

Networked Media, Citizen Journalism and Political Participation in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia: Insight from a European Research Project

Authors : Andrea Miconi

Abstract : The research will focus on the results of the Tempus European Project eMEDia dedicated to Cross-Media Journalism. The project is funded by the European Commission as it involves four European partners - IULM University, Tampere University, University of Barcelona, and the Mediterranean network Unimed - and three Tunisian Universities - IPSI La Manouba, Sfax and Sousse - along with the Tunisian Ministry for Higher Education and the National Syndicate of Journalists. The focus on Tunisian condition is basically due to the role played by digital activists in its recent history. The research is dedicated to the relationship between political participation, news-making practices and the spread of social media, as it is affecting Tunisian society. As we know, Tunisia during the Arab Spring had been widely considered as a laboratory for the analysis the use of new technologies for political participation. Nonetheless, the literature about the Arab Spring actually fell short in explaining the genesis of the phenomenon, on the one hand by isolating technologies as a casual factor in the spread of demonstrations, and on the other by analyzing North-African condition through a biased perspective. Nowadays, it is interesting to focus on the consolidation of the information environment three years after the uprisings. And what is relevant, only a close, in-depth analysis of Tunisian society is able to provide an explanation of its history, and namely of the part of digital media in the overall evolution of political system. That is why the research is based on different methodologies: desk stage, interviews, and in-depth analysis of communication practices. Networked journalism is the condition determined by the technological innovation on news-making activities: a condition upon which professional journalist can no longer be considered the only player in the information arena, and a new skill must be developed. Along with democratization, nonetheless, the so-called citizen journalism is also likely to produce some ambiguous effects, such as the lack of professional standards and the spread of information cascades, which may prove to be particularly dangerous in an evolving media market as the Tunisian one. This is why, according to the project, a new profile must be defined, which is able to manage this new condition, and which can be hardly reduced to the parameters of traditional journalistic work. Rather than simply using new devices for news visualization, communication professionals must also be able to dialogue with all new players and to accept the decentralized nature of digital environments. This networked nature of news-making seemed to emerge during the Tunisian revolution, when bloggers, journalists, and activists used to retweet each other. Nonetheless, this intensification of communication exchange was inspired by the political climax of the uprising, while all media, by definition, are also supposed to bring some effects on people's state of mind, culture and daily life routines. That is why it is worth analyzing the consolidation of these practices in a normal, post-revolutionary situation.

Keywords : cross-media, education, Mediterranean, networked journalism, social media, Tunisia

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020