Roots, Routes, Routers:
Communications and Media
of Contemporary Social Movements

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Abstract
This monograph is an interdisciplinary analysis of the complexity of communications and media as they are embedded in the making and development of contemporary social movements, in three parts. The first part, *Roots*, provides a broad context for analyzing communications and media of contemporary social movements by tracing varied and multifaceted *roots* of the wave of global protests since 2010. The second part, *Routes*, maps out the *routes* that social movements take, trace how communications and media are entangled in these routes, and identify various key mechanisms occurring at various junctures of movements' life cycles. The last part, *Routers*, explores roles of human and nonhuman, fixed and mobile, traditional and contemporary, digital and analog, permanent and temporal *routers* in the making and development of social movements. These analyses of *roots, routes*, and *routers* are mutually intertwined in broadening and deepening our understanding of the complexity of communications and media in contemporary social movements.

Keywords
digital media, social media, social movements, communication, networks

On February 17, 2017, Facebook co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg posted online a 5,734-word mission statement that mapped out the platform's agenda for social change (Zuckerberg, 2017). According to this statement, Facebook's purpose is bigger

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than simply "connecting friends and families" and now includes developing "the 'social infrastructure' to give people the power to build a global community that works for all of us" (Zuckerberg, 2017). Zuckerberg's statement also asserted that Facebook can help communities become supportive, safe, informed, civically engaged, and inclusive. Zuckerberg is not alone in this conviction. Many technological determinists see technology as an active agent that determines human actions, causes as well as solves societal problems, and even drives changes in society. The belief that technical means, technological developments, or technology in general, are the prime cause of changes in society (Chandler, 2000) is now a highly common myth about technology. As a result of such technological deterministic thinking, Facebook has been accused of single-handedly facilitating the proliferation of fake news and pushing society to the post-truth era but is also believed to be able to fix the consequences associated with that social media platform (Bershidsky, 2017).

Six years earlier, Western news media credited social media, especially Facebook, as the primary force behind the popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region (Huang, 2011; Vargas, 2012; Webster, 2011). The *New York Times* even anointed Mark Zuckerberg as the faraway leader of the Arab revolution (Cohen, 2011). Expectedly, scholarly assessments of the events were more cautious and their analyses were more nuanced than those of journalists. Some scholars recognized social media as neutral tools assisting activists or accelerating movements (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2011). Others have identified both the capacities as well as the limitations of social media (Golkar, 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Solow-Niederman, 2010; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Some, having explored the complexities of the uprisings beyond the role of technology, proposed that communication phenomena are tightly woven with historical, political, and cultural processes (Gerbaudo, 2012; Lim, 2012, 2013; Moussa, 2013). Nevertheless, a very large volume of work implied that mass mobilization for social changes can occur principally through social media activism (see Bhuiyan, 2011; Harb, 2011; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Mansour, 2012). In a systematic analysis of 79 journal articles on the MENA uprisings published between 2009, when the Iranian movement transpired, and the end of 2014, Alrasheed (2017) observed that the majority of these pieces tend to reproduce techno-utopian discourse. In this discourse,

> the progressive notion of the revolution . . . , in conjunction with the belief that technology as part of *progress*, has energized the notion that new communication technologies can revolutionize, make, enhance, or replace the path to democracy in the region of MENA. (Alrasheed, 2017, p. 223)

Beyond the Arab uprisings, media commentaries and scholarly work on many popular movements that emerged from 2010 to 2016 continue to be predisposed, subtly or explicitly, to technological determinism, casting social media as the catalyst—the machine or the main instrument behind either progressive or regressive activism (Cohen, 2017; Friedman, 2016). The 2014 Occupy Central Hong Kong protests, for example, were largely covered and discussed from social media lenses, with

over-attention to the role of Instagram. When the protests, often called the Umbrella Movement, began in business districts of Hong Kong in September 2014, participants' main demand was full democracy, namely, the right to nominate and directly elect the Chief Executive, the head of the Hong Kong government.[1] Yet, the struggle, which involved more than 100,000 people of Hong Kong, is framed as a "digitized fight" (Sile, 2015) with social media as "an insurgent public sphere" (Lee, So, & Leung, 2015). Similarly, scholarly work on the Bersih movement in Malaysia, too, has tended to be social media centric. Bersih (meaning clean in Malay), or the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election, is a coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) founded in 2006 that seeks to reform Malaysia's existing electoral system by addressing pervasive electoral misconduct. The coalition successfully mobilized five mass rallies since 2007. In analyzing Malaysia's Bersih protests, scholars hailed social media as a platform for change (Tapsell, 2013), arguing that social media "can mobilize the masses" (Leong, 2016), empower the people, and change the country's political landscape (Muniandy & Muniandy, 2013).

Rodríguez, Ferron, and Shamas (2014) observed that the preoccupation with social media drives inquiry to emphasize the role of technology, erasing socio-political and historical contexts, and subsequently rendering human agency invisible. Furthermore, they argued, research on communication for social change needs to address four challenges, namely, accounting for historical context, acknowledging the complexity of communication processes, anchoring analysis in a political economy of information and communication technologies, and finally, positioning new research in relation to existing knowledge and literature within the field of communication and social change (Rodríguez et al., 2014). Meanwhile, in their review of digital activism scholarship, Treré, Jeppesen, and Mattoni (2017) identified three biases:

> The media-centric bias in communications research that tends to neglect social movements; the ahistorical bias in media research that risks ignoring the socio-political and cultural conditions; and the hyperlocal bias in social movement studies that ignores the global network society. (p. 416)

To tackle these biases, they proposed a multidisciplinary framework of analysis that combines communications and social movement research and focuses on the importance of translocal media imaginaries as they shape movement repertoires of contention and communications (Treré et al., 2017).

Built on my previous and current research on socio-political implications of digital media in MENA and Asia as well as informed by an awareness of biases, challenges, and research directions suggested by Rodríguez et al. (2014) and Treré et al. (2017), in this monograph, I pursue an interdisciplinary framework to explore the complexity of communications and media as they are embedded in the making and development of contemporary social movements. Grounding in the empirical contexts of Tunisia, Egypt, Malaysia, and Hong Kong and employing the metaphors of *roots, routes*,[2] and *routers*, my analysis comprises three parts. In the first part, *Roots*, I sketch out a broad context for analyzing communications and media of contemporary social movements

by tracing varied and multifaceted *roots* of the wave of global protests since 2010. In the second part, *Routes*, I map out the *routes* that social movements take, trace how communications and media are entangled in these routes, and identify various key mechanisms occurring at various junctures of movements' life cycles. In the last part, *Routers*, I explore roles of human and nonhuman, fixed and mobile, traditional and contemporary, digital and analog, and permanent and temporal *routers* in the making and development of social movements. These analyses of *roots, routes*, and *routers* are mutually intertwined in broadening and deepening our understanding of the complexity of communications and media in contemporary social movements.

Part I. Roots

What was the root cause of the Arab uprisings? Did social media cause the Arab uprisings? These two questions were very frequently asked with regard to the emergence of protests and demonstrations across the MENA countries that commenced in 2010. The second question is easy to answer. The answer is simply no. In contrast, the first one has no simple answer. Root causes are popular in discussions on protests, riots, demonstrations, social movements, and any other types of collective actions. The term *root cause* is commonly used to describe the deepest cause in a causal chain which would prevent the problem from occurring if they are resolved. In the case of popular uprisings, the root cause is a particular part of a societal system, at the fundamental level, that explains why the system produces a certain collective behavior rather than some other behaviors.

Scholars agree that uncovering the root causes of any collective action and social movement is important. Nevertheless, scholars have different views about what constitutes a root cause and at what level root causes exist, and establishing a causal relationship between movements and their presumed causes is difficult. In the context of the Arab uprisings, for example, some scholars argued that the root cause was the youth bulge, a demographic factor that exacerbated conditions such as unemployment and poverty, resulting in security issues such as radicalization and inter-ethnic conflicts (LaGraffe, 2012). Most political analysts agreed that the root causes were economic deterioration, corrupt government, repressive regimes, and lack of freedom (Salih, 2013). In his analysis, Achcar (2013) agreed with all of the above explanations but further argued that the emergence of young Arabs making intensive use of digital media greatly contributed to the uprisings. Which ones of these were the root causes?

Protest movements can be categorized as complex events. Due to their complexities, no empirical models exist that can explain the causal chains that would lead to such complex events (Renn, Jovanovic, & Schröter, 2011). A multitude of potential factors can contribute to the formation of movements. In general, most of the factors identified interact with social movements in a nonlinear relationship, many causal factors are simply unknown, and, most importantly, most factors are highly dependent on sociocultural and political contexts, and historical conditions (Renn et al., 2011).

In this first part of the monograph, I neither attempt to identify any root causes nor develop a causal relationship between any societal factor and the rise of protests.

Rather, I attempt to map a mosaic of factors contributing to the uprisings—multiple, diverse, and intertwined *roots*, some of which are deeper seated than others—that represent a variety of social, spatial, and temporal relations to reveal commonalities as well as complexities of contemporary popular protests globally, with emphasis on the MENA region and Asia.[3] The *roots* map provides a broad context for analyzing the communications and media of contemporary social movements.

Spatial Roots: From Global to National and Local

The Zapatista uprising, which started in 1994, and the Battle of Seattle in 1999 are frequently cited as two iconic illustrations of social movements in the Internet era.[4] The Zapatista case is often framed as "the first major Internet-based campaign of the anti-globalization movement" (Warschauer, 2004, p. 192). At the time of the Battle of Seattle, anti–World Trade Organization (WTO) protesters were described as "autonomous but Internet-worked squads of demonstrators protesting used 'swarming' tactics, mobile phones, websites, laptops and PDAs to win [the battle]" (McCarthy, Miller, & Skidmore, 2004, p. 192). Both are used to demonstrate how the Internet globalized social movements and shaped their protest tactics and tools (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). The incorporation of the Internet in global activism was deemed one of the most significant innovations in protest practices in the 1990s, which has "given social movements new and improved opportunities to engage in social and political actions" (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010, p. 1146). This led scholars to envision "a future of social movements that is increasingly global in both target and in form and that is in a more direct confrontation with global institutions than its historical predecessors" (Smith, 2001, p. 1)

Without sidelining the role of the Internet in global activism in the 1990s and early 2000s, it is important to point out that transnational movements existed prior to the Internet era. Likewise, while the Internet is essential for communication and the dissemination of information, the technology alone did not globalize the movements. Simply put, transnational social movements emerged as a response to and a consequence of the global economic liberalization that took a dramatic turn in the 1990s. Here, the Internet's role was to assist activists to reach vast and dispersed communities, making it easier to establish a transnational and global network (Smith, 2001). The transnational and global expansion of communication and information networks was indeed "compatible with transnational issues that dominated the wave of protests" in the 1990s (Lim, 2018, p. 12). Moreover, while the Internet undoubtedly was important in communicating and disseminating Zapatistas' messages, information technologies are communicative tools that should not be mistaken for social actions (Khasnabish, 2013).

In the latest wave since 2010, protests were distributed globally. They were occurring in every region, including the Middle East and Asia, and in every major regime category, from authoritarian countries to democracies (Carothers & Youngs, 2015). Unlike the wave of protests in the 1980s and 1990s, however, recent protests were not global in nature. They were translocal in character and their scopes of activism have

scaled back to local and national levels. Protests that spread globally often developed from similar issues, such as corruption and economic inequalities, but most were ingrained in national and local debates and concerns (Carothers & Youngs, 2015).

In 2018, more than 20 years since the Internet became commercialized, almost half of the world's population is online. The Internet has become more globally available and, yet, increasingly local in character. With the growing popularity of social media, the technology has become embedded in various aspects of society, including politics, especially among the urban middle class. Social media platforms have become integral to everyday communication practices and are immersed in conversations and exchanges that reflect translocal sociality, including gripes and grievances grounded in local and national settings.

Temporal Roots: Long-Term Enablers, Short-Term Causes, and Immediate Triggers

Most social movements stem from multiple roots. Some roots are more entrenched and deeper seated than others. They subsist in different temporalities. Some developed over decades and others over years, months, or even days. Large-scale protests, including those unraveled in the MENA region and Asia, are enabled by complex structural factors that reflect long-term conditions, but are driven by short-term causes that stipulate immediate milieus, and sparked by immediate triggers that are usually local.

Long-term enablers. Understanding how protest movements occur first requires considering the structural factors, which encompass technological, economic, and political elements of change (Carothers & Youngs, 2015). These long-term enablers have usually been brewing for many years and provide the fundamental conditions for collective grievances to develop (Lim, 2018).

Three main long-term enabling conditions can be identified from the latest wave of popular protests. First, a failed reform and/or problematic democratic transition (Carothers & Youngs, 2015). The 1980s and 1980 were marked by the wave of protests that, to a certain degree, contributed to economic and/or political reform in many countries. The larger trend of political development had increased citizens' awareness of their rights and expectations for accountable, clean, and effective governance. In most countries in the MENA region and Asia, however, the so-called reform stopped progressing and/or failed to bring the transitions to democracy, leaving citizens dissatisfied with how democracy functions in practice. This made many of these countries fertile soil for protests (Carothers & Youngs, 2015).

Second, the rise of urban middle class globally, especially in the MENA region and Asia, propelled by rapid economic growth in the last two decades. This does not mean that the middle class is always a motor for more social, economic, and political justice for all; in fact, they have not. In the mining revolt in Gafsa, Tunisia, the textile workers' strike in Mahalla, Egypt, and Hindraf (Hindu Rights Action Force)[5] protests in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the poor and marginalized populations were at the forefront

of justice protests. However, the massive participation of the urban middle-class population, who joined the protests of the poor, made the uprisings possible. Indeed, during the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011, protests were sparked by an event in poor areas but the urban middle class was an essential element of the wave of protests, with vast sections of the middle class taking to the streets from Tunis to Cairo, from Sana'a to Manama.

Large-scale protests in Asia, too, as exemplified by the Occupy Central Hong Kong and the Malaysian Bersih movements, were highly urbanized and predominantly rooted in middle-class driven causes. The urban middle class participation in the protests was not necessarily provoked by the concern for social justice, but by their growing and widely shared dissatisfaction with the quality of life. On one hand, the urban middle class "develop expectations beyond material goals and gain access to education, travel, communication technologies, and other resources that give them new perspectives and capabilities" (Carothers & Youngs, 2015, p. 6). On other hand, they are frustrated by the lack of job opportunities, poor quality public services, and the lack of government accountability. Socioeconomic exclusion of a large portion of the middle-class population and stark inequalities produce the increasing gap between expectations and realities which, in turn, can potentially become a basis for collective resistance (Lim, 2018).

The third long-term enabling factor is the rise of civic engagement and citizen participation, assisted by the mushrooming of nongovernmental and civil society organizations all over the world, particularly in countries where civil society was previously weak or nonexistent (Carothers & Youngs, 2015). Between 2010 and 2011, there were more than 9,000 NGOs in Tunisia (Brudzińska, 2014), 30,000 in Egypt (Hassan, 2011), 14,000 in Malaysia (Nesadurai, 2012), and 3,000 in Hong Kong (Chan, Lou, & Ko, 2015). In addition, the youth had been central to this rise. A good number of civil society organizations were focusing on youth-related issues as established by youth groups. The April 6 movement in Egypt, which was founded by the youth members of anti-Mubarak movement, Kefaya, is one of such examples. In Tunisia, youth members were the big part of Takriz, a network of online Tunisian dissidents. In Hong Kong, a secondary school activist group Scholarism was at the forefront of the Occupy Central protests. One of the most animated grassroots movements spearheading Malaysia's electoral reform movement was *Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia*, loosely translated as "I am Malaysian," a volunteer network whose youth wing is active and vibrant.

Short-term causes. Mass protests in the last 7 years have diverse short-term causes, with issues ranging from corruption, freedom of expression, fuel prices, voting rights, and many others. Having analyzed how issues resonate with one another, I categorize these issues into three clusters:

1. Socioeconomic factors, such as food prices, fuel prices, higher wages, unemployment, poor living standards, widening income gap, property prices, austerity measures, working/labor conditions, and poverty.

2. Political system and governance-related factors, such as lack of or poor democracy, transparency and accountability, corruption, corporate influence (in government), police brutality and violence, and authoritarianism.

3. Concerns with citizen rights, such as land and cultural rights, women's' rights, labor and worker rights, immigrants' rights, ethnic and racial rights, religious rights and tolerance, voting rights, and freedom of speech.

The combination of socioeconomic and political factors appears to be the main cause for the majority of the population in the MENA countries. In both Egypt and Tunisia, short-term causes were high unemployment, widening income gap, and food prices coupled with corruption, police brutality, and authoritarianism (Lim, 2018). Large-scale protests in Asia, including those that occurred in Hong Kong and Malaysia, however, were mainly driven by political conditions especially the lack of (or deteriorating) democracy and transparency, coupled by citizen rights–related factors such as the lack of freedom and voting rights (Lim, 2018).

Immediate triggers. "Long-term causes create necessary conditions for collective awareness (of shared dissatisfactions and contentions) and short-term causes provide an immediate environment for collective networks of resistance to emerge" (Lim, 2018, p. 15). However, typically an immediate trigger is what sparks protests to break out in certain space and time. These triggers are usually materialized locally, in "highly symbolic" and/or "visually dramatic" events (Lim, 2018, p. 15).

Death and martyrdom are at the heart of some of the stories that personify these triggers. Mittermaier (2015, p. 584) told the story of 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi, who sold fruits and vegetables, without a permit, to support a family of eight in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia:

> When the police confiscated his produce on 17 December 2010, he went to the regional government headquarters to plead his case but was thrown out. He poured paint thinner over himself and set himself on fire in front of the building. He died on 4 January 2011, in a hospital in Tunis. Retroactively, to many, Mohammad Bouazizi's suicide has become a sacrifice and an act of defiance. He, in turn, has become a shahid—an Arabic term which means both "martyr" and "witness"—and a national and international hero.

Likewise, after Khaled Said, a 28-year-old, middle-class Egyptian from Alexandria, was beaten to death by two police officers on June 6, 2010, two images went viral on the web. One shows a smiling young man:

> The other, a picture snapped by Khaled's brother on his mobile phone in the morgue, shows a deformed and barely recognizable face, the victim of a brutal beating. The images . . . inspired Wael Ghoneim and Abdelrahman Mansour to launch the Facebook group "We are all Khaled Said" (kullina Khalid Sa'ıd). The group soon drew thousands of followers and played an instrumental role in organizing the mass protests on 25 January, which were primarily directed against police violence and torture. "We are all Khaled Said" can be read as: We are all ordinary Egyptians and have been mistreated for

too long. Or: We are all already dead, have been killed by the state, over and over again. Or, alternatively: We are not afraid of death; we are willing to die if it will make a difference. (Mittermaier, 2015, p. 584)

Other protests, however, were sparked by unexpected (and undesirable) political affairs or publicly known political notoriety. In Malaysia, the mass protests calling for electoral reform organized by the Bersih were triggered by a story of electoral fraud. The electoral commission was accused of manipulating electoral rolls and gerrymandering districts to keep the ruling coalition in power (Welsh, 2011). In Hong Kong, the highly restrictive implementation of universal suffrage for the selection of territory's chief executive triggered the Occupy protests.

Historical Roots

Most protests involve a long period of mobilization and "are rooted in a long history of struggles and resistance" (Lim, 2018, p. 16). They are generally not sudden and spontaneous but, instead, resulted from long processes of the transformation of culture and politics. In the latest wave, some protests had shorter trajectories than others, particularly those emerging in countries with no historical experiences of protests. The Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, however, were more than a decade in the making (Lim, 2012, 2013). As can be seen in Figure 1, the Tahrir uprising has a long and complex history. In the case of Egypt, a remarkable number of protests occurred within a decade prior to the uprising. Between 1998 and 2008, at least 2,623 protests took place in the country (The Solidarity Center, 2010).

Similarly, the Malaysian Bersih movement and the Occupy Central Hong Kong were historically rooted in a long history of activism. The Bersih movement can be traced to 1998 with the establishment of the *reformasi* (reform) movement and a number protests afterward (Lim, 2016; 2017). The Occupy movement is steeped in a long history of activism and protest culture that had dominated the streets of Hong Kong for more than a decade prior to the emergence of the Umbrella Movement. Indeed, on July 1, just months prior to the Occupy Central protests in September 2014, a big protest occurred. Part of the protest culture is an annual July 1 rally, held since 2003, when half a million Hongkongers rallied to reverse Article 23, laws that prohibit any act of treason, sedition, and subversion against the Central People's Government of China.

Unfinished "Revolution" and Limited Democratization Effects

The results of recent protests in the MENA countries, Asia, and the rest of the world, have been mixed. In many semi-authoritarian countries, governments have perfected a balancing act. They allow "a limited amount of opposition political activity and independent civil society, both to release some political pressure in the system and to keep a degree of international legitimacy" (Carothers & Youngs, 2015, para. 71). In some countries, nondemocratic governments were able to defeat them without making any significant political concessions (Carothers & Youngs, 2015).
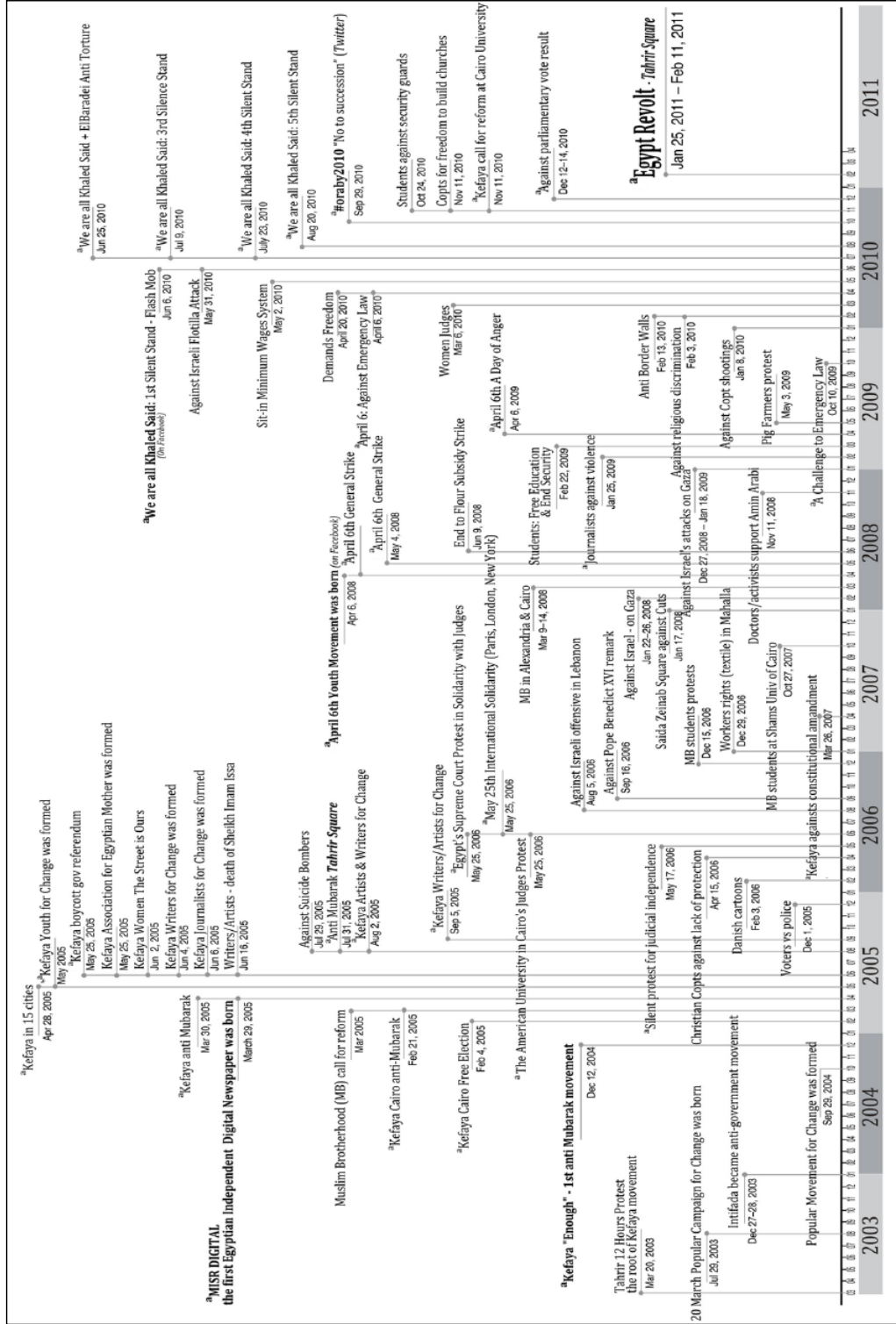
Figure 1. Timeline of Egyptian oppositional movement against Mubarak (2002-2011). [a]Involved digital activism.
Source. Adapted from Lim (2012).

Other protests have produced significant effects even though these effects are not always democratic. In Tunisia, the uprisings ended with the change of regime and the country has experienced a transition to democracy. Although the economic growth has been slow and the country has been haunted by terrorist threats, in 2018, Tunisia moves to its seventh year of transition to democracy. From 2006 to 2011, Tunisia was on the Reporters Without Borders' "enemy of the Internet" list as one of the countries with most heavily censored Internet. In 2018, it is no longer "the enemy of the Internet." Yet, the digital space remained constrained, marked by obstacles to access, limits to content, and violations of users' rights.

Egypt's experience is not as positive. Since the 2011 uprisings, Egypt has experienced its first democratic elections, the brief presidential tenure of Mohamed Morsi of the previously banned Muslim Brotherhood, another wave of protests over his misrule, a military coup, and a reversion to authoritarianism under former army chief and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Cook, 2016). Meanwhile, since November 2013, a new law on public assembly was issued, in violation of international standards, to restrict peaceful political demonstrations:

> [The law] effectively grants security officials discretion to ban any protest on very vague grounds, allows police officers to forcibly disperse any protest if even a single protester throws a stone, and sets heavy prison sentences for vague offenses such as attempting to influence the course of justice. (Human Rights Watch, 2013, para. 1)

Alaa Abdel-Fattah, a blogger activist who was also involved in the 2011 Tahrir uprising, was arrested under this law for allegedly organizing illegal protest. By the time of writing this monograph, the Egyptian government is continuing to crack down on dissent and aggressively arrest activists in both online and offline spheres.

Three years after the 2014 Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong, students who led the peaceful protests are in jail while the misconduct of pro-Beijing protestors and Hong Kong police went largely unexamined; indeed, Beijing has become more "hardline" on Hong Kong (Wang, 2017). However, the movement does not stop. People in Hong Kong continue to demand their rights. The 2016 vote for Hong Kong's semidemocratic legislature saw a large turnout. In August 2017, tens of thousands of Hong Kongers took to the streets to protest against the jailing of three young activists who were questioning the independence of the city's judiciary (Wu, 2017).

In Malaysia, the Bersih electoral movement has resulted in growing resistance against the ruling party and the popularity a newly unified political opposition. The movement reached a settlement between the ruling regime and the opposition that addressed a number of grievances related to the electoral system. Bersih activists and supporters continued to protest, pushed for reform, and, in lieu of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) corruption scandal, even called for the resignation of the Prime Minister. And, yet, the increasingly repressive and authoritarian government continues to crack down on dissents and spread a culture of fear.

In most countries, then, large-scale protests have only limited democratic effects. In some, the effects have been undemocratic. In all of these places, the "revolution" remains unfinished.

Hybrid Media/Communication Networks

Digital media are neither a revolutionary driver nor a cause of the protests. Nevertheless, changes in communication technologies

> make much more information available to people, giving them a greater awareness of how others are asserting themselves against entrenched power holders in other countries and of how their own political and economic conditions compare with those of others. (Carothers & Youngs, 2015, para. 33)

"Digital media, especially social media, facilitate exchanges among citizens, enabling them to collectivize around shared grievances rooted in long-term conditions as well as short-term causes" (Lim, 2018, p. 15), and can potentially assist the immediate local trigger to be publicized widely by making it viral.

Also, historically, media have always been incorporated in social movements. Figure 1 illustrates that digital media have long been part of political activism: 54 out of 70 recorded anti-Mubarak street protests in Egypt from 2004 to 2011 captured in this timeline had already involved digital activism. It is important to clarify that in the majority of protests, social media were not the principal tool for social movements' mobilization and organization. In most cases, cellular phones, whose penetration rates were extremely high in the MENA region and Asia, were heavily utilized alongside other types of communications and media. The wave of protests since 2010 has seen hybrid communication and media networks beyond cellular phones and social media taking the chief role (Lim, 2018). How these communications and media are incorporated in the making and development of contemporary social movements is the next central theme.

Part II. Routes

In scrutinizing the complex entanglement of communications and media in the making and doing of contemporary social movements, I dissect a social movement under three modes: *imaginaries, practices*, and *trajectories*. A social movement can be seen as "a composite of abstract and concrete acts from and in space involving corporeal and cognitive bodies" (Lim, 2015, p. 118). This composite can be traced in three phases: from its spheres of origin in the *imaginary* realm; through its successive developments involving *practices* of participation, organization, protest, and symbolic activities; and to its unfolding as interconnected events in its *trajectory*, which takes place within multiple spatialities and diverse temporalities (Lim 2015). Within the journey through these three modes, I identify several mechanisms through which social movements, communicative practices, and actions on the grounds are interconnected and unraveled in space and time, such as *dis/connecting, brokering, bridging, framing, hybridizing (repertoires of contention), in/visibility, intermodality, on/offline connectivity*, and *globalizing.*
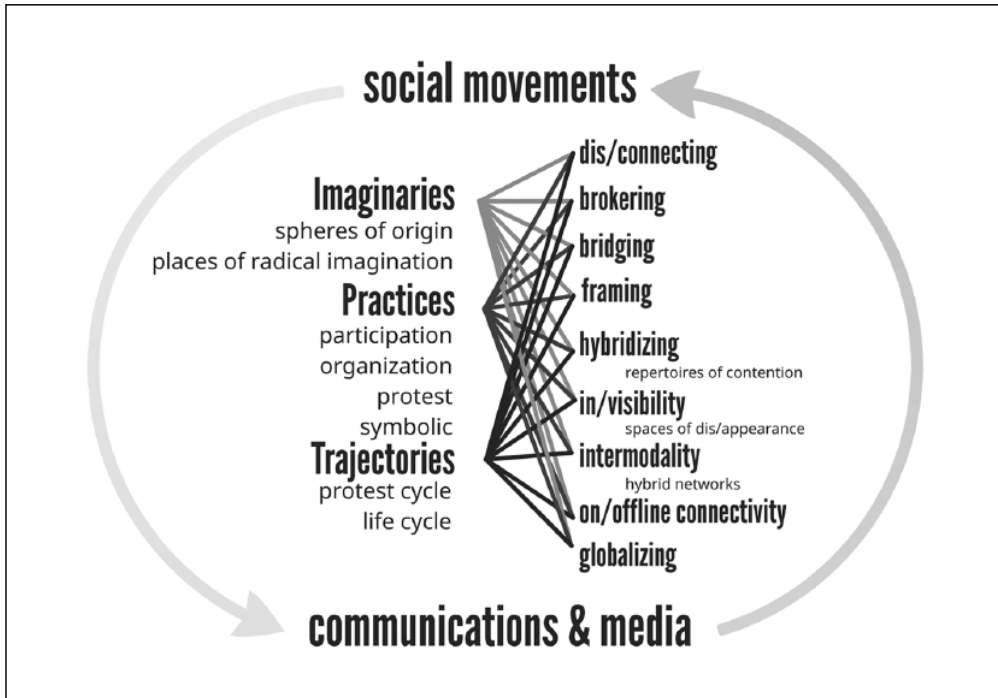
Figure 2. Communications and media of social movements—an analytical framework.

Here, I discuss these three phases in a chronological order. They are, however, are not sequential: pathways of social movements are not linear. In addition, as Figure 2 shows, the mechanisms listed here can be associated with any phase. However, to avoid textual redundancy, I associate each mechanism with only one phase. This framework is flexible and adaptable; it is open to any additional elements, particularly additional mechanisms.

In this part, I ground my analyses in the empirical narratives from four sites where I conducted field research: Tunisia, the place where the Arab uprisings began in December 2010; Egypt, where the brave story of its people seems to turn somber; Malaysia, where the historic electoral reform movement took place unbeknownst to most people in the West; and in Hong Kong, where people fought for universal suffrage, namely, the right to directly nominate and elect their own candidates for the Hong Kong territory's leaders.

The Imaginaries

Where does a movement begin? Where do people create the initial beginning of a movement? How do they come together? How do they come to share a similar sense of injustice or resistance that forces them to act together collectively? Discussions

about social movements generally focus on causes and motivations and rarely consider how they begin. Long-standing grievances concerning economic equality and political repression are often mentioned as causes of social movements. In the "Roots" section, I established that the combination of long-term enablers and short-term causes indeed contributes to the emergence of social movements. Historically, however, social, political, or economic grievances alone have not created social movements (Buechler, 2000). Social movement scholars have long argued that social movements are not spontaneous (Blumer, 1969; Tilly, 1978). Unorganized individuals may spontaneously form small protest groups, but if they are not connected and networked to each other, the protest remains local and/or dissipates over time without forming any movement, let alone producing significant changes. A movement is a network of organized, yet informal, social entities that collectivize based on common purposes and solidarities in the pursuit of societal change.

Social movements indeed become visible as they are materialized publicly in the form of mass protests and turned into media spectacles. As soon as a movement displays its collective power through public performances, observers and researchers scratch the surface to find its immediate cause, the trigger that sparks it, and mistakenly assume that a movement only starts as it becomes visible. I concur with Freeman (1999, p. 7) that "most movements have inconspicuous beginnings." Most movements are marked by visible and sometimes dramatic events, local triggers that spark mass protests, such as the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in the 2010 Tunisian revolt or the arrest of Rosa Parks for sitting in a "white" seat in a bus in the civil rights movement in 1955. Yet, they did not emerge only from such events. They were built within existing networks established within communities associated with the movement. The civil rights movement was born and existed long before becoming visible to the American public and media. At the least, it originated in two important institutions, namely, Black churches and Black colleges, which "provided the primary networks through which most southern blacks interacted and communicated with one another on a regular basis" (Freeman, 1999, p. 9). In these places, African Americans were allowed to imagine an alternative society that was different than the one they experienced. These were spaces for alternative or even radical imaginations. A movement cannot start if such spaces do not exist.

I propose that an analysis of social movements should include *an inquiry of the invisible*, by taking into account a set of invisible processes entailed in the journey of the movement, including those taking place prior to its public surfacing. As a form of resistance, a social movement originates largely in the peripheries, sometimes in obscured or hidden spaces. These are spheres in which political ideas and subpublics *gestate*, develop, and spread into wider arenas. The construction of *imaginaries* is invisible; yet, this process is crucial to the movement making. Imagination itself is "one of the most important mechanisms for drawing together a community [and] facilitating an expression of collective resistance [because it] allows collectives to project themselves beyond the present to envision a different, more desirable future" (Lim, 2015, p. 118). Khasnabish and Haiven (2012) argued that social movements start from the ability to imagine and are convened by individuals who share a

radical understanding and imagination of the world. Furthermore, "the imagination is a collective *process* rather than an individualized *thing* and that it emerges not from unique geniuses in their romanticized autonomy but from communities and collectivities as they work their way through their world" (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2012, p. 411). Hence, the radical imagination is a basis for building solidarity and the struggle against oppression.

Spheres of origin, places for imagination. Social movements rarely originate in one singular sphere. To emerge, grow, and sustain itself, a collective radical imagination needs multiple spheres. My research demonstrates that with every movement, "multiple spheres of origin emerged separately and then gradually [interspersed into] a larger, denser network" (Lim, 2018, p. 18). To radically depart from dominant imaginaries of the state or other sources of hegemony, people need sites for alternative and radical imaginations to emerge, grow, and spread. In these sites, adherents ascertain the possibilities of resistance through everyday practices, interactivities, and exchanges, allowing the narratives of resistance to be created and nurtured (Lim, 2015).

Contrary to Vargas's (2012) claim that an Egyptian revolution began on Facebook, Egypt's resistance movement against Mubarak did not spontaneously emerge from social media activism. Facebook facilitated activism: the "We are all Khaled Saeed" campaign, for example, contributed to the growth of sentiment against Mubarak. But the movement itself had a much longer history involving multiple spheres of origin, including earlier strands of anti-Mubarak protests and sentiment, notably the Kefaya movement (Lynch, 2006). Kefaya, the unofficial moniker of the Egyptian Movement for Change, is a grassroots and diverse coalition of oppositional movements, comprising liberals, Nasserists, Arabists, and New Islamists.[6] The movement was galvanized against Hosni Mubarak's presidency and the possibility of the rise of his son, Gamal, as well as corruption, political stagnation, and human rights abuses in Egypt. While officially emerging in 2004, Kefaya began organizing in 2000 as part of the pro-Intifada movement, and its public activation can be traced to the very same spot where the 2011 mass protests took place, Tahrir Square, 8 years earlier. On March 27, 2003, when Tahrir's center was packed with thousands of people protesting the US invasion of Iraq (Schemm, 2003), the Kefaya activists managed to shift the anti-US sentiment into an anti-Mubarak sentiment. It was during this 12-hr protest that the public imaginary of post-Mubarak Egypt was first formed. By the end of 2006, the Kefaya movement was in decline. It eventually disappeared altogether. The radical imagination of the better Egypt without Mubarak, however, continued to be cultivated in different spheres. As protests disappeared from the streets, conversations among Kefaya activists continued in the blogosphere where over the years a network of anti-Mubarak socio-political blogs grew exponentially (Lim, 2012; Radsch, 2008). Between 2004 and 2009, numerous state-run factories became places for keeping the imaginary alive through the network of labor activism among textile factory workers. Meanwhile, during this period, the April 6 youth movement, which was born out of the Kefaya youth movement, worked alongside the labor activists and textile workers. Moving around

among social media sites, urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria, and suburban areas where workers lived, the April 6 youth activists used Internet cafes as their main sites of activism. In April 2008, the two movements, the April 6 and the workers, liaised to connect offline and online spheres of resistance connecting textile factories in El-Mahalla El-Kubra, a large industrial and agricultural city located 70 miles north of Cairo, with a Facebook group. The merged group held a nationwide strike that began at Mahalla textile factories. This spread all over the country and years later became the most dynamic anti-Mubarak movement (Lim, 2012).

A similar dynamic is found in the making of the 2014 Occupy Central Hong Kong. First, the movement cannot be separated from Hong Kong's long history of urban street march culture, student activism, and labor unionism, all of which have extensive, robust records of public civic engagement (Butenhoff, 1999; Chiu & Lui, 2000; Hui, 2015). Second, the movement is rooted in the establishment of the Occupy Central with Love and Peace in Hong Kong (OCLPHK) that was founded by Benny Tai, a professor of law at Hong Kong University (HKU) only a year prior to the big protest in September 2014. OCLPHK itself, as described by Benny Tai in a conversation with me at his office at HKU, was an amalgamation of various smaller social groups, including civil society groups and segments of political parties. During a four-month period before to the official formation of the OCLPHK in September 2013, over 30 deliberative meetings involving around 3,000 participants were held (B. Tai, personal communication, August 4, 2015). These participants met at schools, churches, and community centers to engage in difficult conversations, to deliberate, and together to knit a collective imaginary for a freer, more democratic Hong Kong. While the OCLPHK played a central role in organizing the September 2014 protests, it did not single-handedly mobilize the mass. Student activist groups, such as the Hong Kong Federation of Students (FHKS) and Scholarism, also played a major role in mobilizing the mass. These groups had a longer history of activism than OCLPHK and, thus, served as spheres of origin of the Occupy Central. Two years prior to the 2014 protest, Scholarism, a Hong Kong–based secondary school students activist group formed in 2011, initiated a mass protest against the "Moral and National Education" curriculum[7] endorsed by the Chinese central government in July 2012 (Lai, 2012). In the 2014 Occupy Central movement, radical imaginaries emerged from "numerous classrooms of secondary schools and universities where students, teachers, and professors mingled and immersed in frequent communication and interactions" (Lim, 2018, p. 18), as well as in churches and community centers where people interspersed political and nonpolitical conversations.

Similarly, in the Tunisian uprising and Malaysian Bersih movement, radical imagination developed in multiple spheres of origin. The Tunisian case involves at least two historical origins, namely, first, a long history of working-class struggles and labor activism and second, more than a decade-long online activism against Internet censorship (Lim, 2013). The first, which involved blue-collar workers and labor and trade unions, focused on unemployment and poverty; the latter focused on freedom of expression, censorship, democracy, and human rights. The two, however, similarly cultivated a collective imagination that mapped what Tunisia might be, without corruption and use of violence and torture, through years of conversations taking place

online and offline. Malaysia's Bersih movement can be seen historically as originating from the 1998 reform (*reformasi*) movement as well as more recent, smaller, minority-based resistance movements such as Hindraf protests. In the Bersih movement, multiple interconnected sites in on/offline spaces, such as mosques, alternative news media such as *MalaysiaKini*, blogosphere, and social media have increased the possibilities for radical imagination to emerge. Years of conversations on blogosphere, everyday political exchanges in social media, and weekly *ceramah* (sermons) in various mosques together provided multiple spheres of resistance that contributed to the emergence of Malaysian Bersih electoral reform movement in 2006 and even sustained it years later (Lim, 2017a).

Dis/connection and hidden transcripts. The proliferation of on/offline spaces allows citizens to form various communicative spheres—private, public, and private–public—by *dis/connecting*, embracing the interplay of being connected and disconnected. Inscribed in the notion of dis/connecting is an ability to perform a politics of disguise and anonymity. This practice is part of *infrapolitics*, where the *hidden transcript* is communicated in public or in overlapping space between private and public (Scott, 1990). *Hidden transcripts* (Scott, 1990) refer to the critique of power that takes place offstage that power holders cannot see or hear. These are "speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the *public transcript*" (Scott, 1990, p. 4-5) and materialized in the forms of stories, rumors, complaints, songs, and artworks, among others.

In Malaysian, Hong Kong, Tunisian, and Egyptian on/offline spaces, the *hidden transcript* was found in a large amount of amateurish artwork devoted to the movement, in the form of chatter, jokes, digital posters, cartoons, animations, songs, and video compilations. Political jokes, satires, and memes that were parts of daily dining table conversations and everyday exchanges of social media within multiple small private circles found their way to temporarily weave and coalesce into semi-public and public conversations through the practices of dis/connecting in on/offline spaces such as coffee shops, Internet cafes, mosques, churches, classrooms, and social media sites. These conversations routinely took place between friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, such as those between a taxi driver and a passenger. The networked on/offline communicative spaces allow the imaginary to emerge from a process that is both *cognitive* and *corporeal* that involves the specific (focus on certain political issues) and the mundane (the everyday). They potentially allow more alternative places for radical imaginations to emerge rather than online or offline spheres alone.

Brokerage. How to connect disparate individuals? How to facilitate communication and exchanges of information between individuals who are separated from each other? How to connect multiple spheres of origin and places of imagination to form a larger, denser network? From the network perspective, a social movement can only be established by the formation of "collaborative networks," which by definition "seek to bring disparate groups together so they can work effectively and synergistically together" (Long, Cunningham, & Braithwaite, 2013, p. 1). Here, *brokerage*, or *brokering*, defined

as production of a new connection between previously disconnected sites (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001), serves as one of the most important mechanisms in the making of a social movement. Networks are composed of nodes (the actors) that occupy positions in the networks and ties (the relationship between actors) that form the structure of the networks (Long et al., 2013). The brokerage occurs when a certain node connects two nodes that are otherwise separated.

In the realm of imaginaries, some initial exchanges typically happen among disaffected elites; these are individuals who are part of the elite but aspire to break out from the status quo. These exchanges are limited by the boundaries of their interests or ideologies, isolated and disconnected from each other. In this context, brokering between disconnected individuals or groups would allow for conversations to "traverse various representational channels and interest group distinctions and reach diverse publics" (Lim, 2018, p. 19). The brokerage can occur in offline as well as online settings through various everyday encounters. In repressive societies where physical spaces are under siege or limited in their capacity to facilitate political conversations, blogging and social networking online may increase the possibility of brokerage, such as the cases of Tunisia, Egypt, and Malaysia.

Tunisia under President Ben Ali was marked by a poor human rights record, lack of press freedom, and attacks on political opponents. Listed among the "10 Worst Enemies of the Press" by the Committee to Protect Journalists since 1988, Tunisia was considered as one of the most censored countries in the world. In such a repressive environment, activists had very limited space to act. Conversations were limited to small and fragmented clusters. Meanwhile, with the establishment of Tunisian Internet Agency (L'Agence Tunisienne d'Internet), Tunisia also oversaw some of the most severe Internet censorship in the world (Ferjani, 2011). However, partly supported by *dis/connecting* mechanism, activists turned to digital activism by establishing activist websites such as Perspectives Tunisiennes in 2000 and TuneZine in 2001 (Lim, 2013). In 2004, that digital activism was amplified by the emergence of political blogs, and, especially, the birth of Nawaat, an independent collective blog (Etling, Kelly, Faris, & Palfrey, 2010; Ferjani, 2011). By being an exclusive platform for dissident voices and debates, Nawaat became a *broker* linking Tunisian activists who were previously disengaged from each other.

Similarly, in the Egyptian and Malaysian blogospheres, the brokerage occurred as previously disconnected activists and concerned individuals belonging to various political orientations were linked to each other through their blogs (Lim, 2012, 2016; Radsch, 2008). In both cases, individual linkages occurred in the blogospheres paved ways to the formation of more plural and diverse networks. As exemplified in the Tunisian, Egyptian, and Malaysian blogospheres, the brokerage allowed activists as well as proto-activists (concerned individuals who seek to participate in the network of activism) who were previously disconnected from each other to converse and deliberate beyond their own existing boundaries.

Bridging. When the brokerage occurs between two nodes that are central to their own networks, another mechanism can occur called *bridging*, which transpires when two

separate clusters are linked. Using the language of resource mobilization theory, bridging allows two disparate networks to share their resources mutually and, by so doing, expand their collective resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This is particularly important for small and resource-poor groups as bridging may allow them to expand and grow into a relatively resourceful networked environment (Lim, 2018). Bridging is also important in building a movement that can traverse ideological lines. Although its early blogosphere was not an ideal public sphere, Malaysia illustrates this very well:

> [I]nstead of being fragmented and/or polarized along the party or ideological lines, the early Malaysian blogging community was united by its opposition to the ruling elites. From 2002 to 2007, the blogosphere was both a vital space for online dissidents and a place where the Malaysian government exercised its hegemonic power. . . Civil society in Malaysia was typically characterized as being divided along ethnic lines. Blogging, however, brought together otherwise disconnected Malaysian activists and concerned individuals with different ideologies (e.g. Islamist, secular, or liberal) and backgrounds (e.g. Malay, Chinese, or Tamil/Indian) and thus contributed to the expansion of the reformist network. (Lim, 2016, p. 4-5)

Observably, in the initial formation of a social movement, a small-scale, more intimate, and interactive conversational platform, such as blogging, may provide a better environment than large-scale social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Through brokerage and bridging mechanisms, such platforms provide an affordance for the formation of networks based on strong social ties. While not every tie in the blogger networks is based on a strong social tie, frequent and reciprocal interactions that take place in these blogospheres allow for the possibilities for ties to grow stronger over time. In its beginning, social movements need a core network of dedicated activists. These are true believers whose relationships are built on frequent exchanges and mutual trust and whose participation in the movement becomes routine and long-term. In its later development, as a social movement grows and expands, weak social ties, such as those formed in social media, are valuable in terms of their number and diversity. Brokering and bridging that occur within social media platforms can potentially contribute to the expansion of the size and diversity of networks.

The Practices

Beyond the imaginaries, the making of social movements involves a set of practices consisting of various activities to render mobilizations possible and sustain them in many ways. These practices, following Mattoni and Treré (2014), can be grouped into four categories. First, *participation practices* through which social movement actors engage other individuals in daily activities of various stages of the movement, whether in the early stages of mobilization or during the height of mobilizations (p. 259). Second, *organization practices* where "social practices through which activists are able to plan meetings, arrange protests, and coordinate actions" (p. 259). Third, *protest practices* that entail "the performance of public protests," and finally, *symbolic*

practices, which include "those social practices linked to the development of discourses, meanings and interpretations about contentious issues and protests" (p. 259).

Traditionally, these practices are geographically clustered, because social movement actors arrange their practices based on where they are physically located (Lim, 2015). With the digitization of communications and media, these practices revolve mostly around networks of on/offline spaces. Tunisia's and Egypt's uprisings, Occupy Central Hong Kong, and the Malaysian Bersih movement are networked movements. Some of their practices were bound to physical location while the rest were structured around networks that were emplaced in localities and, at the same time, transcended geographical barriers. In contemporary social movements, traditional social and cultural clusters—such as churches, mosques, temples, universities, and schools—continue to serve as sites for participation, organization, protest, and symbolic practices to take place. However, these practices have increasingly extended to new types of networks such as those formed with the help of social media platforms. Although they can differ from one context to another, the practices of contemporary social movements have largely relied on the availability of hybrid networks connecting traditional and contemporary communications, old and new media, online and offline social and cultural spaces. Utilizing these hybrid networks, social movements can continue to grow by generating new resources and encouraging new practices to emerge. In its practices, a social movement goes through various mechanisms for diffusing the narratives and sentiment of resistance to grow its network and reach the larger audience.

Framing. How does a social movement mobilize a diverse public? How does it foster a collective identity across dispersed individuals? In social movements, activists can be viewed as "signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for movement supporters, constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). Symbolic practices revolve around the process of meaning making, with *framing* as the central mechanism. Here, framing denotes an active, dynamic, and contentious mechanism where meaning is constructed to legitimize collective activities and actions (Gamson, 1992). In social movements, frames are utilized to organize experience and guide action and render events meaningful (Benford & Snow, 2000), largely by simplifying the issues, causes, reasons, and rationales for participation.

In mobilizing diverse publics, social media can be considered important mostly because it lowers the costs of participation and mobilization (Farrell, 2012; Garrett, 2006). While recognizing their potential in facilitating social movement, I argue that social media are not inherently necessary to successful mobilization. We may be more cognizant of the successful ones, but the majority of social media campaigns never became viral and were never translated into a social movement. Research shows that virality "is not a function of the social network's ability to bring faraway things closer" (Rajyalakshmi, Bagchi, Das, & Tripathy, 2012 p. 24). It is, however, "achieved when many smaller homophilic groups discover an interest in a certain topic" (p. 24). Social media networks are vast and the information is over-abundant. In the algorithmic environment dominated by sensational narratives around

celebrated personalities, attention is unequally distributed making it unlikely for complex narratives of injustices to gain high visibility (Lim, 2017b). Here, *portability*, which is the movement's capacity to be distilled into a readily spreadable narrative, becomes important (Mitchell & Lim, 2018). Defined as a characteristic attributed to an archetypal content that can be easily carried by and/or moved across multiple and overlapped media networks, portability is intimately connected to the framing processes. To achieve portability, activists are forced to simplify and oversimplify the narratives of their movements and generate symbols and icons that resonate with the larger audiences (Lim, 2013). In creating a frame of injustice, the simplification processes are important to embolden the sense of injustice, evoke shared emotion and rage, incite public outcry, and mobilize antagonism against the common enemy (Lim, 2017b).

Framing has always been important in any movement in the history. The gay rights movement, for example, has been largely framed around a right to marry rather than a broader range of issues facing its constituency (Ettelbrick, 1989). With the incorporation of social media in mobilizing the public, however, social movement frames tend to be intensely symbolic, highly iconic, and increasingly simplified. In the 2011 context of the Egyptian uprising, the movement was framed around the personality of Khaled Saeed. He was elevated into an iconic figure with saint-like qualities for the nationwide rally against Mubarak. The story of Saeed, a young man killed by Alexandrian police in a sketchy drug-related scene, is more complex. Unlike Saeed the icon, Saeed the person was not an activist but a tech-savvy young man who spent most of his time online, aspired to move to the United States, and abused illegal substances (Ali, 2012). Saeed's death was not just indicative of the corrupt and brutal police state but also "symptomatic of the widespread despair that continues to plague Egypt's youth and that manifests in a plethora of symptoms, from drug abuse to the strong desire to emigrate" (Ali, 2012, para. 3). He was neither a saint nor sinner, but simply "a human being who was robbed of his rights and dignity once he breathed his last" (Ali, 2012, para. 36). Khaled Saeed, the icon, is a necessary myth that "enabled Egyptians to personalize and humanize complex issues that could otherwise have drifted into murky abstractions" (Ali, 2012, para. 38).

Similarly, the Tunisian uprising revolved around the iconoclastic symbolization of Mohamed Bouazizi, who activists and journalists of national and foreign media framed as a highly educated young man who unselfishly sacrificed himself after being publicly slapped in the face by a woman police officer. Fedia Hamdi, the officer, repeatedly said that she never hit Bouazizi and nobody could really corroborate the story. Bouazizi the martyr, too, is a myth. As a street vendor who never graduated from high school, Bouazizi's self-immolation could have been cited as a little footnote in the history, just like nine other self-immolations happened in Tunisia from July to December 2010, all of which ignited only small local protests (Lim, 2013). By elevating him to a martyr-like figure and oversimplifying the reality of his life, Bouazizi's story was made to culturally and politically resonate with the majority of Tunisians, especially the highly educated urban middle-class youth.

For the Malaysian Bersih movement and the Occupy Central Hong Kong, the framing processes were different. In the absence of iconic figure, activists of both movements engaged in "boundary framing" (Silver, 1997), which seeks to demarcate the boundaries between "us" and "them" and "good" and "evil." They also practiced "adversarial framing" (Gamson, 1995) to assign movement's protagonists and antagonists. A common method in both types of framing involves associating the image of a targeted opponent with the image of highly iconic villains or antagonists. Many memes and posters depicted Hong Kong's Chief Executive and Malaysia's Prime Minister with a Hitler mustache to render them evil, an enemy of the people.

Hybridizing repertoires of contention. In social movement theory, the practices of organization and protest revolve around the notion of *repertoires of contention*, which Charles Tilly (2010) conceptualizes as "claim-making routines that apply to the same claimant object pairs: bosses and workers, peasants and landlords, rival nationalist faction, and many more" (p. 35). These repertoires vary from one context to another. The choices of repertoires are constrained, first, by what regimes permit, forbid, and tolerate; second, by the history of contention (e.g., a country that has already experienced a revolutionary episode is more likely to have another episode); and, third, by changes in political opportunity structure (any challenge to the existing political system, such as increasing political enfranchisement or division within elites, creates an opportunity for others, including social movement members, to push through a social change; Tilly, 2010). Traditionally, a repertoire of contention refers to a set of various protest-related tools and actions such as, but not limited to, public meetings, pamphleteering, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, petition drives, boycotts, and strikes.

Repertoires are the changing practices. They evolve with time, place, and available technologies, especially with changing communication technologies (Tilly, 2010). With the proliferation of the Internet in the mid-1990s, especially since the 1999 Battle of Seattle, activists started expanding the list of the repertoires by employing online direct action (ODA). Early on, some ODAs were established as digital analogs of traditional repertoires, such as online petitions for paper petitions, virtual sit-ins for physical sit-ins, and hacking for sabotage (Lim & Kann, 2008). The popularity of social media usage has expanded the repertoires of contention to also include social media–facilitated repertoires. One of such repertoire involves hashtag protest or hashtag activism, which refers to a collective effort to intervene in public discourse by curating a massive amount of Twitter statements by using certain hashtags, a word or an unspaced phrase prefixed with the hash character (#), to cluster social media conversations around a certain issue or topic. The social media terrain opens up new possibilities for innovative, emergent repertoires that can further contribute to participation, organization, symbolic, and protest practices of the movement. The emergence of digital repertoires in contemporary social movements, however, should not be interpreted as the end of traditional, analog repertoires. In practice, activists utilize digital and analog repertoires in conjunction. In some cases, as illustrated in the following example from Tunisia, digital technologies are adopted, adapted, and incorporated into existing analog practices to craft repertoires that are more suitable to certain social and technical

contexts. The hybrid of digital and the analog repertoires is utilized interchangeably to address contextual needs and conditions.

In the historic event that was inaccurately labeled a "Twitter Revolution," Tunisian activists started employing hashtag activism as their repertoire of contention only days prior to the resignation of Ben Ali on January 14, 2011. The main hashtag for the uprising, #sidibouzid, first appeared on Twitter on December 18, 2010, a day after the mass protest erupted in Sidi Bouzid, but only became popular in the second week of January 2011. With very low Twitter usage in the country, activists and protesters on the ground did not utilize hashtag activism. According to a Tunisian activist Ben Gharbia, this digital repertoire was employed not to organize things in Tunisia on the ground, but instead, to expand the information network among diaspora through "the reproduction and structuring of information, making it accessible to especially Al Jazeera" (Poell & Darmoni, 2012, p. 25).

On the ground, traditional tools and actions such as demonstrations, strikes, and rallies were central to protest practices during the uprising. By December 2010, Tunisia's Internet penetration rate was only 30% and only one million Facebook users, most of whom resided in Tunis, the capital, and its surrounding areas. Tunisian economic development had long been concentrated in coastal regions, leaving the interior isolated from economic activities because of lack of transportation, information, and communication infrastructures. Towns and villages in these regions, such as Sidi Bouzid, where Mohamed Bouazizi immolated himself, not only lacked Internet access but also lacked reliable mobile phone coverage. And, yet, their protests were not entirely analog. Protesters in Sidi Bouzid reportedly took to the streets with "a rock in one hand, a cell phone in the other" (Ryan, 2011). Cellphones were used to document the protests and the police violence and, ultimately, to break through the media blackout. In places such as Sidi Bouzid, organizational and protest practices took place in the *hybrid network* of community radios, mouth-to-mouth, and coffee houses as well as cellphone and social networking platforms (Lim, 2013).

In a different sociotechnical context, the hybrid network forms differently, sometimes comprising different mixtures of communication and media technologies. In Malaysia, the Internet penetration is above 70% and the rate is even higher in urban areas. The Bersih movement's practices largely took place in the Greater Kuala Lumpur, where 87% of the population was online. As expected, nearly all organization practices involved online platforms. Websites and blogs were utilized heavily in publicizing public events. Facebook played a central role for planning and coordinating meetings and actions prior to the public protests, and Twitter was utilized during the protest for on-site networking and on-the-ground organizing (Lim, 2017a).

The Trajectories

All social movements are ephemeral. They emerge, develop, grow, surface in public, interact with power, decline, fade away, and then eventually end. Social movements may experience different trajectories. Some movements decline because they succeed in achieving their goals. Some turn to new goals once old goals are achieved. When the power vacuum opens, some transform themselves into political institutions that

can fill the void and facilitate the transition to a new society. Some end in defeat through repression or cooptation. Some go in hiding to be temporarily invisible. Some go dormant. Some start all over again, beginning anew. Regardless which trajectory ensues, social movements always encompasses multiple events.

A social movement, in fact, can be conceived as a distribution of events across a population (Oliver & Myers, 1998). In its *life cycle*, a movement "starts with an event, is sustained by more events, rises when many events happen involving a large proportion of the population, and fades when it stops generating future events" (Lim, 2015, p. 122). These events are interconnected, interdependent, and interacting with each other. The interconnections between events are pertinent to the life cycle of the movement. The life cycle of a social movement usually includes one (or more) *protest cycle*, which is "a phase heightened conflict and contention across the social system" with "intensified interactions between challengers and authorities which can end in reform, repression and sometimes revolution" (Tarrow, 1994, p. 153). Protest cycles are built on a set of practices, discussed above, that allow for the emergence of new groups and the mobilization of new actors (through the mechanism of brokerage and bridging), the elaboration of new frames (by framing mechanisms), and the development of repertoires of contention. The cycle, however, ends if the movement stops being diffused. To have a far-reaching impact, the movements need diffusion in multiple places (McAdam et al., 2001), geographically, socially, and demographically, through reproduction and multiplication of protest networks. To maintain the protest cycle, a movement needs to be sustained to last beyond the initial protest. How to ensure that the movement continues beyond the first and the second public mass confrontations is the key. The continuance of protest cycle, as will be illustrated in the following sections, can be aided by several mechanisms such as *in/visibility, intermodality, on/offline connectivity*, and *globalizing*.

In/visibility. In repressive societies, the state exercises its power with the economy of visibility, where the power is invisible and renders individuals visible (Foucault, 1995). In a route toward a highly dense and expansive network, the social movement must be *invisible* to cultivate itself. To a certain degree, when physical spaces and mainstream media are highly censored, the immensity of digital media can assist social movement to be temporally invisible from the gaze of the power holder. Uncensored Facebook in pre-2011 Tunisia is such an example. In Hong Kong, however, activists did not perceive digital space as such. In fact, in many planning meetings for the Occupy Central, all attendees not only needed to be offline, they also needed to shut off their phones to remove any electronic traces of their conversations. In these two different contexts, the notion of invisibility was practiced differently.

While a social movement can effectively cultivate itself through its invisibility, inversely it should publicly claim its power through its visibility in public space, such as by occupying streets, parks, and squares. The capacity to act collectively and to appear simultaneously in the political *space of appearance*, as depicted in the occupation of Tahrir Square and of administrative buildings in the central business district of Hong Kong, is a reflection of power (Arendt, 1958, p. 200). Collective

affects—passion, emotions, and feelings—that bodies produce, transmit, and circulate are present to potentially liberate and transform individuals represented by the bodies gathered together. Furthermore, collective experiences resulted from being corporeally together can sustain the movement as they perpetuate a continual need to establish and reestablish links between people.

However, this visibility can also subjugate people, as those present to power may also be subjected to the gaze of spectators. In modern societies, public spaces are largely spaces in which people are subjected to surveillance. In this context, spaces of appearance may also be associated with what Foucault (1995) called *spaces of surveillance*. Here, I contend that *spaces of disappearance*, which are instances where people collectively carve a temporal space to be invisible from the surveillance gaze, can reflect the notion of power. The ability to escape subjugation or subjection through invisibility is, therefore, empowering. The availability of networked on/offline spaces allow a social movement to control its in/visibility and possibly generate multiple spaces of disappearance/appearance.

Intermodality. How to transform a small, localized protest into a protest cycle? How to diffuse protests in multiple places? Tarrow (1994) argues that a protest only becomes a protest cycle when "it is diffused to several sectors of the population, is highly organized, and is widely used as the instrument to put forward demands" (pp. 14-15). A cycle of protest, therefore, only occurs when multiple social groups engaged in a series of protests in time and span across a wide geographical boundary. In this context, the connectivity between one place to another, which can be facilitated by communication and media network, is important. Traditionally, activists rely on the media attention to create a climate favorable to the movement. Media coverage of the protests, especially the positive ones, can sustain and encourage more protests as the coverage indicates a success. The perception of success is important as it can infuse optimism in other groups and, subsequently, motivate more protests. Tarrow (1994) argues that how other groups perceive a group's success through the media coverage is the major mechanism behind the upsurge of a protest cycle. Furthermore, he argues, "against the inherent power of the media to shape perceptions, movements possess little cultural power" (Tarrow, 1994, p. 24).

In some countries, especially autocratic countries, the governments have vested interests in controlling the flow of information through the establishment of state media. Autocracies in particular intervene in the production and dissemination of news coverage in broadcast and print media. In this highly controlled media environment, activists cannot rely on mainstream media coverage in their attempt to diffuse the protests. As illustrated in the following examples, activists instead must take advantage of the *intermodality* of communication and media networks.

From January to June 2008, a series of strikes occurred in the mining area of Gafsa, Tunisia. At the local level, mobilization of the protest, involving poor miners and their families, was successful. However, the protest was unable to grow. The government not only sent troops to crack down violently on the protests but also physically banned journalists from accessing the region and successfully controlled news reporting of the protests (Lim, 2013). State-owned mainstream news media framed the protesters as

rioters or uneducated thugs who were hijacked by terrorism and extremism (Lim, 2013). In the absence of alternative discourse in domestic and international media coverage, the Tunisian government succeeded in containing local protests, preventing them from becoming nationwide uprisings (Lim, 2013).

The initial protests of the 2010-2011 Tunisian uprisings, too, similarly suffered from lack of news coverage. After all, in 2010, the state's control over news media was even stiffer than years before. In addition, some earlier protests took place in poor areas in the interior region that had no reliable Internet connection. In these places, social media usage was not even part of people's everyday communication practices. However, as illustrated in the following story from Thala and Kasserine, two Tunisian border towns near Algeria, years of activists' work in creating a hybrid communication network led to a different scenario (Lim, 2013, p. 934). In January 2011, when massive protests broke out in these two towns, the government sent a battalion of riot police to crack down the protests resulting in a brutal massacre (Ryan, 2011). The police also blocked the roads toward these towns to isolate them from any journalists, reporters, and out-of-town activists. However, the people could not prevent people of Thala and Kasserine from broadcasting their situation. "People took videos with their mobile phones and pocket cameras documenting police brutality and passed them to activists who transferred them to memory cards" and "[a]ctivists put memory cards inside sneakers and threw the sneakers over the border to Algeria" (Lim, 2013, p. 934). These cards eventually reached the hands of activists in Tunis and some even reached Al Jazeera news desks (Lim, 2013). Facilitated by the hybrid communication network, the massacres in Thala and Kasserine outraged Tunisians across the country and laid "the seeds for the uprising to become a genuinely nationwide phenomenon" (Rifai, 2011).

This story demonstrates not only the importance of a hybrid network but also of *intermodality*, especially in places where digital divide persists. Here, I use intermodality to describe a mechanism in which different media and communication modes and networks are utilized in conjunction to carry a message from one place to another without being altered or distorted. In this case, the intermodality had propelled a gruesome story of massacres in the isolated towns that would have otherwise remained a local account into a national and global affair. The media landscape in this context represents what Rodríguez (2001) termed "citizens' media"—media that have empowering effects. Citizen media is not simply an alternative to mainstream but embedded in the long-term and fluid process of community and identity building, so that the communication process itself becomes empowering (Rodríguez, 2001).

On/offline interconnectivity. Protests against nondemocratic governments can end in violent crackdown when the protesters get crushed after the first mass protest. To create a protest cycle and to sustain the life cycle of the movement, activists need to strategize around the crackdown and physical attacks from the authorities. The public display of resistance needs to be preceded by strategies to survive the physical landscapes.

Tahrir Square, one of Cairo's biggest squares, was designed to resemble Charles de Gaulle Square in Paris. Tahrir is a circular plaza with a large busy traffic circle at its

center, surrounded by a network of main roads which connect the downtown area. The Square and its adjacent downtown streets offer sizable open spaces for thousands to congregate. Unlike streets in other parts of Cairo, however, downtown streets are wide and spacious which can easily accommodate riot squads with their armored vehicles, riot vans, and water cannons. However, these wide radial streets are not the only access points to the square. In addition to these, some 23 streets lead to the square, including some pedestrian alleyways that are inaccessible to cars. In the case where the square is surrounded by riot squads, protesters can use these alleyways to flee from and reenter the square (Mohamed, Van Nes, & Salheen, 2015). In this context, the maneuvering skills around the Square's physical landscape and the knowledge of how to navigate the physical encounters with police forces were important for protesters.

To prepare the mass prior to the big protest days, activists created a 26-page manual for Egyptian protesters entitled "How to Protest Intelligently." They circulated it in print and electronically by email and Facebook. In a highly cited tweet, an Egyptian activist Fawaz Rashed famously stated, "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." Social media indeed was well-embedded in the culture of the country's young urbanites, and thus, this statement might be true for a small number of the activists. In reality, however, few protesters at the Tahrir Square had Twitter accounts. Between January and March 2011, Twitter penetration in Egypt was only 0.15%. For the majority of protesters in Tahrir Square, Twitter was not a channel for immediate physical assistance. The know-how gathered from the protest manual circulated online and offline was contextually more useful for offline survivability than Twitter communication.

Malaysian #Bersih rallies in April 2012 and August 2014 illustrate the interconnectedness of online and offline spaces. In Kuala Lumpur, where the majority of the population was online, activists utilized social media platforms not only to mobilize and coordinate prior to the mass protests but also used them, especially Twitter, to support each other and to physically survive on the ground, especially in the midst of attacks by water-cannon and teargas (Lim 2016, 2017). The on/offline interconnectivity between social media sites and protest sites (public squares, streets, and other public spaces) play an important role in sustaining the life cycle of a social movement at various junctures along its trajectory. Prior to the first protest day, Bersih organizers uploaded three alternative marching routes in GPS format that protesters could download. During the Bersih protests, social media were more integrated into the physical protests, if compared those happened in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. During the 2014 Bersih rally, Twitter data show that tweets with a hashtag #bersih were produced globally. A closer examination through the geotagging map of #bersih tweets, however, reveals that the usage of Twitter was heavily concentrated in places where protests were happening. These tweets were concentrated in central Kuala Lumpur around Independence Square (Dataran Merdeka) and other locations where protesters were clustered. The names of places—streets, mosques, stations—with the highest concentration of protesters, such as Jalan Sultan, Pasar Seni, Masjid Negara, and Masjid India, came up as among the most popularly tweeted words under #bersih hashtag.

During the Bersih 3.0 rally, protesters used Twitter to coordinate and exchange information even as they were marching.

Similarly, the tweets, messages, images, and videos surrounding the Occupy Central in Hong Kong were produced by local protesters. On Instagram, instas with related hashtags, such as #ochklp, #occupyhk, #occupycentral, and #umbrellamovement, originated from various business districts in Hong Kong where mass protests were held, such as Admiralty, Soho, and Central. Social media were largely utilized as a tool to communicate among protesters in and between local protest sites. Activists used social media channels to disseminate information around the physical survival and safety in digital format. Such information includes an electronic safety guide to tear exposure, the manual of civil disobedience, and legal help-line numbers. Analog copies of this information were also disseminated in the forms of pamphlets, photocopied prints, and wheat-paste posters.

Globalizing. In addition to the physical survival in the local sites of protest, efforts to sustain the movement should include making the public protest visible to the audience beyond the local sites, preferably to global audiences. The globalization of movements is important for two reasons. First, multiplying the protest sites on a scale that is beyond the boundary of state control allows the movement to diffuse the resistance and expand the network. Second, by making the protest available to the global audience, the movement also opens new opportunities for participatory politics that, in turn, are valuable in generating external support and pressure.

In Tunisia and Egypt, social media platforms, especially Twitter and YouTube, were used to connect with global social media users who showed solidarity with the movement. Notably, however, while social media were widely used globally, the far-reaching globalizing processes could not happen without coverage from more traditional media such as television and radio. During the "Arab Spring," television stations, especially France 24 and Al Jazeera, were crucial in connecting local sites with a global community by broadcasting information generated by social media users (Russell, 2011). Similarly, during the Malaysian Bersih protests, Twitter was used to globalize the movement. However, global audiences of Bersih were limited to the "global Malaysia." In the Bersih 3.0 protests in 2012, Twitter was successfully used to connect Malay diaspora in at least 85 protest sites in 35 countries. Yet, with an exception of Al Jazeera (Alibeyoglu, 2012), other international media barely covered the Bersih protests that year.

Meanwhile, a story from the Occupy Central Hong Kong offers a different dynamic. The first two weeks of Occupy Central protests (September 26 to October 10, 2014) took place during the height of public discussions around the decision of various Western countries to join the "War against ISIS or ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)" coalition led by the United States. Utilizing PageOnex, an open source software tool designed to aid in the coding, analysis, and visualization of newspaper front pages, I analyzed newspaper front pages to measure mass media attention to ISIS and Occupy Central, using column inches as an indicator.[8]
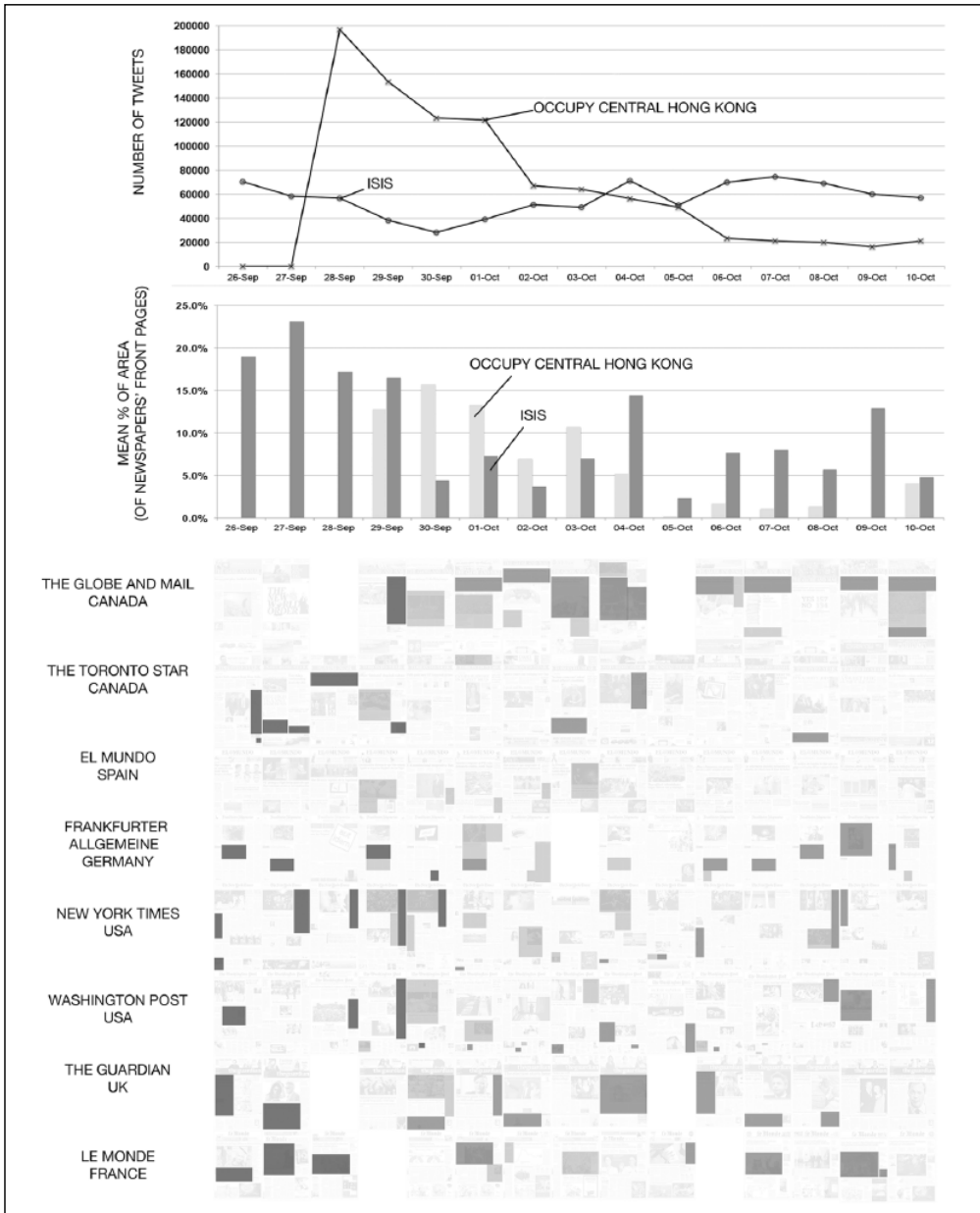
Figure 3. Occupy Central Hong Kong versus ISIS.
Note. ISIS = Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

The visualization of this analysis can be seen in Figure 3, in combination with the visualization chart of ISIS and Occupy Central Hong Kong related tweets. Figure 3 shows that ISIS dominated the coverage of major media in these countries during first three days of Occupy Central protests.[9] Meanwhile, ISIS related tweets also had been

prominent on Twitter in September 2014. As protests in Hong Kong intensified, Occupy Central related tweets reached its peak at 11:25 p.m. on September 28, with 720 tweets per minute, making the issue much more popular than ISIS. Its popularity on Twitter brought the protests to global attention. Occupy Central started to appear in front-pages of major newspapers such as *the New York Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine, El Mundo*, and *the Toronto Star* on September 29 and dominated their headlines as well as other newspapers (*the Globe and Mail, the Washington Post, the Guardian*, and *Le Monde*) until October 3. While there is no evidence of direct causality between the two, the popularity of Occupy Central Hong Kong on Twitter was correlated with the temporal shift of (Western) mainstream media from their preoccupation with ISIS. In other words, the production of Occupy Central tweets helped globalize the movement and thus allowed a worldwide audience to hear the voice of the people rather than the authority's point of view, albeit temporarily.

The cases of Egypt, Tunisia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong show that activists used digital media and mobile technologies as their communication and information platforms without having to depend wholly on mainstream media channels. This differs from past social movements' use of media. For example, with the Students for a Democratic Society and the anti-war movements of the 1960s, activists had to virtually hand over control of their message to mass media professionals who, in turn, undermined the objectives of both movements (Gitlin, 1980). Hybrid human-communication-information networks formed by digital and other media types do not necessarily shift the control of communication from mass media to activists. They diffuse the communication flows, however, preventing any party, including state authority and mass media, from retaining centralized control of communication. The hybrid network, as exemplified in the Hong Kong case, also influences the nature of reporting of the uprisings on mainstream news. In examining the Egyptian uprising, Russell (2011, p. 1239) argued that activists' networked and decentralized communication platform shifted the purpose or main task of the traditional news outlets. In covering the Tahrir uprising, journalists attended to "what networked participants in the drama were reporting and saying about what was happening. . . . The mainstream outlets, in effect, were delivering a meta-story about the story being reported by people hooked into digital social networks" (p. 1239).

The protests in Egypt, Tunisia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong show that while global participants were a world away from where protesters were, they contributed to the movements by globalizing them and, subsequently, amplifying the voices of the protesters. When local and global actors are mutually linked, together they may generate a network of networks to galvanize the resistance and thus sustain the cycle of protests.

Part III. Routers

Social movements are political embodiments of human connections. At the core of social movements is connectivity, without which movements would be impossible. In the third part, I employ the term *routers*, emphasizing the importance of connectivity in social movements, to discuss the centrality of human and nonhuman

connectors who enable the connectivity between people, social groups, networks, and places. To clarify, my focus here is not the process, but the actors of connectivity, *the routers*. In computing, "a router is a networking device that forwards data packets between computer networks" (Ebert & Griffin, 2012, p. 347). Just as a router connects two or more data lines from different computer networks, in the making of social movements, routers make connections among various social networks by forwarding messages, narratives, and symbols of resistance, along with sentiments and emotions attached to them.

Social movements involve networks of people who share a common objective and/ or a common enemy (opponents) and come together in a series of public display of expression (Lim, 2014). A social movement thus is a complex human system made of interconnected systems of nodes (people and groups) and ties (relationships and flows) which resembles an internetwork of routers and links. This human network is an emergent system whose growth is sporadic and self-organizing (Krebs, 1996). Within this network, ties are unevenly distributed with some areas of the network having a high density of connectivity while others are sparsely connected. The availability of routers is thus crucial to the growth of network. "Contemporary social movements, unlike an individual (and often locally isolated) spontaneous protest, are networks of various contentious politics and/or geographically dispersed actions that are associated with each other based on solidarity and collective identity" (Lim, 2014, p. 52). Human and nonhuman routers are central to the formation of these networks. Not only do they perform connectivity where it had not existed, these routers also restore damaged or broken connectivity.

Nonhuman Routers

As discussed earlier, the Internet and social media platforms are undeniably important tools and spaces for expanding networks of social movements. As nonhuman routers, they can connect social movements with people and groups at local, national, regional, and even global levels. However, social media tools are not the main or the only actors who perform connectivity. Many artifacts—technological or otherwise, fixed or mobile, traditional or contemporary, digital or analog, permanent or temporal—can connect people, communicate messages, disseminate narratives and symbols, and, in turn, multiply the networks of social movement. To illustrate, in the following paragraphs, I chronicle some exemplary nonhuman routers, namely, satellite television network, mosques, churches, coffee houses, taxis, and post-it-notes.

Regional router and contagion effects. From January to February 2011, the protests spread like wildfire from Tunisia to Egypt and almost every Arab country. A contagion effect that was evident in the emerging Arab world protests of 2011 cannot be separated from the role of Al Jazeera. Spatial contagion of protests essentially relies on information transmission, and thus, media and communication networks are vital to this process. Al Jazeera, a Qatar-based satellite established in 1996, worked closely with locally based journalists, correspondents, and information. By so doing,

it established the practice of networked journalism, which is "journalism that sees publics acting as creators, investigators, reactors, (re)makers, and (re)distributors of news and where all variety of media, amateurs and professional, corporate and independent products and interests intersect at a new level" (Russell, 2011, p. 1238). Al Jazeera thus became the regional router that was vital to the dissemination of information in repressive media landscapes of the MENA. Along with other regional media, such as Al-Arabiya and BBC Arabic Television, as well as social media networks, Al Jazeera also contributed to the contagion effect in the region.

Cultural/religious routers. In Tunisia, Egypt, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, traditional cultural and religious spaces continued to be places where imaginaries were cultivated, connections were made, collectivities were formed, and resistance were collectivized and sustained. In Tunisia, Egypt, and Malaysia, mosques—and Coptic churches in Egypt—were among the most important routers of the movements. They were both places where protesters could gather and pray prior to and during the protests and as sites for the provision of logistics. Some mosques, such as the Omar Makram Mosque in the southwestern corner of Tahir Square, were transformed into emergency hospitals where injured protesters were treated. These mosques continued to connect people to other people, resistance to others' resistance, and movements to other movements.

Christianity was central to the Occupy Central Hong Kong movement. Notably, Christianity inspired the use of words "love and peace" in the name of the movements' organizer, Occupy Central Hong Kong with Love and Peace (OCHKLP). The movement itself had Protestant leaders—including Benny Tai, Joshua Wong, and the Reverend Chu Yiu Ming, the minister of the Chai Wan Baptist Church—who were joined by Catholic leaders such as Cardinal Joseph *Zen* Ze-kiun. The strong involvement of churches in the movement was unsurprising. Churches were utilized as the sites for deliberations prior to the 2014 Occupy Central protests (B. Tai, personal communication, August 4, 2015). During the protests, pastors and leaders made their churches available for prayer and as sites for the provision of food, water, and rest (Ng & Fulda, 2017).

Urban routers. In cities such as Cairo and Kuala Lumpur, social movements must navigate around the mesh of translocal urban networks that revolve around the combination of *fixation* and *mobilit*y. For example, two distinct social spaces in Cairo represent *fixed* and *mobile urban routers*. They are nodes that connect people and groups to each other and allow them easy access to information on urban protests (Lim, 2012). Cairo's *ahwas* (ahwa is Arabic for coffee and coffee houses alike) represent *fixed urban routers.* Cairo has thousands of *ahwas*, in all shapes and sizes. Just around the Tahrir Square are more than a dozen coffee houses, including a chain coffee bar *The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf* and independent ones such as *Café Mex, Nady Wady El Niel, Pottery Café, Costa Coffee, Beano's, a*nd *Café Corniche*. They served as social spaces, fixed urban routers, where activists, students, and ordinary Egyptians mingle for everyday conversations. In, from, and among these coffee houses, people spread

political information, political jokes, daily rumors, and other forms of *hidden transcripts* to one another.

Cairo's yellow taxis represent *mobile urban routers*. Taxi drivers always knew where the students/activists would hold street protests both because they wanted to avoid traffic jams and because they wanted more details about the protests as a way to engage passengers in conversation. Waleed Rashed, one of the Tahrir protest organizers, claimed that on the route to the January 25 revolt, "taxi drivers were as important as Facebook." In spreading information about the revolt, he took advantage of the fact that "taxi drivers couldn't stop talking":

> Every time I was in a cab, I would call Ahmed on my cell phone and talk loudly about planning a big protest in Tahrir Square for January 25th, because I knew that they couldn't stop themselves talking about what they'd overheard. Eventually, on January 23rd, a cabbie asked if I'd heard about this big demonstration that was happening in two days. (cited in Lim, 2012, p. 243)

Taxis and coffee houses serve as *routers* for networks of information flows not only in Cairo but also in other cities, including Tunis, Kuala Lumpur, and Hong Kong. As *urban routers*, taxis and coffee houses connect various social groups and networks. The combination of these *routers* represents the *fixed* and the *mobile* modes of communications and information networks. From thousands of taxis, coffee shops, and other *urban routers*, the message of movement are disseminated far and wide beyond the initial group of protesters to society at large.

Ephemeral routers. Some routers emerge in a fleeting moment in a certain space and time and then disappear. They are *ephemeral* and, as illustrated in the following examples from Hong Kong and Egypt, some materialize by necessity, others by creative impulses.

Taking place in a highly techno-urban society, Occupy Central protests were heavily mediated by social media apps. In Hong Kong, where the vast majority of people are online, social media platforms such as Facebook, Weibo (the China-based microblogging service), Twitter, and Instagram were extensively used during the actual protests. When rumors emerged that the police were planning to cut off the Internet connection—which they never did—protesters moved to Firechat, an application that uses a phone's WiFi and Bluetooth capabilities to build a mesh network with other phones. A mesh network is a decentralized network that connects devices to other devices; anyone can become a node in the network anonymously as long as the person's phone is within a 120 to 210 feet range to one of other nodes. The Internet was never cut off, but in an anticipatory mode, Firechat became an *ephemeral router* that occurred in a temporal moment of crisis. It became a router by forced necessity.

Similarly, in Egypt, the government decided to cut off nearly all access to the Internet on January 26, 2011. Data traffic to and from Egypt saw a 90% drop, crippling a main communications network used by protesters to organize and to spread their message (Richtel, 2011). In this moment of crisis, a newly invented tool called Speak

To Tweet or speak2tweet—a service developed by engineers at Google, Twitter, and the voice messaging startup SayNow—emerged as an ephemeral router, enabling Egyptians to tweet by calling a designated international telephone number and leaving a voice message.

Despite being heavily mediated by digital communication technologies, protesters of the Occupy Central still needed simple analog media, such as curated sticky notes, as an ephemeral router to diffuse the message of resistance. In a simple but creative collective undertaking, in October 2014, demonstrators wrote messages on sticky notes hang on walls and stairs outside the Central Government Offices in Admiralty, Hong Kong to invite passerby to stop, read, and, hopefully, participate in the movement. Indeed, the curated wall of sticky notes is "more reflective of the word, the voice, a multiplicity of voices—more painstaking and social in the old fashioned way" (Bagnewsnotes, 2014, para. 2). At the same time, these notes also reflect how a social movement builds in successive iterations, forms layers, and organically expands.

Bodies and Human Routers

Grosz (1987) rightly observes that the human body is "a political object *par excellence*; its forms, capacities, behaviour, gestures, movements, potential are primary objects of political contestation" (p. 3). While social media, cellphones, satellite television, and other communications tool are important, the most essential and central medium for contemporary social movements is the human body. It is the vital nexus of online and offline, between physical struggles and digital communication, connecting spaces of flows and spaces of places. Human bodies are brokers, bridges, boundary spanners, liaisons, and more. The human body is the most significant and, yet, fragile *router*. It voices, moves, dissents, and, yet, can be burned, dead, and decayed.

Burning bodies. The images of Mohamed Bouazizi's burning body were possibly the most disseminated images from the Arab uprisings. These dramatic images were presented to morally shock the public and evoke their emotions. They gave the "first and lasting visual impression of the story and elevated a local event to a larger spectacle" (Lim, 2013, p. 927). In *The Naked Blogger of Cairo*, Marwan Kraidy (2016) has drawn attention to the role of the body in MENA uprisings. Kraidy argued that the human body had animated Arab uprisings a century ago and it was still indispensable from recent Arab activism. Bodies in "naked" action—the self-immolated body of Mohamed Bouazizi, the body of tortured-to-death Khaled Said, and Aliaa Elmahdy's naked body—refract various kinds of repression and resistance (Kraidy, 2016). Elmahdy, an Egyptian activist, posted a nude photo of herself in her blog "Rebel's Diary" in October 2011 to protest Egypt's limitations on free speech. Describing herself as "secular, liberal, feminist, vegetarian, individualist Egyptian" in her Twitter account @aliaaelmahdy, in 2013 Elmahdy sought a political asylum in Sweden after being kidnapped, receiving a death threat, and escaping a rape attempt.

The burning bodies—a term I use to include bodies whose actions are radical or who are in extreme conditions, even when they are not burned—are radical human

routers who not only connect people to each other but, like fire, can potentially spread the resistance to manifold, expansive networks. During the Malaysian Bersih 2.0 protests, one of the most viral images was the picture of an elderly woman, drenched in rain and chemical-laced water, walking away from riot police while clutching on to a long-stemmed flower and a near-empty mineral water bottle. The frail, aging body of 65-year-old Annie Ooi Siew Lan, who is nicknamed "Aunty Bersih" and called "Malaysia's Lady of Liberty," is a burning body that sparked resistance in the online sphere of Malaysia, at home and globally. Beyond the uprisings, burning bodies continue to mark various junctures of social movements' trajectories, even as protests disappear from the streets. In Egypt, these are exemplified by the body of activist Ahmed Douma, who is serving a life sentence for alleged clashes with security forces. The same is true of the body of a prominent blogger Alaa Abdel-Fattah, who is serving a 5-year sentence for organizing unauthorized protests, and ultimately, the body of Shaimaa el-Sabbagh, who was shot dead in January 2015 in Tahrir Square while laying a wreath to commemorate those who had died 4 years before.

All of Kraidy's (2016) "naked" bodies, as well as my examples of burning bodies, represent radical, bold, and brazen actions in extreme conditions. Here, however, I also call for recognizing other types of bodies whose actions and conditions are less radical: they, too, still rely on bodies as the source and site of resistance. As illustrated in the following examples, these bodies, too, are important human routers whose existence and actions greatly shape social movements they are part of.

Dissenting bodies. In modern society, bodies *en masse* consent to participate in political rituals, allowing a political institution to subject, use, transform, and improve them as it sees fit. Having rendered themselves politically impotent, these bodies, in Foucault's (1995) term, are docile. Protest is "intimately connected to corporeal realities whereby the dissenting body disrupts—literally and figuratively—by presence and action" (O'Keefe, 2012, p. 1). Dissenting bodies *en masse*—participating in marches, sit-ins, strikes, and protests—are not docile. They are the opposite of Foucault's docile bodies. They turn an invisible resistance into a visual spectacle. They convert grievances into a display of collective power. They concretize social movements' claim-making.

The presence of dissenting bodies assembled in Tahrir Square of Cairo, Habib Bourguiba Avenue of Tunis, Central of Hong Kong, and Independence Square of Kuala Lumpur was essential in dramatizing grievances and performing collective resistance. But they were also essential to connect social movements' message, narrative, affect, and emotion to the larger public, tapping into the minds and hearts of (recruitable) strangers.

Moving bodies. The events of Cairo show that moving bodies are important human routers in urban settings where streets are crowded and encounters with strangers are common.[10] While the initial calls for protests were posted on social media, the protests themselves began in a number of key mosques and churches. These sites were located in densely populated working-class districts such as Shubra and El-Dakrour. While marching toward the square, Egyptian on the streets waved their hands and urged

Egyptians watching them from balconies and windows to join them. The connection between moving bodies on the ground and other bodies on balconies led to more protesters (El-Ghobashy, 2011).

Moving bodies can also perform connectivity between urban and rural areas that, in the case of Malaysia, also represented online and offline, technological and nontechnological spaces. The mobilization of Bersih movement took place mostly in urban areas; a heavy utilization of social media in doing so just amplified the urban bias. To reach out people in rural areas, Bersih activists initiated a *Balik Kampung Bawa Berita* (bring the news back to your village) project. *Balik kampung* is an annual Islamic tradition among Malay Muslims during the Eid holiday, when Muslims return to the village where their families—usually parents and grandparents—still live. The project instructed those who were going back to the village to share Bersih-related information with their families and friends. The shared information could take the form of offline soft copies saved on USB cards, hard copies, or CDs of blog postings, websites, and YouTube videos (Lim, 2017a). The sharers, however, were human routers, moving bodies who acted as liaisons between rural and urban communities.

Vocal bodies. Bodies need not always move to be rendered political and act as human political routers for social movements. Anybody who speaks, yells, chants, or sings is the vocal body who renders a body political by exercising the power of self-expression. In January 2011, this chant echoed at Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis: *Ash-sha'b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām!* (The people wants to bring down the regime!). Soon, the same chant reverberated at Tahrir Square and in the streets of Cairo, traveled to Bahrain, and resounded in protests across Yemen. The chant was also sprayed as graffiti on the wall of Dera'a in southern Syria. Beyond the Arab streets and squares, during the Arab uprisings, the chant also echoed in the union halls, newspaper offices, Internet cafes, and private homes of Arabs. Abulof (2011) contended that the Arab uprisings might not be "nominally qualified as real revolutions" as their impacts on political systems, at that moment, remained to be seen. He argued that, as reflected in the slogan, "one revolution is real and clear: the [singular] people . . . (*sha'ab*) was born—a collective, rather than a collection, of individuals, a whole greater than the sum of its parts" (Abulof, 2011, para. 11).

The chanting bodies are political bodies. In chanting, they express their political rights. Their vocal bodies are collectively producing one voice and noise to break the silence and, at the same time, temporally silencing the dominant power that tries to silent them. Bodies who chant, speak, or sing are human routers that can possibly span the boundaries of social movements because their chants, speeches, or songs reverberate through the networks beyond their own physical locations. Once such chants, speeches, or songs flow in the labyrinth of information networks, these become their own routers. They even travel through time and are reproduced again and again by vocal bodies of the future, such as exemplified by the vivacity of "*Ash-sha'b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām!*" (The people want to bring down the regime!). Years after the Arab uprisings largely disappeared from the Arab streets, the hybrid network of communications and media keeps the chant alive. It has been played and replayed on YouTube,

shared and reshared on Facebook, tweeted and retweeted on Twitter. It was echoed back in the streets of Tunis 5 years after the 2011 uprisings. It has been spoken, chanted, and sung again and again by vocal bodies of Arabs and non-Arabs globally, to remind that the people still want to bring down the regime.

However, "agency is not always directly audible, overt, or spoken loud in clear and unambiguous ways" (Ramzy, 2015, p. 652). Instead, as exemplified in the following examples, sounds of withdrawal, silence, and sonic disengagement, too, can be considered political (Ramzy, 2015). On May 23, 2015, hundreds of people, largely Egyptian-Canadians, gathered in Yonge-Dunda Square of Toronto. The silent bodies stood out in contrast with the lack of quiet in the noisy streets of Toronto. Through their silence, they loudly voiced their protest against the government of Egypt under el-Sisi, in particular the unjust execution of young activists. A similar gesture, standing in silence in protest against police brutality and on behalf of Khaled Said, was held multiple times in Cairo and Alexandria prior to the Tahrir protests. One was carried out quite dramatically by two Egyptian women in Alexandria on July 9, 2010. Two female bodies surrounded by at least 50 male policemen voiced the resistance louder than any sound can possibly make. They demonstrated that silenced bodies could still speak against the repression. In silence, vocal bodies act and resist, beyond voice and noise.

Conclusion

"Why do the Tunisian youth demonstrate in the streets; don't they have Facebook?" A caricature published in a Jordanian newspaper posed this question shortly after President Ben Ali was overthrown (Alexander, 2011). The answer is obvious. As discussed in this monograph, social media space is not a replacement for physical space in the making of contemporary social movements. Social movements occur, develop, and endure in and alternate between both social media and physical spaces and networks. Fundamentally, social movements are about power struggles. In the contemporary society, power is multidimensional and is increasingly organized around networks. Naturally, then, social movements exercise power by navigating through various networks of communications and media. The role of social media in contemporary social movements, is, therefore, not attached to its own inherent emancipatory power. Isolated from other networks of communications and media, social media cannot make a revolution.

In this monograph, employing the metaphors of *roots, routes*, and *routers*, I explored the complexity of communications and media as they are embedded in the making and development of contemporary social movements. Beyond empirical contexts utilized in this monograph, my analytical frameworks—roots, roots, and routers—can be employed to analyze other contexts. They may contribute to a more comprehensive, nuanced, deeper, and contextual analysis and understanding of the complexity of contemporary social movements and the entanglement of communications and media in this complexity. Mapping a mosaic of factors contributing to the uprisings showed that multiple *roots*—the combination of long-term enabling conditions, short-term causes, and immediate local triggers—were and will always be very much part of most large protests happening globally. Social movements, as I said

earlier, are not spontaneous endeavors. In the complex communications and media landscape, only through discipline and structured organizing involving hard work spanning time and space can activists create a social movement. This involves cultivating *imaginaries* in multiple spheres of origin and paving mobilization *routes* involving multiple *routers* to finally usher it into the mass revolutionary moment. Even when the mass mobilization reached its goal, such as in Tunisia, the revolution continues and needs to be continued.

Social movements in Egypt, Tunisia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, as well as many other movements in other places, will continue to emerge, coalesce, struggle, evolve, and eventually decline and fade away as have all social movements in the history of humankind. Regardless which trajectory ensues, within the legacies of these movements people will continue to collectivize, engage with power, and struggle for change. Hybrid human-communication-information networks that include social media or the next generation of communication technology will remain part of this struggle. In this hybrid milieu, the human body will always be the most essential and central instrument.

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Notes

1. The Chief Executive (CE) office was created after Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. CE was to be elected by a 1200-member Election Committee, comprised largely of representatives of functional groups, with a strong bias in favor of the business and the Chinese government and a small number of constituents.
2. Historian Paul Gilroy suggested that focusing on *roots*, which refer to authentic origins of peoples and cultures, would obscure the *routes* through which various processes and practices evolve and identities shift, realign, and coalesce (Gilroy, 1993). While my interpretations of *roots* and *routes* differ than those of Gilroy, I am aware of, inspired, and influenced

by his usage of the terms.

3. The dataset used in Part 1 was expanded from Carothers and Youngs' (2015) dataset and analysis, which covers 103 protests in 60 countries from May 2010 to August 2015. I combined their dataset with 2010-2013 data from the database of protests from the Initiative for Policy Dialogue and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Working Paper (Ortiz et al., 2013). I added more data that I collected online, namely, mass protests that happened in September to December 2015, by filtering the search for protest-related news articles on Google within an associated time range. In total, my dataset includes 152 large-scale national protests (those involving more than 1,000 protesters and covered by mainstream media) occurring in 77 countries. A different version of the analysis in this part is published as Lim, 2018.

4. While the Zapatista and the Battle of Seattle movements indeed operated on global and transnational level, their activities and actions were also anchored in local settings. The locality is especially salient in the Zapatista case, where most social actions were carried out in local communities, many of which lack running water and electricity (Khasnabish, 2013).

5. Founded in 2006, Hindraf is a coalition of 48 Indian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) committed to fight for equality of rights as citizens for Indian and Hindu community in Malaysia (Pandi, 2014).

6. The New Islamists include Islamic scholars, lawyers, journalists, and other prominent members of Egypt's society who shared a moderate centrist and reform Islamic mainstream vision, as embodied by the New Wasaat Party (Monshipouri, 2016). New Islamism in Egypt was largely shaped by Islamists from within the Muslim Brotherhood who were long disenchanted with its conservative leadership.

7. "Moral and National Education" is a school curriculum proposed by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong to strengthen national identity awareness and nurture patriotism toward China. It has drawn public opposition: many view it as Chinese Community Party propaganda.

8. In the past, this involved obtaining physical copies of newspapers, coding and measurement by hand, and manually inputting measurements into a spreadsheet or database, followed by calculation, analysis, and visualization. PageOneX automates some of these steps, simplifies others, and enables teams of investigators to conduct in shared newspaper front page analysis online (Costanza-Chock & Rey-Mazón, 2016).

9. Three months earlier, a massive July 1 rally in Hong Kong did not make it to headlines of these news media at all, except a very short article in the bottom of the front-page of *The New York Times* on July 2, 2014.

10. Here, it is important to note that crowd behaviors are complex and the anonymity of the crowds can provoke aggression and/or violence. Normally peaceful protests attract far more peaceful protestors than those who would stir up trouble. Mass sexual assaults that happened in Tahrir Square upon the fall of Mubarak in 2011 should not be seen merely as the result of the anonymity of crowd or anomaly of crowd behaviors during protests. Mass sexual assault has played a controversial role in Egyptian politics since May 2005, when security forces used it during a public protest in Tahrir as a weapon against female protesters (Slackman, 2005). Since then, it became a feature of many public festivities. In its report on the sexual assaults in Tahrir Square, Nazra for Feminist Studies (2013) states, A general attitude of sexual entitlement prevails, that is, a belief that the bodies of women present in the context of demonstrations are safe territories for sexual attacks underlies nearly all testimonies. With testimonies that speak of hundreds of hands persistently raping women, with hundreds more watching the brutal attacks, some while even smiling, it becomes clear that we are faced with an overwhelming challenge, namely a state and a society that have internalized sexual violence against women as the law of the land. (p. 8)

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