Social Media and Contentious Politics: Tunisia 2010-2013

by Kevin A Ivey

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Thesis directed by

Nathan J Brown
Professor of Political Science and International Affairs

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Abstract of Thesis

Social Media and Contentious Politics: Tunisia 2010-2013

How do social media contribute to groups engaged in contentious politics within a domestic environment? While many have examined the influence of social media on the Arab revolutions of 2010-2011 from an international perspective, there are fewer studies examining the impact of social media within a national environment after these events. Through interviews with a group of 40 Tunisians, many of them active in contentious politics from 2010-2013, this research identifies what sources initially informed the group members of a movement as well as the sources that ultimately pushed them to become active. While information gleaned via social media certainly played a role in the decisions of many interviewees to join the movements examined in this research – unsurprising, given the high rates of internet use within the group – social media were often cited as less trustworthy than other sources and were more likely to inform the respondents of a movement's existence than to push them to act. While these findings are not unexpected, they do require that future efforts examining the role of social media in contentious politics within a country's borders differentiate how different types of sources are viewed by potential supporters and how they might contribute to mobilization in different ways.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Iran's Twitter Revolution"[1]

"Facebook, Twitter Help the Arab Spring Blossom"[2]

"Hong Kong students galvanize on social media to protest against Beijing plans"[3]

The narratives surrounding many recent social movements contain significant references to the use of social media. From Occupy Wall Street to Iran's Green Movement, numerous commentators weave the use of social media into the stories of these groups as a way to explain their successes and failures and ponder the implications of social media's ubiquitous presence in the modern world.[4] Although such views have certainly been challenged, what are the implications of movements' decisions to employ social media; why do we care? If much of the world's population is joining these sites, is it not reasonable to simply accept that activities previously carried out offline are now moving online? While much of the world's population may be carrying out a number of mundane activities online – activities that were previously done in person – the internet and social media could very well be tools distinct from the media that preceded them, providing opportunities different from technologies that came before them. By putting the power of distribution in the hands of movements instead of major media outlets, sites like

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[1] "Editorial: Iran's Twitter Revolution" *The Washington Times* 16 June 2009 (available at: http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/16/irans-twitter-revolution/) accessed 25 September 2014.

[2] David Wolman "Facebook, Twitter Help the Arab Spring Blossom," 16 April 2013 (available at: http://www.wired.com/2013/04/arabspring/) accessed 25 September 2014.

[3] "Hong Kong students galvanize on social media to protest against Beijing plans," *Deustche Welle* 24 September 2014 (available at: http://www.dw.de/hong-kong-students-galvanize-on-social-media-to-protest-against-beijing-plans/a-17949348) accessed 25 September 2014.

[4] Michael Saba "Wall Street protesters inspired by Arab Spring movement," *CNN* 17 September 2011 (available at: http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/16/tech/social-media/twitter-occupy-wall-street/index.html) accessed 25 September 2014.

YouTube and Facebook are sites from which movements can distribute information independently and provide a new way for them to interact with geographically disparate supporters. Theoretically, this could provide movements a powerful new tool to shape the conversation, reach new supporters, and ultimately mobilize people on behalf of their cause, challenging a reliance on major media outlets and reducing the importance of a physical presence in areas in which the movement would like to operate or expand. Is this the case or have movements encountered variables not accounted for in this equation?

Researchers have examined the role of social media in contentious politics from a variety of angles: shaping media coverage, putting potential supporters in contact with each other, and empowering different outlets via their distribution on social media sites. In this research, we ask how social movement organizations (SMOs) grow within a country, paying particular attention to how individuals learn of a movement and ultimately become involved in it. While this research includes significant contributions from social media sites, it is part of a broader conversation taking place within the world of contentious politics, examining how movements spread from one area to another. To this end, we turn to the tools of brokerage and diffusion – which predate the rise of social media – to examine how ideas of contention spread from individuals. The answer to this question has significant implications for movements and observers. Establishing clear benefits to social media's uses could aid movements in their attempts to realize their goals. If there is a clear relationship between online outreach and movement success, movements will likely move more of their resources online and perhaps change the nature of movements' actions, focusing more on online campaigns and less on traditional activities like sit-ins. This would fundamentally alter how we think of SMOs; what

“success” looks like under this thinking could be very different from previous time periods, focusing more on transferable memes and social media presence than on physical events. However, an unclear or negative relationship between online campaigning and movement success would either negate ideas of social media as equalizers or show that while social media *can* contribute in some ways to movements, SMOs continue to rely on traditional actions to achieve their goals, either at the exclusion of social media or utilizing both traditional and social media outreach in a complimentary fashion.

The purposes for which SMOs use social media reveal quite a bit about how they see the sites and where they expect success to come from. Similarly, asking when and where SMOs use social media in compliment to or at the expense of traditional tactics reveals important attitudes and potential biases regarding the use of social media in contentious politics. These results can be juxtaposed with the responses of participants within the movements, from which we can see how alike the two responses are; discrepancies between the two could reveal a logical disconnect that movements would need to address before ultimately using social media to its fullest potential, whatever they see such a potential to be.

This research examines Tunisia, asking how a variety of Tunisians who participated in interviews for this research came to be active in a number of social movements. The story of the Tunisian revolution is well known and elevated to an almost mythic status in its simplicity and speed: on 17 December 2010, a young fruit vendor lit himself on fire in the small city of Sidi Bouzid. Protests soon followed and, aided by a variety of modern technologies, spread from town to town until they consumed much of the country, forcing

out president and strongman Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, all in less than one month. A simple, digestible narrative such as this is rarely satisfying.

Because of the speed with which the protests spread amid a media blackout and the high profile nature of many activists who actively used social media during the revolution, the question of how the revolution spread became *the* issue for many, especially as similar movements sprouted up in other Arab countries. Some chose to focus on social media, questioning how new tools like Twitter and Facebook aided protesters. It is the contention of this paper that although most Tunisian Facebook pages do communicate with a domestic audience and are often aimed at facilitating contentious action among Tunisians, they are not sufficient in and of themselves to push most individuals to action and often serve to pique the interests of potential supporters, pushing them to further inform themselves elsewhere before ultimately joining a movement. While Facebook serves as a useful tool to movements, they do not rely upon it entirely for their success and instead use it to supplement their offline activities and provide a positive 'first encounter' with the movement.

After examining the literature relating to this research and establishing methods, the bulk of this research is divided into three sections. Section 3.A begins by asking whether Tunisians in fact use social media and if so, how. If Tunisians are not using social media, outreach by any SMO using social media will likely fail. After establishing that Tunisians are in fact using social media, section 3.B asks whether or not the pages examined in this research likely facilitate communication among a domestic audience. Communication not directed to those living inside of Tunisia on a large scale would mean that although social media *can* be used to mobilize groups within a country's borders, they may be more

likely to be used for communicating with audiences outside of the affected country. Such a finding might lead us to conclude that while social media can be of great benefit to movements, they do not use these sites to communicate with their supporters and instead use them to enhance their position within the greater global community of SMOs and communicate with outside actors, notably foreign press. Alternatively, communication directed internally would allow us to examine how movements use social media to reach domestic supporters, in conjunction with or as an alternative to traditional outreach and mobilization strategies. After establishing such a link, section 3.C asks how people come in contact with movements and what sources ultimately shape an individual's decision to join a movement. If a role for social media is found, we examine the content of pages associated with movements, looking at what they say and how these might facilitate mobilization. The nature of the content on these pages reveal how far social media have penetrated the world of contentious politics, changing how movements reach communicate with and mobilize potential or active supporters. A strong finding would force us to examine in what ways social media can complement a movement's expansion and perhaps change how we think of movements and success more broadly.

Literature Review

In answering how social media have affected how SMOs spread and how individuals become aware of social movements, three conceptual tools from previous research prove most useful, namely brokerage and diffusion; the production and consumption of social media; and connective action. These tools allow this research to be grounded in existing research, aiding in our examination of the spread social movements across Tunisia. While several researchers examining the role of social media in modern protest movements

ground their research in region or country-specific explanations, this research – examining how social media aid the proliferation of movements in a country – focuses on tools that explain the use of social media in contentious politics and the expansion of movements in the hopes that the findings are applicable in a variety of environments and contexts. By focusing on tools that can be used in a variety of contexts – in different regions and levels of internet access, for example – the findings of this research can be tested and applied in different environments in order to see in what ways social media affect the spread of SMOs within a country and in what contexts they are most effective in doing so.

Additionally, much research – especially research relating to the use of social media in the Arab revolutions of 2010-2011 – has focused on the impact of social media across national borders. In contrast, this research asks how social media affect the spread of SMOs within a country. This does not challenge or dispense with previous findings on the impact of social media in transmitting frames, grievances, or repertoire across borders; however, it does force us to ask how social media have impacted the spread of domestic movements, especially when a movement lacks a counterpart from a different country from which a movement can borrow frames and elements of a repertoire. This also necessitates the use of tools that focus on the impact of social media within a country, in contrast to tools that explain how social media transport ideas across national boundaries.

The first conceptual tool necessary to address the question of how social media have affected the spread of SMOs is that of the production and consumption of social media. Interesting questions have been raised by Sean Aday, et al regarding how social media

have been consumed by those living in Arab countries during the revolutions of 2010-11. In analyzing the consumption of links maintained by the site bit.ly during the revolutions, they find that the majority of clicks – representing consumers – came from computers located outside of the countries in question.[5] Looking at the question from a slightly different angle, research from Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson finds that after controlling for other factors, social media use increased the odds that an individual joined in protest activity in Tahrir Square.[6] This raises the question of whether people inside of a given country are consuming social media in such a way that has a meaningful impact on the events as they unfold. While it is not the purpose of this research to challenge either of these findings, it does force us to first address the question of whether social media are being consumed by a domestic audience. This research cannot move forward without establishing some level of consumption among Tunisians; while social media may have an impact if they are consumed more or less exclusively by those following the events from outside of Tunisia, measuring their impact in the spread of SMOs within the country is not possible if sites like Facebook are not being used to communicate among a Tunisian audience, regardless of whether the effects of social media extend beyond Tunisia's borders.

As the aim of this research is not to challenge so much as clarify the findings of researchers such as Sean Aday and Zeynep Tufekci, the goal in this research is simply to identify whether or not Tunisians consume social media related to ongoing SMO campaigns. If there is little or no consumption of social media by Tunisians or a lack of

[5] Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Deen Freelon, Marc Lynch, John Sides, and Michael Dewar, "Watching from Afar: Media Consumption Patterns Around the Arab Spring," *American Behavioral Scientist* 57 (7).
[6] Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson, "Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square," *Journal of Communication* 62, 2012.

social media pages that can be used by Tunisians to aid in their participation within an SMO, then examining how social media affect the spread of SMOs takes on a very different nature, if such a relationship can be found at all. In contrast, if Tunisians are actively consuming social media, we can further examine how such sites allow SMOs to spread within Tunisia. Determining what kinds of media Tunisians are producing and consuming provides us with the context necessary to push our research forward, but it does not answer the question that we are posing, namely whether and how social media affect the spread of SMOs within a country.

The second conceptual tool that allows this research to be examined in the context of previous research is that of connective action. In contrast to previous research on collective action that endeavors to solve the free rider problem, connective action centers on easily personalized frames shared by digital technology. In connective action, those who view these easily transmittable frames then repackage them again for both consumption and redistribution.[7] Such research sees some forms of online activism as phenomena distinct from types of activism that preceded them and has been applied to a variety of contexts, notably the call "We are the 99%" that echoed from the Occupy Wall Street movement and was subsequently shared across social media sites as the movement spread. While such ideas by no means eliminate previous forms of contention, they do stand to substantially expand the window of what can be considered activism and the nature of online contentious campaigns by opening up new avenues to contention that exist in large part away from the street, the traditional focus of contentious movements.

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[7] W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg "The Logic of Connective Action," *Information, Communication, & Society* 15, no. 5 (June 2012).

Can such ideas be applied to the Arab spring, when people protested in the streets at great risk to their lives? In this research, we examine whether such examples of connective action can be found among Tunisian SMOs. While a lack of examples of connective action would not invalidate such theories, it would limit their applicability to this research, as well as force future research to question in what context(s) examples of connective action are most likely to be found and why some individuals and groups might in fact use social media while forgoing connective action. Examining these movements with an eye focused on connective action certainly provide us with valuable insights – such as the conditions that might contribute their use or relative effectiveness and in what way easily transferrable frames contribute to SMOs within a small, domestic environment – but can only offer us contributions if we can positively identify examples of connective action. While the appearance and use of connective action among the pages examined in this research would allow us to examine why and to what ends individuals active within SMOs employ connective action, the mere absence of examples of connective action would not necessarily preclude its use in Tunisia; rather, we would force to see what ways existing theories regarding connective action might explain their absence. If examples of connective action can be found, we must then examine what role such ideas play and how they exist alongside or instead of other, more traditional forms of contentious politicking.

The final conceptual tools necessary to answer how social media aid in the proliferation of SMOs within Tunisia are those of brokerage and diffusion. Brokerage and diffusion are two of the many mechanisms identified by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilley in the book *Dynamics of Contention*; both predate the rise of large social

networking websites and help put this research in the context of previous scholarly work examining relational mechanisms and their role in contentious politics. Together, brokerage and diffusion refer to important relational mechanisms that identify the point of contact through which SMOs spread. Brokerage is defined as "the linking of two or more currently unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with each other and/or with yet another site." In contrast, diffusion describes a "transfer in the same or similar shape of forms and claims of contention across space or across sectors and ideological divides;" additionally, diffusion tends to focus on the "transfer of information across existing lines of communication."[8] Thus, while the two mechanisms describe similar phenomena, they are differentiated by the relationship between the two parties before the spread of information.

While brokerage and diffusion do differ with respect to the relationship between the two parties prior to the spread of a contentious claim, this research examines them together, making distinctions between them only if necessary. The nature of social media – particularly sites like Facebook – makes differentiating between the two difficult. If, for example, two individuals who do not know each other outside of a social media platform begin correspondence and eventually spread knowledge of a contentious campaign, would such a phenomenon be described as brokerage or diffusion? What if the two individuals live in two different regions, countries, or continents? In these examples, it is difficult to distinguish what makes two social sites "unconnected"; while two individuals may in fact not know each other outside of a social media platform, the ability of social media to bridge the physical divide between individuals is one of social media's most

[8] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, (Cambridge University Press: 2001).

prized features and it becomes difficult to define when real world friendships end and virtual friendships take hold. It is for these reasons that this research examines brokerage and diffusion as one in terms of how social media aid in the spread of SMOs, rather than distinguishing the nature of the relationships between individual users of social media.

Moreover, examining the pages and groups found on Facebook – as this research aims to – further complicates attempts to precisely identify the relationship between a page, the page's administrator(s), and a potential supporter. While an individual may use a page to communicate with people that he or she knows offline, the anonymous nature of social media, coupled with the visibility of information spread on social sites by a variety of users, means that differentiating between close and distant relationships online is difficult and can mask how a claim is actually spread. Given that simply looking at a fellow social media user's page or profile might suffice to spread a claim of contention – if relevant content is featured on that user's page – mapping the spread of claims of contention across social media by viewing brokerage and diffusion as two manifestations one principle is more illuminating than identifying the relative closeness of various relationships.

By examining how SMOs spread in an era in which social media permeate much of the social realm, we can see if social media sites serve as the initial points of contact that individuals have with SMOs. This research looks at a number of different brokers and diffusers: individuals, both close friends and distant acquaintances, through face to face conversations; individuals, again both close friends and distant acquaintances, through telephone conversations or SMS; traditional media; and social media. All of these different sources can serve as potential brokers or diffusers, introducing individuals to a

movement's campaign and bringing him or her into the movement's actions. By examining how these different sources inform individuals of SMOs and their campaigns, we can see which sources are most effective in informing an individual of the existence of an SMO and its campaign.

In order to effectively identify how different sources may be used and contribute to mobilization in different ways – and avoid the reductive approach of viewing the relative effectiveness of various sources in terms of simple numerical superiority – this research not only looks at the initial sources that inform individuals but also the sources that prove most influential in an individual's decision to ultimately join a movement. Thus, although we look broadly at the role that various media have in acting as brokers and diffusers, this research also examines the ways in which different sources contribute to the mobilization of an individual. If, for example, a source is often instrumental in introducing individuals to a movement (a broker/diffuser) but individuals still regularly follow up by checking the veracity of the broker's or diffuser's information via a second source, such a source would contribute to mobilization less than a source that introduces individuals to a movement at the same rate but is more uniformly trusted. In other words, brokers and diffusers that relay incomplete or untrustworthy information might not contribute to mobilization as effectively other, more trusted sources.

By examining the relative levels of trust in various brokers and diffusers, this research can shed light on how different media – acting in a similar manner to inform individuals of an ongoing SMO in the hope of spurring them to action – contribute in different ways to SMOs. While a variety of media can undoubtedly contribute to a campaign's success, acknowledging which sources convey the most trusted information allows researchers to

see how media contribute in different ways to an individual's mobilization as well as allowing movements to see how best to allocate their resources and efforts as they attempt to mobilize the maximum number of people for their cause.

Chapter 2: Methods

In order to examine how social movements spread within a country, we must first select an area on which to focus our attention. Here, we examine the spread of SMOs in Tunisia during and after the revolution. Why Tunisia? Outside of the social media-based narrative of the Tunisian revolution and the revolutions that followed in other Arab countries, we have heard little from many researchers regarding the contentious politics of these countries. Tunisia has taken a number of steps towards democracy, making it not only a rare success story from the Arab spring but a singularity in North Africa and the Middle East. It is because of this that Tunisia is a perfect candidate, as we examine events that occurred after 2010-2011, most of them peaceful in nature and all taking place within the framework of an evolving democracy.

Having decided to focus on Tunisia, we must now select the movements that we will examine. Research that aims to accurately understand and describe the role of brokerage and diffusion within social movements in Tunisia – with a special focus on the potential role of social media – must include a variety of groups to ensure the validity of its findings. This research focuses on four criteria in order to determine a movement's inclusion. First, the movement must have an identifiable goal; without an identifiable goal, it would be difficult to categorize any group as belonging to a larger movement. Second, the movement needs to have a public social media presence; while many SMOs attempt to limit the information that they publish online, it is impossible to examine the social media trail of an entirely clandestine group. Third, given that this research looks at the country as a whole, it necessary for each movement to have some amount of national mobilization. While Tunisia has seen a number of local strikes and other movements

aimed at redressing specific grievances, looking at events that occurred only within specific local contexts could easily lead to comparing unlike scenarios in an attempt to draw conclusions regarding the country as a whole. Finally, in order to ensure that this research's findings are not limited to one particular moment in Tunisian history, this research must include movements from different time periods. Research that only focuses on one movement may very well have limited applicability when applied to other scenarios. Given the difficulty of amassing publically-available data from social media websites under a dictatorship, researching movements before the revolution is beyond the scope of this research.

The revolution, being well-researched and documented, serves as a useful starting point to test previous theories and set up a baseline against which subsequent events can be examined. The movement had a clearly identifiable goal and repertoire: the removal of dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali through protests and strikes across the country. The movement also had a public social media component; while safety was a concern for protestors and administrators of anti-government webpages alike, there are numerous social media pages and other public resources that offer useful contributions to this research. And while the movement began in economically deprived areas outside of the country's major cities, the revolution quickly spread across the country and changed the face of the Tunisian government. Finally, the revolution serves as a starting point for this study because of the difficulties involved in collecting accurate data before the ousting of Ben Ali; while it is difficult to compare other events to the revolution, it does serve as a useful barometer when looking at the three other movements that make up this research. In keeping with Philip Howard's findings relating to the role of social media and the

"follow on information warfare" phase, both the interviews and social media data in this research examine the revolution beyond the departure of deposed president Ben Ali on 11 January 2011.[9]

The next major event that the country witnessed was the 2011 National Constituent Assembly (NCA) elections, tasked with writing the country's new constitution. The parties, electorate, and transitional government all had a clear objective and repertoire: to elect a body to write a new constitution and continue the country's democratic transition. Given that the campaign was a highly publicized event, the Facebook pages of major political parties serve as a key resource when examining this movement. While the election featured local campaigning, this research examines the efforts made by the national parties, ensuring that local contexts – such as one party being dominant in a particular area – do not adversely affect our findings. Finally, the elections occurred roughly nine months after the departure of Ben Ali and more than seven months after the fall of the RCD government.

The third event examined in this research is the reaction to the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair, when a controversial art exhibit in the city of La Marsa inspired impassioned reactions from the public as well as isolated attacks against the exhibit. The movement's goals here are divided between those who supported the exhibit, seeing it as an emblem of free speech, and those who saw the controversial pieces inside as blasphemous, seeking to ban such art through a law criminalizing attacks on sacred values. While it is likely that the initial attacks against the art fair itself were organized offline, there are

[9] Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain. "The Role of Digital Media." Journal of Democracy 22, no. 3 (2011): 35-48. http://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed August 20, 2014).

numerous public pages that shed light on the discussion and attempts at mobilization on both sides. Although the exhibit was held in a suburb of the capital, the controversy led to protests across the country, including the death of a young man in the city of Sousse, the country's third largest city. Finally, this movement occurred in June of 2012, between the aforementioned elections and the Tamarrod movement, the final movement examined in this research.

The 2013 Tamarrod movement was one of the largest and most successful social movements in post-revolutionary Tunisia and is the most recent movement that this research examines. The movement's goal, attacking the legitimacy of the NCA and installing an interim government, was ultimately realized in December 2013 and January 2014. The movement's repertoire varied; its signature method was a widely circulated petition against the NCA, but Tamarrod also engaged in sit-ins and major protests outside of the NCA headquarters and across Tunisia. The movement also maintained an active social media presence across several different pages. Finally, the movement began in the summer of 2013 and remained active throughout the year, providing a useful comparison with the events that preceded it.

Sources

Facebook, as the most popular form of social media within Tunisia, serves as the primary source of information in this research.[10] While Facebook was and remains Tunisia's most popular social networking website, used by more than 15% of the overall population at the time of the revolution and upwards of 42% of the population at the time of this

[10] UM Digital Tunisie, "L'usage d'internet en Tunisie et chiffres clés," published 25 April 2013 on Frenchweb.fr, available at: http://frenchweb.fr/infographie-les-chiffres-clefs-de-linternet-en-tunisie/113332 (accessed 11 March 2014).

writing, numerous policies employed by Facebook to ensure the privacy of its users make examining many kinds of data on the site difficult.[11] Searching for specific words within postings – as is customary on Twitter – is not permitted by Facebook's privacy policy. As such, locating posts that mention a specific event is difficult. In light of these challenges, the data gleaned from Facebook for this research will be that which are available from Facebook's "groups" and "pages," which allow outsiders to view content published on the page, whether by the movement's leaders or supporters.

Twitter, with its status as the second most popular social networking site in Tunisia and relatively open policies regarding privacy of individual postings, could serve as major source for information. While Twitter represents a promising source for information, there are certain facts that must be kept in mind when turning to it as a source. Despite being the second most popular social media website in Tunisia, the number of active Twitter users in Tunisia has never exceeded 1% of the population.[12] Thus, despite being more accessible than data on Facebook, information available via Twitter is less representative of the Tunisian population. Additionally, some research has shown that information published on Twitter is largely consumed by people outside of the region.[13] As such, Twitter is not included in this research, as is not used by a large number of Tunisians; the focus of this research, examining how Tunisians interact among themselves via social media, necessitates seeking out information that is representative of Tunisian society as a whole, even if that means seeking out more difficult sources of

[11] *The Arab Social Media Report VI,* Dubai School of Government, available at: http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com/home/index.aspx?&PriMenuID=1&mnu=Pri (accessed 5 September 2014).
[12] Ibid
[13] Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Deen Freelon, March Lynch, John Sides, and Michael Dewar, "Watching from Afar: Media Consumption Patterns Around the Arab Spring," *American Behavioral Scientist* 57 no. 7, 15 March 2013.

information. Other social media websites, such as Foursquare and Instagram, are not included for similar reasons; their limited popularity and specific foci is not likely to contribute greatly to this research.

While information from social media websites themselves provides excellent insight of how the sites are used, gaps remain in their utility. How can research answer the question of how Tunisians use social media to organize and galvanize support for social movements without including the opinions of users? With this in mind, it is necessary to conduct interviews with Tunisians of all stripes. First, a group of 40 Tunisians were selected and asked broadly about their media consumption habits. Then, they were asked if they had participated in one of the four social movements in question and, if so, how they came to learn about the movement, what sources they turned to learn more about it, and how they ultimately participated in the movement(s).

Measurements and Variables

This research examines data from individual 'groups' and 'pages' on Facebook related to the movements in question to determine the deeper purpose of the page: does the page facilitate communication among Tunisians? To this end, the language of publication on these pages serves as a useful indicator; pages that employ languages other than French or Arabic extensively are likely of limited use to most Tunisians. These data are both quantitative, examining the numbers of posts in foreign languages as a portion of total posts, and qualitative, examining the content and to whom it speaks. Once a connection between the pages and a Tunisian audience is established, the pages are examined qualitatively, looking at how the page speaks to its audience, what its goals are, and how

it aims to achieve them. Additionally, this research examines the relative interaction between pages and the movement as a whole, whether through other pages affiliated with the movement, media coverage, official statements, or similar memes found on multiple pages within the same movement.

While the membership lists of pages could theoretically be examined in an attempt to determine the makeup of the movement's supporters, this proves difficult for two reasons. First of all, information on Facebook is self-reporting; there is no way to know that an individual's location according to Facebook is indicative of reality. Second of all, even if this information were taken to be correct, there is no way to track the changes in this information over time; an individual who currently resides outside of Tunisia could very well have been in Tunisia at the time of the events.

To collect qualitative data from Tunisian users of social media, this research also relies on data gleaned through interviews interviews. These interviews were administered to a variety of people, examining their media consumption habits, whether or not they had participated in any of the movements in question, and if so, how they learned about the movement initially and what sources they turned to in order to better inform themselves about it; to be fair, participation in movements that was driven by factors outside the realm of social media is given equal weight to participation spurred on by social media. While the ubiquity of both traditional networks and internet-based social media networks undoubtedly means that both are often used to spread ideas associated with a movement in question, how information is being shared and the degree to which a given network encourages participation in a movement is used to measure the influence of 'new' social media – like Facebook – compared to traditional networks.

Chapter 3: Presentation

Before examining the role of social media in informing participants of social movements, we must first examine what forms of media Tunisians are consuming. Once a pattern of social media consumption is established, both among the population as a whole and in the sample group, we delve into our arguments, examining pages relating to the movements to see at whom they are directed. After establishing that the pages do communicate with a Tunisia audience, we ask how participants in this research actually learned of the movements in question in order to determine whether or not social media played a role in their ultimate mobilization. Finally, we look to the pages of the movements again, seeing what the data on the pages indicate regarding how social media contributed to the mobilization of the members of our sample group. The answers to these questions tell us how both participants and organizers within social movements view and use social media, establishing whether or not they can truly serve as effective brokers and diffusers, informing the previously uninitiated and pushing them to action.

Chapter 3.A: Media Consumption Habits of Tunisians

Before assessing the role of social media in social movements, there are some important questions that must be asked regarding the media consumption habits of Tunisians in general and the specific habits of the 40 individuals interviewed for this research. While social media can certainly have effects in Tunisia regardless of their relative use, the effects of social media likely vary depending on whether or not they are consumed by broad swathes of the population or by a minority of influential players. How are Tunisians as a whole informing themselves about current events: through traditional media, a rapidly expanding, internet-dependent media, or a combination of the two? And how do the consumption habits of the interviewees compare to their fellow citizens? Finally, what do these preferences reveal about how Tunisians as a whole and the respondents in particular view their news sources?

Why examine the general consumption patterns of media across Tunisian society? Consumption patterns that generally exclude social media could challenge the assertions of those who claim that social media fundamentally altered the calculations of protesters from Tehran to Zuccotti Park or limit their influence to a select group of major players; the latter would make social media a useful tool among such influential players – allowing them to take advantage of many of the most promising aspects of social media – but limit their efficacy of social media in reaching out to the population as a whole, who make up the majority of their potential supporters. In contrast, a high level of social media use allows us to examine how social media can be utilized by a broad array of Tunisians, both the influential leaders of SMOs and the population in general, who make up much of the SMOs' target audience. While the advent of social media could

fundamentally alter the way in which people inform themselves and movements reach out to potential supporters, it is first necessary to establish an element of social media consumption among the Tunisians in general and compare it to other forms of media inside of Tunisia. Only then can this research answer the questions of how both supporters and activists actually utilize social media as a part of social movements.

After establishing what media sources Tunisians are using to inform themselves of ongoing social movements, we then compare them to the consumption patterns of the 40 Tunisians who agreed to be interviewed for this research. Similarities between the media consumption patterns of the two groups ensure the validity of this research's findings when making statements about the country as a whole. This research cannot explain these patterns using the more personal and nuanced answers given in the interviews if those within the group do not share at least some of the same preferences of their fellow citizens. Similarly, if respondents indicate a preference for media almost unheard of to most Tunisians, this would also make their responses unrepresentative of the country as a whole and likely call in to question the applicability of many of their responses to the country as a whole. Additionally, a biased sample group diminishes the applicability of the responses of those who did mobilize, calling into question much of the findings of this research.

What do these preferences for certain sources reveal? If only a select group of individuals – highly active within SMOs – use social media, than websites like Facebook will have only a limited influence outside of the leaders of and those active within these groups. Such a finding could certainly affirm a role for social media in contentious politics in Tunisia, but such a role would be limited to transmitting ideas and information among the

already active cadres of these groups – hardly a recipe for mass mobilization. In contrast, a high rate of social media use among the general population could allow social media sites to serve as influential sources of information for both leaders and supporters. While a role for social media in mobilization is not a foregone conclusion simply due to their popularity, social media sites have more direct effects on mobilization when they can be accessed by a large section of the population.

Consumption patterns of various media not only reveal what sources people are seeking out, but also what sources they are avoiding. In this research, we not only asked respondents what sources they were using, but the reasons that underlie these choices: a lack of trust in a particular medium, a preference for a format, ease of access, etc. If Tunisians turn to social media at the expense of traditional outlets , this could indicate that certain elements – trust key among them – are lacking from more traditional media outlets; in this case, social media could represent an independent and trusted source of information for ongoing current events and be an indispensable tool for movements and individuals alike, pushing this research to examine who is using social media sites and why. Additionally, if Tunisians with internet access rely mostly on media accessed online to inform themselves, this not only shows that the internet is a powerful tool with which movements can recruit potential supporters, but also a tool for communication and outreach that can and should be effectively harnessed by governments and businesses as well. If either of these facts proves to be true, then searching for a role for social media in mobilization is justified, as it indicates that social media have a role in the daily lives of average Tunisians likely to be targeted by social movements as potential members. If similar trends were to be found in other countries or regions, these areas could also prove

ripe for research, making research on social media a viable field in the study of social mobilization.

To best answer these questions, this section examines the media consumption patterns of Tunisia as a whole, it compares to that of the respondents, and asks how these respondents view the various media available to Tunisians.

Group Background

For this research, 40 individuals agreed to be interviewed. They were not selected at random, but via snowball sampling; after a successful interview, respondents were asked to provide the names of others who might be interested in participating in this research. No attempts were made to screen individuals for age, sex, or other demographic factors. The group included 25 men and 15 women, ranging in age from 18 to 51. The median age of the group was 24, lower than the median age in Tunisia, 31.4.[14]

Interviews were conducted in person; due to budgetary and timing concerns, all interviews were conducted in and around the capital area by a trusted and experienced research assistant; many of the initial interviews were with those who agreed to be interviewed for previous research conducted by the research assistant.

Looking at the makeup of our sample group, it over represents Tunisia's urban regions, particularly the capital. While the majority of Tunisia's population does live in some kind of urban area – 66% in 2013[15] – this population is spread across a number of population centers in the country. Including only interviewees from the capital region has a number

[14] *CIA World Factbook*
[15] *The World Bank,* World Development Indicators.

of implications for our research, chief among them that internet is more prevalent and easily accessible in urban areas. This affects media consumption – making it more likely that an individual will consume online forms of media – and, potentially, how an individual came to learn of and be active within a movement. While access to internet does not guarantee that an individual will learn of a given SMO through social media, the possibility of an individual learning of an SMO via social media without any access to the internet is significantly reduced, if not bordering on impossibility. Thus, our urban sample group makes it potentially more likely – but does not guarantee – that we will find individuals who were spurred to action based on information that they encountered on social media and potentially inflating the role of social media.

Additionally, while the range of ages in the sample group is quite broad, the median age of the group is still younger than Tunisia as a whole, especially when looking at those in the sample group who participated in a social movement. This presents similar problems to the overrepresentation of people from urban areas in the sample group, likely increasing the chance that an individual will use social media and therefore become aware of an SMO's existence through social media sites.

Does this jeopardize our findings? Not necessarily. While more thorough research on the impact of social media in a more mixed environment would certainly produce more balanced results, there is still reason to believe that significant insight can be gained from the responses of the sample group. While the sample group could overemphasize certain media – particularly social media – due to their proximity to urban centers and youth, our findings can still shed light on how social media contribute to mobilization in general, although it would certainly force us to ask the question of whether the same factors are at

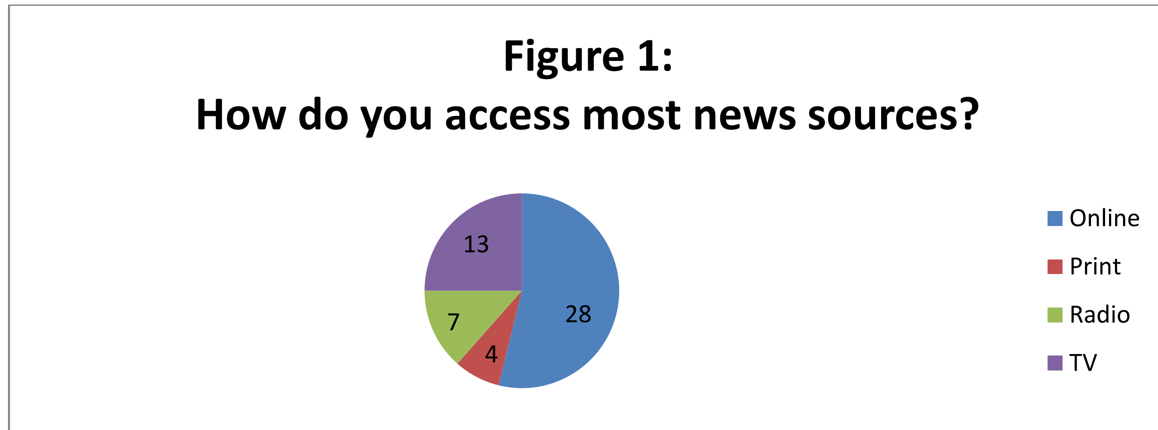
work in the mobilization of individuals living in rural areas. Additionally, if a decisive, causative link between social media use and participation in SMOs were to be found – or preference for social media at the complete exclusion of other media – we would need to reexamine our findings, looking at a broader selection of Tunisians in order account for mobilization and media consumption in the absence of social media. As we will see, however, this is not the case; while the younger, more urban group here is far more likely to use social media than the average Tunisian, they do not as a whole use social media or other resources at the exclusion of more traditional media. Furthermore, as is shown the third section, while social media and mobilization can certainly influence each other, we do not see that a lack of social media precludes activity within an SMO nor that use of social media in any way guarantees mobilization.

Traditional News Media in Tunisia

Television reaches 94% of Tunisians, making it one of the most widely consumed forms of media within the country.[16] While media censorship under former President Zine al Abidine Ben Ali placed significant restrictions on the reporting of domestic events – especially the 2010-2011 revolution – significant changes have been made since 2011, increasing the overall number of stations as well as their relative freedom. There are currently four free-to-air channels – Wataniya 1 & 2, Hannibal, and Nessma – as well as more than 20 private channels.[17] Many television channels allow online access to their programming, including sites like YouTube and Facebook, allowing users to both access

[16] *Arab Media Outlook*, Doha Press Club, 2013: 213.
[17] Ibid

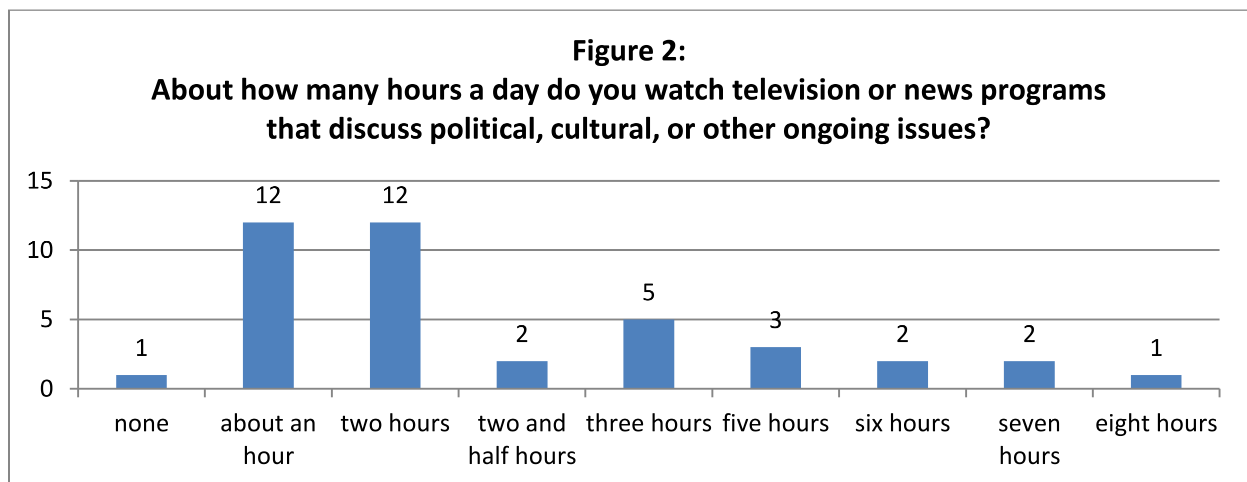
and share content online and extending the reach of television stations beyond the airwaves.



How do the television consumption habits of the sample group compare with that of their fellow citizens? Of the 40 individuals interviewed for this study, all but one indicated that they watched television on a daily basis and all owned at least one television in their homes. Interviewees described a range of consumption patterns for news-related programming, with the lowest responses indicating one hour per day and one individual reporting eight hours per day. The median time spent watching television stands at 2 hours per day, indicating that while consumption patterns certainly vary from individual to individual, television is a widely consumed form of media among the respondents, mirroring the habits of Tunisia as a whole.

Opinions of those interviewed vary regarding the role of television in informing them about ongoing events. Many said that they continue to distrust major television stations, especially national stations, citing bias and a lack of credibility in their reporting. These feelings were particularly acute among those active during the revolution. Interestingly, many said that while they do not trust television programming, it was an important

catalyst in their decision to mobilize, as it spurred them to seek out information through more trustworthy sources, such as foreign news websites, social media, and face to face conversations with close friends and family members. In this sense, television could represent an important initial source of information despite being generally distrusted by many of those interviewed. In the words of one woman, “I think that TV was influential because I knew already that [national media] doesn’t cover the truth, which triggered me to do my own research and learn more using other sources. It strikes your curiosity.”



Newspaper circulation in Tunisia has fallen considerably in recent years. While the country has changed many of its press practices, the country’s largest print newspapers – Al Chorouk, Dar Al Sabah, and La Presse de Tunisie – have seen sales of printed papers and its associated advertising cost decrease in recent years.[18] Similar to their television counterparts, however, Tunisia’s major newspapers host online sites that provide their news content to internet users. Again, this content is often shared across social media, suggesting that while readership of paper newspapers has decreased, some readers have migrated to their associated websites. The country’s press is split between French and

[18] *Arab Media Outlook*: 215.

Arabic language outlets, with major papers in both languages. While Tunisia's news agency TAP (French: Tunis Afrique Presse) publishes in three languages – Arabic, French, and English – the country lacks a major print outlet in English.

When asked about printed materials – specifically *excluding* internet versions of traditional news sites – respondents generally expressed limited interest. Only four people identified printed media as one of their chief sources of news. Less than one third of respondents said that they read a newspaper or equivalent several times a week; more than half admitted to reading printed sources rarely or not at all. In this way, readership of newspapers proved to be one of the most divisive issues among those interviewed. Two men adamantly preferred printed materials and expressed a disinterest in several newer forms of media, with one saying he preferred to read exclusively printed newspapers and discounted both the influence of social media and the role of the internet in general. Several said they use printed media along with another traditional form – radio – as their primary sources for news. Generally speaking, however, most respondents did not indicate that they regularly read printed news sources. While comparing the sample group's consumption of printed sources to that of Tunisia's population as a whole is difficult, it is clear that consumption of printed sources is decreasing among the population in general and low among the sample group. However, printed news outlets remain influential due to their clout and the ease with which their stories can be shared across social media.

The final traditional form of media distribution in Tunisia is radio. Tunisia has several major national and regional radio stations. Measuring the number of listeners on a national level is difficult, however, due to the ubiquity of radios in cars, cafes, and stores.

Similar to other traditional news media, Tunisia's major national radio stations – Mosaïque FM, Express FM, Shems FM, and Jawhara FM – host websites that both stream content and allow users to view previously recorded content. Many of these websites also publish news articles on their sites, many of which are shared across the social media pages examined in this research, suggesting that outlets rooted in radio maintain influence regardless of the size of the live broadcast audience. The stations broadcast songs in a variety of languages, but generally feature programming in Arabic. Websites are available both in French and Arabic.

How many in the sample group rely on radio as a source of news? Of the 40 people interviewed, only two stated that the radio serves as their primary source of news; five other respondents indicated that they rely on radio for news in addition to other sources. There is no clear correlation regarding a preference for other media among those who cited radio as a major source of information. One man explained his preference for radio by citing the live and ongoing nature of its broadcasts; few others gave details regarding their preference for listening to radio broadcasts, focusing more on television and online sources. Again, while it is difficult to compare consumption between the nation and sample group in this regard, only a small number of interviewees confessed a preference for news via radio. While many of the respondents likely encounter radio broadcasts in their daily lives – in cafes, stores, and taxis – the amount of content originating from radio stations found on social media in this research suggests that either the sample group is less likely to use radio as a source of news than the average Tunisian or that radio's influence on Tunisia has migrated from the airwaves to the internet, where members of our tech-savvy sample group might be more likely to encounter it.

New Technology and Media in Tunisia

How does the consumption of media from the internet and other technologically-enabled sources compare with that of traditional news media? And given that the sample group seems less likely to turn to traditional sources for news content – especially print and radio – does this mean that they are accessing these traditional outlets online? Or do participants in this research turn to a different source entirely for news, be they social media sites or other media more or less exclusive to the online realm?

Internet access in Tunisia is high compared to much of the Arab world, with an estimated 43.8% of the population having access to the internet, whether at a home, internet café, or a different location; the figure has steadily increased over the last five years.[19] Additionally, other indicators – including cell-phone usage, the presence of high-speed internet connections, and usage of social media – relating to the use of technology are high compared to the Arab world.[20]

How is this reflected among those who participated in this research? Results from the interviewees reflect a group that uses technology to a greater degree than the population as a whole. 36 of the 40 respondents indicated that they had internet access in their homes at the time of the interviews; interestingly, the four respondents who indicated that they lacked home internet access said they maintained active social media accounts; all owned cell phones. While the oldest person sampled in the group said that he lacked access to internet in his home, the four respondents without home internet access could only be unified by one statistic – sex – as all four were men. A lack of home internet access does

[19] International Telecommunication Union (United Nations), 2013 estimated figure.
[20] *Arab Media Outlook*: 213.

not seem to correlate with a lack of activism: two of the men without home internet access were among the most active of those interviewed.

The expansion of internet access in Tunisia, coupled with the expansion of press freedom since 2011, has resulted in a large percentage of Tunisians reading news on the internet; a recent survey examining internet use in a group of Arab countries found that 58% of Tunisians use the internet to look up news at least once a day, the second highest country in the survey sample, behind only Bahrain.[21] As stated previously, many traditional news outlets in Tunisia also allow access to their content online. These sites, coupled with several new electronic news sources that cater exclusively to an online audience, give Tunisian internet users access to a broad range of domestic and international news content, including instant access to stories originating from more traditional outlets such as newspapers, radio, television channels. Interviewees were not asked to explicitly distinguish between traditional outlets accessed online and online only outlets and often cited both as major sources of news, revealing a varied news diet that often manifests itself in the content shared on social media sites. Additionally, the internet is the sole source for domestic news in English, with several news websites – notably, Nawaat, Tunisia Live, and Tunis Times – publishing some or all of their content in English.

Those interviewed for this research displayed a decided preference for accessing their news online. More than half indicated that they rely on online news sources alone as their primary source of news information, with five indicating that they use online sources along with other content; only two said they prefer to use online sources of all stripes as

[21] Media Use in the Middle East, *Northwestern University in Qatar* (available at: http://menamediasurvey.northwestern.edu/#) accessed 1 September 2014.

little as possible. For many who participated in the revolution, international news outlets were described as being more balanced and willing to cover events that the national media was attempting to "falsify," in the words of one woman. When asked what types of sources they use online, 11 said that they use the internet to seek out online news sites and named a broad array of sources, including a variety of international press outlets such as Al-Jazeera, BBC, and France 24. While two respondents were vocally critical of online sources of information, results from the interviews paint a picture of a group that is more likely to use the internet and access news online than the population as a whole. While such a finding can certainly push our role for social media forward, this online news content includes quite a bit of information originating on websites that are in fact extensions of larger press outlets that have a significant presence offline, indicating that while the internet has certainly allowed for a more varied news diet, online news consumption includes numerous sources that are online incarnations of older outlets. This does not necessarily negate the search for a role for social media in mobilization but it does necessitate that we look cautiously at the variety of online sources from which Tunisians gather their news.

Blogs are another important source of online news content and have been a feature of the Tunisian internet scene for several years, with many of them predating the revolution. Though the rise of more participatory social media has lowered the bar needed to share information online, blogs remain an influential feature of the Tunisian political conversation. Although it is difficult to estimate readership, many of Tunisia's most prominent bloggers – among them Slim Amamou, Lina Ben Mhenni, and Sofiane Shourabi – have thousands of followers on Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, the work

of Lina Ben Mhenni, who blogs under the name "Tunisian Girl," surfaced several times when examining material spread across social media. Although examined from a social media perspective, one of the pages examined in this research – Nawaat – is, at its heart, a blog.

Interviewees were not directly asked about blogs but three individuals volunteered that they preferred to obtain their news from blogs. Those who read blogs cited the blend of more trustworthy information – as compared to television or social media – with the persuasive viewpoints that have made many blogs famous; as one man said, blogs are at the same time "more trustworthy and they incite you to act," while adding later that "You can't trust information found on Facebook. Also, the social/intellectual category found on Facebook is not like that which is found on blogs." Overall a small number of those interviewed referenced blogs but their appearance on several pages examined in this research suggests an influential role for blogs that stretches beyond their dedicated readers.

The final sources of online information examined in this research are social media sites, particularly Facebook. Social media have exploded around the world and Tunisia is no exception. The ability to publish, share, and discuss topics from the comfort of one's home or internet café permits ongoing conversations among friends, acquaintances, and strangers regardless of the physical distance between them. As mentioned before, Facebook is by far the most dominant form of social media in Tunisia, with an estimated 4.6 million people – or 42.1% of the total population – using the social media platform.[22] While the number of Facebook users has grown since the revolution, these gains are in

[22] Arab Social Media Report VI (2014): 27-28.

line with other countries in the region, regardless of the presence of a liberalizing force like the one seen in Tunisia in 2011.[23] Other platforms – among them Twitter – are used in the country, but the number of users is dramatically lower.

Is this preference for social media reflected in the sample group? The vast majority of those interviewed for this research said that they use social media, with most of them indicating that they use their social media accounts one or more times per day. Only two respondents indicated that they did not have a social media account. When asked specifically about information relating to ongoing social movements, many said that they prefer social media due to the biased nature of other mediums, especially television; again, this seems to be particularly true for those who participated in the revolution. "Videos on Facebook of protests, events, the live coverage…are more credible," said one man who participated in the revolution and the 2011 NCA elections. One man who participated in the revolution and the 2013 Tamarrod movement against the NCA said that Facebook is a credible source for information because "the Tunisian media is still considered misleading." While opinions regarding the overall utility of and trust in social media varied among respondents, participants in this research were far more likely to maintain an active social media account than their fellow citizens.

Part of the appeal of social media is the ease with which users post opinions, share data, and connect with people, even strangers. Several people mentioned the ease of sharing content from YouTube or other sites as an important reason for why they use social media, in spite of an official ban on YouTube before the departure of Ben Ali. While this lead several respondents to declare Facebook as the only source necessary for

[23] Ibid.

information regarding current events and social movements, it also lead many to doubt much of the content that they see on the site; several respondents used the word “rumors” to describe much of the information on the site and five of those interviewed used some variation of the phrase ‘social media are not credible sources for information’. “Facebook has lost a lot of credibility compared to the detailed type of information we find in talk shows that discuss politics,” said one man, though he admitted that he used the internet throughout the revolution to better understand the events as they unfolded. Two other respondents expressed similar opinions, each saying that they use social media to gather information but do not necessarily trust the information found on such sites as they would information gleaned through other channels. In our sample group and the country as a whole, social media occupy a discernable position in the diets of of many Tunisian news consumers, justifying our search for their potential role in mobilizing people in SMOs. However, central to the social media experience is the intermingling of more traditional sources with newer sources. While social media have clearly taken off, they have not necessarily displaced or reduced the influence of more traditional outlets.

Summary

What does the media landscape of Tunisia as a whole look like? Overall, the media consumption habits of Tunisians reflect a society that is modernizing and placing an increasing emphasis on media platforms that utilize the internet for some or all of their distribution. Consumption of newer forms of media, however, coexists alongside traditional forms of media, including radio, TV, and traditional press outlets; no platform can be said to displace others, especially when stories originating from offline outlets are shared on social media. While this does identify social media as some of the sources that

Tunisians use to inform themselves – pushing our search for the "how" of social media and contentious politics forward – it does necessitate taking a nuanced view in examining how Tunisians learn of movements and ultimately become involved in them.

In comparing the responses of the sample group to the country as a whole, interviewees expressed a greater preference for the internet and social media than national statistics would otherwise predict. This is in line with the more urban nature of the individuals who make up our sample group, who generally have easier access to online resources than those living far from urban centers . However, the majority of respondents were careful to explain that their choice of media is varied and adaptable; regardless of their participation or lack thereof in a movement, the majority of those who use social media use it alongside traditional platforms, whether on or offline. While the sample group is somewhat more likely to use or rely upon the internet in general for news, respondents expressed varied opinions regarding the role of social media, from fervent enthusiasm to outright rejection, with a variety of shaded responses in between the two extremes. If the majority of those within the sample group who participated in a movement credit social media or other technology-dependent resources entirely for their mobilization, this could impact the credibility of this research. However, given the nuanced responses of the group regarding their general media consumption habits, it is not likely that this is the case.

What do these preferences reveal? The varied nature of the consumption patterns of both the country and the individuals who participated in interviews makes drawing broad conclusions difficult. Television is by far the most popular medium but while many indicated that they watch informational programs, others did not. In contrast, readership

of printed sources is low among the sample group, but many respondents indicated that they access more traditional news outlets, including newspapers, online. Several members of the sample group expressed a lack of trust in either social media or television but these responses are generally limited to those who participated in the revolution. The intermingling of different sources – whether in the responses of our sample group or in the content found on the social media pages associated with the various movements examined in this research – reveals that both traditional and newer sources of news play a influential roles in informing Tunisians of ongoing social movements.

Interestingly, a number of respondents who ultimately participated in a movement questioned the credibility of a medium – television, social media, or both – while also indicating that they continue to use the same medium in spite of their doubts, showing that a varied consumption pattern is likely the norm for many. Although no clear pattern of distrust was found regarding a single medium, the most active members among the sample group tended to indicate a higher rate of consumption of news in general, whether offline or online. Few participants indicated that social media alone are sufficient purveyors of information, even among those who did not participate in a movement, and two of the most active individuals among the sample group reported using little social media. Thus, while social media may be influential sources of information, they exist alongside – and often interact with – traditional news sources that originate offline.

While these facts certainly justify our search for a role of social media in contentious politics, they do not answer how such resources are being used by movements. Similarly, these facts do not address whether or not these social media sites target a domestic or

international audience. For the answers to these questions, we must examine the pages themselves.

Chapter 3.B: Targeting Tunisians: Consumption of Tunisian Social Media Pages

Having established that a large number of Tunisians are in fact using social media – particularly Facebook – we now examine whether the sites examined in this research can effectively reach and potentially mobilize those living inside of Tunisia. While many of the movements utilize Facebook pages to share relevant information about their movement, how can we be sure that this information is reaching Tunisians? After all, Tunisian media content is easily accessible within the country in a variety of forms; do Tunisians turn to social media to share information that is readily available from a Tunisian street vendor or news website? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to determine whether or not these pages are likely being consumed by Tunisians.

The answers to this question have serious implications in this research and beyond. Social media pages that aim to facilitate and enhance communication among Tunisians could very well influence how social movements proliferate, allowing movements another avenue of outreach to compliment in person organizing and outreach. A lack thereof would be a serious blow to the idea that social media can serve as a useful tool to SMOs attempting to reach out to their audiences using social media. While establishing a pattern of domestic consumption among the selected Facebook is necessary to push our research forward, this does not mean that domestically-aimed posts cannot have international effects. The international effects of social media are important and warrant further examination in future research. However, establishing a measure of consumption among the selected Facebook pages by Tunisians is necessary for us to search for a causal role for Facebook within the country.

In order to best determine whether or not Tunisians are among the intended targets of these Facebook pages, this research turns to the languages used in the pages as a useful indicator of target audience demography. In Tunisia, the official language is Arabic, while French is taught in schools – alongside Arabic – and widely used as a language of commerce. As with all Arab countries, there exist a number of local dialects within Tunisia, many of them related to each other and generally mutually understood. These dialects are primarily spoken and serve as the main language of communication among Tunisians in daily conversations with each other. If a language other than these is found among the pages, it raises the question of whether the pages seek to communicate among Tunisians. While other languages, notably English, are taught in schools, they are not widely understood among the population and rarely used to communicate with other Tunisians. The presence of a large number of posts in English or another language would indicate that a page is not attempting to communicate with a Tunisian audience. In contrast, the presence of a large number of posts that contain languages spoken within Tunisia – especially Tunisian Arabic, as it is understood more or less exclusively by Tunisians – would likely indicate that a page seek to communicate with a Tunisian audience.

Additionally, references to certain aspects of local culture, geography, or politics could also indicate that a page is likely intended for Tunisian consumption if no explanation is given. If, for example, one references the location of the presidential palace (Carthage) without explaining why this location is politically symbolic, an outsider would likely be confused: it would be difficult to attract an international audience on a page littered with references that only Tunisians would know. In contrast, if a page introduces national

leaders, famous dissidents, or important locations with short descriptions, it is likely that the page is attempting to reach beyond national boundaries – most Tunisians know why Bardo was the target of the Tamarrod movement's protests or how important *brik* is to Tunisian Ramadan observances.

<u>Background:</u>

This research examines a variety of pages for each of the movements in question: the revolution of 2010-2011, the NCA elections of 2011, the reaction to the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair, and the Tamarrod movement in 2013. In general, we only examine pages affiliated with the movement itself: pro-revolutionary pages, the official pages of national political parties, and pages affiliated with the Tamarrod movement. However, in the case of the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair, when controversy raged on both sides and neither side engaged in protest under a unified banner, we examine pages from both sides in an effort to give equal weight to each camp and the diversity within their ranks.

This research examines five pages in relation to the revolution: the Facebook page of the blog Nawaat; The People of Tunisia Burn in their Spirit, Mr. President (Arabic: شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس)[24]; Takriz; Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution; and Support Tunisia. Of these pages, the first three were active throughout the revolution, while the latter two were active only after the departure of Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. In an effort to portray an accurate picture of the revolution, which continued after Ben Ali's resignation, this research examines the events of the revolution until the end of February 2011.

[24] This page includes six incarnations, all of which are included in this research.

In examining the 2011 NCA elections, we examine the pages of four political parties, each the official version of the national party's page: Congress for the Republic (Arabic: المؤتمر من أجل الجمهورية, French initials: CPR), Ettakatol, the Ennahdha Movement, and Afek Tounes; the first three parties went on to form the ruling Troika coalition after the elections. Three pages – Ettakatol, Ennahdha, and Afek Tounes – were active throughout 2011, while CPR's page only contains posts from October 2011. Information included from these pages begins with the date of initial activity – usually early 2011 – and extends until the end of October 2011, immediately after the elections.

Six pages are included in this research in relation to the controversy that after from the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair held in Palais Abdelliah in June 2012: Ni Putes Ni Soumises; Ohibouki (Arabic: أحبك تونس, English: I love you Tunisia); Brick by Brick, Building a Wondrous Tunisia (Arabic: طوبة طوبة نبني تونس الأعجوبة); Ennahdha in Bab al Bhar; Free Tunisia (Arabic:لا لتحويل الثورة من كرامة و حرّية إلى زيادة في الشّهريّة); and Son of Tunisia (Arabic: ولد تونس). Each page was an active member of the Facebook community during June 2012. Because the controversy associated with the exhibit quickly rose and fell, posts touching on the controversial exhibit coexist with posts discussing a variety of topics. While each post offers clues to the identity of the page's intended audience, this research focuses on posts relevant to the fair itself to ensure continuity throughout, referencing irrelevant posts only if necessary.

Finally, this research examines four pages relating to the 2013 Tamarrod movement against the NCA, all of them associated with the movement itself: the Campaign of Tunisia's Tamarrod حملة (حملة تمرد تونس); the Movement of Tunisia's Tamarrod حركة تمرد (تونس); the Movement of Tamarrod in the Capital (حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة); and Rebellion

Tunisie (Official). While the pages were founded at slightly different times, all became active in late June and early July of 2013 and remained active in varying degrees for the remainder of the year.

2010-2011: The Revolution

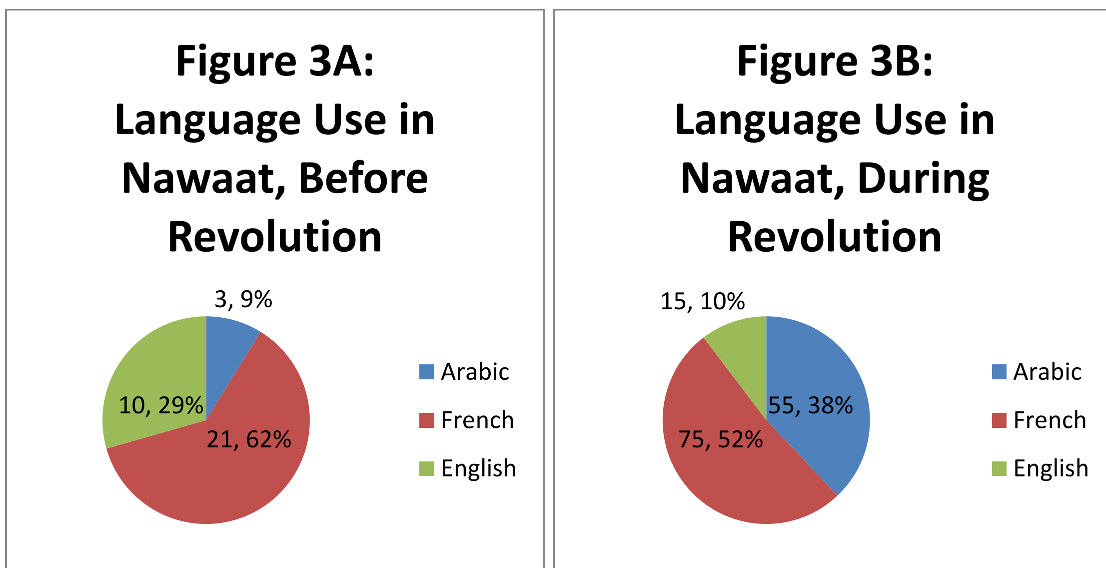
Were administrators of Facebook pages using the site to communicate with domestic supporters during the Tunisian revolution? Were there attempts to speak to an audience outside of the country? This section examines the five pages from the revolution, looking at the languages that the pages employ as well as any references that would be more or less resonant to those living outside of Tunisia.

Nawaat is a collective blog launched in 2004 by a group of Tunisians with the aim of offering an alternative to the dominant, pro-government media organizations within Tunisia.[25] The posts on Nawaat's Facebook page show that the blog was particularly active during the revolution; 178 posts from 1 December 2010 to 28 February 2011 are included in this research. The first mention of events related to revolution occurs on 18 December 2010; after this point, almost all of the posts relate in some way to the revolution. Of the 178 posts, 62 are in Arabic, 97 French, and 25 English; 14 of the posts feature a significant amount of content in Tunisian dialect, mostly in the form of dialogue in videos. For this research, posts are classified as containing a significant amount of Tunisian Arabic if the majority of dialogue or text is presented in Tunisian Arabic instead of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in such a way that an individual unfamiliar with the dialect could not understand them. Here, French is the primary language in a majority of

[25] "About Nawaat." Nawaat. Available at: http://nawaat.org/portail/about/ (accessed 25 August 2014).

the posts; Tunisian dialect does not feature prominently. While this could owe in part to the fact that two of Nawaat's founders and main contributors – Sami Ben Gharbia and Malek Khadraoui – spent a significant amount of time living and working outside of Tunisia, this does seem to indicate that at least some of their content is caters to a varied audience, many of whom are likely not Tunisian.[26]

The pattern of language use changes, however, after the outbreak of revolution. Before 18 December, the most common type of story deals with WikiLeaks; this material is generally in English. As is shown, the use of Arabic dramatically increases after the first mention of the revolution on 18 December while the use of English declines. Although the majority of the material on the page is still in French, this represents a notable shift in the use of language and a shift to either an audience less familiar with English or a topic less reliant on English language sources.



[26] Interview with Malek Khadraoui.

The page "The People of Tunisia Burn in Their Spirit, Mr. President" shows high levels of activiy during the revolution, posting 459 times between 22 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. This page was established after the beginning of the revolution and as such, all content deals exclusively with the revolution, both before and after the departure of Ben Ali. Due to reasons that the administrator(s) of the page ascribed to hacking, the page went through six incarnations during this time period; all are included in this research. Of the 459 posts, almost all – 448 – are in Arabic; French and English are found in 27 and 7 posts, respectively; of the seven posts in English, three are links to English language newspapers. Moreoever, 82 of the posts (18%) include Tunisian dialect. A majority of the posts that include Tunisian Arabic are videos that give firsthand accounts of several protests and confrotantations with police; a minority, however, are text posts, with many of them directed explicitly at readers of the page, including one post directed at the administrator's critics and another directed at those who allegedly hacked the page.[27][28] The large number of posts in Arabic and limited number of posts in other langauges, coupled with the presence of Tunisian dialect, indicates that this page's most likely conumer is one who is fluent in Arabic, comfortable understanding Tunisian dialect, and understands references to Tunisian politicians, events, and locations with passing references, especially when protests are mentioned. Additionally, the page's administrator directs numerous posts at readers of the page in Arabic, often using Tunisian dialect with Arabic script in the process; to understand this, the reader would not only need to speak Tunisian Arabic, but also be well-versed in Arabic script. While Tunisian expats are likely to understand this language, first and second generation

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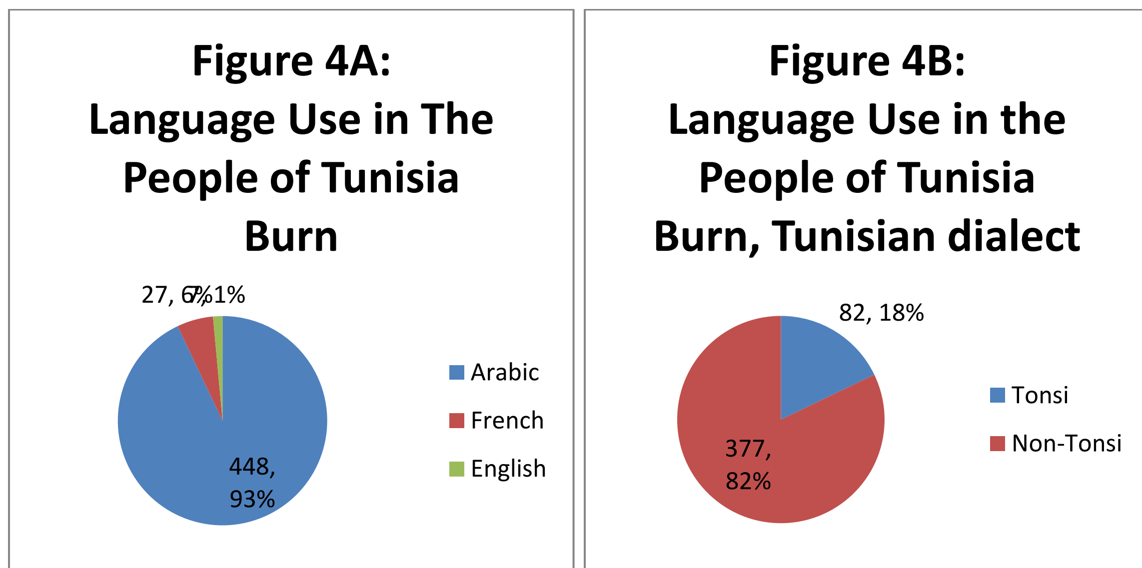
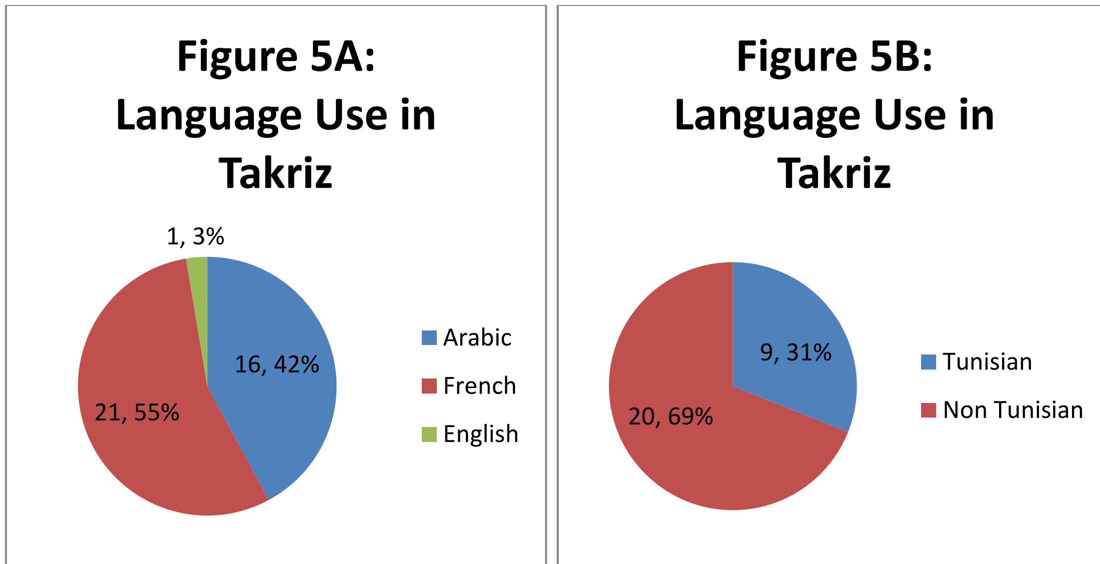
[27] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس 5 (Facebook) 13 January 2011.
[28] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس 4 (Facebook) 10 January 2011.

Tunisians living in foreign countries would be disadvantaged unless they had studied standard Arabic in addition to understanding the Tunisian dialect. This indicates that the audience of this page is predominantly Tunisian, most likely those residing in Tunisia, or those living abroad educated in reading Arabic.



According to the movement's Facebook page, Takriz is a movement established in 1998, active on and offline in defense of liberty and against dictatorship. The page contains only a limited number of posts during the time period of the revolution – 29 – but all deal directly with the revolution and its aftermath. The page uses Arabic and French interchangeably, with 21 posts in French and 16 in Arabic; English is found only in one post. Tunisian Arabic, however, is found in 9 posts, making a significant contribution to the overall content, usually in the form of video. The lack of content in English, coupled with the frequent use of Tunisian Arabic, suggests that the page has a sizable Tunisian audience .



The page "Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution" was founded on 17 January 2011, after the departure of Ben Ali; from that day until 28 February 2011, the adminstrators of the page posted 45 times. Of these posts, 26 are in Arabic, 16 in English, and 7 in French. Interestingly, almost all of the English language posts are direct translations of Arabic language posts that occur immediately before or after them on the page; that is, the majority of the posts in Arabic have English counterparts and vise versa. The page does feature six videos in which Tunisian dialect is used, sometimes with sufficient information to provide enough context to understand the main idea for readers who are not familiar with Tunisian Arabic; several, however, include little information, be it in English, French, or MSA. The videos, however, are not the main theme of the page, as most posts are text descriptions of events and many have direct translations in English. The publication of similar posts in English and Arabic indicates that the administrators of this page made concerted effort to communicate both with an international audience and those living inside of Tunisia.

Figure 6:
Language Use in Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution

The page "Support Tunisia" began activity on 14 January 2011, the day of Ben Ali's departure. From its beginning until 28 February 2011, the page contains 51 total posts. Of these, the vast majority are in English – 49 in total. While some posts mix languages, Arabic is only found in seven posts while French is found in three. There is only one post, a video, which contains Tunisian Arabic; the video is also accompanied by an explanation in English to facilitate understanding for those not familiar with Tunisian dialect. The nature of the limited calls for action on the page – the page suggests that people translate Tunisian pages into their native languages and demand support for Tunisia in their countries[29][30] – coupled with the absence of posts in languages spoken within Tunisia indicates that this page is likely of less utility to Tunisians than the other pages examined in this research.

Of the pages examined in relation to the revolution, only two – Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution and Support Tunisia – include a significant number of posts in languages that are not widely understood in Tunisia, in both cases English. Together, the

[29] "Support Tunisia." (Facebook). 21 January 2011.
[30] "Support Tunisia." (Facebook). 22 February 2011.

five pages contain a total of 764 posts. Of these posts, 559 contain Arabic, 156 French, and 99 English; the number of posts in each language total higher than the overall number of posts because several mix multiple languages in a single post. Overall, this indicates that the administrators of these pages tend to be fluent in Arabic and prefer it to other languages. Interestingly, the use of French does not greatly surpass that of English, despite the fact that English is not widely spoken within Tunisia, whereas French is a mandatory subject in most Tunisian schools and a major language in business, despite not having official status within the country.[31]

Additionally, 112 posts contain a significant amount of text or – in the case of video – dialogue in the Tunisian dialect of Arabic (called "Tonsi"), a dialect that is related to other forms of North African Arabic but is more or less limited to Tunisian and its expatriate population.[32] Only one post out the total 112 contains an explanation to facilitate understanding for those unfamiliar with the dialect. This indicates that, in the case these posts, the content is most readily accessible to Tunisians. There is no doubt that much of this information would prove useful to those wishing to understand the Tunisian revolution though social media – indeed, we have seen several concerted efforts on these pages to reach such an audience. However, given that our goal is to establish some level of consumption of the media found on these pages by Tunisians, we can safely say that much of the information found on these pages was intended for – and likely consumed by – Tunisians, regardless of international consumption. .

[31] "Tunisia". CIA World Factbook. Accessed 25 August 2014.
[32] "Tunisia". Ethnologue. Accessed 25 August 2014.

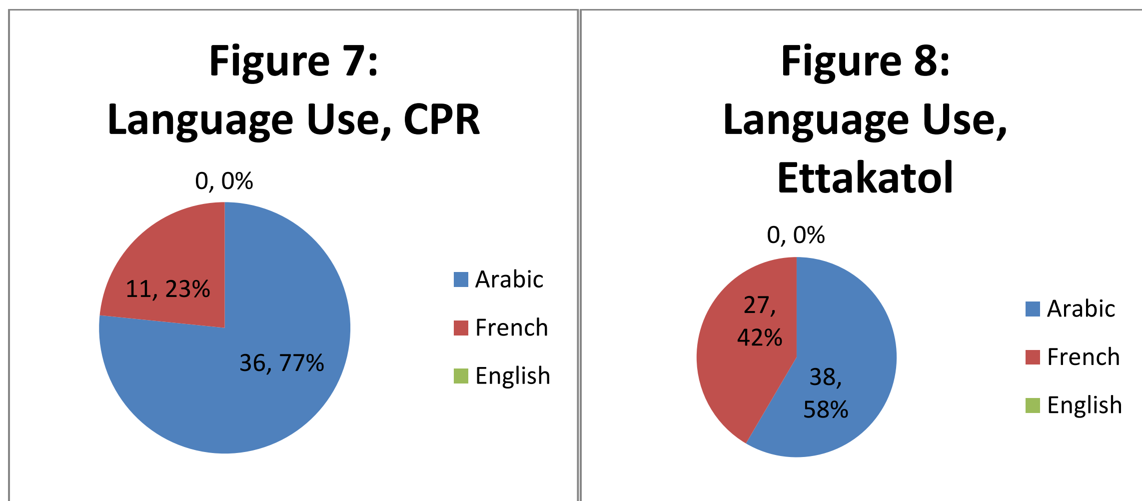
2011: NCA Elections

Is there a notable difference between the target audience of pages relating to the revolution and those of major parties during the NCA elections? Do pages reveal a continued effort to communicate with Tunisians? What about Tunisians living abroad, to whom the NCA offered representation; do we see attempts to communicate with this constituency? Here, we examine the pages of four major Tunisian political parties, looking the languages and references found on the pages, as well as any direct references to those living outside of Tunisia.

The official page for the Congress for the Republic contains a total a total of 42 posts. Unfortunately, evidence from the page suggests that the page was taken down for some reason in early October 2011 only to be re-launched on 18 October; content before 18 October 2011 is not available. Fortunately, the page was extremely active from 18 October until the end of the month. Of the 42 posts, 36 feature Arabic while 11 feature French; English is not found in any of the posts. Seven posts – representing 17% of the total – feature Tunisian dialect; these posts include three text posts and four videos that include a significant amount of Tunisian dialect, the former of which is found in several slogans on the page, each written in Arabic script.[33][34] The page also includes numerous posts instructing readers *how* to vote in both Arabic and French;[35][36] these posts are likely in both languages so as to not disenfranchise Tunisia's expat community, which participated in the election. While the audience may extend beyond the country's borders,

[33] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 21 October 2011.
[34] Ibid, 23 October 2011.
[35] Ibid, 20 October 2011.
[36] Ibid.

the information on this page is clearly intended to be consumed at least in part by a Tunisian audience, residing in Tunisia or elsewhere, as evidenced by the absence of English, the presence of Tunisian Arabic, and the focus on increasing participation in the upcoming elections, in which only Tunisians were eligible to participate.



We examine a total of 58 posts on the page for the Ettakatol party, beginning in June of 2011 and ending with the elections in October of the same year. Of these posts, 38 feature Arabic while 27 feature French; similar to the CPR page, no posts include English. 11 posts contain significant amounts of Tunisian Arabic, representing 19% of the total posts. These posts in Tunisian include written slogans and videos; the most interesting of these is a video instructing people inside of Tunisia how they can contribute money to the party at their local post office.[37] Similar to the other pages relating to the election examined in this research, the page contains a number of posts instructing individuals how to vote, including the numbers the party's list in each governate.[38] These instructions, along with the presence of French, MSA, and Tunisian Arabic and the absence of English, show that

[37] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 10 September 2011.
[38] Ibid, 22 October 2011.

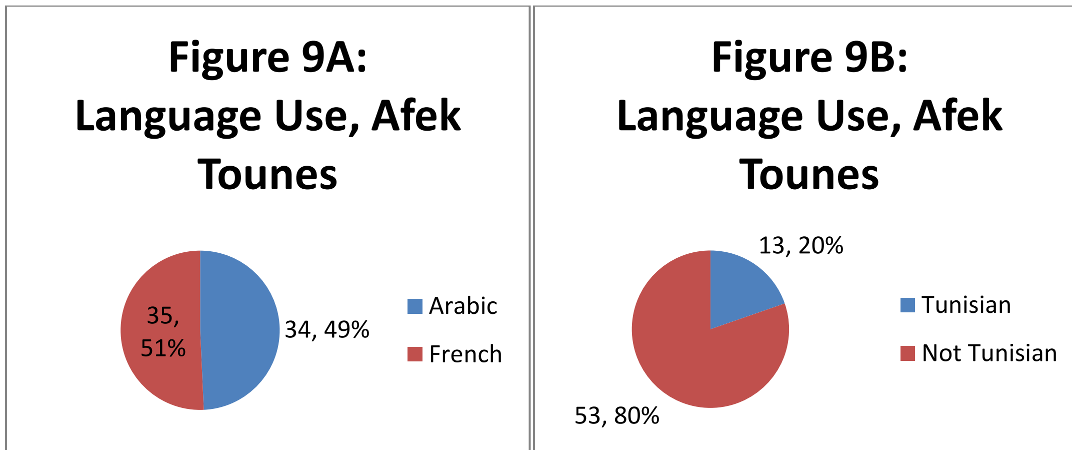
the page aims to communicate with eligible voters fluent in Arabic and French, a population that resembles Tunisia.

The page for the Ennahdha Movement began posting on 26 January 2011 and remains active throughout the year. Between 26 January and October 31, 67 posts were added to the page, all of them in Arabic. Of these posts, four videos contain a significant amount of Tunisian Arabic. As with other pages, there are a number of posts telling individuals how they can fill out ballots and vote for Ennahdha in their local districts.[39][40] The page also includes invitations to party events in Tunisia, including one specifically aimed at young people interested in business.[41] While the page is almost entirely written in MSA and could be used by anyone with a functional knowledge of Arabic, the presence of voting instructions indicates that much of the information found on the page is aimed at likely voters, here the Tunisian people.

Afek Tounes' official page begins activity on 14 April 2011; between this point and the end of October, a total of 67 posts were added to the page. Of these, a roughly equal number of posts are in French and Arabic – 34 in Arabic and 35 in French. Of the posts, 13 featured Tunisian Arabic. More so than other pages, the Afek Tounes page freely mixes Arabic, French, and Tunisian Arabic, often within the same post. Use of French and Arabic is roughly equal, but the page features a greater proportion of posts in Tunisian than other pages relating to the elections examined in this research. All posts that include Tunisian Arabic come in the form of dialogue in videos. Similar to other pages, Afek Tounes' page includes voting instructions for those who seek to participate

[39] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 20 October 2011.
[40] Ibid, 15 October 2011.
[41] Ibid.

in the country's elections.[42] The page also includes an invitation to a party event in Paris, indicating attempts to reach out to Tunisians living abroad and reminding us that the entirety of Tunisia's population does not live within its borders.[43] The majority of the information on the page would be most readily utilized by an audience that switches between Arabic and French with ease, speaks Tunisian Arabic, and is eligible to participate in the country's 2011 NCA elections.



The four party pages contain a total of 234 posts, with 175 posts in Arabic and 73 in French; there are no posts in English. Again, several posts utilize numerous languages, making the sum of posts by language higher than the actual number of posts. Of the 234 total posts, 31 contain a significant amount of Tunisian Arabic. The choice of language in these posts indicates that unlike the pages associated with the revolution, none of the pages contain information in English or explanations of terms for the uninitiated; while it is possible that some pages use a greater amount of French to reach out to Tunisians living abroad, there is substantial evidence that most of the posts found on these pages are intended to reach – at least in part – a Tunisian audience. There is no doubt that the

[42] Afek Tounes (Facebook) 17 October 2011.
[43] Ibid, 12 September 2011.

information found on the pages could prove useful to members of an international audience, whether those engaging in research or members of the media covering the events from abroad. However, the pattern of language and relevant calls to action found on these pages demonstrate clear attempts to communicate – at least in part – with a Tunisian audience, particularly with regards to voter outreach. While these posts undoubtedly have international effects in addition to domestic implications, they do indicate that, coupled with the findings of our previous section, that both movements and potential supporters within Tunisia are using social media.

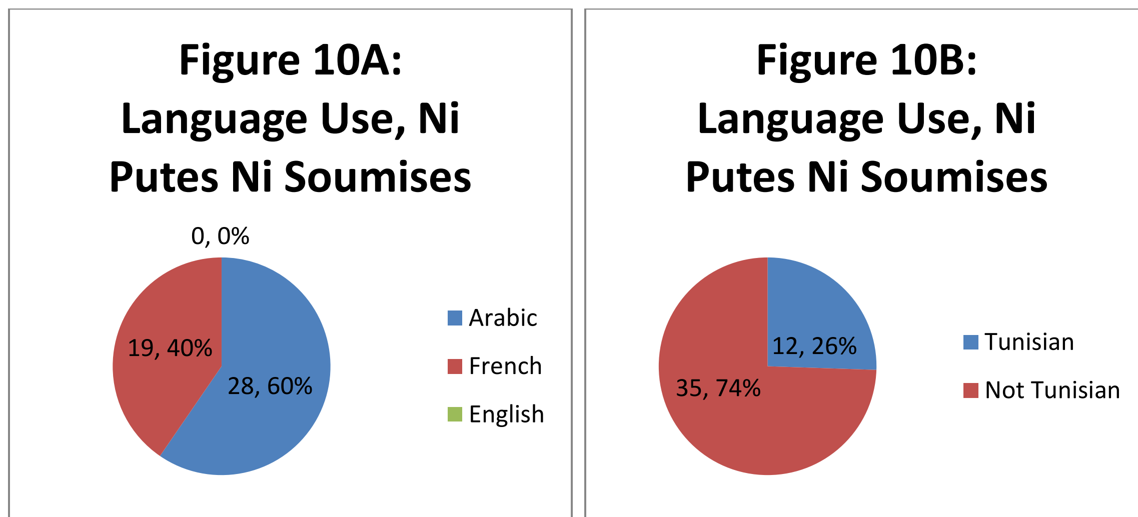
2012: Printemps des Arts Fair

This research has found clear attempts to facilitate communication among a domestic audience along with some posts that aim to communicate with a clearly international audience. Do pages responding to the controversial art exhibit in Palais Abdelliah in 2012 exhibit the same pattern? Or does the domestic focus of the events limit attempts to communicate with those living beyond Tunisia's borders? This section examines the relevant posts from the six pages that shared information relating to the exhibit, looking at the languages used as well as any relevant references or calls to action that might indicate attempts to communicate with those outside of Tunisia.

The page Ni Putes Ni Soumises contains a total of 283 posts, of which 47 deal with the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair. The page also contains the only reference to the fair before the controversy erupted, alerting readers to the art exhibit on 5 June without mentioning any of the exhibit's contents.[44] Of the 47 posts, 28 are in Arabic while 19 are in French;

[44] Ni Putes Ni Soumises (Facebook) 5 June 2012.

12 posts contain Tunisian Arabic. The majority of the posts that contain Tunisian Arabic are written in Arabic script, limiting the intended audience. The use of French, Arabic, and Tunisian dialect written with Arabic letters, coupled with the reference to the exhibit long before controversy arose, indicates that the page is most is likely consumed by a Tunisian audience.



The page of the Ennahdha Movement in Bab al Bhar – an area in the Tunisian capital – contains a total of 187 posts from June 2012, of which 41 deal with the Printemps des Arts Fair in some way. As with the Ennahdha page examined with regard to the 2011 NCA election, all posts are in Arabic. Of the 41 posts, six contained Tunisian dialect, with three of the posts written using Arabic script. Two pieces of evidence indicate that the page is likely communicates with a Tunisian audience. First, a number of posts deal with facilitating protest, a protest which was later called off; this is not the kind of information that parties typically disseminate for public and, especially, international consumption.[45] This, along with the exclusive use of Arabic and Arabic script on the page

[45] حركة النهضة بباب البحر – تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 14 June 2012.

and the fact that the group's name is tied to a neighborhood in the Tunisian capital, indicates that the page is likely consumed by Tunisians.

The page Free Tunisia contains a total of 86 posts from June 2012. Of these, 38 – or 44% - deal with the exhibit in Palais Abdelliah. Of the relevant posts, 35 contain Arabic while only five contain French; 15 contain Tunisian Arabic, representing nearly 40% of the total posts, the highest of any page examined in this research. Roughly half of the posts featuring Tunisian Arabic are in text form while the remaining are found in videos. As is detailed in section 3.C, one notable function of many of these pages is how they provide information to readers in situations where official sources of information are scarce or untrustworthy, especially in times of violence. This type of information is found numerous times on the page; these posts, which alert readers to violent situations, universally reference locations by name only, often using the names of neighborhoods instead of the cities in which they are located or the names of buildings without referencing addresses or other nearby locations.[46] The presence of Tunisian Arabic, along with numerous, name-only references to numerous Tunisian neighborhoods in the capital area, indicates that the page likely aims to facilitate communication with those living in affected areas, here inside of Tunisia.

The page Son Tunisia is a blog through the medium of Facebook, with most the posts taking the form of long, freeform opinion pieces and articles. There are a total of 197 posts on the page from June 2012; of these, 23 deal with the fallout from the exhibit in Abdelliah. As with the page as a whole, all 23 posts are in Arabic; 8 feature Tunisian prominently, mostly in the form of videos. The majority posts on the page deal with the

[46] لا لتحويل الثورة من كرامة و حرّية إلى زيادة في الشّهريّة (Facebook) 13 June 2012.

author's analysis and opinions on current events within Tunisia; two of his analyses include statements that address the Tunisian people directly, questioning their leaders and calling on citizens to restore order themselves in the absence of an effective state response.[47] Because of the text in MSA and long-form articles, the page could very well serve as a resource for those interested in events within the country. However, the author's focus on events within Tunisia – especially when examining content on the page that goes beyond the controversial exhibit – along with posts where he addresses the people of Tunisia directly, indicates that the author is clearly communicating to some degree with a Tunisian audience. Here we see that the posts can have both international and domestic implications, despite the fact that the page aims to communicate with those living inside of Tunisia. Nevertheless, given that the question here is whether or not this information is likely being consumed by a Tunisian audience, the posts on the page Son of Tunisia indicate that the answer to this question is likely yes.

The page I Love You, Tunisia contains 48 posts in June 2012, of which 17 deal with the controversial exhibit. As with the page as a whole, all posts are in Arabic. Of the 17 posts, five contain Tunisian Arabic; all of these posts are videos originating from within Tunisia, many from Tunisian television stations, and all bear the watermark of a Tunisian group that spread the video across social media,. This relationship between media, especially national media, and Tunisian intermediaries, is complex but the fact that the original sources, social media intermediaries, and page in question are all Tunisian indicates that the page likely has both Tunisian administrators and a Tunisian audience. The remaining posts include a number of images from the exhibit, criticizing its contents,

[47] ولد تونس (Facebook) 13 June 2012.

and posts that detail both the planning and cancellation of an aborted protest in downtown Tunis.[48] While the page and its contents could certainly be used by those outside of Tunisia to gather information, the use of Arabic alone, presence of a number of Tunisian media and social media outlets on the page, exclusive focus on events within Tunisia, and discussion of protest seems to indicate that the page is speaking to a Tunisian audience.

The page Brick by Brick, Building a Wondrous Tunisia contains 54 posts from June 2012, of which ten deal with the Printemps des Arts exhibit. All ten posts are in Arabic, following the pattern of the page as a whole. Only one post, a video interview with people in attendance at the exhibit, originally from the page I Love You, Tunisia, features an extensive amount of Tunisian Arabic.[49] The relevant contents of the page indicate that the page speaks to a Tunisian audience. Several posts are clearly related to the exhibit, for example, a post juxtaposing art from the time of Jahaliya (pre-Islam) with the art of jahl (ignorance, a piece from the exhibit), without referencing the exhibit directly.[50] Additionally, five posts contain commentary on the exhibit, some of which call on people to act against it, but after the first post, all take place within the existing conversation of "protecting the sacred" within Tunisia and the post-revolutionary political landscape; they do not offer explanations for the uninitiated. Moreover, the page contains an anonymous video that aims to detail the contents of the exhibit while also giving the names of the artists involved, ostensibly to pressure them to apologize or remove the offensive art.[51] The video itself is in Tunisian Arabic and while the images of the exhibit could be useful to a number of people, the publication of individual names suggests that

[48] أحبك تونس (Facebook) 14 June 2012.
[49] طوبة طوبة نبني تونس الأعجوبة (Facebook) 11 June 2012.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

the video is directed at the artists themselves – who reside in Tunisia – and people who might come into contact with them, likely inside of Tunisia.

Together, these six pages posted 755 times in June 2012. However, only 178 contain information, statements, or opinions that relate to the art fair. Of the relevant posts, 154 are in Arabic and 24 in French; English is not featured in any of the post examined in relation to this event. Of the 154 posts in Arabic, 47 – 30% – are in Tunisian Arabic, much of it written with Arabic script. The free use of Arabic, French, and in particular, Tunisian Arabic, suggests the administrators of these pages aim to communicate with a Tunisian audience. Moreover, cultural references abound on these pages and indicate that most pages assume that their audience is familiar with many aspects of Tunisian culture, including landmarks and ongoing political discussions. This event is also noteworthy because the controversy arose and fell quickly and as such, Facebook could serve as a primary source of information to those who wanted to understand the exhibit and avoid the violence associated with it in the absence of comprehensive media coverage, a subject that is examined in the following section.

2013: Tamarrod Movement

So far, it seems that while some pages active during the revolution and NCA elections made attempts to communicate with those living outside of Tunisia, most of the pages examined in this research aim to communicate – either wholly or in part – with a Tunisian audience. Is this also true for the Tamarrod movement?

The page "Campaign of Tunisia's Tamarrod" contains a total of 109 posts, beginning in early July 2013 and ending in November of the same year. Of the 109 posts, virtually all

of them – 108 – contain Arabic, while four posts contain French and two English; only one post is written entirely in French. Additionally, 26 posts – 24% – contain significant amounts of Tunisian Arabic. In contrast to several other Tamarrod pages, there are relatively few attempts by the page's author(s) to mobilize readers in the form of protests or other actions, which would indicate that the page caters to a decidedly domestic audience, given the domestic nature of most other action associated with the Tamarrod movement. While the page does contain a handful of news items that are likely relevant to those participating in protests (person to person or page to person news) and a significant number of links to national news agencies, the majority of posts would be of equal value to individuals both in and outside of Tunisia. However, considering the other pages within the movement, as well as posts that include person to person news only relevant to those participating in movement-related events and the high level of Tunisian Arabic, it is likely that the page is has Tunisian readers but used less frequently than several of the other pages relating to the movement examined in this research.

The page "Tunisia's Tamarrod Movement" contains a total of 97 posts from 30 June to 31 December 2013. Of these posts, 95 are in Arabic, with the remaining two written in French. 12 of the posts are written in Tunisian Arabic, including a long post that references numerous aspects of Tunisian culture – mostly food – that are likely understood to a limited degree by those living outside of Tunisia.[52] Additionally, the page features multiple posts calling people to participate in an ongoing sit-in in the capital, even asking people to bring supplies to the protest.[53] Another invitation invites people to join them in the suburb Bardo – the location of the largest protest associated with the

[52] حركة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 11 November 2013.
[53] Ibid, 26 July 2013.

movement and referred to by one name only – to participate in the protest and a prayer to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan.[54] While the language of the page is almost exclusively MSA, the content of the posts suggests that the page caters to a Tunisian audience, likely in the capital area.

The page "Movement of Tamarrod in the Capital" contains 596 posts, far exceeding most other pages in this research and all other Tamarrod pages. The page began activity on 2 July 2013 and continued activity until 31 December of the same year. Of the 596 posts, the vast majority feature Arabic more or less exclusively – 585 posts in all. An additional 24 posts contain French and one English. Additionally, 89 – 15% – contain Tunisian Arabic. While the uses of Facebook pages are analyzed in the next chapter, the page features 146 posts detailing times and locations of protests across Tunisia, and is therefore clearly intended to be used at least in part by those who could attend proposed protests, almost all of them inside of Tunisia. Despite its name, it is difficult to tell whether the intended audience of this page resides exclusively in the capital or in fact extends across Tunisia, as many of the events that the page calls supporters to join are not located in the capital area.

The movement's official page, "Rebellion Tunisie (Official)," contains a total of 153 posts, ranging from 30 June to 31 December 2013, though the majority of the posts come from July. Of the total, the vast majority – 149 – are in Arabic, with six containing French and one English. 34 posts – 22% – are in Tunisian, including both text and video posts. Similar to several other Tamarrod pages, Rebellion Tunisie (Official) contains numerous posts that aim to mobilize readers to join in or contribute supplies to ongoing

[54] حركة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 7 August 2013.

protests outside of the NCA in Bardo, always referenced by name only, without any directions given.[55] All of this evidence indicates that this page, as with all other pages affiliated with the movement, is directed at those interested in joining protests located inside of the country, indicating that Tunisians are undoubtedly among the likely consumers of the posts found on the group's official page.

Together, these four pages contain 955 posts from the movement's beginning in mid-2013 until the end of the year. Of these posts, the vast majority – 937 or 98% – are written in Arabic. The remaining posts include 36 posts in French and 4 in English. 161 posts include a significant amount of Tunisian Arabic, representing about 17% of the total number of posts. The languages used in these pages, coupled with the calls to action that reference locations and other cultural elements without explanation, indicate that the pages do in fact speak to those interested in joining the group's protests, a group that likely resides mostly inside of Tunisia's borders. This does not mean that these posts do not have impact in reaching beyond Tunisia's borders; the posts examined in the next chapter reveal some notable elements of international coverage, coverage that could have very well been brought about by the group's high profile on and offline. However, in our effort to establish a pattern of consumption of social media among Tunisians and the likelihood that the information found on these pages is intended to be consumed at least in part by Tunisians, we can safely assume that we have established such a pattern. This does not rule out or outweigh the potential international effects of these pages; on the contrary, these pages can have immense international implications, attracting foreign media coverage and changing policies in foreign countries relevant to Tunisia. However,

[55] Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) 26 July 2013.

in recognizing these effects, we must acknowledge that at the same time, the pages examined in this research were part of a lively dialogue within Tunisia at the time of the events in question and had the goal – whether fully realized or not – of communicating with supporters, a substantial proportion of whom live within Tunisia.

Summary

Overall, only a handful of pages attempt to speak directly to audiences that reside in substantial numbers outside of Tunisia, all of them limited to pages examined in relation to the revolution and 2011 NCA elections. These pages are distinguishable by their relatively high use of languages other than Arabic, calls to action that are directed at those living beyond Tunisia's borders, and comprehensive explanations of material that might be confusing, especially for those who are not familiar with Arabic or Tunisian dialect. For most pages, however, the audience is clear and direct: Tunisians, generally living within Tunisia's borders rather than abroad. In the next section, we examine how this targeting affects the content of the page, noting differences between the calls to action and other information found on pages that target Tunisians and foreigners.

During the revolution and the NCA elections, movements had a vested interest in publicizing their message outside of Tunisia: during the revolution, attracting an international audience could mean international support and greater pressure on the regime. In the NCA elections, attracting foreign voters was key to the success of many parties, as a significant number of Tunisians reside abroad. The pages reflect this: several pages found in the revolution include substantial amounts of content in English and explanations of content that might be difficult for foreigners to understands, while the

pages of several Tunisian political parties from the NCA elections contain high levels of French as well as instructions for voting outside of the country. In contrast, the movement in response to the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair and the Tamarrod movement were decidedly domestic in focus and their successes depended upon attracting supporters within the country. International support did not play the same role in the latter two events and while Tunisians living abroad certainly could participate, most of the activity was occurring on the ground in Tunisia. These data seem to suggest that as the potential role for the international community shrinks, Tunisian Facebook pages exert less effort to attract them and speak more to Tunisians.

This does not mean that the posts examined in this research cannot have international effects or reach a non-Tunisian audience. Indeed, several pages – even those that communicate entirely in Arabic – reference international coverage of their movements or pages, showing that inwardly directed communication often has effects beyond the borders of one's home country. Measuring the absolute impact of these posts is an immense undertaking and beyond the scope of this research, but it is important to remember that even though these posts seem to have a distinct domestic focus, they continue to reach those living abroad, regardless of their intended audience(s). However, given that our goal in this section is to determine whether or not the pages examined aim to communicate with those living inside of Tunisia, we can safely say that while these pages can and do reach those living beyond Tunisia's border, they are also intended to be consumed by a Tunisian audience. In the absence of comprehensive tracking of Facebook data consumption, we rely on the information found on the pages themselves. While these pages can be and are consumed by a variety of a sources domestic and international,

they are intended to facilitate communication among those living within Tunisia, particularly when encouraging participation in a movement's activities that occur entirely within the country's borders.

Having established an intended audience for these pages that includes a sizable Tunisian contingent, how are these sites being used? Given that we have established a clear pattern of use of social media by Tunisians in the previous sections, we must now look at how these pages are being used, paying attention to the content present on the pages themselves as well as the responses from those who participated in these movements.

Chapter 3.C: Assessing the Means of Mobilization

Given the array of media that Tunisians consume on a regular basis and the fact that the Tunisians make up many of the likely consumers of the Facebook pages examined in this research, what sources most often inform Tunisians of ongoing social movements? And, after learning about these movements, what sources prove most persuasive in pushing them to act? Finally, if the respondents cite social media as a source, how do social media catalyze these actions: is it through direct calls to action, shared postings that reveal long-held but suppressed opinions, or something else?

Identifying the initial point of contact of an individual with a movement allows us to determine what sources most often serve as brokers and diffusers and in what ways sources differ in ultimately catalyzing action. If social media are found to be both initial points of contact with a movement and sources that consistently push to people to take up a cause, then their role in contentious politics likely proves decisive. This would warrant further study of the role of social media in SMOs by academics and increased usage by movements, as it validates the idea that social media can and *do* allow movements to reach out to potential supporters effectively. This could also supplant or enhance previous tactics or theories regarding how movements communicate with potential supporters and how supporters become active members within movements. In contrast, responses indicating that social media generally were either not initial points of contact or not critical in a supporter's decision to ultimately join a movement would – especially given the high rate of social media use in the country and among our sample group – seriously challenge arguments that social media alone can push people to action. Such a result would either force us to question the role of social media in mobilization or consider an

alternative role for social media, functioning not as brokers or diffusers – informing individuals of movements and pushing them to join – but as something else entirely.

What do the differing roles of various media reveal about mobilization? If individuals learn of a movement through social media or television but follow up by researching through a different medium, it likely indicates that while many sources can serve as brokers or diffusers, some are more trusted than others; addressing such a gap in trust would be necessary for any movement that seeks to use social media or any other new medium to reach out to potential supporters. This thinking would necessitate that we differentiate between different types of brokers and diffusers, examining the contrasting or complimentary roles that each plays in an individual's decision to mobilize. While an overwhelming presence or absence of responses mentioning social media as key factors in an individual's mobilization would paint a simple picture – either solidifying or challenging the argument that social media are a boon to SMOs – results that are more nuanced – showing a role for Facebook that may be helpful to movements but less effective than other methods of outreach – require us to think more about what social media contribute to movements while keeping in mind the myriad of ways in which groups communicate with potential supporters.

Finally, if respondents indicate that social media were either initial sources of information or played an influential role in the respondents' eventual mobilization, we must examine Facebook pages relating to the movements again, asking how the information on these pages could have helped turn personal sympathies into public action. While we have established that Tunisians are using social media and that the pages examined in this research are consumed at least in part by a Tunisian audience, we

have not seen these pages in action. Is it not possible that much of the aura surrounding social media has created a mystique that might cause people to mistakenly attribute many successes to sites like Facebook? A number of respondents indicating that Facebook played a role in their mobilization but a lack of relevant information on pages relating to a movement would either require us to reconsider the pages included in this research – looking for pages that contain information in line with the respondents' answers – or question whether or not the respondents' estimations of the role of social media are at odds with the picture painted by the pages themselves. While an adjustment in our sources could ultimately paint a more accurate picture, a lack of relevant information on a great number of pages would strike a serious blow to the idea that movements use social media as means to mobilize potential members. Moreover, it could suggest that much of the enthusiasm for social media in contentious politics is found not in the movements themselves, but in the eyes of starry eyed supporters or analysts mistakenly attributing social media as a cause rather than a corollary. In this event, we would need to examine why respondents attribute their involvement in the movement to social media in the absence of relevant information on the pages.

To answer these questions, we turn to the responses of the sample group, looking for the sources that initially informed them of the movement(s) that they participated in and what sources ultimately pushed them to act. After establishing a role for social media in the mobilization of the sample group, we examine the posts from the Facebook pages to see the types of information found and ask how such information could be relevant in mobilizing a potential supporter.

Group Background

Of the 40 people who participated in the survey, 28 said that they had participated in at least one of the following movements: the 2010-11 revolution, the 2011 NCA elections, the protests in support of or opposition to the controversial 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair, and the 2013 Tamarrod movement. Of the 28, all but one participated in some form of activity relating to the revolution; seven of those who participated in the revolution went on to become active in the other movements.

One issue that is immediately apparent when examining the activities of the individuals in the sample group is their political affiliation. While we did not ask questions regarding individuals' political or ideological affiliations, the actions of those from our sample group who participated in SMOs suggest that they are more liberal than Tunisians as a whole. This does not necessarily invalidate our findings – political affiliations are often idiosyncratic and highly personal and thus actions that might seem to reflect a broad ideological affiliation could in fact mask deeper divisions among our sample group. It does, however, raise interesting questions about how different sides of the ideological spectrum might use social media. As we saw when examining the Facebook pages affiliated with various movements, there are efforts by a variety of groups – liberal and conservative, religious and secular, political and cultural – to utilize social media on behalf of their causes. It would be interesting – but outside the scope of this research – to see the varying degrees of effort and success different movements have in mobilizing supporters based on movements' broad ideological orientations. Based on the amount of activity seen on public Facebook pages, we assume some level of rough parity between the online activities of social movements, regardless of their ideological affiliation, but

again taking into account other factors, such as access to internet and level of popularity in urban areas. This could be challenged in future research but is in line with the relative activity seen on the various pages examined in this research regardless of their ideological affiliation.

2010-2011: The Revolution

A majority of the individuals in the sample group said that they participated in the revolution. Of these, 26 said that they participated in protests or sit-ins during the revolution. The remaining woman said she participated by sharing information relating to protests or violence on social media as the revolution progressed.

Of the 27 individuals who participated in the revolution, 8 were women; the median age of the group was 23 at the time that the interviews were conducted in June 2014, making the median age during the revolution approximately 20. All had a social media account, but two lacked an internet connection in their homes at the time that the interviews were conducted; one woman indicated that she did not have a Facebook account during the revolution. Additionally, their social media use and time spent watching TV were in line with that of the overall sample group, but those who participated in the revolution reported reading printed sources more often. In spite of this, a little more than half the group preferred online sources exclusively, with another quarter of respondents saying that they use the internet along with other media. Television was the second most popular source of information among the respondents, though most used it in conjunction with one or more other media. In this metric, those who participated in the revolution showed

a slightly greater preference for accessing news online and reading printed sources of news.

Do these differences in consumption patterns affect how the individuals became aware of the revolution and active participants within it? Participants were asked to indicate the source or sources that initially informed them of the existence of the movement(s) that they participated in. Since the revolution occurred more than three years ago, several people indicated that they learned of this information from multiple sources. Most, however, were able to identify a single source and all were able to identify a small number of sources from which they first learned of the revolution.

Social media – in the form of Facebook – were mentioned by many participants, 12 in all. However, more mentioned face to face communications with friends or family member – 13 – as a source of initial information. When this latter group is expanded to include phone and SMS communications, the group grows to 19, more than 70% of those who said that they took part in the revolution. Five people indicated that they learned of the events through TV, while one mentioned official government statements (along with face to face communication with friends and family) and another indicated face to face conversations with acquaintances.

A respondent's preferred method of accessing news does not correlate with how he or she learned of the revolution. Of the 16 who participated in the revolution and said that they accessed news primarily through online sources alone, eight said that they learned of the revolution through face to face conversations, while one said that he learned of the events through SMS with friends or family. In contrast, only four who participated in the

revolution and said that they primarily use online resources said that they learned of the events through Facebook, while three said that they learned of the events via television. Among the five who participated in the revolution and said that they primarily access news via television, three said that they learned of the events via Facebook while two said that they learned of the events via face to face conversations. Among the six remaining respondents who reported using radio, print, or a combination of sources as their primary source of news, the group is again split: three indicated that they learned of the revolution via Facebook while the remainder said that they learned of the events through face to face conversations. When dealing with our sample grouo, an individual's reliance on a medium as a source of news does not seem to predict that the same medium would be the most likely source to inform him or her.

In these answers, respondents indicated that far from being an exclusive source for information, Facebook exists alongside a variety of different resources, ranging from the technologically dependent (Facebook) to the most elemental form of communication, face to face communication among those in tight social networks. While Facebook is certainly an important factor according to the interview group, an overwhelming majority pointed to individually-directed communication within close social networks, whether in-person or via phone/SMS, as their initial source of information. Moreover, more than half of respondents indicated that they learned of the events via face to face communication, with all but one reporting that the conversation was with a family member or friend. Despite restrictions on reporting on the events at the time, TV still informed a number of people, although some did not necessarily trust the reporting conducted by national outlets, pushing them to seek out information elsewhere. "I used my phone through

phone and SMS conversations, as well as Facebook, to better learn about these events. TV was not enough because it is not credible," said one man who learned of the events through TV. Another said that she used Facebook to check information, although she followed up with face to face conversations with friends because "Facebook is not very credible."

If both face to face conversations and social media played major roles in initially informing people about the revolution, what ultimately pushed them to action? During the revolution, did our respondents seek out more information from the same sources that initially informed them or did they look at different sources that proved to be more persuasive? Participants were asked to identify what they saw as the most influential sources that pushed them to act in an open-ended question. As before, some identified multiple sources, but most were able to pinpoint a single source that they felt was most influential. The results are as follows:

Table 1: **After learning about the revolution,** **what sources ultimately pushed you to action?**	**#**
Face to face conversations with friends and family	10
Facebook	9
Seeing violence first hand	4
TV News	3
Public meetings	2
Face to face conversations with families of the martyrs and other victims	1
YouTube videos	1
International media websites	1
Blogs	1

Here, respondents identified both face to face conversations with family and friends and Facebook as the most influential source of information. TV news, despite being perceived by almost respondents as biased towards the regime – including those who said that TV pushed them to act – was mentioned three times. Thus, our respondents were pushed to act by a variety of sources, whether technologically-dependent or traditional, with each playing influential roles in the eventual mobilization of the members of our sample group.

The picture is just as evenly split if we divide the categories more broadly between face to face communication among any individuals – including those participating in public meetings – and those who used more technologically-enabled methods – such as Facebook and YouTube, but also including television and international news websites. With the categories more broadly defined, 14 people named some form of face to face communication as the most influential source of information while 13 identified some form of technologically-enabled method, of which Facebook was by far the most common answer. However, television and news websites lack the participatory element that makes social media potentially appealing for social movements, skewing these numbers away from sources that might be appealing to SMOs hoping to grow their ranks by independently distributing information to a large audience without relying on an established distributor such as a major media outlet. Thus, while Facebook – along with technology more broadly – was often reported as a critical factor, face to face communication often proved equally influential, with sources often playing complimentary roles as respondents worked to amass all the necessary information in

solidifying their support for the movements that they ultimately participated in. Several people commented on the balancing act that these two sources played. "I consulted Facebook to check the information [that I heard]. Then I discussed the event through face to face conversations with friends to gain an in-depth knowledge of the issue," said one woman who participated in the Kasbah sit-in.

With a number of people citing Facebook as an influential factor in their eventual decision to mobilize, what is the nature of this information spread over Facebook? Do the pages contain numerous calls to action – relying on Facebook better facilitate organization and ease the costs associated with communication among large groups – or something else? In examining these pages, we turn to their content: what do they say? Are they simply describing news events that the national media might gloss over or refuse to cover? Are they telling people to take action, whether broadly or specifically, such as participating in protests, vigils, or some other form of support? Or is there something else buried deeper within their postings? We look at the same pages examined in previous section, looking now at content instead of language.

After reading the posts, we find that they broadly fall into four categories: those that mainly relate news, from either an international source or a personal anecdote (sample: *Clashes between the police of oppression and a group of youth in Jebnyana while the youth are trapped in the city cemetery*)[56]; those that contain calls to action (example: *Call for a workers' rally in front of the union headquarters in Sfax Sunday, December 26 in solidarity with the people of Sidi Bouzid*)[57]; those that express opinions (example: *Down*

[56] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس 4 (Facebook page), 31 December 2010.
[57] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس2 (Facebook page), 24 December 2010.

with the RCD government and that of the opportunists!)[58]; or other, often unrelated information (music videos, unrelated posts, humor). Of course, many posts combine multiple forms of content, such as describing an event with loaded language or linking to an event's coverage in a major press outlet and commenting on it. Some posts fall into more than one category when discerning the author's intent proves difficult. However, a clear picture begins to emerge even among these complications.

Of the more than 1,000 posts from the five different pages examined in relation to the revolution, a majority describes and disseminates news to the pages' audiences, whether domestic or international; this is the most common type of post found on the pages. After relaying news, the second most common type of post on these Facebook pages provides commentary and opinions on the events as they occur. A small number of posts from the pages directly incite or facilitate action. These results do not dramatically differ numerically between pages aimed at an international audience and those aimed at a domestic audience, although the types of mobilization encouraged by the pages' administrators do. An examination of several Facebook pages relating to the revolution reveals that posters wrote for a variety of purposes, often weaving news, commentary, and calls to action into posts to inform, express their own opinions, and encourage readers to take action.

[58] Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution (Facebook), 17 January 2011.

Figure 11:
Posts on FB pages relating to the Revolution, by use (Total)

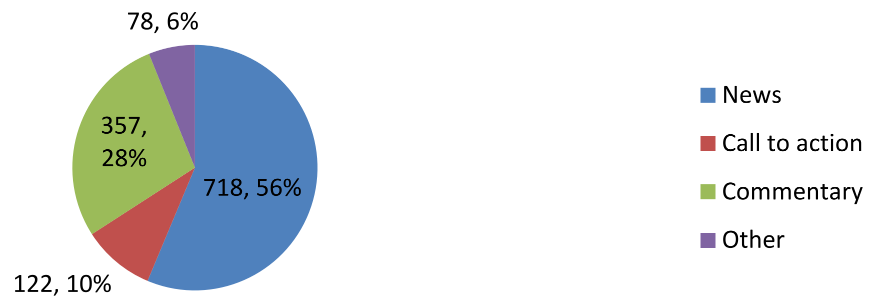
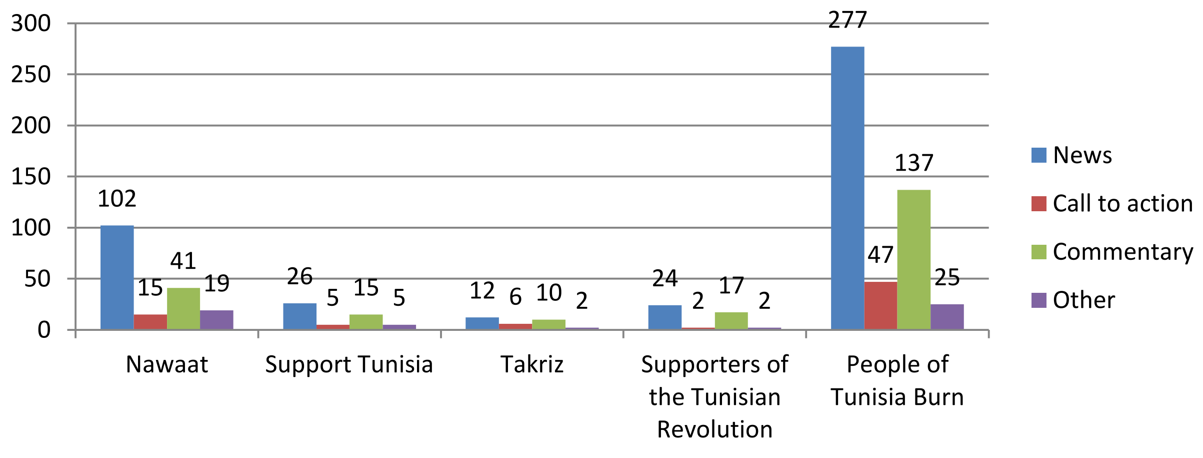


Figure 12:
Posts on FB Pages relating to the Revolution, by use (Individual Pages)



Posts conveying news content tend to focus on providing readers with knowledge of events when it would have been difficult to independently find or verify information. The vast majority of the posts that discuss news serve one of two purposes. First, they bypass the media censors put in place by the Tunisian government under Ben Ali and seek to spread information about the revolution and, if possible, corroborate different accounts of

events circulating throughout Tunisia in an effort to legitimize the protests against the regime of Ben Ali. These posts detail protester deaths, actions undertaken by protesters, and police countermeasures, and link to Tunisian and international sources. Many of these posts contain videos to back up their claims: images of police firing on protesters, protestors burning cars, or marches around the country as the revolution spread. In the case of rumors, some pages (such as The People of Tunisia Burn in their Spirit, Mr. President) qualify the posted information as rumor when necessary and later follow up with verification when possible. Additionally, some pages cite sources when possible, either through media outlets, other individuals, or by naming the city and attributing the information to an unnamed source; many, however, do not post this kind of information. While this could call into question the validity of the information, the ability to corroborate these accounts online or offline means that these pages may very well have served as a useful introduction for potential supporters before they moved to different sources of information. Additionally, the willingness of many people to appear on camera, whether lawyers in Sidi Bouzid,[59] unionists in Djerba,[60] or protesters in Jendouba,[61] showed other potential protesters that a sizable portion of the population was willing to risk their safety and careers, encouraging further protest.

The second major function of news posts is providing updates and coverage of police actions during protests, sharing information between the page and its readers (page to person or person to person news). Examples can be found on several pages, each using Facebook to share news about ongoing protests and the level of involvement by security

[59] Nawaat (Facebook) 28 December 2010.
[60] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس 4 (Facebook) 30 December 2010.
[61] Takriz (Facebook) 29 December 2010.

forces. "*Demonstration in Tunis, many police, some attacks, a blockade [in place] to prevent the march*," reads one page.[62] "*Intense security blockade in downtown [Tunis] in anticipation of any movement in addition to cutting power to the majority of the neighborhoods…*" reported Nawaat as the revolution reached the capital.[63] These posts provided an invaluable resource to those who may have been present or living nearby, as they could then adjust their actions accordingly, by moving to a different area, dispersing, moving closer to the police forces in order to document abuses carried out by security forces, or providing support to those affected by police abuses. While this is not a direct call to action, it is a tool that protesters can readily use and the number of posts that deal with following protests in real time suggests that they proved useful to those protesting inside of the country, as well as providing up-to-the-minute updates to those following the events from outside of the country.

The second most common type of post found on pages relating to the revolution deals with commentary. Posts conveying commentary on revolutionary pages tend to attack the legitimacy of the Ben Ali regime, by criticizing his history as a ruler and failed past reforms, condemning violent tactics against peaceful protesters, or by dismissing the (often meager) concessions put forward by the then-president. These posts come in the form of short posts, op-eds, and videos of protesters or supporters of protesters openly criticizing the regime. Cartoons and other photos that satirize or otherwise attack the regime are quite noticeable, with numerous pages circulating pictures with similar themes, emphasizing how easily pictures can capture a plea or sentiment from the population and transmit it quickly and effectively across several Facebook pages. One

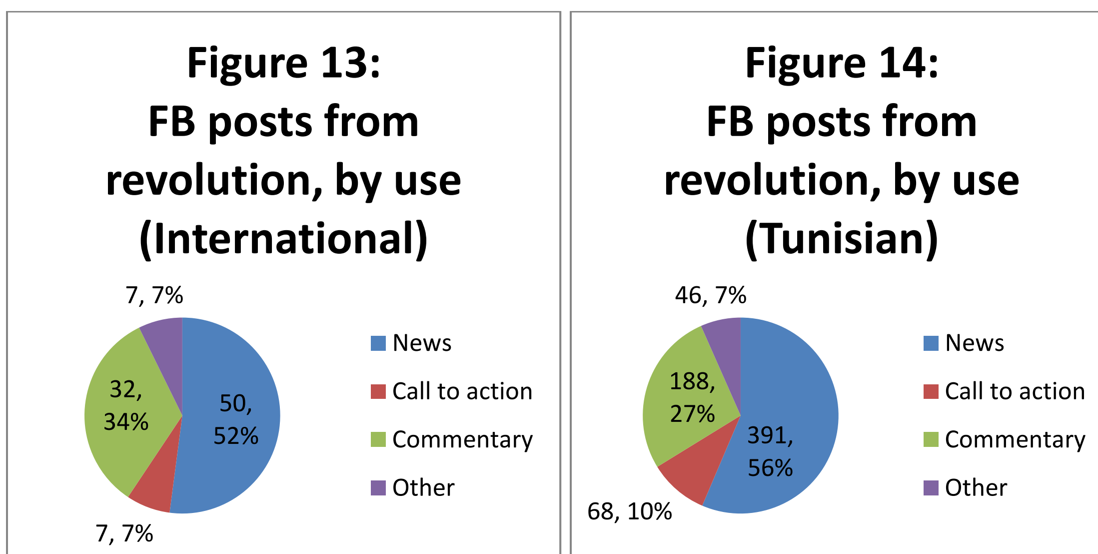
[62] Ibid, 27 December 2010.
[63] Nawaat, 29 December 2010.

such image simply shows a man sitting in front of his computer, with a sign reading "Close YouTube! Open Carthage!"[64] a reference to the president's concession of allowing citizens to legally access YouTube. Many posts expressed sympathy with protesters and encouraged readers to stay committed to the cause of the revolution; the line between encouraging protesters – expressing solidarity with victims of violence[65] or commemorating martyrs[66] – and criticizing policy is often blurred, but the majority of posts expressing opinions do not contain outright calls for action. In general, these commentary-oriented posts raise the spirits of protesters and diminish regime legitimacy, but do not push readers towards a specific action. In doing so, however, these posts raise the profile of the revolution's active participants and encourage involvement by otherwise reticent actors, further shaping the revolution's trajectory.

The third type of post featured on the pages associated with the revolution is that which contains calls for direct action. Understandably, there are notable differences between the calls to action found on pages that address international audiences specifically. Pages such as these –notably Support Tunisia – contain fewer calls to action, despite their stated goal of providing support to Tunisia in the midst of its revolution. Moreover, the calls to action found on these pages either detail vague pleas for support (*…please invite all you friends to this group…make people aware*!)[67] or actions that could only be undertaken by those living abroad (*write to your country's foreign secretary, requesting that they do not support any government that does not respond to the legitimate demands of the Tunisian people, that they express clear and public support for the Tunisian people's right to*

[64] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس6 (Facebook), 13 January 2011.
[65] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس 2 (Facebook), 25 December 2010.
[66] Takriz (Facebook) 26 December 2010.
[67] Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution (Facebook page) 20 January 2011.

freedom and to choose their government.)[68] Additionally, these pages were established in the final days of the revolution or afterwards and therefore aim most of their venom at the interim government instead of Ben Ali.



In contrast, the pages intended for a Tunisian audience include posts that detail specific calls for action with times, locations, and action plans for engaging in street protests inside of the country. While many posts that include mentions of protests can be initially overlooked as simply conveying news, a posting that provides information regarding the location and time of an upcoming or ongoing protest can easily facilitate participation in such an event. These protests can spring up in a number of circumstances: under the auspices of a funeral for someone killed while participating in a previous protest,[69] detailing an ongoing sit-in inside of a government building or union headquarters,[70] or calling for a future protest at a defined location.[71] Two pages – Nawaat and The People of

[68] Support Tunisia (Facebook page) 21 January 2011.
[69] Takriz (Facebook page) 31 December 2010.
[70] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس2 (Facebook page), 26 December 2010.
[71] Nawaat (Facebook page) 26 December 2010.

Tunisia Burn in their Spirit, Mr. President – include details for separate protests in Paris, France, a country with a large Tunisian expat population.[72][73] In addition to calls to participate in specific events, pages include calls to participate in other actions: symbolic protests (throwing portraits of Ben Ali into the streets),[74] documenting violence used by protesters,[75] or calling for action from third party groups such as unions, student groups, and even police officers.[76][77] Calls to action on these pages sometimes includes digitally-enabled actions – such as an online petition to make Mohammed Bouazizi Time magazine's Person of the Year[78] – or vague statements of intent,[79] but the majority of posts that explicitly push readers to act detail specific actions that would take place offline.

The fact that these posts do not form the majority should be taken as an indication of their relative weight. In contrast, pages that contain mostly calls for action while neglecting the kinds of news and commentary found on other pages – especially those relevant to potential protestors – might have difficulty in establishing the trust granted pages that contain information that go beyond calls for action alone. While we see that calls to action form a minority of the total posts, this does not mean that their impact was necessarily less than that of the other types of posts. Thus, we can verify that in pages relating to the revolution, there were concerted efforts made by administrators of these

[72]Nawaat (Facebook page) 24 December 2010.
[73] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس3 (Facebook page), 26 December 2010.
[74] Nawaat (Facebook page) 9 January 2011.
[75] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس4 (Facebook page), 27 December 2010.
[76] Takriz (Facebook page) 26 December 2010.
[77] شعب تونس يحرق في روحو يا سيادة الرئيس4 (Facebook page), 28 December 2010.
[78] Nawaat (Facebook page) 27 February 2011.
[79] Takriz (Facebook page) 26 December 2010.

pages to mobilize people via online outreach for action both on and offline, regardless of the relative weight of posts of this nature compared to the total number of posts.

Finally, a number of posts are difficult to categorize. For many of these posts, they simply discuss unrelated topics, a reminder that life goes on amid chaos. In the case of Nawaat, an organization whose existence precedes the revolution, a number of posts created before the outbreak of the revolution were examined for the sake of thoroughness but excluded from these categories as they do not relate to the revolution. The most common type of post excluded from these categorizations is that of memorials to those who died in the revolution. While commemorating the dead is an important feature of any violent conflict, it would be difficult to place such a post into any one of these categories, as they serve to inform, comment, and occasionally mobilize the reader. A number of pages included several music videos; the most common individual song is the national anthem. Most other songs are explicitly political – generally rap. These are excluded simply due to the subjective nature of art and the inability to separate the artist's original intent with that of the poster's. Finally, a handful of posts are comedic and tend to fall outside of the realm of easy categorization – the picture of a rambunctious dog at a protest in Greece[80] or a baby repeatedly saying 'no' as his asked him questions about the Ben Ali regime.[81]

During the interviews, many indicated that Facebook served as a crucial point of initial contact with the events of the revolution but a smaller number indicated that social media satisfied all of their information needs before they ultimately decided to mobilize. What

[80] Takriz (Facebook) 10 December 2010.
[81] Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution (Facebook) 17 January 2011.

does a comparison between these Facebook pages and the answers of participants tell us? First, the content available on Facebook, while compelling, does not provide the verification and comprehensive information necessary for many to ultimately join a dangerous movement; people are ultimately skeptical and while a number of media can pique the interest of potential supporters, a variety of sources – or an extremely trustworthy source such as viewing violence firsthand – are necessary before people are willing to take the risk of joining a movement that could cost them their lives. While the administrators of many pages tried to address this by verifying and citing sources when possible, the chaotic nature of the events complicated such endeavors. Similarly, a significant number of people cited face to face communication among close friends or family as the decisive factor in their decision to mobilize; this is a more trustworthy source and thus more likely to encourage mobilization.

Finally, only a minority of posts of on the pages examined here include specific calls for action. Does this suggest that mobilization was a minor element of these pages? Not necessarily. For one, pages establish their credibility by accurately reporting news and delivering commentary that resonates with their audiences; as stated previously, a page that contains mostly calls for protest without other types of posts might have difficulty in attracting protesters wary of the risks involved in attending such a protest. Second, many posts contain what we have referred to as 'page to person' news, posts that alert protesters or supporters of events surrounding protests – such as conflicts with security forces – in real time; while these posts do not necessarily call people to participate in the events in question, they could lower the risks associated with attending protests, making it more likely that an otherwise reticent supporter might join a given protest. Finally, it is

impossible to measure the overall impact of social media on attendance at protests solely from the data on the pages; doing so would confuse the online profile of a movement with its offline success. While the answers of our respondents indicate that Facebook was often a key source of information relating to the revolution, the pages indicate that this mobilization did not come from outright calls for action. Instead, pages provide the information necessary for supporters to ultimately decide whether to join a movement. After having made up their minds, supporters might participate in protests that they learn of online or from other sympathetic groups that mobilize offline. Here, despite seeing a decided role for social media in mobilization, the specific site that ultimately pushed an individual to participate in a protest is but one part of his or her mobilization.

2011: National Constituent Assembly Elections

How do the answers of participants in the NCA elections compare with the answers of those who participated in the revolution? Only two individuals indicated that they participated in the 2011 National Constituent Assembly (NCA) elections outside of voting. One man, age 30, said that he was an active member of a political party, participating in voter outreach and other activities central to the party's mission. Another man, age 23, said that he was active on social media during the elections, sharing his opinions about the event on Facebook.

While both individuals said that they primarily use online resources to access news, only one of the two men (age 30) indicated that he had internet access in his house. They both said that they were active social media users, but neither said that he used social media multiple times per day. Their TV consumption habits were in line with those of the

sample group (about two hours per day) but only one (age 23) said that he read printed sources of news. The 30 year old expressed a decided interest in accessing most information online – news websites, blogs, encyclopedias – while the other respondent expressed an interest in combining online information with face to face conversations at discussion groups and sit-ins.

The two respondents said that they learned of the NCA elections differently. The 30 year old said that he learned of the elections via Facebook, and then pursued further information via blogs, which ultimately pushed him to act. The younger man said that he learned of the events while watching television, and then contacted friends and continued watching television to better inform himself. Interestingly, each expressed misgivings about the medium that initially informed him. "You can't trust information which is spread over Facebook," said the man who learned of the elections via the social media website, adding that the role of social media "…is important but relative. It is not dominant because people were out in the streets. In reality, it is something else. There is a role, but it's not dominant." The younger man, who learned of the elections via television, expressed similar misgivings about television, saying "TV doesn't cover most of what happens in reality. TV is monopolized. Facebook is more credible in this sense," while echoing the sentiments of the other individual who participated in the NCA elections regarding social media: "Let's say it's not really dominant. It played 50 percent of the importance." Given that both individuals mentioned social media in their responses, how did social media contribute to their activites?

What do the Facebook pages of major political parties reveal about the role of social media during this time period? Are they an information resource, a depository of

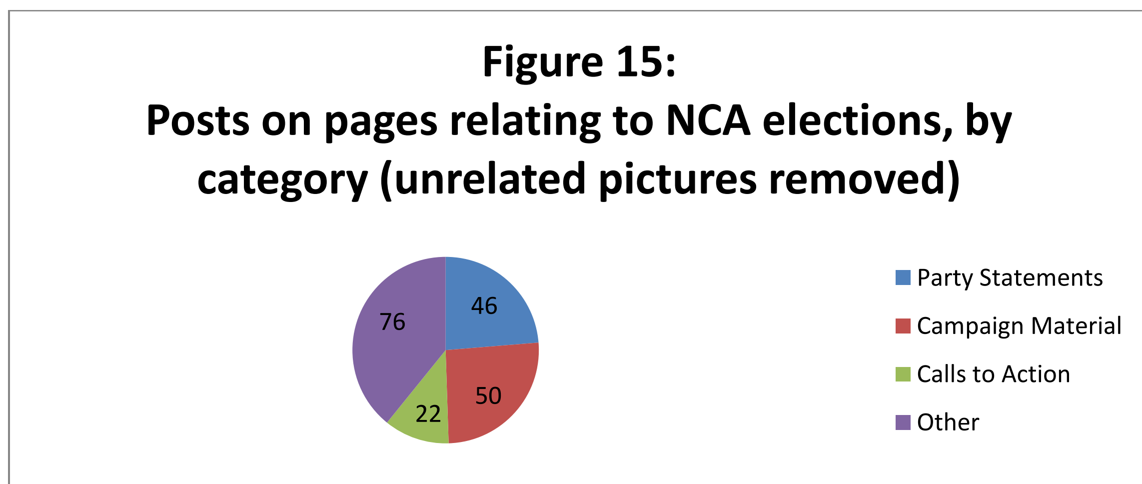
campaign materials, or an unacknowledged source of mass mobilization? Are these functions mutually exclusive?

The very nature of campaigning makes analyzing Facebook pages of political parties difficult. In any campaign, each statement, picture, or omission thereof is calculated. Parties do not simply inform voters of upcoming party events, but announce them with such gusto as to inspire people to attend. Similarly, parties do not merely relay the pertinent details of a news story; rather, they spin the story, weaving commentary and party zeal into the retelling of events in an effort to cast party positions in a more favorable light. Every action of a party – and potentially, each post on a party's Facebook page – is a calculated attempt to attract voters and build support for the upcoming elections. With this in mind, the pages are examined comprehensively for overall content and to classify their content as it falls into three categories: official party statements, campaign materials, and direct calls for action. The first two categories are easily identifiable and can give a general idea of how much preexisting campaign material is being distributed on a party's social media page, while the latter – though more difficult to discern – will indicate just how much parties pushed individuals to participate in party activities via their Facebook pages. After this has been done, the remaining posts are examined to see what content falls outside of these categories.

Overall, the pages of political parties during the 2011 election contain many of the same elements of other pages examined in this research: pictures, statements, and links to other media. Several things, however, have a diminished presence or are noticeably absent. First, a relatively small number of pages link to news outlets or other material that can be clearly identified as having originally come from a different source; those that do are

most often videos containing interviews, generally with Tunisian news agencies or radio stations. Second, all pages contain a large number of pictures that, while ostensibly captured by the parties at official functions, reveal little about the party itself or its platforms. Many pages host entire series of photos consisting of little more than banners from the events and pictures of party officials sitting around tables; these images are not evaluated for content and are excluded from this section of the research.

The most notable feature of the four pages of major Tunisian political parties is how they serve as a means to disperse the primary outputs of any political party: campaign materials and statements on behalf of the party. Once unrelated pictures are removed from the data set, these two categories make up about half of the material found on the pages.



Campaign materials mainly consist of photo versions of many of the parties' fliers, pamphlets, and billboards. Interestingly, while some of the pages do feature online versions of the parties' television commercials, the majority of the videos found on the pages do not fit the mold of typical television commercials; the videos are too long for

broadcast, ranging from several minutes to more than ten. Additionally, they diverge from normal televised commercials in their content – many of the videos are from party conferences and campaign stops and feature lengthy speeches (most notably on Ennahdha's page)[82] while others feature explanatory videos and recorded statements directed at different audiences; Moncef Marzouki's statement to the Youth of the Revolution on the CPR page or the explanations of party positions on the Afek Tounes page are notable examples of this.[83][84] These videos, though a minority of the overall content, are notable because they seem to be produced specifically for internet distribution. They can be differentiated from other videos on these pages because they are often animated, directed at specific audiences, and exceed the length requirements typical of television advertisements. Thus, it is clear that although parties although it was not the largest focus of their campaigns, political parties during the 2011 NCA elections clearly appreciated the unique opportunities provided by social media and produced content specifically for social media.

Statements on behalf of the parties can be found on all pages – with the exception of CPR, which was taken down and re-launched weeks before the election; other pages feature numerous official statements and press communiques. In the case of official statements, posts are accompanied by many of the same elements that are found on physical copies of official statements: party seals, dates, and signatures of party leaders. Several pages, notably Ennahdha, occasionally include photographed copies of their

[82] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 2 October 2011.
[83] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 19 October 2011.
[84] Afek Tounes (Facebook) 5 October 2011.

official statements, lending a greater air of authenticity to their social media postings.[85] The posts deal with a variety of events and there is little overlap between them; while many of the statements deal with similar issues – the upcoming elections,[86] future governmental system,[87] current events,[88] and foreign policy[89] – only a few posts comment on the same events. One issue mentioned in all three of the pages that contain official statements is the decision to postpone elections taken in May 2011.[90][91][92] Additionally, the three pages contain official statements in the period before the election referencing the impending event; however, each post discusses different issues, with Afek Tounes encouraging voters to participate,[93] Ettakatol discussing the possibility of a coalition with Ennahdha,[94] and Ennahdha discussing a potential referendum.[95] With regards to foreign policy, the pages differ again, each responding to different events. While these official statements could certainly be accessed elsewhere, their presence online suggests that parties attempted to reach out to constituents using new media in conjunction with more traditional media, such as television or printed sources.

The goal of any political party in an election is to mobilize the maximum number of voters for one's party; outside of the material already seen, what attempts at mobilization do we see on these pages? Outside of the aforementioned posts, there are few explicit attempts to mobilize voters for election day – pages simply do not feature daily

[85] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 6 September 2011.
[86] Afek Tounes (Facebook) 8 September 2011
[87] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 19 October 2011.
[88] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 16 October 2011.
[89] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 18 June 2011.
[90] Ibid, 23 May 2011.
[91] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 22 May 2011.
[92] Afek Tounes (Facebook) 22 May 2011.
[93] Ibid, 21 October 2011.
[94] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 15 October 2011.
[95] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 6 September 2011.

encouragements to vote in an effort to increase participation. A few features, however, are notable for how they encourage participation on and offline. The most notable post – found on all pages – comes in the form of partisan and non-partisan guides to elections. These posts explain the ballot for first-time voters and the election lists for each party. The non-partisan guide was published by the Tunisian body charged with organizing the 2011 NCA elections, the ISIE (French: Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections) and is found on the CPR page[96] while instructions for an SMS service that voters can use to find their polling station is found on the Afek Tounes page.[97] Both of these services could have been accessed on and offline, but placing them on a social media page increases their visibility and exposes them to a potentially new audience. In addition to these non-partisan sources, each page features a post indicating the list numbers for parties in each electoral district in the country. The CPR and Ennahdha pages also feature mock ballots indicating how to fill in the ballot, with each party's logo highlighted with a check mark, a subtle touch that both informs readers how to fill in the ballot while also increasing recognition of the party's image on the ballot.[98][99]

There are also several smaller examples of mobilization that take place on a number of pages. The Ettakatol page features a video explaining how supporters can donate money to the party at their local post office.[100] The CPR page contains a famous video, in which the party re-erects a Ben Ali-era propaganda poster, only to tear it down to reveal a

[96] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 18 October 2011
[97] Afek Tounes (Facebook) 17 October 2011.
[98] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 20 October 2011
[99] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 20 October 2011.
[100] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 20 September 2011.

message that encourages participation in the election.[101] Interestingly, only the Ennahdha page includes an open invitation to a party event, a meeting targeted at young supporters of the party with Ennahdha members at the Tunisian stock exchange.[102] Finally, both Ennahdha and Ettakatol direct Facebook users to other Facebook pages, with the former pushing a party magazine and the latter promoting a page in which users will declare their intention to vote for the party.[103][104] These posts, while a minority of the total number, are interesting because many of them take specific advantage of different types of social media, here YouTube and Facebook. It is evident that parties recognized, at least in part, some of the potential of social media in reaching out to potential supporters. While there are far fewer attempts at voter outreach than one might otherwise predict – if we exclude redistributed campaign materials – and few attempts to include social media users in in-person events related to the party, there is clear evidence that the parties realized the potential of social media as a means to reach voters.

If these posts fall into the clearly identifiable categories of campaign material, official statements, and mobilization, what fills the remainder? The difficulty in untangling purpose is evident in many of these posts. 8 of the 76 posts (just over 10%) deal with Ramadan, wishing readers a happy and blessed holiday. 16 of the posts are videos from interviews with news outlets or snippets from party conferences; while these videos certainly inform potential voters – and were posted by the parties' themselves for that very purpose – they fall outside of the realm of campaign materials. Only the Ennahdha page contains a significant amount of material that could best be categorized as news-

[101] [101] CPR – Page Officielle (Facebook) 18 October 2011.
[102] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 15 October 2011.
[103] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 15 February 2011.
[104] Ettakatol (FTDL Officiel) (Facebook) 30 Juy 2011.

related while falling outside the bounds of campaigning: celebrating the opening of new campaign offices,[105] eulogizing those who died in accidents or the revolution,[106] celebrating the party's official status,[107] etc. Finally, one interesting feature on the Ettakatol and Afek Tounes pages unique to social media is the use of polls to determine reader opinion. Of the seven polls, all but one ask readers their opinions about the upcoming NCA elections and the overall mission of the NCA. Participation in these polls is higher on the Ettakatol page, with over 1,800 people participating in one poll, but each poll attracted at least 400 participants, with several polls attracting many more. Finally, a number of posts contain quotes from famous people (Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.), general commitments to the principles of the revolution, and a healthy dose of generic praise for the parties' leaders.

Overall, each post from these parties' pages is calculated to raise readers' opinions of the party; how they go about raising this support varies by party and post, but each page includes ballot information, interviews with the press, and campaign materials, as well different attempts at mobilization for actions on and offline. All but the CPR page contain official statements; it is entirely possible that the page would have contained them if it had not been re-launched from scratch weeks before the election. While all pages contained plenty of material aimed at mobilizing voters, there is a limited presence of mobilization attempts designed specifically for social media and few explicit calls for mobilization for actions that go beyond voting. There is, however, a small number of interesting examples that show that parties where aware of the promise of social media,

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[105] حركة النهضة التونسية (Facebook) 2 April 2011.
[106] Ibid, 21 October 2011.
[107] Ibid, 1 March 2011.

regardless of the overall number of posts in this category. Despite their limited number of posts that seek to mobilize supporters directly, these posts, coupled with the campaign materials distributed through the pages, indicate that parties did exhibit a concerted effort to galvanize support online for both the election and other party events. Given that a quick glance at the current pages of these parties indicates that they have increased their social media activity substantially in the years since 2011, it is possible that attempts at mobilization by the parties via social media have also increased in number and sophistication. This represents an interesting topic that could be better explored in future research.

2012: The Printemps des Arts Fair

What have we seen so far? In the case of the revolution and the 2011 NCA elections, our respondents indicated that social media often played a role in informing them of the existence of a social movement in which they participated, along with other, more traditional media. The previous two movements differed in their uses of Facebook, but each employed the social media site to reach out to potential supporters on multiple occasions. While direct attempts at mobilization were sometimes limited in number – especially in the early days of the revolution and during the NCA elections – administrators of these pages did indeed use the site to spread their message and engage potential supporters. How does this compare with the pages relating to the reaction to the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair? Four of the respondents participated in the reaction to the controversial art exhibit in June 2012. Of the four, two participated in protests, one actively shared his opinion on Facebook, and one used his activities within a political party to support artists while also participating in public discussions about the exhibit. Of

the four, two also participated in both the revolution and the NCA elections, while another individual also participated in the revolution.

All four of those who participated in this event are males. Three of the men were age 23 at the time that the interviews were conducted while the remaining man was 32. Two men (both 23) lacked internet in their homes but all four said that they maintained an active social media account. Their television consumption and printed media habits were in line with the larger group, averaging 2 hours per day and multiple times per week, respectively. When asked to state their preferred method of accessing news, two stated that they used online sources, one radio, and one television in addition to print sources. All indicated that they used social media *less* than the overall sample group, with no respondent indicating that they used a social media account more often than several times per week. Interestingly, two individuals (ages 23 and 32) said that they shied away from using social media, with only one saying that he was an enthusiastic user.

When asked how they first learned of the opposition to the art exhibit, three pointed to television as the original source of information, while the other man said that the information came to him via face to face conversations with friends or family members. Despite learning of the events via television, all were generally skeptical of the information presented on televised news programs; one man noted that most TV channels have a "political line that is already determined." This is the only event examined in this research in which no individual indicated that they learned of the events via an internet-based source. While it is possible that the lower levels of social media use among respondents in this group contributed them not crediting social media as their initial source of information, two of the respondents did indicate that online news sites generally

serve as their primary sources for information about ongoing events. While distrust of social media could have contributed to few of them indicating that social media played a role in informing them of the controversy initially, a preference for online news is still found in this group. This repeats the findings from the previous two movements, in which an individual's preferred method of accessing news does not seem to correlate with the source that initially informed him or her.

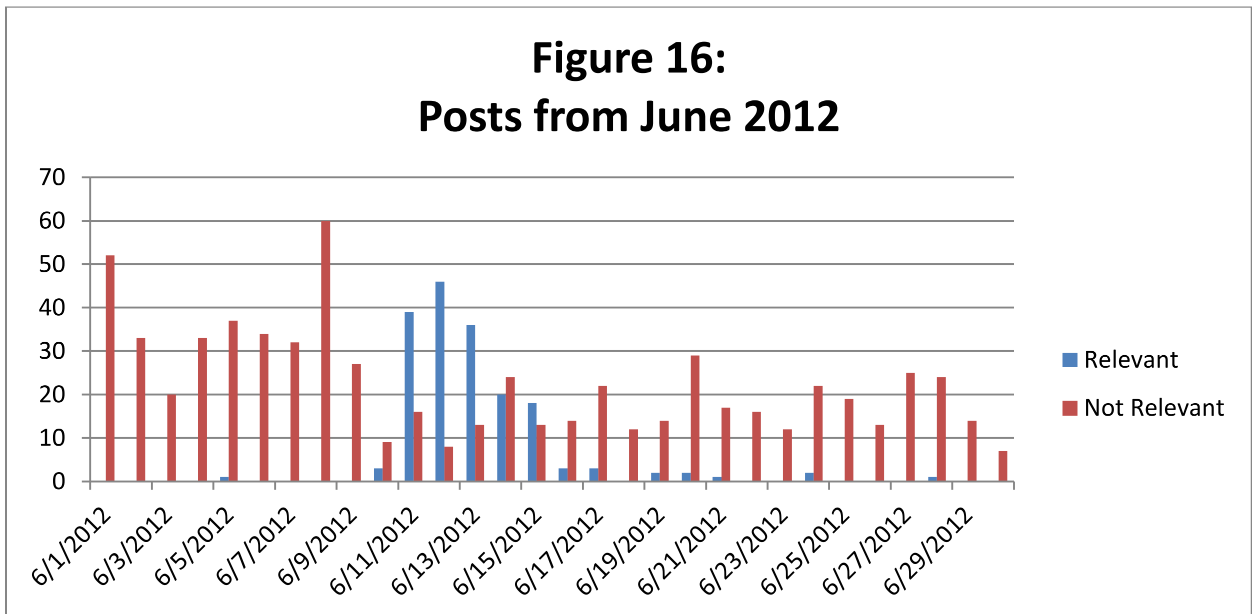
After learning about the controversy surrounding the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair, what sources of news ultimately pushed these four individuals to action? Upon learning about the exhibit and associated controversy, the three men who learned of the events from televised news programs said that they contacted friends to confirm details, which ultimately pushed them to become active in supporting the artists involved. As one man (age 32) put it, sources outside of conversation "are not a convincing way to push me to action. Personally, I am indifferent when I hear about an event. I think about it for a while but I soon forget. It's the consumerist side of media that dominates." The remaining individual – who learned of the events through a face to face conversation – attended public meetings to better inform himself before he finally decided to join the movement; his statements indicate a general skepticism towards both television and social media, although he thought that the latter played a useful role during the revolution. In this case, respondents indicated that they learned of the controversy that surrounded the art exhibition by traditional means like television and face to face conversations instead of social media and other internet-based media. This mirrors the lower than average social media usage patterns of the group and contrasts slightly with the larger sample. All indicated some level of skepticism towards television, and two indicated skepticism with

regards to the quality of information spread over social media, both sentiments found within the sample group as a whole.

Given that the respondents who participated in the reaction to the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair were reluctant to point to Facebook as a source that either informed them or pushed them to act and less likely to use social media in general, what do the Facebook pages of the groups involved in the controversy reveal about the role of social media during this turbulent time? Analyzing mentions of the Printemps des Arts Fair itself and the controversy associated with it within Facebook pages is difficult for a number of reasons. The short duration of the event and subsequent controversy, coupled with other major ongoing events during the same time period – such as the postponement of the national Baccalaureate exam – means that posts relevant to the event must be differentiated from posts discussing other issues. When this is done, it is evident that the controversy surrounding the art fair was a major event in Tunisia for several days, but almost disappeared from discussion after less than one week. Additionally, the event itself takes place within a larger conversation revolving around the protection of sacred beliefs and comments made by internet commentator Jalel Brik in June 2012 that were deemed offensive by many. Thus, many posts calling for legal protections of sacred beliefs, icons, and figures earlier in the month are deemed irrelevant, while similar posts made later in the month – after the controversy that arose from the Printemps des Arts Fair – may be considered relevant for the purpose of this research. In this regard, time – and context – is everything.

As stated, the selected Facebook pages mention the art exhibit in Palais Abdelliah and protests that arose from this controversy in a limited time frame. Of the 856 posts found

on the pages in June 2012, 178 touch on the exhibit and ensuing events. Almost all of these posts appear between 10 June 2012 and 17 June 2012; the exhibit ran from 1 June until 10 June, with the first protests occurring outside of the exhibit on 10 June, major incidents of violence occurring on 11 and 12 June and a planned but cancelled protest scheduled for 15 June.[108] The data show a correlation between posts mentioning the exhibit and major acts of violence and protest, but few mentions of the exhibit before these actions took place. In fact, the only mention of the exhibit before the nights of violence are from a page that is generally friendly to the exhibit, publicizing the event before the controversy erupted. This would seem to indicate that little, if any, mobilization was undertaken using these pages before violent acts targeting the exhibit occurred.

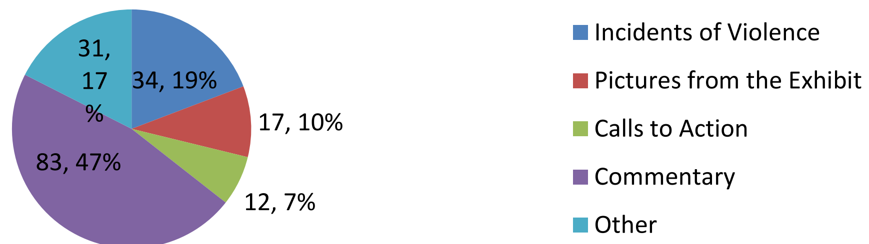


Most relevant Facebook posts examined during this period of heightened activity share one of the following themes: commentary on the events as they unfolded; pictures from

[108] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/06/2012615111819112421.html

the exhibit to better inform – or persuade – their readers; and reports of violence as the turbulent events unfolded. A limited number of posts call on readers to act, although only a small number actually encouraged protest and the largest such protest was ultimately cancelled. Naturally, a number of posts fall outside of these broad categories and are also addressed.

Figure 17:
Total Posts relating to 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair, by type



The most prevalent type of post relevant to the Printemps des Arts Fair in June 2012 among the examined pages is that of commentary, representing about half of the relevant posts. In these posts, users express opinions about the exhibit itself, ensuing violence, state response to the exhibit and violence, possible legal remedies, and a planned but aborted protest. A number of posts reiterate an earlier call to criminalize ‘attacks on the sacred’, an issue that emerged in the post-revolutionary environment and was more acute as images of controversial artwork circulated via social media.

In general, the opinions shared on the pages vary and tend to reflect the overall orientation of the pages’ administrators. Posts on “Ni Putes Ni Soumises” – a page with a strong affinity for the arts in general – take a direct stand in support of controversial art

and against violence.[109] “Free Tunisia” contains numerous posts denouncing violence, but relatively few posts dealing with the art itself.[110] The pages “Ennahdha in Bab al Bhar,” “Brick by Brick, Building a Wondrous Tunisia,” and “I Love You, Tunisia” all contain posts condemning the exhibit specifically and posts supporting the movement to criminalize attacks on sacred values more generally. The Ennahdha-affiliated page contains several videos and text statements from party leader Rachid Ghanouchi condemning violence while also adamantly criticizing the exhibit’s contents.[111] Both “Brick by Brick, Building a Wondrous Tunisia” and another page, “Son of Tunisia,” contain a number of posts questioning the role of Salafists – the alleged perpetrators of the violence – in addition to posts criticizing the art, as well as a number of posts blaming the events on a variety of international actors.[112][113] These posts generally reflect the ongoing conversation regarding the exhibit and attacks on the sacred within Tunisia at the time and contain numerous references to these conversations via links to outside news articles. This reveals quite a bit about the attitudes of Tunisians from a variety of political persuasions regarding this then-ongoing conversation and shows a role for social media as an extension of an already occurring political debate.

The second most prevalent type of post deals with spreading information about the violence as it spread, as official sources of information were scarce in the early days after the attacks. This fact is borne out in the pattern of posts relating to ongoing violence: six posts on the 11th – the first night of violence – 14 the following day, 12 posts on the 13th,

[109] Ni Putes Ni Soumises (Facebook) 13 June 2012.
[110] Free Tunisia (Facebook) 12 June 2012.
[111] حركة النهضة بباب البحر (Facebook) 13 June 2012.
[112] طوبة طوبة نبني تونس الأعجوبة (Facebook) 14 June 2012.
[113] ولد تونس (Facebook) 11 June 2012.

and only two on the 14th; no posts detailing acts of violence are found after the 14th. This parallels both the violence itself and the state response, which resulted in a nation-wide curfew on the 12th. A limited number of posts deal with the violence as it occurred, mostly on the 11th; instead, the majority of the posts circulate images, videos, and occasionally written accounts detailing the aftermath of the attacks in La Marsa[114] and other areas, particularly the area of Hai Tadhamon.[115] As the protests in Sousse against the exhibit became violent, pages featured images and video of the protests and the Ennahdha page issued multiple posts commemorating a young man who died in the events.[116] While the general pattern of the posts correlate with incidents of violence, they do not increase in frequency with the overall level of violence, as the most violent events took place on the 11th; instead, they reflect the evolving mood and conversation within the country rather than indicating a reliance on Facebook to communicate in the immediate aftermath of acts of violence. In contrast to the pages associated with the revolution, pages associated with the controversy surrounding the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair tend to feature news that is of limited use to those engaged in protest and more useful in discussing the government's response to the exhibit and associated violence, an element that is closely tied to the previous type of post that we examined, commentary.

As the controversy erupted, Facebook pages shared images from the exhibit in an effort to assuage or incense readers. A total of 17 posts depict the contents of the exhibit, including a rumored – but fictitious – painting of the prophet Muhamad.[117] This latter piece generated several related posts, as the image spread across social media, with

[114] Free Tunisia (Facebook) 12 June 2012.
[115] ولد تونس (Facebook) 12 June 2012.
[116] حركة النهضة بباب البحر (Facebook) 14 June 2012.
[117] أحبك تونس (Facebook) 13 June 2012.

opponents of the exhibit using it as an example of the artists' disdain for conservative values[118] and supporters of the artists attempting to show the painting's true origins in Senegal.[119] Many of the images and videos from the exhibit include text commentary that reveals the author's opinion as to whether the art was in fact controversial. One the most noteworthy pieces is a video from "Brick by Brick, Building a Wondrous Tunisia" that shows the exhibit's most controversial works along with the names of the artists involved in the show; this video made headlines when it was issued and raised serious concerns on the part of the artists for their own safety.[120] While these videos and images again reflect the broader conversation within Tunisia, they also take advantage of the ease of distribution afforded by social media to show the contents of the controversial exhibit, demystifying – but perhaps enraging – those who would otherwise not be able to see the pictures in person.

Only a limited number of posts attempt to mobilize opponents of the Printemps des Arts Fair. No attempts at mobilization by supporters of the fair are seen in any of the pages examined in this research. Two calls to protest appear on the page "Ennahdha in Bab al Bhar" on June 12 and 13; no other attempts at forming protests are found.[121][122] Another post on the same page encourages young supporters to follow the example of two members shown in a video putting up graffiti against blasphemous material.[123] The remaining posts in this category explain the cancellation of the previously planned protests by Islamist groups, with third parties commenting on the issue and commending

[118] ولد تونس (Facebook) 11 June 2012.
[119] Ni Putes Ni Soumises (Facebook) 14 June 2012.
[120] طوبة طوبة نبني تونس الأعجوبة (Facebook) 11 June 2012.
[121] حركة النهضة بباب البحر (Facebook) 12 June 2012.
[122] Ibid, 13 June 2012.
[123] Ibid, 15 June 2012.

the groups for deciding to not hold a protest at such a divisive time.[124] While the initial post on the Ennahdha page calling for protest did generate quite a bit of Facebook activity (shared by 421 people, a large number but not the largest on the page), attempts at mobilization are limited. Additionally, the lack of posts mentioning the exhibit before the 11th – the first night of violence – indicates that the the largest and most notable example of mobilization associated with this movement was planned elsewhere. However, there are still interesting examples of attempts at mobilization by the pages in question, particularly on the Ennahdha page. In addition to attempts at traditional demonstrations, the page includes a video that encourages young supporters to put up street art encouraging respect for traditional beliefs. Such calls to action take advantage of an easily transferable repertoire spread by social media, a hallmark of several other movements with a heavy social media presence. While the mobilization was certainly limited during the response to the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair, there are several interesting examples of attempts to mobilize supporters both online and offline.

A number of posts fall outside of these categories. They include posts that reference the exhibit and include inspirational messages, media coverage, and pictures from protests, especially the aborted protest in the capital. Ten of the 31 uncategorized posts originate from national and international news outlets, analyzing the exhibit, attacks against it, and the implications of the event for post-revolutionary Tunisia; most of the international coverage of the event comes from France. Finally, eight posts contain images and videos from the aborted protest in downtown Tunis. While the protest was ultimately cancelled, a number of people assembled outside of a mosque in the area afterwards; these posts are

[124] أحبك تونس (Facebook) 14 June 2012.

found on pages supporting the artists and opposing the exhibit alike, with each offering a slightly different commentary on the protest.[125][126]

From the pages and answers from the interviewees, we do not see many calls for the kinds of mass – and often violent – mobilization that grabbed headlines in the days after the exhibit ended. While cannot conclude that social media had no influence in preparing these initial events, we cannot conclude that social media were not used simply due to their absence from these limited pages. We do see, however, that most of the posts related to mobilization on these pages differ fundamentally from the two previous movements. In this case, none of the respondents indicated that they learned of the events via social media; this is reflected in the lack of mention of the exhibit before the violence erupted. Instead, the attempts at mobilization we do see occur after the exhibit had shut its doors and include both traditional (on the street) mobilization and a more transferable form of contention, spreading memes relating to respect for the sacred, the latter heavily indebted to other kinds of transferable frames circulated via social media.

Additionally, contrary to the pattern found during the revolution, much of the social media conversation regarding violence occurs long after the initial acts of violence. Here, we see that while information regarding first attacks against the exhibit was certainly spread via social media, much of the information regarding violence was actually spread later – from events that had already passed – and was part of the ongoing dialogue within the country over what the events meant for Tunisia's democratic and secular future. While we do see some notable attempts at mobilization in the days after the exhibit, much

[125] Free Tunisia (Facebook) 15 June 2012.
[126] حركة الههضة بباب البحر (Facebook) 15 June 2012.

of the information found on these pages reflects the then-ongoing conversation in Tunisia, utilizing social media for debate on and distribution of the exhibit's contents.

2013: The Tamarrod Movement

In the three movements that we have examined thus far, we have seen that while pages affiliated with each movement actively participated via social media, calls to action – direct attempts at mobilization – take different forms in different movements: each movement utilized their Facebook pages to mobilize readers in different ways, whether by encouraging attendance at traditional protests, instructing potential voters about the election process, or spreading forms of protests easily transferable via social media. Nonetheless, in each case – especially during the reaction to the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair, post encouraging mobilization were often a minority of the total number of posts.

Additionally, we see that each movement used their pages in slightly different ways: highlighting police abuses during the revolution, distributing campaign material during the NCA elections, and showing pictures from the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair. How does this compare to the Tamarrod movement? Of the 40 who participated in the interviews for this research, five said they were involved in the 2013 Tamarrod movement. Of these five, three (two males and one female) participated in protests against the NCA, one (female) signed the group's petition, and one (male) was active in the movement, protesting while also engaging in outreach on behalf of the movement. Of the five, all had previously participated in the revolution; additionally, one (male, 30) was active in a political party during the 2011 NCA elections while another (also male, 23) was active on social media during the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair, sharing information

in support of the artists. Of the five, three of the respondents are male and two female, making this the most gender-balanced group among the respondents. The group ranged in age from 23 to 30, with a median age of 24.

All respondents who indicated that they had participated in the Tamarrod movement said that they had home internet access and an active social media account. Three said that they used social media at least once a day, while two said that they used social media several times per week. Four of the respondents said that they used online sources as their primary source of news, with one adding that he also used TV in conjunction with online sources; the remaining respondent indicated that he preferred to access news via the radio. The median television consumption for the group stands at three hours; all but one indicated that he or she watched television for 2 or 3 hours per day, while the respondent who said that he accessed news via online sources and television said that he watched seven hours of television per day. Similarly, all but one in the group (the same individual who indicated high levels of television consumption) said that he or she rarely read printed sources of news. Overall, this group's television consumption habits are similar to the other groups, but preferences for online sources are higher and reported levels of reading printed sources lower than the overall group.

When asked how they initially learned of the Tamarrod movement, four said that they found out about the movement via Facebook; the remaining individual indicated that he learned of the movement via phone and SMS conversations with friends and family members. After discovering the movement, two individuals said that Facebook remained their main source of information about the movement, which ultimately pushed them to act; both also said that Facebook was a dominant force in the country overall and were

generally receptive to information spread over social media. Two other respondents indicated that, after initially learning of the movement, they sought more information from offline sources, particularly face to face conversations with friends; these two individuals expressed general skepticism towards online sources of information. The remaining respondent said that he preferred to use blogs, a source that ultimately pushed him to act, echoing his statements made in regards to the revolution and the NCA elections. Overall, those who participated in the Tamarrod movement were more likely to report using social media to learn about the movement initially than participants in other movements were and but only slightly more likely to turn to internet-based sources to better inform themselves before deciding to join.

With the majority of the respondents who participated in the movement indicating that they initially learned of Tamarrod via social media, what do the Facebook pages associated with the movement tell us about the group's use of social media in reaching out to and mobilizing supporters? Is the respondents' higher-than-average tendency to cite social media as an initial point of contact with Tamarrod reflected in the group's social media postings? Of the roughly 1,000 posts found on the Facebook pages dealing with the Tamarrod movement, the majority have one of the following aims: sharing commentary regarding Tunisian politics and leaders; covering the group's protests via pictures, videos, and text descriptions; encouraging supporters to engage in action on behalf of the group (usually protests or petition drives); sharing official statements; sharing person to person (page to person) news; and highlighting national and international press coverage of the group.

Numerically speaking, the most prolific type of post among the Tamarrod pages comments on Tunisia's political climate, publicizing the group's opinions about ongoing issues. These can take the form of long text posts, slogans, or pictures; the latter is best represented in the numerous political cartoons found across the Tamarrod movement's pages. Out of 247 posts commenting on Tunisia's political situation in 2013, 82 are pictures, the majority of which are cartoons or edited pictures that criticize Tunisian leaders in humorous ways. Generally, these posts criticize the NCA over its inability to finish the constitution before the expiration of the body's mandate and accuse the body of stoking tensions instead of calming the political situation in Tunisia. One of the most interesting – and unique – aspects of the commentary found on the pages supporting the Tamarrod movement are endorsements and commentary put forth by prominent Tunisians in support of the movement.[127] The most prominent of these figures is Kais Said, a prominent Tunisian intellectual, whose quotes appear constantly on several pages, giving his analysis of the constitutional crisis and encouraging protesters to remain committed until their goals are reached.[128] These posts build support for the movement by spreading information about the group's aims among a potentially receptive audience, establishing credibility with those who disagree with the interim government's handling of the transition process.

The second most common type of post on the Tamarrod-related pages contains images, videos, or (rarely) text descriptions of protests. As the movement grew in late July 2013, protests, sit-ins, and petition drives became more numerous and administrators documented these events on Tamarrod pages. Of the 170 posts detailing protests, more

[127] حملة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 13 August 2013.
[128] حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 29 July 2013.

than 100 share images, while the remainder mostly contains videos. Among the four pages, one contains a live feed link to a protest outside of the NCA headquarters in Bardo.[129] Generally, the videos and pictures focus on the group's large number of supporters and peaceful, conflict-free protests. Moreover, a number of posts actually show cooperation between members of the security forces and protesters,[130] including several showing police and other officials handing out water to protesters during Ramadan.[131] The images and videos found on these pages seek to raise the profile of the movement, demonstrating the group's worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment while assuaging the fears of potential critics who might worry about violence or other criminal acts by protesters.

In a departure from many of the other movements examined in this research, the Tamarrod pages contain a large and statistically significant number of calls to action directed at supporters, totaling 178 in all. While a small number of posts encourage symbolic or vague commitment to the cause, the vast majority include locations, dates, and times, something not seen in the same magnitude on other pages examined in this research. Interestingly, the Tamarrod pages are the only pages examined in this research that make significant use of the "Event" function on Facebook, where users can create and promote events and examine RSVP lists in order to identify attendees and potential supporters via the social media site. The page "The Rebellion Movement in Tunis" contains 14 such events, with the number of invitees for each event ranging from 254 to 16,100; RSVP lists available on the same page indicate that hundreds of people planned

[129] حملة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 13 August 2013.
[130] حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 30 July 2013.
[131] Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) 28 July 2013.

to attend these events, reaching almost 2,000 for an event in Sousse on 26 August 2013,[132] although this is impossible to verify and far below the attendance estimates that the group gave on its pages after the events had passed. The majority of the attempts at mobilization, however, were initiated via online flyers, distributed across the pages. While these posts do represent a statistically significant portion of the overall number of posts, many of these posts are simply picture copies of handbills that would otherwise be distributed by the group in person. Thus, a large number of the posts do attempt to mobilize potential supporters via social media, but a smaller number take advantage of the unique promise offered by social media. However, while these are a small part of the total calls to action found on these pages, there are still a great number of posts that attempt to mobilize Tamarrod supporters while utilizing features unique to social media and a greater emphasis on encouraging attendance of protests on Tamarrod pages than is found on other pages.

Another form of outreach that was seen several times asked supporters to bring supplies, including water, fuel, and food, to Bardo to allow protesters to continue their sit-in in September of 2013.[133] This represents a unique combination of mobilization and page to person news, something not seen in the other movements examined in this research. Although we see far more attempts at mobilization on the Tamarrod pages than other movements examined in this research, this is likely in part influenced by the fact that – unlike other movements in this research – Tamarrod was a long term movement that took place in a time that Tunisia was liberalizing politically and concentrated many of actions in one physical location; no other movements examined in this research share all three

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[132] حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 26 August 2013.
[133] حركة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 26 July 2013.

characteristics and these factors do make reaching out to people via any means – whether by social media or traditional outreach – easier. In general, however, mobilization has a much larger presence on Tamarrod movement pages than any other movement examined in this research and reflects the fact that respondents who participated in the Tamarrod movement were more likely to cite social media as an initial point of contact with the movement than were those who participated in other movements.

Similar to political parties during the 2012 NCA elections, the Tamarrod movement's pages show a concentrated attempt by the movement to disseminate official information via Facebook. These official statements fall into three categories. The first type of post elucidates the movement's goals, methods, and beliefs; this is especially common in the movement's early stages as it tried to attract supporters with its nonviolent methods and anti-authoritarian goals.[134] The second type reminds readers that opponents of the movement have created fake pages to sow confusion among the ranks of supporters and implores supporters to only trust information from official Tamarrod pages.[135][136] The final type of post is that of promotion for Tamarrod itself or other like-minded pages or movements; these posts share slogans, images, and invitations to 'Like' or 'Follow' certain affiliated Facebook pages.[137] These official statements account for more than 50 of the total posts and are found almost exclusively in the movement's first month. They show that, like political parties during the 2011 NCA elections, Tamarrod was a highly organized movement and took advantage of the ease of communication afforded by social media to interact with the group's diverse base of supporters.

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[134] Ibid, 2 July 2013.
[135] Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) (Facebook) 4 July 2013.
[136] حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 4 July 2013.
[137] حركة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 11 July 2013.

This increased use of social media by the Tamarrod movement is seen in other types of posts as well. Similar to the pages examined in relation to the revolution, Tamarrod pages were used to distribute person to person (or page to person) news regarding breaking and unconfirmed events. The majority of these posts alert readers to either violence against protesters or political news from unconfirmed or unnamed sources. The former is reminiscent of pages from the revolution, when pages would share news regarding violence undertaken by police against protesters; here, the presence of pro-government 'militias' adds a further dimension to the page but the function is essentially the same: telling supporters and participants about security concerns during protests, whether from security forces,[138] supporters of the government[139], or obstacles that they might face upon their arrival – blockades, barbed wire, or other barriers.[140] Unconfirmed news stories or stories from unnamed sources are less common and tend to focus on political developments related to the transitional government, usually rumors that embarrass or undermine members of the ruling Troika coalition.[141][142] While political stories could be accessed anywhere, informing participants of ongoing security issues takes advantage of the unique promise of social media to subtly encourage protest by reducing the danger faced by those who do decide to mobilize.

Finally, national and international media coverage accounts for a significant number of total posts on the Tamarrod pages. Of these, roughly 100 originate from within Tunisia while only 19 come from international outlets. Of the Tunisian news agencies, the best

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[138] حملة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 27 July 2013.
[139] Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) (Facebook) 28 July 2013.
[140] حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 29 July 2013.
[141] Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) (Facebook 31 July 2013.
[142] Ibid, 5 October 2013.

represented here are Hiwar Tounsi, Nessma TV, Hannibal TV, Wataniyya, Shems FM, and Mosaiqe FM, although numerous Tunisian press agencies are represented in addition to these. Much of the press coverage from the movement's infancy in the summer of 2013 focuses on the group itself, explaining its goals and methods.[143][144] Similarly, much of the foreign coverage examines the Tunisian incarnation of Tamarrod, often comparing it to the movement's Egyptian counterpart.[145] However, during August of 2013, international content decreases considerably, with only three international stories found after 15 August 2013. The domestic coverage that remains broadens its focus; while many of these stories are political in nature and generally in line with the movement's goals, there is less coverage of the Tamarrod movement itself and a number of stories simply cover major news events within the country, including an earthquake and attempted suicide bombing, both in October 2013.[146][147] Almost all media posts on the page have a decidedly domestic focus, with limited attention paid to events outside of Tunisia. Here, administrators of the Tamarrod movement pages selectively employ favorable press coverage to elevate the movement's profile and alert potential supporters to relevant current events, taking advantage of the ease with which third party media is shared across sites like Facebook.

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[143] منظمو حركة "تمرد" للحكومة: شرعيتكم انتهت لهذه الأسباب from الجريدة التونسية, 3 July 2013, found in حركة تمرد تونس العاصمة (Facebook) 3 July 2013, (available at: http://aljarida.com.tn/slide-show/منظمو-حركة-تمرد-للحكومة-شرعيتكم-انتهت-لهذه-الأسباب) accessed 14 August 2014.
[144] الناطق الرسمي باسم حملة تمرد لـ«الشروق»:هدفنا تجميع مليوني توقيع from الشروق (Tunisia), 5 July 2013, found in Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) (Facebook) 5 July 2013 (available at: http://www.alchourouk.com/10360/151/1/الناطق -الرسمي-باسم-حملة -تمرد-هدفنا-:«الشروق»-لـ-تجميع-مليوني-توقيع-.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook) accessed 14 August 2014.
[145] هل سيكتب لتمرد تونس نجاح التمرد المصري؟ from France 24 (Arabic), 4 July 2013 found in Rebellion Tunisie (Officiel) (Facebook) 4 July 2013 (available at: http://www.france24.com/ar/20130704--تونس-النهضة-المرزوقي-تمرد-التونسية-راشد-الغنوشي-محمد-مرسي-عدلي-تكرار-سيناريو-/) accessed 15 August 2014.
[146] حركة تمرد تونس (Facebook) 18 October 2013.
[147] Ibid, 30 October 2013.

How do the data from the interviews and those gleaned from the movement's Facebook pages compare to each other? And how do they compare to the other movements examined? Tamarrod was the only movement in which a majority of respondents said that Facebook served as their initial point of contact with the movement. Similar to other movements, however, about half of those who learned of the movement via Facebook sought information from other sources, which ultimately pushed them to mobilize. Still, participants in this movement were more likely to rely on social media than the sample group and Tunisians in general. The pages of the movement tend to reflect this. Overall, the social media pages of the Tamarrod movement are more active than most other movements examined in this research on a variety of fronts, sharing more third party media, calling for attendance at more protests, and posting more examples of page to person news than the other movements examined in this research. Additionally, the pages make use of a number of features of social media – distributing news from their pages to facilitate safe and effective protests, publicizing protests online via social media invitations, and distributing video endorsements by public figures – to a greater degree than the pages of other movements examined in this research. Tamarrod's pages are also the only ones examined in this research that contain noticeable amounts logistical support enabled by social media, calling for people to bring specific supplies to an ongoing sit in outside the NCA headquarters in Bardo.

Still, much of the information found in our study of previous movements also holds true in examining the Tamarrod movement. The most common types of post on the Tamarrod movement pages were commentary and news, similar to the pages examined in relation to the 2012 Printemps des Arts Fair and the revolution, both of which featured significant

amounts of commentary and news about the events as they unfolded. While the use of social media for the purposes of mobilization was greater in examining the Tamarrod movement, many of the features remain the same for the pages of all movements. As before, the mere presence of calls to mobilization alone do not alone make a movement, whether offline or online; movements must establish their credibility among potential supporters before attempting to spur them to action. Finally, while interviewees who participated in the Tamarrod movement reported higher levels of internet use than the sample group and were more likely to cite social media as an initial point of contact with the movement than those who participated in other movements were, face to face communication was still the most commonly cited source among the respondents in ultimately pushing them to mobilize and many expressed distrust about a variety of media, including television and online sources.

Summary

What do the respondents' answers reveal about the sources that most often informed them of the movements that they participated in and contributed to their mobilization? The responses of participants reveal that while Facebook often served as an initial contact point for many, many respondents did not trust the site enough for it to serve as the sole source of information. In all four movements, Facebook was first or second most commonly mentioned initial point of contact; only in the case of Tamarrod did Facebook clearly outpace all other forms of initial contact. In each case, however, the number of people who said that Facebook also served as the source of information that ultimately persuaded them to join the movement was fewer than those who said it served as their introduction to the movement. Respondents expressed this repeatedly in the interviews,

suggesting that they often do not trust much of the information that is spread via social media. This suggests that although Facebook may effectively introduce people to a movement, information found on the site is neither trusted enough nor complete enough as a source of information to persuade most people to join a movement in the absence of other corroborating information.

Additionally, a number of participants indicated that personally directed communication within close existing networks – face to face conversations, phone calls, or SMS among close friends or family members – served as an initial contact point with a movement. In contrast to Facebook, respondents were more likely to turn to personally directed communication within close networks to further research a movement after initially learning of its existence, regardless of the medium that initially informed them. While many respondents said that they search out information from a variety of source – including social media – a large number said they are far more likely to trust information gained through conversations with friends and family. As such, a significant gap in trust exists between traditional forms of communication and newer forms of communication. Addressing this gap is necessary for any movement that desires to use social media to a greater degree than the movements examined in the previous pages, especially when encouraging potential supporters to devote their time and potentially risk their safety to participate in contentious activity. Similarly, researchers and analysts studying the role of social media need to examine the various levels of trust that a given population has for social media before attributing a causative element to a source that is potentially distrusted by large segments of the population.

Are these findings influenced by the young, urban nature of those in the sample group? Undoubtedly, the members of our group are more likely to have access to the internet and social media than the average Tunisian. This likely inflates the importance of social media to a degree; all other things being equal, an individual living far from an urban center is simply less likely to have access to such media and as such, social media would play a reduced role in such an individual's decision to mobilize. However, we have not found a role for social media that precludes mobilization in their absence. Rather, we have seen that social media serve as useful compliments to less technologically dependent forms of communication. This could be challenged by future research that shows a fundamentally different path of mobilization for those living outside of city centers or those who are older and might therefore be less likely to use Facebook, but there is no reason to believe that mobilization takes place in rural areas any differently than in city centers, save access to social media and other internet-dependent technologies.

What do the pages reveal about how movements use these tools? The pages indicate that social movements can and often do use Facebook for a variety of purposes, including sharing news, media coverage, commentary, and extending calls for mobilization to potential supporters. Attempts at mobilization, however, are a minority of the posts found on each page and never represent a plurality of posts on a given page. In the case of the elections, there are many attempts at mobilization but a relatively small number come in the form of material designed specifically for an online audience. Here, we see that while mobilization is often the goal of the movements in question, they use a variety of postings to intrigue, inform, and ultimately mobilize potential supporters. Regardless, pages from

all movements use the unique promise of social media to distribute information useful to those who would like to mobilize or have already made the decision to do so. One type of post found on several pages, news designed for those who are or soon will be engaged in protest – page to person news – does have the potential to impact mobilization but its level of impact is difficult to measure from the data present. It is likely that such forms of news could reduce the associated cost of protesting by ensuring protesters' safety; however determining how much and in what way this occurs is not possible from the data that we have seen.

While the members of the sample group tended to indicate that they participated in movements that were more liberal than conservative, examining the information found on the pages of a variety of movements indicates that SMOs of all stripes can and do use social media to reach out to potential supporters. While the nature of this mobilization certainly could vary – and further research should be done discerning how different ideological orientations influence groups' online outreach – it is safe to assume that while the movements may have different goals, groups across the ideological spectrum seek to utilize social media to attract and maintain support, often pushing them to action.

Overall, Facebook can and does seem to play a role in brokerage and diffusion, spreading a movement's message among receptive audiences within Tunisia, but interactions and information from the site alone are not sufficient to effectively ultimately mobilizes potential participants. While addressing this trust gap could facilitate greater use of the site by movements, the "rumors" cited by numerous respondents as the source of their distrust cut to the heart of the social media experience: sharing information from one person to another is the goal of the site. Although several pages make mention of rumors

or other issues that could sow distrust – spreading information of intelligence services creating fake pages during the revolution or Tamarrod issuing statements reminding people to only join official Tamarrod pages, for example – it is difficult for a page to attack opponents for spreading false information regarding a group without first establishing its credibility.

Many pages established this credibility outside of social media: Nawaat is a news outlet and blog with significant clout, the pages of major political parties feature videos and official party material to ensure the pages' credibility, and Tamarrod engaged in a substantial amount of on the ground activity at the same time that their social media pages were filling up with other calls to action. Thus, while many of the pages did in fact use social media to communicate with their supporters, they alo engaged in a substantial amount of action outside of social media. While it does not seem to be a mere corollary to mobilization, social media pages do not alone cause movements to spread. Rather, they ease the distribution of numerous types of material – videos, pamphlets, and pictures – that would have previously been more difficult to distribute or left movements at the mercy of major news outlets. The presence of social media does allow SMOs to expand their audience beyond what might have previously been feasible but movements cannot mount effective campaigns without effective, in-person organizing and much of the material circulated on these pages is still the byproduct – directly or indirectly – of in-person work done by activists.

Section 4: Findings

What have we found in this research? Are Tunisians using social media? And what is the role of social media in informing individuals of ongoing social movements: are they effective brokers and diffusers, or do they fulfill some other kind of function? Through the analysis of roughly 3,000 Facebook posts from 21 different Facebook pages and interviews with 40 Tunisians, we have come to the following conclusions.

Finding #1: *Tunisian Facebook pages cater to, and are used by, Tunisians.*

There is ample evidence among the pages and posts examined in this research to establish that the primary targets and users of these pages are Tunisians. While they are certainly of use to foreign observers – and can sometimes be started for such a purpose explicitly – we see that the goal of most of the pages examined in this research is to communicate with a Tunisian audience. We see this by looking at the languages used by the pages and the media and cultural references shared therein.

The language use on the examined pages is a key indicator that these pages aim in large part to facilitate communication among Tunisians. Overall, Arabic serves as the primary language of communication on these pages, with French being coming a distant second in most cases; most pages contain at least some mixing of the two languages. Only four pages – Ettakatol, Afek Tounes, Nawaat, and Takriz – feature an amount of content in French that surpasses or comes close to surpassing the amount of content in Arabic. Similarly, English is rarely found on the pages examined in this research; only three pages – Nawaat, Support Tunisia, and Supporters of the Tunisian Revolution – feature a significant amount of content in English, with the latter two pages being set up for the

purpose of connecting those outside of Tunisia to the events going on inside of the country during the revolution, as evidenced by the information found in the postings on the page. It is noteworthy that only two movements feature any significant contributions to content in languages other Arabic; in both cases – the revolution and the 2011 NCA elections – connecting with people outside of the country was a vital part of the movement. In the case of the revolution, connecting with those outside of the country was important in drawing attention to the events when media coverage of events inside the country – to foreigners and Tunisians alike – was limited. In the case of the elections, a key constituency – Tunisians living abroad – could have felt alienated if parties did not attempt to communicate them. While there are clearly attempts by some pages to reach out to a global audience, this does not represent the majority of the pages examined.

Additionally, Tunisian Arabic has a small but notable presence on Tunisian Facebook pages. The dialect is featured in videos, cartoons, and posts from all movements, although some pages – such as the Ennahdha movement – typically refrain from using it. Its presence in both spoken and written forms indicate that the administrators of these pages write to an audience that is fluent in both Arabic and French, as well as the Tunisian dialect written in Latin and Arabic script. Tunisian Arabic is also used in references to numerous aspects of Tunisian culture – including food and music – that indicate that someone who wanted to follow the conversations found on the pages most effectively would need to be well-versed in the local dialect and various aspects of Tunisian culture. Overall, the blending of Tunisian Arabic, MSA, and French, along with numerous references to Tunisian culture found on the pages suggests these pages are likely used – mostly but not necessarily exclusively – by Tunisians.

<u>Finding 2:</u> *The goal of movements' use of social media includes – but is not limited to – attempts at mobilization.*

Attempts at mobilization are seen in pages affiliated with each movement. In all cases, however, these attempts exist alongside a number of other types of posts. Users and administrators utilize Facebook pages to discuss a movement's goals, share relevant media coverage or official statements, and share relevant pieces of breaking news, often in the absence of other credible sources or in times of violence.

Even in cases where a substantial number of posts are found attempting to mobilize readers, they are found among a variety of other types of posts. In numerous pages, there are either no attempts at mobilization, or an extremely small number; none of the pages examined in this research successfully launched large scale protests regarding the 2012 Printemps des Arts fair. Similarly, while some pages associated with the revolution call readers to attend protests or engage in other actions, the existence of these posts alone does not adequately explain how protests and violence came to be: many of the events began before the pages became active participants in the revolution and they do not mention a number of events that were significant in the revolution's success or only mention such events after they were completed. While the Tamarrod Movement contains a substantial number of calls for supporters of the movement to mobilize, the movement's signature strategy – an on and offline petition – predates the group's online mobilization attempts and has a limited presence on the movement's Facebook pages. For the most successful movements examined in this research – the revolution, the 2011 NCA elections, and the Tamarrod movement – online activity was preceded by substantial activity outside of the social media realm.

In addition to mobilization, we have seen that there are other ways that social media can aid movements of all stripes. Independent videos, commentary, relevant media coverage, footage produced specifically for distribution on social media, and footage from protests all work to explain a group's message, methods, and successes and raise a group's profile using the low-cost communication tool of social media. Several of these functions speak to what Charles Tilley refers to as WUNC: showing the peaceful and respectable nature of protesters, highlighting unity towards an achievable goal, emphasizing the level of support in terms of numbers of supporters at movement events, and showing commitment to the movement's goals in the face of police or other opposition. This is particularly acute in videos of protests, as many of the clips simply show columns of protesters marching or chanting, or show aggression on the part of authorities; these videos seek to gain support by demonstrating that the group in question is respectable. While grievance alone does not ignite protest, it does form the basis of movements and sharing commentary is an excellent way to spread ideas revolving around grievance, reminding potentially isolated people that they are in fact not alone, while also galvanizing support among a diverse group of people around a single goal or message.

Finally, the person to person news found on many of these pages, while not an explanation of mobilization in and of itself, is an exceptional resource for those who are already mobilized, allowing participants to avoid violent confrontations – reducing casualties in the process – and therefore reduce the potential costs of participating in protests and increase their efficacy through smarter, better-coordinated action. This can, in turn, encourage mobilization, but measuring this effect is difficult. These social media tools are clearly used in three of the four movements in question – excluding the 2011

NCA elections – and their use serves as a reminder that social media can provide invaluable resources to those who have already mobilized by reducing the danger associated with attending protests.

<u>Finding #3:</u> *Facebook is an effective tool for brokerage and diffusion but not trusted enough to serve as the sole source of information for most people.*

The interviews conducted for this research indicate that Facebook can and does serve as an effective initial point of contact for many; in three of the four movements, it was the first or second most commonly mentioned point of initial contact with a movement. In these three cases, however, the number of people who said that Facebook was the source from which they learned more about a movement was lower than the number of people who indicated that the social media site was their initial point of contact. People cited many reasons for this, the most common of which was the unreliability of information found on the site. Additional reasons included a general dislike for the internet or social media and a preference for personal communication among existing networks. Interestingly, roughly two thirds of the respondents indicated they believe Facebook plays a dominant role in mobilizing people on behalf of social movements in Tunisia. Those who participated in multiple movements were slightly more likely to express a dissenting view, but the overall feeling of the group was that Facebook is an important tool in shaping people's opinions and pushing them to act. In several cases, people credited Facebook with contributing greatly to mobilization in Tunisia when they themselves were not mobilized by a form of social media. While social media play a great role in spreading information, the data from this research shows that in many cases,

social media alone cannot be said to be the driving force behind people's decisions to mobilize.

Standing alongside social media in almost every case is personally directed communication among close networks, particularly face to face communication among friends and family members. When asked what sources of information they accessed to better inform themselves and which they found most persuasive, respondents were more likely to cite face to face communication with friends and family that social media. Beyond face to face communication, people cited a variety of sources – television, blogs, phone and SMS conversations, and online news outlets – in addition to social media as sources that they found to be persuasive.

Overall, this suggests that while social media use is growing, it continues to exist alongside several other forms of communication. Additionally, while Facebook serves as a crucial vehicle for disseminating and accessing new information, as evidenced by the number of people who cited it as there initial contact point with a movement, the unreliability of social media often causes people to seek information from other sources to verify the story and better inform their opinions. Thus, Facebook, with its greatly reduced cost of communicating to a large and geographically distributed populace, facilitates communication to a larger audience but many people do not trust it enough for it to serve as their sole source of information regarding ongoing news events and SMOs.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What have we learned about how mobilization and social media interact? In what ways does this research contribute to a growing body of knowledge concerning the uses of social media in our constantly evolving age? We have examined the media consumption habits of Tunisia, comparing them with those of the individuals who participated in this study, looking for a role for social media. We have also examined the pages themselves, looking to see if Tunisians are among the likely consumers of the information found on these pages. Finally, we have looked to both the respondents' answers to our research questions, as well as the pages of the movements examined in this research, in order to determine what sources of information are most likely to inform individuals of a movement's existence and ultimately push them to act. How have we answered these questions?

In our research, we have reached three distinct findings. First, social media are a definite part of the Tunisian media consumer's diet, but exist alongside a variety of other media; although they play a role in spreading news around the country, social media cannot be said to displace other forms of media. Second, we have demonstrated that although Facebook pages *can* transcend national boundaries – putting activists in touch with supporters in other countries – they are also used to facilitate communication among a domestic audience. With the exception of pages associated with the revolution, few pages contain appeals to those living outside of Tunisia and those that do generally limited their appeals to Tunisia's expat community during the 2011 NCA elections. Third, we have demonstrated that although Facebook pages often introduce people to movements, they are often not sufficient in and of themselves to cause individuals to join a movement. In

looking at the information found on the pages themselves, we see that mobilization is but one part of the movement's overall social media existence. What are the implications of these answers?

With regards to brokerage and diffusion, we have seen the two mechanisms, brokerage and diffusion, at work in the online interactions of the respondents. In many cases, the respondents did in fact learn of the movement(s) that they participated in via social media, although this was not always the case and other forms of communication, notably face to face communication with close friends or family members, were also likely to initially inform the respondents of the existence of the movement. However, we have also seen that information from social media alone were not sufficient cause to join a movement for most of the respondents; respondents were more likely to attribute their final decision to mobilize to conversations that took place within tight social networks than any other source. Ultimately, this leads us to confirm our initial hypothesis: although social media can serve as introductions to an SMO, they are not yet trusted enough to spur individuals to action in and of themselves and are better understood as a source that piques the interest of users, causing them to conduct research elsewhere before ultimately making a decision to mobilize.

Are social media use and mobilization mere corollaries? The results here are mixed: a sizable portion of participants in each movement indicated that they did indeed initially learn of the movement via social media, but an even larger number agreed that they ultimately swayed to action by sources that were decidedly low tech, usually conversations within a close social network. Therefore, as brokers and diffusers, social media are effective but to a limited degree. The research here demonstrates that no

movement succeeded entirely through online action. While one woman did indicate that her participation in the revolution was limited to online action – as did another man active during the Printemps des Arts Fair – most respondents indicated that their participation took place outside of the internet and social media; with two exceptions, respondents did not include 'online activism' when mentioning their involvement with SMOs. Thus, the idea of 'connective action'[148] – mobilization that takes place online through the sharing of easily personalized frames – does not fit much of the mobilization found in the movements examined here: respondents indicated that they were more likely to be persuaded by a movement's offline outreach and generally considered activity within an SMO to be limited to actions undertaken offline. While some attempts at connective action can be found among the pages – notably among the endorsements of different Tunisian celebrities during the Tamarrod movement – most attempts to galvanize support and encourage action found on the pages, even among those there are easily transferable across social media – such as the attempt on the Ennahdha page to encourage people to put up graffiti supporting respect for sacred values – take place offline and encourage physical, concrete action. Even among movements that had limited access to the types of resources that professional SMOs might possess – three of the movements examined in this research – social media tend to be used to facilitate offline action and the pages of the movements do not include large amounts of user-generated content that falls into a frame associated with the movement.

Does this mean that movement's shy away from drumming up support for contentious action on social media? Not at all. Movements can and do attempt to mobilize supporters

[148] W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg "The Logic of Connective Action," *Information, Communication, & Society* 15, no. 5 (June 2012): 756.

via social media; this was seen to a greater degree in the Tamarrod movement, but present in some form among each movement. However, their online output reflects a much broader conversation, aimed at increasing the groups' prestige, dispensing relevant or favorable news to supporters, and finally mobilizing them. In this way, social media is but one small part of movements' outreach; for example, although Tamarrod's pages feature numerous calls to attend protests, these coexist along with a number of posts explaining the political orientation of the group, highlighting favorable press coverage, and distributing news relevant to those engaging in protests. While posts that reduce the danger associated with protests could certainly encourage more to join in the movement's activities, it cannot be said in and of itself to cause mobilization; a change in the relative opportunity costs is not the sole determiner of individual's decision to mobilize and was not mentioned by any of the respondents who said that social media played an important role in their decisions to mobilize. Thus, while social media can play a role in mobilization, the relationship is more complex than simply increasing the visibility of a group's message or reducing the costs associated with joining a movement's activities.

Implications for Future Research

These findings are not a challenge to the idea that social media can in fact aid movements; on the contrary, a number of individuals learned of movements via social media, including those who said it provided them with all of the necessary information to participate in a cause, and a few individuals indicated that for them, online action *is* a form of contentious politicking. For the vast majority of participants, however, social media are simply a tool to complement in person organizing, providing an overview of a group before conducting further research on the movement elsewhere. Social media can

and do serve as effective portals for these movements, allowing curious citizens the opportunity to see a bit about the movement before deciding to learn more, either from social media or a potentially more trusted source. If these findings are validated in other research, it forces us to examine sources of information in a way that acknowledges their multi-tiered nature, differentiating between those that initially inform supporters and those that ultimately push them to action. More research should be done on complementary roles of offline and online social networks, using controls to see what types of information from different sources prove most effective in encouraging participation in movements. Understanding the difference between these types of sources would allow movements to more efficiently mobilize supporters and researchers to better understand the mobilization process through the eyes of a movement's participants. If movements can address the issue of trust in social media, they very well may find themselves putting more of their efforts in mobilization into sites like Facebook.

As the usage of the internet and social media in Tunisia increases, social media could be viewed as more trustworthy and complete, playing a growing role in SMOs. For the movements examined in this research, however, social media are an effective complement for SMOs to their regular activities, but not a substitute. For researchers, this means paying close attention to activists themselves, examining social media only in conjunction with a group's other activities. For movements, this could mean building up online credibility so as to make their online activities as trustworthy as in person events – should they deem it more cost-effective – in terms of time and money – than the alternatives. Ultimately, it is the individuals who decide to participate in movements who play the largest role in deciding what media will be most effective in their mobilization,

voting with their feet, or – perhaps in the future – their tweets. While movements can work to build online infrastructure, an untrustworthy source cannot spur people to action and can only occasionally strike curiosity. Bridging the trust gap is key in online mobilization, and movements will likely work to do this in the future if they deem online mobilization more effective than offline efforts.

Additionally, a number of other approaches could be attempted in the future to improve upon, challenge, or look more closely at the findings of this research. Obviously, this research's methods – looking at pages for content and intended audience while asking those active within a movement how they were mobilized – could be replicated in a number of different areas. This research was in part inspired by a study conducted by Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson regarding social media and mobilization in the Egyptian revolution and could easily be transplanted to a number of Arab countries, especially given the multilingual nature of many countries in the MENA region. While examining the target audience of social media pages with language may prove difficult in other environments, a number of other features – references to local landmarks and culture or direct references to people outside of a given area – could be used in a similar way to language in this study. Additionally, further research could be done examining the applicability of this research's findings to those living in rural areas, who might be less likely to have internet access or use social media sites in different ways due to their geographic isolation. Similar research into the social media usage patterns of those who are older than the sample group here could also prove elucidating.

Finally, further research could be done on other movements within Tunisia, including strikes and the upcoming elections. A cursory look at the pages of major political parties

at the time of this writing reveals a much heavier emphasis on social media output than during the 2011 NCA elections; this could mean that parties are engaging more heavily in outreach via social media and thus build on or challenge the findings of this research with regard to the use of social media by major political parties. Finally, this research included hundreds of videos and articles from Tunisian Facebook pages, many of them shared from other pages. It would be very interesting to map the interaction of third party sites on different social media pages, examining attention to their origins and content.

Rebuttal

This research relies heavily on the responses of 40 individuals who agreed to be interviewed regarding their media consumption habits and activities in the four movements examined in this research. The 40 individuals were identified via snowball sampling, meaning that each successful interview ended with attempts to identify more potential subjects based on an individual's personal network. Of the 40 who participated in this research, 36 had access to the internet in their homes; the four who lacked home internet access all maintained active social media accounts. This sample group is far more connected than Tunisia as a whole, where less than 50% percent of people have a social media account and a similar number lack internet access.[149]

Does this disproportionate use of social media among the respondents affect the findings of this research? If social media use was correlated with high levels of activism – something that this research does not suggest – this could have led to the relatively high level of activism seen among the sample pool, at 28 of the 40 individuals interviewed, or

[149] Arab Social Media Report VI
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70%. While this criticism is legitimate, it would seem that such a bias would increase the relevance of social media or, in extreme cases, lead to the exclusion of other types of media. On the contrary, this research finds that most respondents use social media and other internet-based forms of media in conjunction with less technologically dependent media. Additionally, given that the goal of this research is to understand how social media influence potential entrance into a movement, such a bias is natural, as a greater number of social media users leads to more nuanced, richer findings. Finally, as volunteers needed to be willing to discuss their participation in often controversial movements, there were no alternatives other than to accept the responses of those who willingly participated in this research. As such, unrepresentative sample groups are understandable but likely unavoidable, especially when using small sample groups to elicit detailed, qualitative responses.

Similarly, as these interviews were conducted in and around Tunisia's capital, the sample group disproportionately reflects an urban environment. While it is certainly possible that many in the sample group had previously lived in an rural area, they would still likely enjoy access to the resources in that an urban area provides unless such a move had happened recently (interviews were conducted months after the final movement in this research, Tamarrod, had completed much of its activities). Could this affect the findings? Undoubtedly, those living in urban areas like the capital have greater access to the internet, thus over representing those who would likely indicate that social media play an important role in contentious politics in Tunisia. Again, while this is an important and interesting question that could be examined in future research, it is not the goal of this research to define a causal role for social media in mobilization and contentious politics;

rather, we have examined in what ways Tunisians use social media in contentious politics and whether or not they can serve as effective brokers and diffusers. While we have found that movements can and do use social media to reach out to potential supporters, they also engage a number of offline forms of outreach to reach those who lack internet access. Additionally, our sample group indicated that while social media often helped them learn of social movements, they also used other sources. Research on the use of social media in rural areas and the mobilization patterns of those who lack internet access would shed important light on these topics. This research, however, does not make claims that internet and social use is any way necessary for an individual to be an active and contributing member to any SMO.

Closing

Research examining social media will continue to expand in the future and adapt to changes in technology. As technology changes, so too will its uses by SMOs. For the last 20 years, the march of technology has pushed the power of communication forward at exponentially increasing speeds. Who knows what future technologies will put in the hands of the young activist? Until that point, we must continue to seek to understand technology and social media as it conforms to and challenges our previous understandings of contentious politics. By continuing to examine how technological leaps coexist with, alter, or refute previous research into contentious politics, we can better understand whether or not technology and social media coexist with our traditional understanding of contentious politics or fundamentally alter the calculations of researchers, SMOs, and individual supporters.

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