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Let's Boost Democracy and Human Rights:

The use of the social media and its impact on the venture of enhancing democracy and human rights in an era of social turbulence


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## *Abstract*

The use of the social media has seen an uprising the last few years. The outcome of their extensive use has been reflected in the Egyptian Revolution, the Occupy Movement, the case of WikiLeaks and the case of the Anonymous. Utilising the social media, one can see that there are multiple benefits for democracy and human rights. However, the disadvantages also have to be examined, since they show that it is not the social media itself that will make the change. To maximize the use of the social media and their beneficiary nature for human rights and democracy, there should be new policies. The appropriate use of the social media both by the citizens and by the governments is the key to enhance democracy.

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## Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have experienced a series of changes- political, technological advances and more. What is interesting and what no one was expecting is that technology would become so vital for our everyday lives- from making international calls and arrangements through a screen to checking the governments' procedures on multiple issues online. Social media have thus become so essential for our everyday lives, boosting a range of different human rights, most importantly the freedom of expression and the freedom of speech. By allowing these rights to flourish we have seen a domino of allowing other rights to be fulfilled too, like the freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and many others. People share their opinions, cultures are met and interactions between them flourish, but most importantly democracy is enhanced. We have seen this revolution of the media through the Egyptian Revolution and how the media helped people to come together and boost for real democracy through open dialogue and arrangements to take action. Nevertheless, as far as the governments are concerned, 'ICT-enabled mechanisms offer opportunities to address and adapt to broadening understandings of political representation, transparency, participation and accountability. In turn, such practices offer citizens possibilities of additional involvement, understanding and engagement in the democratic system'[1].

What I will do in this essay is to point out the way that the social media have enriched and continue enriching and boosting democracy and I will provide some policy changes that can better enhance democracy. To do this, I will first explore the positive and negative effects of the social media on democracy and then I will reflect them in four cases- the Egyptian Revolution, the Occupy the Wall Street Movement, the case of WikiLeaks and the Anonymous. The main finding is that social media can truly help democracy and democratisation as it will be shown in the case of the Egyptian Revolution and the Occupy the Wall Street Movement. However, I will show the negative aspects of the social media through the case of WikiLeaks and the Anonymous and how it endangered people's lives and made the government more opaque than transparent. Based on this analysis, I will offer my personal opinion and some policy changes to make in order to use the social media to really enhance democracy.

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[1] Julie Freeman and Sharna Quirke, Understanding E-democracy- Government- Led Initiatives for Democratic Reform, *JEDEM*, 5(2):141-154, 2013,p.142

As I mentioned before, we have been viewers of the incidents of the Egyptian Revolution, which was mainly organized through the social media and was indeed successful, at least concerning the immediate aftermath. People there have indeed gained some rights, however it should be noticed that the situation has not changed *that* much. In other words, the media present multiple paradoxes; on the one hand, we see democracy flourishing through bringing people together and sustaining important dialogue procedures, but, on the other hand, we see harassment, censorship and the oppressive political systems being sustained. Nevertheless, bringing up the example of WikiLeaks, we see, on the one hand, the effort to create transparency on the part of the governments, but, on the other hand, we have seen endangering peoples' lives that had nothing to do with politics through the disclosures. The same applies with the case of the Anonymous, who have been hacking various sites, again mainly governmental, to inform the people and protect them from injustice. However, the word 'hacking' that I am using is immediately connected with illegal action, and sometimes, like with the WikiLeaks' disclosures, people's lives have been put at risk. Both the efforts of WikiLeaks and of the Anonymous have the pure goal of democratising and of boosting transparency in politics which is for the advantage of the citizenship, however they have ended up being problematic because of their anarchic ways. Nevertheless, these two ventures have overlooked the fact that when a government is attacked, the norm is that it will become more opaque rather than transparent. Apart from this problem, there is the complication of the people's harassment due to the difficulty and, consequently, the lack of enforcing the cyberspace protection. Last but not least, we have experienced what happened with the case of the Occupy Movement, which had a good start and it helped to call the attention of governments on some social issues, however this did not happen without problems. The question thus is how we can promote rights like the freedom of speech while protecting the harassment of individuals and censorship and how real democracy can be boosted, along with protecting the governments' efforts to sustain democracy. The governments are using the social media to enrich democracy but ventures like the aforementioned put it in danger.

Some authors have highlighted the revolutionary nature of the times people live in regarding the current and continuously evolving communications' landscape and the effects this will have on democracy. Specifically, in the Journal of Democracy, Marc F. Plattner has stressed that 'though it is too soon to know where this revolution will lead, it is an opportune moment for a broader historical inquiry into the relationship between democracy

and the media. Representative democracy was born in the era of print media, but over the past century it has accommodated the raise of broadcasting and now is being shaped by new communications technologies. As a result, we seem to be heading toward a more pluralistic but also more fragmented media environment that may pose a threat to the shared civic arena essential to democracy'[2]. There has been a major agreement with this argument, like the one that Campante, Durante and Sobbrio have put forward: 'The idea that the Internet has profound effects on society and that it brings substantial economic benefits is widespread both among experts and in public opinion. The Internet is also often mentioned as a powerful political tool that can contribute to overcome collective action problems and foster political change. In fact, some have gone as far as stating that the world is experiencing a true "communication revolution" which provides yet unexplored opportunities for democratic development and social reform (McChesney, 2007). Yet, despite this perceived importance of the Internet for politics, business and the public sector, much remains to be learned about its effects'[3]. In the same study, it has been shown that the more informed the citizens are, the more likely it is for them to vote[4], a fact that seems to be generally agreed by the researchers of the topic. However, the Internet may alter the citizens' level of information in several subtle ways; 'first, it may increase the level of information by providing more (and more diverse) news sources. At the same time, it is much more than a mere news media platform, offering unprecedented entertainment opportunities, and a platform for different forms of participation beyond elections. It may thus crowd out traditional (and potentially more informative) news media, as has been noted with other episodes of new media technologies such as television (or offline modes of participation)'[5].

Specialists talked about the role of the social media in promoting democracy and human rights in a congress organized by the International Peace Institute (IPI). Jonas Gahr Store, Foreign Minister of Norway, discussed the events in Tunisia, in Egypt and throughout the Arab world that proved how these were important challenges for the authoritarian regimes. He highlighted the fact that neither Facebook nor Twitter was the driving force of bringing down these regimes- it was rather the people that did that. He said that 'I believe, as I approach it,

[2] Mark F. Plattner, Media and Democracy: The Long View, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.23, No.4, pp.62-73.
[3] Filipe Campante, Ruben Durante and Francesco Sobbrio, Politics 2.0: *The Multifaceted Effect of Broadband Internet on Political Participation*, April 2014, p.1,
http://www.iae.csic.es/investigatorsMaterial/a13174085038513.pdf
[4] Ibid.,p.4
[5] Ibid.,p.4

that social media with all its [sic] opportunities are tools and multipliers. For human rights defenders of today these tools offer a much more effective way of bringing out information, organising, reaching out across borders, and this efficiency of course triggers repressive regimes.[..] Today, around 60 countries, are listed as exercising some form of internet censorship, they filter, they infiltrate, they manipulate and they harass. So there is another technology brunch growing up with those opportunities. Especially for human rights defenders, this insecurity of digital stored or communicated information via social media can prove to be a great vulnerability/dilemma'[6]. We see thus that the social media can be used for both ends: both positive and negative.

Many are those who have highlighted the fact that the Internet freedom has been grounded in the UDHR and in the ICCPR as Maria Otero, Under Secretary of the State for Democracy and Global Affairs of the United States, did. She argued that keeping these in mind, we reach a consensus that the question of the internet being free and accessible to all is strongly connected to democratic systems that allow free expression, which is something that everyone seeks, and, relating the internet freedom to the UDHR is vital because it is grounded in that and this has to be the contemporary point of departure[7]. Nevertheless, it is commonly agreed that it is the people who bring the changes and not the social media; the centrality of the individual in this process is essential. However, the harassment and the threats have increased and people have to be supported[8]. The question is how to achieve this; there is a common opinion that civil society could help in that.

Maria Otero also talked about the fact that we should be reminded *why* the topic has become a foreign policy priority for states around the world. Citizens should be empowered to do what they want. As social media have become a tool, the degree of harassment and of threats and the vulnerability of people throughout the world have increased and part of the government's role is to protect the human rights defenders of today and of the future[9]. Most importantly, Otero talked about the president of Brazil and the US who have launched the Open Government Partnership (which Norway is also very involved in). This program is an effort to move governments themselves to become more transparent, as well as more accountable and responsive to the citizens. Using the technologies for this will make the governments more

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[6] 'Role of Social Media in Promoting Democratisation and Human Rights' at IPI, Sept. 21,2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlzHBcq7jfE
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

accountable. So, the social media do not have to do only with revolutionary movements like the Arab Spring that had attracted attention, but it is how these tools are used in order to advance the governments towards becoming improved in the governance that they carry out[10].

Another argument that has been used deals with the threats that the freedom of the net is under. This has been put forward by Carl Bildt, Foreign Minister of Sweden, who discussed about the Internet and how it began, underlining that it used to be outside of politics and this was a rather positive thing. It started without state interference, however this has changed because there is this exact threat to the freedom of the net, as well as the threat that some governments pose due to sometimes restricting particular media through filtering[11]. Bildt put also emphasis on the Swedish government's effort to put the freedom of the net high in their foreign policy agenda and its cooperation with 40 other nations to create a plan to bring that further, working primarily with the UN Human Rights Council together with likeminded governments like the US and more[12]. Bildt, nevertheless, discussed also the *security* of the net that goes hand in hand with its *freedom*; he concentrated on the continuous threat that the net faces, thus creating two different cultures; on the one hand, the freedom of the net, and, on the other hand, its security[13]. He underlined that we should 'develop the legal, political, and, to a certain extent, also the technological instruments to count to those that want to restrict the freedom of the net'[14].

The main argument of this thesis is that the various social media can indeed help democracy to flourish. However, the negative effects should be also taken in careful consideration, since they can prohibit boosting democracy. Regarding the positive effects, the social media can raise awareness about human rights' abuses around the world, thus pushing the governments to take measures for the protection of the people both domestically and internationally. Nevertheless, the social media can help also human rights organisations to know where injustice, what type of it and where it takes place and take measures. In the same time, social media can help people to know their rights in order to elevate their lives. I am going to discover this by showing the mechanisms of the social media in detail. Nevertheless, I will explain how the governments should pay attention to this powerful tool since now we

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

have social media as an exposition of peoples' needs from their governments. However, governments have to pay attention to the social media for their own advantage and security.

First of all, I will provide a brief history of the social media and the freedoms that they have enhanced through the years. Then, I will discuss the positive and negative effects of them on protecting the rights of the people but also the rights of the governments, and then I will provide four cases (the Egyptian Revolution, the Occupy Movement, WikiLeaks and Anonymous) to check how they have reflected these effects. Last but not least, I will offer my personal opinion in the form of suggesting policies that can take place in order to reinforce democracy through the use of the social media- thus I will show how the positive effects can outweigh the negative ones.

## Chapter I: A Brief History

The vast amount of literature on the issue of new media has demonstrated their positive impacts on democratisation as well as on the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights. After the Egyptian Revolution, it has become clear that 'these technological advances clearly have added effective new tools to the arsenal of people challenging authoritarian rule- even as their oppressors are hard at work seeking ways to use these same tools to thwart them'[15].

The type of democracy that we have now, the representative, was born in the era of the print media. As Platner describes, the term *media* was later used; 'for centuries, people spoke instead of the press, using a term describing the technology of printing to refer to the various means of communication based upon the printed word. Today we think of this anachronistic term as referring primarily to periodicals and newspapers. But initially it also included books, as is still reflected in the names of contemporary publishing houses like the Oxford or Harvard University Press'[16]. The battles in England in the 17th century had as a primary goal the liberty of the press focusing on the licencing of printers, and they were waged by John Milton as well as John Locke. Platner describes that 'as it is clear from both Milton's public 1644 pamphlet Areopagitica defending the "liberty of unlicensed printing" and Locke's private 1695 memorandum opposing the renewal of the Licensing Act, the enemy of the freedom to publish was the ecclesiastical authorities as much as the state'[17].

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[15] Marc F. Platner, Media and Democracy: The Long View, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.23 (4), Oct.2012, pp.62-73 (p.63).
[16] Ibid. (p.64).
[17] Ibid.

However, this Enlightenment era-led approach supporting free speech 'by no means implied a call for unfettered individual liberty let alone for democracy'[18]. It was only Spinoza who directly linked democracy to the freedom of expression. In his *Theologico-Political Treatise* he had a chapter entitled that in a free state *Every Man may Think what he likes, and Say What He Thinks,* clearly indicating that democracy, as 'the most natural form of government' is also the one best-suited to fulfil this aim[19].

The first law that explicitly provided the freedom of the press, a 1766 Swedish royal 'Ordinance Relating to the Freedom of Writing and of Press', made it apparent that the liberty of the press is inseparable from supporting and boosting democracy. It started by underlining that 'the great advantages that flow from a lawful freedom of writing and of the press, in that an unrestricted mutual enlightenment in various useful subjects not only promotes the development and dissemination of sciences and useful crafts but also offers Our loyal subjects greater opportunities to gain improved knowledge and appreciation of a wisely ordered system of government'[20]. However, this Ordinance, although abolishing censorship, clearly 'affirmed severe legal penalties for publications that "contain blasphemy against God" or "disparaging opinions of Us and of Our Royal House"'[21].

Later on, it was Alexis de Tocqueville that offered a sustained analysis of the role of the press in modern democracy in his *Democracy in America* (1835-1840). Tocqueville offered a thorough analysis of the three societal domains through which opinions are formed: political parties, the press and political associations (nowadays civil society). Platner has described that these domains 'are not formally part of the government and go unmentioned in the US Constitution, except insofar as the Bill of Rights prohibits the federal government from infringing upon the freedom of press, association, petition and assembly. Yet despite the sub constitutional or extra constitutional status of parties, the media, and civil society experience has shown that modern democracies cannot work without them and that they have profound effects upon the quality and sustainability of democracy. It is not surprising then, that contemporary programs of international democracy assistance are to a great extent focused upon supporting democratic political parties, media organs and civil society groups'[22].

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., (p.64-65).

[21] Ibid., (p.64-65).
[22] Ibid., (p.66-67).

Nowadays we have moved to the era of modern media, or social media. We have Facebook, having started in 2004 for students in Harvard University, but later on it became a cyberspace where people from all around the world can connect and express, exchange and maintain their opinions. I will later discuss the fact that Facebook also acted as an amazing mechanism for connecting people to strive for democracy in the Egyptian Revolution. In a similar manner, Twitter was created in 2006, and, through the short 140-character twits that can be written, it has changed the world. It has also brought people together and has started discussions, while it has also helped politicians to be more active in the public sphere through their personal profiles and their announcements or their opinions on various issues.

In another sense of media, we can see the investigative journalism that WikiLeaks has put forward or the "internet gathering" of hackers that has been the case of the Anonymous. These are not social media in the way that Facebook and Twitter are, but they are forms of gathering the people in cyberspace to strive for democracy through disclosing governmental secrets to unveil governmental misconducts (WikiLeaks) or through hacking terrorists' sites to prevent their action, by not allowing their internal communication and organisation (Anonymous). These cases have been a lot more radical and, we could say, anarchical, but they still have to offer to this issue ways of boosting democracy through technological means. Importantly though, the use of them poses questions for the security both of the governments and of the civilians that need to be answered. I am viewing them as a different kind of social media, since everyday people can participate to enrich democracy, thus it is very important for my research to refer to them, however in a kind of different sense and with disparate impacts.

Seeing the facts, according to a large survey made by the TNS Opinion & Social at the request of the European Commission (2012), the people of the Union still watch mainly television to get informed on the matters[23]. The survey acknowledges however the great attention that the Internet has gained by the European people, writing that a clear majority of 69% use the Internet at least once a week. Nevertheless, the facts have shown that 'this proportion has increased significantly since autumn 2011 (+5 percentage points). More than half of Europeans now use the Internet every day or almost every day (54%), a sixpoint rise between autumn 2011 and autumn 2012. The proportion of Europeans who never use the Internet has fallen (27%, -3 percentage points): 22% (+1) "never" use it and 5% (-4) say *spontaneously* that they do not have Internet access. The use of the Internet on a daily or almost

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[23] Media Use in the EU, Survey Carried out by TNS Opinion and Social at the Request of the European Commission, Directorate- General Communication, "Research and Speechwriting Unit, p.4

daily basis decreases significantly with age (85% of 15-24 year-olds, 70% of 25-29 year-olds, 56% of 40-54 year-olds and 28% of those aged 55 or over). However, it has increased in all categories since autumn 2011 (+6 among the youngest respondents, but also +5 among those aged 55 or over)'[24]. It is commonly agreed that is hard to tell if these changes are real unless they change, however, I find the numbers worth known and they should be carefully taken in consideration.

As far as the social media are concerned, the report writes that 'the use of online social networks has also increased in the European Union: 42% of Europeans say they do so at least once a week, an increase of seven percentage points since autumn 2011. More than a quarter of Europeans now use social networks on a daily or almost daily basis (27%, +7). Nevertheless, more than four out of ten Europeans "never" use social networks (43%, -1). This reflects the fact that the proportion of respondents who answered *spontaneously* that they do not have access to them has fallen significantly (6%, -5)'[25]. As for the credibility of the Internet sources, 'a majority of Europeans trust institutional and official websites more than other sites (38%, unchanged since the Standard Eurobarometer survey of autumn 2011, whereas only 15% trust them less than other websites, -2). The proportion of Internet users who said spontaneously that they do not distinguish between institutional and official websites and other websites has increased slightly to 25% (+3). One in ten Internet users said *spontaneously* that they "don't trust what's on the Internet" (10%, +1)'[26]. This is very important to see how we can build trust in the media and social media networks and raise their credibility. What is more important though, is the belief of the European citizens that they are ill-formed on the European matters. To be more specific, 'three-quarters of Europeans believe that citizens in their country are not well- informed about European issues (75%, +2) and 68% consider that they are personally ill-informed (+2). Therefore, less than a quarter of Europeans believe that people in their country are well-informed about European matters (22%, -2) and less than a third feel that they are personally well-informed (31%, -2)'[27]. Last but not least, 'a socio-demographic analysis confirms the trends measured previously for media use: the Internet is the preferred source for searching for information on the European Union among 15-24 year olds (51%) and 25-39 year

[24] Ibid., p.8
[25] Ibid., p.10
[26] Ibid, p.26
[27] Ibid.,pp.27-28

olds (46%) […], the most educated respondents are also more likely that average to mention the Internet (50%)'[28] and the same applies to students as well.

## Chapter II: Potential Positive and Negative Effects of the Social Media on Boosting Democracy and Human Rights

The social media have certainly created a new political landscape. As Unwin has maintained, 'the effects that the emergence of social media platforms, such as Facebook, [..] Twitter or YouTube as well as blogging environments and online discussion fora, have had on political processes remain controversial and not well understood. Indeed, much discourse in this field seems to be driven as much by political ideology itself, as it does by rigorous academic enquiry. There is a strong will to believe that these social media are indeed making political processes more democratic, and yet the evidence is not always there to support such assertions'[29]. Therefore, there are positive effects of the social media regarding the enrichment of democracy, however the negative effects cannot be overlooked. In this chapter, I will be covering these potential positive and negative outcomes of this large scale use of the social media. Following this chapter, I will be providing interesting cases that reflect both the types of effects of the social media use on democracy and human rights.

To begin with, it is commonly agreed that the social media have helped people unite and have common goals. Through the social media, it is easier for people around the world to come together and create interesting dialogue procedures concerning everyday problems and their solutions. On platforms like Facebook, citizens can write their problems that can be discussed with others and they can share possible suggestions or actions that can be taken in order for them to be solved.

Nevertheless, it has been commonly agreed that the social media are precious mechanisms for unveiling gross injustices regarding human rights all around the world. Through this, it is easier for the governments to know their citizens' problems and proceed into finding solutions. In many countries we have seen censorship being divulged through the social media, as well as other human rights violations like the cases we have seen in Egypt with the

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[28] Ibid., p.40
[29] Tim Unwin, *Social Media and Democracy: Critical Reflections*, Background Paper for Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Colombo 2012, (p.1),
http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/Unwin%20CPA%20Social%20media%20and%20democracy.pdf

lack of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, as well as the lack of implementing women's rights.

On the part of the governments, through the use of social media, they become more transparent. Having their own sites that people can visit to see what is taking place and be more informed about their interests and their rights being respected and fulfilled, the citizens' rights can be better protected. This is also being used by the civil society for the same goals. The National Democratic Institute has underlined this fact, writing that 'Citizens, civil and non-governmental organizations, companies, civil servants, politicians, and large state and private-sector bureaucracies are employing technologies and the Internet to enhance communication, improve access to important information, and increase their efficiency, resulting in strengthened democratic processes and more effective governance'[30].

In addition, we have seen politicians using social media, especially Twitter, to make announcements or declare their opinions on multiple issues. This has multiple effects. First of all, citizens feel closer to their elected representatives and the latter get more straightforwardly informed about the outcome of their practices, or even opinions. This has as a consequence that the answers of the citizenry can produce more informed government decisions. However, it should be noted that, although citizens get informed in general about multiple issues, and, in this way they are reinforced to make decisions that are reasoned, there are predetermined affairs that do not afford feedback. Thus, not every civic opinion can shape the various political agendas.

As I have already shown, social media have gained huge popularity among all ages. Importantly, they have gained popularity mainly among the young people, which I believe is very important, especially if we think that these same young people will or already hold high positions that can affect policy making. This is another positive effect of utilising the social media, since they help specifically the young generations to get deeply informed on and engaged with multifarious political issues.

That young people have rejected traditional forms of media due to their relationship with the marketing of big companies and due to the relationship of TV channels with political parties has been established. Young people prefer independent sources of information and they engage much more in political discussions through the internet and social platforms like Facebook or Twitter. On the other hand, older people, as I have already indicated, do not attend

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[30] National Democratic Institute, Democracy and Technology, < https://www.ndi.org/democracy-and-technology>

the social media in the same manner and in the same percentages, however they use these too on a large scale.

When we discuss about young people, we generally refer to a diverse societal group that presents distinct characteristics, both in terms of identity, socio-economic and educational background. Nevertheless, 'the distinction between who is considered youth and adult is also culturally determined and changes over time. In some countries, for example, young people are dependent on their parents for much longer than other countries and this tendency is exacerbated in times of crises'[31]. In a study of the LSE University, the researchers showed that 'a normative conception of youth participation broadly, is about engaging in forming opinions and taking actions to bring about positive change in society'[32] and it can take various forms. One form is the participation of young people in representative democracy through voting, the participation in participatory structures like youth organisations or volunteering or involvement in issue-based NGOs[33]. I would however maintain that the most important forms of participation is through debates of online communities and through seeking online information about political processes. As the study, which I strongly agree with, shows, youth participation 'fosters a sense of citizenship and makes policy processes more transparent and accountable towards young people. At the same time, it helps young people build self-confidence, develop a sense of initiative and acquire and test skills that are relevant for the workplace, such as communication, negotiation or teamwork, in a practical environment'[34].

On the other hand, as far as the young people are concerned, there are also some dangers. They are often victims of cyber bullying, which is first of all against their freedom of expression and their freedom of speech. However, this is a general phenomenon; minorities, women, or people who propose different ideas are fought online. The challenge is that it is difficult to control this, since it is quite problematic to both stop harassment and, in the same time, maintain freedom of speech.  Although 'corporations do in many countries have an existing legal obligation to report certain types of content (such as "hate speech" or incitement to violence), they frequently fail to do so. This alone is not justification for companies not to act, rather, their failure or inability to act on the most serious of content puts into question their capacity for dealing with harassment complaints. Furthermore, corporations are not in the best position to judge what qualifies as bullying; often they don't have staff on board with the

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[31] Youth Participation in Democratic Life, *EACEA 2010/03*, Final Report, Feb.2013, p.3, www.lse.ac.uk./businessAndConcultancy/LSEEnterprise/pdf/YouthParticipationDemocraticLife.pdf
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

expertise to do this and their lawyers are often prone to over compliance with the law, putting into jeopardy speech that does not qualify as harassment'[35]. There is a number of countries that protect people from harassment, however, the unfortunate fact is that a number of these laws are often not applied. On a worldwide scale, 'law enforcement is often dismissive of complaints about bullying that occurs solely online. While some have called for new laws aimed specifically at addressing online harassment, the risk in taking an approach that divides our lives into "online and offline" are numerous: speech that would typically go unpunished would likely be subject to additional scrutiny, and the police are unlikely to be able to deal with the large number of complaints that would inevitably arise'[36].

Another positive effect of the social media use that has been described in a directorate of the European Parliament in 2013 is the women's increased political participation through the new media[37]. This particular study has reviewed 'the barriers to women's involvement in politics and, through case studies and research with new media users, how media many help to increase women's involvement at different levels of political participation, including formal representative politics'[38]. The researchers used quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as different users of social media and case studies of eight different new media platforms. The study found out that, first of all, there are different forms of political behaviour, all of them being equally important, and, secondly, that 'there are several barriers to women's involvement and advancement in formal 'representative' politics. These barriers are social (cultural norms and values), structural (connected with women's smaller share of economic and power resources), and situational (connected with women's role in the family)'[39].

However, although the study found out that women MEPs had more followers on social media than men, they have generally profiles that are not interactive enough. The study found out that this happens 'because of the tension between the necessity of being open, honest, personal and direct with online communication and the need to 'control' the public-facing message, to avoid embarrassment or departure from party lines. Consequently, institutions, including political ones, and politicians are not as good at new media, particularly social media, as individuals and small organisations. However, this weakness also represents an opportunity

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[35] Jillian York, *Do People Have the Right to Bully Others Online?,* http://www.bl.uk/my-digital-rights/articles/the-right-to-bully-others-online#
[36] Ibid.
[37] Women in Decision Making: The Role of the New Media for Increased Political Participation, European Parliament, *Directorate General for Internal Policies,*2013
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., p.12

for women politicians and (future) aspiring politicians'[40]. It was also found out that if the profiles were more interactive and innovative in their way of using the social media, it would allow them to be leaders in this field[41]. In addition, using the social media in diverse ways could help women engage more in politics. Last but not least, as it was underlined 'it is essential for new media projects to listen to and value their users. [Additionally,] new media tools provide immediacy to action which is useful for women, often allowing women to act when angered or interested in an issue'[42].

Nevertheless, the study suggested that for women to be empowered though the social media, they have to adopt innovative and courageous media practices, in order to diverge from the rest in a good way; 'New media is an opportunity for female politicians to set the example and become leaders in this approach. In so doing, female politicians will be even better engaged with their voters and wider electorate. This could have two interlocking impacts – on the one hand to bypass mass media and social and cultural barriers that lock women politicians into 'lower' political roles. On the other hand, it may attract the trust and support of individual voters by providing direct and honest contact between voters and female politicians. In so doing, this may also inspire other women to get involved in formal politics'[43]. We clearly see thus the positive effects of the social media on the level of the women's empowerment as well as on their increased political representation.

However, the low levels of women's online political representation work as a reflection of the patriarchal society that we still live in, and thus, having models that repress women, we cannot talk of democracy (which goes hand in hand with equality) boosted through the social media. The study noticed that women engage in the new media less than men because of their lower financial situation, so the work of the governments needs to be focused on this. As the study writes, 'women's lower political representation can be explained by their lack of financial and power resources, and of time to engage in traditional politics. […] [Nevertheless,] Negative media representations of women in politics reinforces the socialisation that deters women from entering politics. New media tools are used by women to develop a 'public self' and build confidence in public debate, although not necessarily

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[40] Ibid., pp.13-14

[41] Ibid., p.12
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p.15

linked to formal or representative politics'[44]. So the focus needs to be on building women's empowerment through the media, something which is definitely attainable.

We can see thus that the new media can really help and empower women, and what needs to be figured out is how we could use these tools to empower them more. Through the use of the social media by women we have seen that, although it has been years now that we have achieved an equal society in terms of gender representation, we need to treat women equally with men by giving them equal resources and opportunities to represent the citizens in the political institutions. It should however be underlined here that this cannot be attained anyway in eastern countries: women still do not see their rights being fulfilled due to the Sharia law infused with politics. We have seen this happening in a very obvious way in the Egyptian revolution- but talking about women's empowerment in the eastern region is a big topic that is somehow irrelevant and cannot be covered in this essay.

Having already discussed some negative effects, like the case of cyberbullying, there are more of them that should be taken in serious consideration. First of all, we have seen governments attacked through sites like WikiLeaks, which cannot be defined as a social medium, however, thinking about it in a different way, we can see it being a space where people, unknown to each other, gather and share information creating important discussions around injustices. Nevertheless, because these efforts have been actually attacks to the governments, the latter end up being more opaque rather than transparent, and, in this way, the efforts of people to unveil injustices fail. In addition, apart from the interesting dialogue that is created through the social media, there are issues that cannot be resolved there; it is true that democratic countries hold elections and the outcome is to have people having been democratically elected to represent the people and their needs. But as I will show later, we have seen the example of the Egyptian revolution that had a successful outcome, however there are still political and social problems that persist and many have laid emphasis on the failures of the transition. Nevertheless, we have seen a lot of hate speech (for example, during the pre-election period in the US, when people are bullying each other for their political views) and cyberbullying of children and women which needs to be fought.

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[44] Ibid.,p.23

## Chapter III: Methods: The Egyptian Revolution, WikiLeaks and Anonymous, and the Occupy Movement

In this chapter, I will describe the cases of the Egyptian Revolution, the Occupy Movement, WikiLeaks and the Anonymous to reflect the elements of my aforementioned theory of positive versus negative effects that social media can bring. As I have aforementioned, these cases are very indicative of how the social media can boost democracy or offer nothing to it in the end. I am going to sustain that they can boost democracy, but additional policies by the governments or the institutions have to be created in order to enrich democracy and human rights though the use of the social media.

First of all, it would be useful to provide here a definition of the social media. They are defined as 'forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)'[45]. It is commonly supported that WikiLeaks and the Anonymous are not social media, however, in the way I view them, they are quite similar and their use can have the same results. This is the reason why I chose these particular cases to refer to, while also to use them as the starting point of creating new policies to invigorate democracy through the social media.

To begin with, the Egyptian Revolution can shed light on how well the social media can act in times of social turbulence and how they can help people overcome barriers and enjoy their rights that have been long ago granted. They can also show the negative aspects, such as people not fully enjoying their rights even after the revolution. However, as I see the topic, the positive impacts can overshadow the negative ones.

The Occupy Movement has worked quite in the same way as the Egyptian Revolution has done: people occupying the streets demanding their rights. In this way, as I have aforementioned, they called the attention of the governments and the international organisations to protect human rights. There have also been rights that, even though the movement took action, are not fulfilled till now.

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[45] Definition of the social media, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media

WikiLeaks has made important disclosures of governmental documents and attracted the attention of governments but, most importantly, the attention of the people. With its method, WikiLeaks tried to bring a new aspect of transparency in politics. On the one hand, it revealed injustices, but, on the other hand, it showed the governments that they have to be more careful in keeping their documents classified. In the beginning, people loved the way this venture worked, what it challenged and what results it brought. However, through the time, people stopped being so interested, something which I will analyse further on.

As far as the Anonymous are concerned, similar incidents happened. People embraced it in the beginning and still embrace it and expect things from them, however some of their misconducts led them to lose their previous popularity. The case of the Anonymous, along with this of the WikiLeaks, can confirm the hypothesis that social media can create more transparency in politics, but they can also create great confusion, along with secrecy in politics as a response. In addition, they also confirm the hypothesis that people have the power to make changes, however the Internet needs to be carefully regulated to be made safer in order to avoid incidents such the ones created by the WikiLeaks' disclosures.

**Chapter IV: The Egyptian Revolution**

Following the Tunisian Revolution of 2010 and the efforts to oust the long term President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, thus democratising the country and gaining free and democratic elections, we experienced the following incidents in Egypt. The Egyptian people wanted to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak. Thus, focusing on various political and legal issues including police brutality, lack of free elections, lack of freedom of speech, corruption, economic oppression and many more issues, the Egyptian people took down the streets and demanded their rights. Nevertheless, strikes by labour unions of Egypt acted as a forceful pressure to the government officials[46]. The BBC had written that 'The simple fact is that most Egyptians do not see any way that they can change their country or their lives through political action, be it voting, activism, or going

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[46] Benjamin Weinthal, *Trade Unions, The Revolutionary Social Network at Play in Egypt and Tunisia*, Feb.10, 2011, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/trade-unions-the-revolutionary-social-network-at-play-in-egypt-and-tunisia/

out on the streets to demonstrate'[47]. It was the people's need that led to this overthrow, but it was the existence of the social media that bolstered the revolution.

It all started with the 6th April Youth Movement, an Egyptian Facebook group that started to support workers in an industrial Egyptian town, calling them for marches and symbolic moves to show the peoples' dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. The New York Times have referred to this group as the site with the most dynamic civilian debates, analysing its strategy: 'Members coalesce around a few issues — free speech, economic stagnation and government nepotism — and they share their ideas for improving Egypt. But they do more than just chat: they have tried to organize street protests to free jailed journalists, and this month, hundreds of young people from the April 6 group participated in demonstrations about Gaza, some of which were coordinated on Facebook, and at least eight members of the group were detained by police'[48]. The article also emphasized the fact that having an online organisation, the movement avoided bureaucracy, censorship and compromise with the regime; however, when the people tried to actually meet and take action, they kept on finding the Egyptian police awaiting. Sapiro thus posed the question: 'what does it mean to have a vibrant civil society on your computer screen and a police state in the street? When I spoke to Nora Younis, she described the April 6 strike as a practice session for the new generation. "It's a rehearsal for a bigger thing," she said. "Right now, we are just testing the power of each other"'[49]. And the bigger thing happened. People took down the streets shouting for the rights that had already been declared in the UDHR and the ICCPR, but no one abided with. It is irrefutable that the social media played a major role in this; they brought people together and gave them the chance to reinforce their natural rights and the rights that had long ago been declared.

Social media were extensively used and they tremendously helped in the democratisation process. One Egyptian activist had twitted that 'We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world'[50]. A court in Egypt jailed two policemen for ten years for killing the man who reinforced the uprising against Mubarak,

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[47] Jon Leyne, *No Sign Egypt will take the Tunisian road,* 17 Jan, 2011, BBC.
[48] Samantha M. Sapiro, *Revolution, Facebook-Style,* Jan.22,2009,
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/magazine/25bloggers-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[49] Ibid.
[50] Miller Mc Cune, *The Arab Uprising's Cascading Effects*, 23 Feb.,2011

and this led to the creation of the page *We Are All Khaled Said* that campaigned against police brutality. The page 'urged people to participate in the nationwide anti-government demonstrations on 25 January 2011 - Egypt's National Police Day. Eighteen days later, Mr Mubarak was forced to resign'[51]. There were videos posted everyday revealing gross violations of human rights and people were calling each other to go out in the streets and shout for their rights.

On January 28, 2011 Mubarak shut down the Internet for five days to prohibit new assemblies of the people and prevent new protests. The Harvard Human Rights Journal noted that 'That Mubarak took this desperate step — which cost Egypt an estimated $90 million and outraged the international community — demonstrates the incredible power of social media'[52]. Mubarak's decision drew strong international criticism, with President Obama declaring that '[W]e stand for universal values, including the rights of the Egyptian people to freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and the freedom to access information. Once more, we've seen the incredible potential for technology to empower citizens and the dignity of those who stand up for a better future'[53]. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had also showed her support to the Egyptian people, saying that 'We support the universal rights of the Egyptian people including the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly. And we urge the Egyptian authorities not to prevent peaceful protests or block communications, including on social-media sites'[54]. The day the Internet was restored, the social media experienced a historic number of users using Facebook for the revolution. Even people that had held governmental positions joined the protests in Tahrir Square, for example the former Foreign Minister Amr Moussa as well as Mohamed Rafah Tahtawy, the public spokesman of Egypt's highest state-run religious authority declared his resign to join the protesters[55]. After a few days, Mubarak resigned.

This is an amazing example of the power of the social media and their effect on respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights. Nevertheless, 'Social media brought to the

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[51] *Egypt Police Jailed over 2010 Death of Khaled Said*, 3 Mar. 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26416964

[52] Ali, Amir Hatem, The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations: New Tools for Closing the Global Digital Divide and Beyond, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 24(1), pp.185-219, (p.185).

[53] Press Release, The White House, Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt, Feb. 1, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/01/remarks-president-situation-egypt

[54] Hillary Rodham Clinton, Remarks With Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh After Their Meeting (Jan. 26, 2011), http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155388.html

[55] Hatem, Ali The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations: New Tools for Closing the Global Digital Divide and Beyond, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 24(1), pp.185-219, (p.187).

Egyptian people a sense of self-empowerment — through the capacity to speak and assemble — that was previously not there'[56]. It should be highlighted though for once more that it is not the social media, but the people who bring the change- without their will nothing could have happened.

On the other hand, we have the negative side of the social media use, or maybe the limitations that they have. What is striking is how the situation, even without Mubarak now, is similar with before, something that shows that the social media can really bring the change, but they cannot govern. The country is still being rehabilitated and there is a strong antithesis between Islamist and secular groups, having the Egyptian military as the chief political dealer. After the first democratic elections in 2011-2012 and the victory of the Islamist parties, the Egyptian first democratically elected parliament was dissolved in 2012. Nevertheless, Mohammed Morsi (the Muslim Brotherhood candidate) won the presidential elections, however a year later he got removed from power due to massive anti-government protests. Nevertheless, 'this legal vacuum has created a political tug-of-war between the military, the judiciary, and dozens of political parties vying for power. Political uncertainty and anxiety over the future have generated ongoing political protest, labour strikes, deep mistrust between Islamist and secular parties, and Muslim-Christian tension in some parts of the country. Violence and criminal activities have been on the rise in the poorly-policed Sinai Peninsula, where militant Islamist groups stepped up attacks on security forces'[57].

Another failure that we have witnessed is that after such a powerful victory of the amazing aid of the social media to the revolution, we have seen many arrests of journalists in Egypt. The CPJ (the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists) named Egypt 'one of the world's top 10 jailers of journalists in its annual census released on Dec.1. CPJ went on to name Egypt as one of the top three deadliest places for journalists to work in 2013. Ironically, prior to the Arab spring in 2011, there had only been one work-related journalist death in the country since 1992'[58]. Censorship continues to be powerful in Egypt and what is disturbing is that the efforts to establish free press have failed, reminding people what was happening with the media under the Mubarak rule. Back then, journalists were jailed on defamation charges and the media were highly censored and manipulated by the Mubarak regime. Journalists that

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Primoz Manfreda, Current Situation: Egypt's Messy Transition,
http://middleeast.about.com/od/egypt/tp/Current-Situation-In-Egypt.htm
[58] Ibid.

are being jailed are accused of covering incidents that harm national security. The article writes that 'it is a sobering smack in the face for journalists that had high hopes after the fall of the Mubarak regime. Three years ago this month, journalists captured the downfall of a despot that held information hostage to preserve his control. It appears Egypt has truly made a revolution-right back to where it started'[59].

The Human Rights Watch has published their 2015 World Report that describes the current situation in Egypt. As it has shown, the democratic aspirations of the revolution (that happened with the constructive help of the social media) are failing, even though in the beginning people had felt a totally different sense of change. As it is described in the report, the way that the Morsy's government rules 'left many Egyptians fearing (whether legitimately or not) the gradual emergence of a strict Islamic regime, but its abuses never came close to those now being visited upon the Egyptian people by the military-dominated government that overthrew Morsy on June 30, 2013. The military coup led by Sisi devastated the Brotherhood and its supporters. In just 12 hours on August 14, 2013, security forces overseen by Sisi and Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim systematically shot dead at least 817 mostly peaceful protesters in Cairo's Rab'a Square, where they had conducted a weeks-long mass sit-in to protest Morsy's removal. The security forces claimed self-defense, but their handful of casualties paled in comparison to the number of protesters shot by snipers and other gunmen, many as they sought medical aid. Egyptian authorities had planned the violent dispersal of the sit-in weeks in advance, and fully anticipated a massive death toll. It was the largest massacre of protesters in recent history—the most deadly since at least China's repression of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement in 1989'[60]. Nevertheless, Sisi's security forces imprisoned civilians without the trial procedures. Most importantly, the report has underlined the inadequacy or failure of the international community to respond to this new situation. Specifically, at the UNHRC, 27 countries urged Egypt to start an investigation about the massacre in the Rab'a Square, but a majority in the council was not achieved. Nevertheless, as the report describes, 'there is little appetite among the US, the UK, and other key European governments to look into the military government's abuses. Indeed, while Washington will apply selective sanctions on Venezuelan officials (a move we support) for their security forces' brutal response to protests—which took the lives of no more than a few dozen protesters

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2015*, Printed in the United States of America, p.5,
https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2015_web.pdf

(though victimized many more)—it 5 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH has fought sanctions for Egypt, despite the government's murder of close to 1,000 protesters at Rab'a Square'[61].

Imprisoning civilians, banning protests and outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition group, have continued being practiced by the Egyptian authorities. Furthermore, as the Human Rights Watch Report of 2016 sustains, 'the authorities continued to restrict freedom of expression and association by investigating independent nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), arresting people suspected of being gay or transgender, and prosecuting those accused of defaming religion'[62]. Most importantly, as far as the freedom of speech along with the freedom of religion are concerned, during February and March, the Egyptian courts decided to appoint prison sentences to two men that had supported their views on atheism online. Adding to that, 'in June, prosecutors in Beni Suef governorate ordered a local man arrested for allegedly posting cartoons online that insulted the prophet Mohamed. In October, an appeals court upheld a five-year sentence against TV presenter Islam al-Behery for contempt of religion, but al-Behery appealed the ruling to a higher court'[63]. Last but not least, as far as the freedom of association, a freedom that was supposedly gained after the revolution, is concerned, 'In June, government investigators visited the office of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and asked for registration and financial documents. National Security agents banned Mohamed Lotfy, executive director of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, from travel to Germany in June to attend a roundtable at the German Parliament'[64].

In other words, although we have seen a revolution happening by the people and the government allowing some rights to be fulfilled, we have witnessed a failed transition. People were outraged with the situation, and although Mubarak has resigned, the situation remains the same, showing us that people were not truly heard and that their rights are still not respected and fulfilled. The people have gained some freedoms and there is not such a high degree of corruption, however there is corruption and freedom of speech is nowhere. The political problem is that 'the illusion of national unity was shattered almost immediately after Mubarak was gone. The fundamental problem with the 2011 "revolution" was that it produced no coherent revolutionary programs, no memorable speeches, no leaders. No one group was able to articulate a national agenda of political and economic change that would rally the nation.

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[61] Ibid., pp.5-6,
[62] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016*, Printed in the United States of America, p.225, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2016_web.pdf
[63] Ibid., p.230
[64] Ibid. p.230

Pro-democracy activists wanted to continue protesting until the last vestiges of Mubarak's regime were gone. However, it soon became apparent that most Egyptians had no stomach for radical change. The short-lived revolution gave space to an institutionalized transition to democracy, and many citizens were perfectly happy to let the powerful Egyptian military manage the process'[65]. Thus, what needs to be answered is how revolutionary programs can be produced in order for the country to fulfil its democratisation process with the help of the social media and how the governments can be spurred to really listen to the people. Nevertheless, 'democratization was swept aside in favour of order and stability, but the army's ability to keep a lid on the country's divisions and social problems is highly uncertain. The generals' natural instinct is to preserve as much of the old order as possible, which will continue to attract resistance from various quarters. If the history of other countries with a powerful military is any judge, Egypt will be governed by a series of weak governments. The opposition will alternate between resisting the generals and trying to woo them against political rivals, all with a good deal of political violence on the streets'[66].

## Chapter V: The Occupy Movement

In a similar manner with the Egyptian revolution, we have seen the formation of movements like the Occupy Movement to fight injustices around the world. The movement is the international branch of the Occupy the Wall Street Movement. Having started in 2009-2010, the global movement has been fighting against injustices and has been protesting against social and economic inequality. The movement in general seeks to 'challenge global capitalism as the dominant system of economics. At the ideological level, activists connected to Occupy seek to engage in fierce contestation of the global structuring of greed, thus exhibiting clear signs of global rebellion'[67]. An article in the Huffington Post posed the interesting question: Does social innovation equal social change?[68] The answer was that it is not that much on the part of the tools but on the part of people using them. Ben Rattray, founder of the Change.org underlined that 'social media is [*sic*] used for supporting, not supplanting, existing strategies, though at the same time it can absolutely spark something that wouldn't exist'[69]. He also

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[65] Primoz Manfreda, Current Situation: Egypt's Messy Transition,
http://middleeast.about.com/od/egypt/tp/Current-Situation-In-Egypt.htm
[66] Ibid.
[67] Jerry Harris, *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol.12, Issue 1-2 (2013) , pp.7-13, (p.7)
[68] Craig Kanalley, *Occupy Wall Street: Social Media's Role in Social Change*, Dec.2011,
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/06/occupy-wall-street-social-media_n_999178.html
[69] Ibid.

maintained that the best way to organize people and have them also physically present in a city like New York is through the Internet. Nevertheless, the media helped this process be shown and it revealed that the traditional media are still powerful, however 'it was the content of social media that drew the attention of many in the mainstream media'[70] through the norm of virality.

How did the Occupy Movement work? Costanza-Chock found out that 'Among those who answered questions about how they used different types of media to gather news and information about the Occupy movement, respondents were heavy users of some digital media platforms but not others. The majority (64%) reported using Facebook for Occupy-related information within the 24h before taking the survey, while just a quarter said that they used Twitter (23%) or blogs (24%) for the same purpose. Face-to-face communication played a key role for many: nearly half (43%) reported discussing Occupy within the previous 24 h, about the same as those who said they used Occupy movement websites (44%) or email (42%). A third (29%) used YouTube, a quarter (24%) used newspapers and a fifth used a livestreaming video site (19%), TV (17%) or radio (17%) for Occupy information during the past day'[71].

The Occupy Movement has tried to achieve a new type of democracy, the participatory one. The movement started as Occupy Wall Street, but through the time it has had different manifestations around the world. We have seen the impact that the movement had, both on a social and political level. To begin with, one of the victories the movement has achieved is that the Americans started focusing more on the unemployment rather than the deficit. More specifically, the movement has shifted the attention to 'the lack of jobs — and especially jobs with decent benefits — spiraling inequality, cash-strapped American families' debt loads, and the pernicious influence of money in politics that led us to this point'[72]. Nevertheless, the attention was also shifted to the issue of income inequality[73] as well as the issue of homelessness in the US. Noam Chomsky underlined the importance of movements like the Occupy saying that 'the Occupy movement spontaneously created something that doesn't

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Sasha Costanza-Chock, Mic-Check! Media Cultures and the Occupy Movement, Social Movement Studies, *Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, Vol.11:3-4 (2012), pp.375-385 (p.379).

[72] Joshua Holland, *The Victory OWS has already Won*, Oct.27, 2011, http://www.salon.com/2011/10/27/the_victory_ows_has_already_won/ .

[73] Dylan Byers, Occupy Wall Street is Winning, Nov.11, 2011, http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2011/11/occupy-wall-street-is-winning-040753.

really exist in the country: communities of mutual support, cooperation, open spaces for discussion ... just people doing things and helping each other'[74].

As far as the impact on politics that the movement had, many are those who have argued that the movement had a global impact, changing the terms of political debates. Almost five years now since the birth of the movement, a movement that many thought that had disappeared, it has 'instead splintered and regrown into a variety of focused causes. Income inequality is the crisis du jour—a problem that all 2016 presidential candidates must grapple with because they can no longer afford not to. And, in fact, it's just one of a long list of legislative and political successes for which the Occupy movement can take credit'[75]. Nevertheless, with its action, the movement has 'charted the course for concrete legislative reform. It's now up to elected officials to achieve much bigger results—and for the grassroots movements to continue driving those policies into being. Because as millions of Americans learned following the election of Barack Obama, real change doesn't come in slogans: It comes when the people demand it'[76].

However, these have not happened without difficulties and tensions. As Smith and Glidden have described, many of the activists have been influenced 'by anarchist arguments and [sic] which stress the tension between spontaneity and the formation of organisations. Consequently, there is resistance to having structure , in favour of fluid and supposedly open processes that are seen as more responsive to the democratic impulses of the group'[77]. Nevertheless, as they describe, there had been problems with sustaining a democratic dialogue and decision-making, something that created tensions in the movement itself[78]. What is more, using the example of Pittsburgh, we have seen that there was an organisational issue with the General Assemblies of the group; there was no structural program and there were no pre-announced agendas to discuss. This organisational problem has been an issue for the Occupy movement in other regions too, and there was also a problem with the topics discussed; many of them had been already discussed, so many people attending the assemblies kept on leaving during the dialogue process. As it has been described 'As the length of the meetings increased,

[74] Democracy Now, *Chomsky: Occupy Wall Street "Has Created Something That Didn't Really Exist" in the U.S.- Solidarity*, May 14,2012,
http://www.democracynow.org/2012/5/14/chomsky_occupy_wall_street_has_created
[75] Michael Levitin, *The Triumph of Occupy Wall Street*, Jun.10, 2015,
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/the-triumph-of-occupy-wall-street/395408/.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Jackie Smith and Bob Glidden, Occupy Pittsburgh and the Challenges of Participatory Democracy, Social Movement Studies, *Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, Vol.11:3-4 (2012), pp.288-294, (p.289)
[78] Ibid.,(p.290)

many either capitulated or left, allowing decisions to be made by the hold-outs left standing at the end. Often, there was an imbalance which favoured those speaking against proposals, and belligerent, stubborn and militant individuals tended to control conversation and decision-making. Noticeably, few women participated in Pittsburgh's GAs after first few weeks'[79]. This amount of attention to the process of reaching consensus in the General Assemblies left a little time on the actual building of the movement. Most importantly, there were cultural differences noticed during the assemblies which discouraged people to participate. As it has been underlined, participatory democracy demand models based on consensus; it can rather allow different formulas for decision making. Nevertheless, 'there are different forms that consensus processes can take, and activists need to be mindful of whom they seek to engage in the movement as well as whom they might be excluding when they adopt particular forms. The process of deliberation should help participants better understand the diversity of others' experiences and positions, and generate at least recognition of the legitimacy of others' arguments, if not agreement'[80].

Another feature, and problem, of the Occupy Movement has been the absence of leadership. The movement started well enough in the beginning, however it has had particular problematic areas like these that cannot help reach the actual goal of the movement. It has been celebrated, but has nevertheless perplexed many. What has been important to the process of the decision making in participatory democracy movements is that they aid the members of these groups gain an understanding of how authority and power work, as well as allow them to discern between legitimate and illegitimate sources of power. Nevertheless, these forms can also assist groups in diagnosing contemporary types and sources of leadership that are in touch with group needs while entitling new leaders[81].

It is undeniable that the Occupy Movement saw the freedom of speech as a useful starting point to collect opinions and gather people through the social media to real life gatherings. In addition, undeniable is also the fact that the Occupy Movement has mobilized huge numbers of activists who go against corporate power and inequality. However, for the movement to sustain and strengthen its existence, it needs to examine the lessons that other movements have taught. The movement needs to have a better understanding of how the global system operates in order to really have impact. As it has been maintained, 'in many places

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[79] Ibid., (p.290)
[80] Ibid., (p.291)
[81] Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting*, (United States of America: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.209.

around the USA, for instance, the least advantaged of 'the 99%'—African Americans, immigrants and other minority groups—were prevented from joining the Occupy struggle by, among other disadvantages, a long tradition of repression by what is known as the 'prison industrial complex' (e.g. Martinez, 2000). Thus, enhancing racial diversity in the movement requires attention beyond the financial sector to address the systemic use of violence that excludes particular communities from full participation in political and economic life'[82]. Nevertheless, transnational activity and solidarity should be employed as an instrument of having a real impact. Last but not least, 'the movement can be strengthened by conscious attention to the cultural work of transforming identities, institutions and practices to advance struggles against patriarchy and all other hierarchies and exclusions. In the near term, however, we need to stress what Polletta calls the 'ethic of care' to nurture the unity in diversity; the relationships we need to carry on what will be a long and hard struggle for a better world'[83].

## Chapter VI: WikiLeaks' effort for transparency and its failures

In this Chapter I will be discussing the phenomenon of WikiLeaks not exactly as a social medium, but as a cyberspace that brought people together to reveal and push governments to fight injustices around the world. Nevertheless, WikiLeaks has had this same anger of people with the government as it happened in the Egyptian revolution, and we can see many similarities in the two cases. People that were strangers, nevertheless united, gathered all together in the cyberspace, this time anonymously, disclosed governmental information that was unveiling secret political processes, and pushed the governments around the world to respect the people's rights and to act in a more transparent way. However, although in the beginning it seemed to be a very interesting case and a unique way to democratise, WikiLeaks suffered from bad internal structure- it started by Julian Assange wanting to fight corruption and injustice, but turned out to be an event around his anarchical character. Apart for that, and most importantly, through the disclosures, WikiLeaks put lives of innocent civilians in danger.

WikiLeaks appeared in the global political sphere in 2010, when it called hackers from all around the world to leak and put confidential government documents in public. As I aforementioned, the site has not been a form of social media like Facebook or Twitter, but

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[82] Jackie Smith and Bob Glidden, Occupy Pittsburgh and the Challenges of Participatory Democracy, *Social Movement Studies*, Vol.11:3-4 (2012), pp.288-294, (p.292).

[83] Ibid., (p.293).

rather a form of investigative journalism that called people to disclose the information they have, thus creating a different type of a social medium where people gather anonymously to unveil the opacity of the governments. And indeed, people felt that there was a change happening, regarding both the way they were having access to governmental information and in the way that the media were reporting. Julian Assange, the disputed figure behind the endeavor, was a strong proponent of this venture and its aspiration to take transparency in politics a step further. He argued that the site was a form of investigative journalism, while he also worked with media giants, like the The Guardian, the New York Times, Le Monde and more. The literature around WikiLeaks and Assange himself has been conflictual -praising it or hating it- however, most scholars have rather stressed the failures of the site, its aberration from traditional journalism and its strife towards transparency. The story reminds us of the Egyptian Revolution; a revolution through the (social) media and a forceful exposition of the misconducts of the governments around the world. But how safe could this be both on the part of the governments and on the part of the civilians? And how successful can it end up being?

The WikiLeaks' first disclosure was the Guantanamo Bay Operating Procedures which shed light on the guards' pitiless behaviour towards the detainees. On January 2008, it published a scandal with the Julius Bär bank, and, as Domscheit-Berg has narrated, 'From the documents, it was apparent that enormous amounts of money had been shielded from tax authorities. The material was full of concrete examples. We were talking about sums between 5$ million and 10$ million per client. The tax revenues not paid by dozens of exorbitantly wealthy individuals would have probably been enough to fund a dozen social programs'[84]. This specific leak would be the one that would draw great attention to Assange's idea of democratisation, and it would start be viewed as a liberal intermediator of transparency. Afterwards, other leaks followed, like the Kenyan elections, Sarah Palin's private emails, the 9/11 pager messages and more. But these were only the beginning.

Journalists had already been interested in WikiLeaks, following its publications and writing articles to add their comments. Two journalists from *The Guardian*, David Leigh and Luke Harding, searched for and found Assange, to persuade him that his efforts would be more influential if he collaborated with one or more newspapers. Assange indeed realized that moving on to a collaboration with major newspapers- *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Le*

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[84] Daniel Domscheit-Berg and Tina Klopp, *Inside WikiLeaks- My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website* (United States: Crown Publishers, 2011),p.17

*Monde, Der Spiegel* and *El Pais*- WikiLeaks would open up to a broader audience and attract more attention, apart from having a legal back-up. The collaboration was arranged; and as Alan Rusbridger describes, 'The first thing to do was build a search engine that could make sense of the data, the next to bring in foreign correspondents and foreign affairs analysts with detailed knowledge of the Afghan and Iraq conflict. The final piece of the journalistic heavy lifting was to introduce a redaction process so that nothing we published could imperil any vulnerable sources or compromise active special operations'[85]. The "Collateral Murder" video was published, unveiling the cruel practices among the US military in Baghdad, while also lamenting the deaths of two Reuters journalists by mistake, the Afghan War Diaries followed raising questions about the potential war crimes committed by coalition troops, and then the Iraq War Logs, describing massive civilian killings by the US troops. All of these leaks exposed the US authorities and underlined their failure of investigating the deaths of innocent people, while also shedding light on the secrets that America was keeping secret with the justification that they were classified documents. Assange was given the title of a peace maker, a contributor to democracy and to modern transparency, while, in June 2010, he also received, among other prizes that he had been awarded with, the Amnesty International Media Award. Hindman and Thomas, quoting Schmitt (2007), had then written that 'WikiLeaks has been described as being 'as important a journalistic tool as the Freedom of Information Act' and as '[…] a new model for information dissemination in an age of blurred media boundaries'.[86] Roberts also described that 'by the end of 2010, WikiLeaks and Assange become the centre of vast media spectacle. The scale and significance of the leaks, and the rapidity with which one followed one another, led many observers to conclude that the world was moving into a new era of supercharged or 'radical transparency''[87].

Moreover, Assange had already received a leak of 250,000 US diplomatic cables which he exigently wanted to circulate. His collaborators, before breaking the consortium, had suggested that this was extremely hazardous; the cables needed editing, because, otherwise, peoples' lives, international relations as well as foreign policies would be severely endangered. Assange was adamant; he was planning to publish everything, not considering his polarised consultancy. Adding to that, his colleague Daniel Domscheit-Berg was consistently denying to

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[85] David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (Great Britain: Guardian Books, 2011),p.5
[86] Elisabeth Blanks Hindman and Ryan J Thomas, 'When old and new media collide: The case of WikiLeaks', *Sage Publications,*16(4) (2014), 541-558 ( p.542)
[87] Alasdair Roberts, 'WikiLeaks: the illusion of transparency', *International review of Administrative Sciences*, Sage Publications, 78(1) (2012), 116-133 (p.117)

help him upload the cables to the site, admonishing him that this was extremely dangerous and underscoring that the cables needed editing because several people as well as international relations would be severely imperilled. Assange was being left alone, becoming really fidgety about it. He reiterated to publish and he suspended Berg. The latter, apart from losing faith in Assange's venture, was annoyed with having to lie to the public over the site's internal structure and over the authenticity test mechanisms of the received documents. As he described, 'Ultimately, of course, it was Julian who made the decisions. The rest of us were too indecisive and skittish or simply lacked the resolve to set any limits for him. Julian thus became the autocratic head of WL, accountable to no one and tolerating no challenges to his authority'[88]. Once more, Assange's authentic self was laid bare; WikiLeaks did look like journalism anymore. It had become a big event with his name buzzing on the headlines, with the American authorities after him, with a rape scandal, and with him giving aloof interviews, trying to stay calm and not worried of the conflicts he had provoked and the people he had deceived.

Important is the fact that WikiLeaks coincided with a prevailing shift in journalism which came with the introduction of the social media. It was then that newspapers started being published online, while also blogs and social media, like Facebook and Twitter, were becoming more and more used as ways to boost democracy. Assange undoubtedly took advantage of this transformation that established a new media reality, and created this site that, at first glance, could be appraised as (investigative) journalism, since it collected the material, waited to publish it at the right time, and tried to intercede to the social reality exposing governmental misconducts, making a movement towards higher degrees of transparency in politics and making the citizenry more powerful and participatory. I surmise that Assange would concur with Jones's contention that 'The possession of the knowledge of public secrets, as much as a public knowledge, is a route to social power'[89]. This is a valid explanation of the WikiLeaks' appreciation by a high percentage of people worldwide as a new type of a radical news outlet. WikiLeaks definitely made a step towards transparency, but the fact that governments, journalists and scholars have attacked it, commenting on its side effects, failures and divergence from traditional journalism needs to be seriously taken in consideration.

WikiLeaks has, in many ways, deviated from the traditional technical way as well as the ethical sense of collecting and publishing information. First of all, the site had never had a

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[88] Daniel Domscheit-Berg and Tina Klopp, Tina. *Inside WikiLeaks- My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website.* (United States: Crown Publishers, 2011),p.219

[89] Anthony James, Layers of Meaning: Concealment, memory and secrecy in the British Early Bronze Age, p.105, in D.Boric (Ed.), *Archaeology and memory* (pp. 105-120). Oakville CT: David Brown Book Co.

permanent address, but it rather kept on maintaining a fluid existence across the world, with a variety of contributors that kept their identities secret. Anonymity is indeed grounded in the ICCPR by the right of privacy along with the freedom of speech. But the way that WikiLeaks functioned came in sharp contrast with issues of working in a transparent way, although the site had been always fighting for transparency; traditional forms of media that are housed in a particular place and exist under particular laws that make the institutions transparent and completely legal. In addition, the material published is always signed, creating transparency and responsibility over authorship. This also links to the fact that, in the contrasting case of WikiLeaks, everyone could post, while there was also no editing or check over accuracy, thus leading to misinforming the readers, something that is a potential and great danger, while it surely does not boost democracy. In addition, in the traditional journalistic way, the sources of the material consent to the acquisition and publication, whereas, in the case of Assange, the material was illegally obtained and published. What is more, WikiLeaks had not been discrete over publishing, a virtue that good journalism always upholds. Hindman and Thomas have described that old media are '[…] true stewards of the public interest, with WikiLeaks and its operatives lacking the values and ethics necessary to belong in the journalistic community'[90]. Law abiding media filter what is for publication, whereas WikiLeaks neither filtered the documents nor were censorious over what should or should not be published. As Blanks and Hindman have written, 'some secrets should be exposed, and news organizations must continue to dig up evidence for corruption, malfeasance, and wrongdoing…that doesn't mean we have to embrace the over-sharing enabled by the Internet'[91] . But in the case of WikiLeaks, it seems that Assange did not bear in mind that '[…] journalism requires harm minimisation. It is a breach of the journalistic ethical value of responsibility to publish recklessly, carelessly and without regard to potential harm'[92]. The WikiLeaks publications had been characterised as lacking journalistic sensitivity, and this happened due to the unlimited access Assange had to the material. To put it differently, it seems that he was publishing just for the sake of publishing. Nevertheless, Assange's hankering to reveal names (for example, in the Iraq War Logs or the cables) just because they concerned *American* informants and so they deserved to be seriously periled or traumatized, showed amazing irresponsibility and unearthed his personal feelings,

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[90] Elisabeth Blanks Hindman and Ryan J Thomas, 'When old and new media collide: The case of WikiLeaks', *Journal of new media and society,* SAGE Publications, 16(4) (2014), 541-558, (p.546)
[91] Ibid., p.547
[92] Dennis Mulller, WikiLeaks, Journalism and the Digital Age: What Did We Learn? (1 July 2014) <theconversation.com/wikileaks-journalism-ethics-and-the-digital-age-what-did-we-learn-28262> [accessed 4 April 2015]

thus making WikiLeaks aggressive specifically towards the US, rather than an attempt towards a more transparent society. As it has been successfully described, 'While WikiLeaks shares journalism's aversion to secrets, it is here that the similarity ends; journalism would surely […] behave much more responsibly'[93]. All these also created legal issues that real journalism does not face; among other prosecutions, Assange was charged with violating the Espionage Act due to disclosure of information that can seriously endanger the security of the nation. What is more, it is important to keep in mind that '[…] if WikiLeaks is prosecuted for crimes in relation to the leaked documents, it is not immune from civil or criminal liability under the First Amendment because the harms created by releasing unredacted documents outweigh the public benefit of added discourse on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq'[94]. Adding to that, the fact that most of the WikiLeaks' publications had as a sole target the United States narrowed a lot the spectrum of the mediation- something that makes it look more like an assault towards America, rather than being objective and condemnatory of all the political apparatus across the globe. Last but not least, WikiLeaks became a one-man-show, since, in the end, WikiLeaks had become the mirror of Assange. This is once more contradictory if we compare it to traditional journalism, since the latter is never incarnate, but it rather compels all the contributors to work in the same way, while also all of them to share success or failure.

Many people, seeing Assange's irresponsible behaviour, characterized him as an anarchical element being deficient of moral values; as a person not legally binding among the journalistic circles. Curran and Gibson summarised in words this complex type of persona by writing that 'Assange is not a journalist or a whistleblower; he is a political actor… [with] a political agenda…an anarchist'[95]. In a similar way, if we view the internet as a space where people share their ideas without hindrance, we can see Assange as '[…] devoted to protecting a newfound cyberspace commons from a rapidly corralling entrepreneurial market and political state. Through the "mediation of agency" WikiLeaks' actors remain committed to the utilisation of available technologies to re-animate the public sphere'[96]. His anarchical ways have been manifested in multitudinous ways. For instance, albeit he worked together with the newspapers and authorised them to decode, edit and publish the leaks while also being also

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[93]Elisabeth Blanks Hindman and Ryan J Thomas, 'When old and new media collide: The case of WikiLeaks', *Journal of new media and society,* SAGE Publications, 16(4) (2014), 541-558, (p.548)
[94] Rachel Wolbers, Is WikiLeaks a Hit Man Handbook: Why WikiLeaks cannot claim First Amendment Immunity if the Afghan and Iraq War Logs Cause Physical Harm. *Case Western Reserve Journal of Law, Technology & the Internet,* Vol 3 (2), 2012, 365-404 (p.369)
[95] Giorel Curran and Morgan Gibson, WikiLeaks, Anarchism and Technologies of Dissent, *Antipode,* 45(2) (2012), 294-314 (p.295)
[96] Ibid.p.302

legally enforced, many times Assange was not seriously considering the public interest. The times when he wanted to publish not being receptive at all to the consultation of the collaborators are numerous, the top one being the cables. He felt immured by the collaborators and 'this was, from the point of view of WikiLeaks, a distasteful bargain, against which Assange himself routinely kicked, either by threatening to release information unilaterally or by adding new media outlets to the consortium without the consent of its other members'[97]. Once more, this fact presents a disparity with traditional journalism that respects and carefully considers what should reach the public; journalists always act in a multilateral and law abiding manner, after deliberation with the editors-in-chief and others, always editing, re-editing and using verified sources.

The anarchical ways of WikiLeaks broke down; following the cable disclosures, Paypal, Amazon, MasterCard, VisaEurope, and EveryDNS.net, stopped working with WikiLeaks, each one for various terms violations. A lot of people maintained that this was being done under political pressure, however, PayPal, for example, 'denied that it had been contacted by any governmental organization, but acknowledged that its decision was taken after the State Department said publicly that WikiLeaks' documents might have been obtained in violation of US Law'.[98] Nevertheless, although the disclosures created a greater public awareness, they did not have the exact outcomes that Assange was aiming for (public outrage followed by political action). It has been argued that the disclosures were things people already knew, and as Roberts quotes Zizek, 'The only surprising thing about the WikiLeaks revelations is that they contain no surprises'[99]. Another parameter that was not taken into consideration, is that when a government is attacked, it becomes more opaque than transparent. WikiLeaks tried to wage a war on state secrecy, but the result was quite the opposite, underlining the failure of massive and almost unethical disclosure. What is more, as far as the Iraq and Afghanistan War Logs are concerned, Roberts has argued that '[the] opinion about the American engagement in Iraq has not changed significantly in years. Meanwhile, perceptions about the war in Afghanistan actually improved after WikiLeaks' July 2010 disclosures'[100]. Nevertheless, in our contemporary times that people are losing day by day their faith in their governments, and especially in the US after the 9/11 attacks and the financial crisis, what people need is

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[97] Alasdair Roberts, WikiLeaks: The Illusion of Transparency, *International Review of Administrative sciences*, SAGE Publications. 78(1),2012, 116-133 (p.124)
[98] Ibid., p.120
[99] Ibid., p.125
[100] Ibid., p.126

reassurance that their government does whatever it takes to ensure its peoples' interests. Maybe the WikiLeaks' revelations helped this confidence to boost, and as Roberts argues, 'to a public that is preoccupied with the decline of security and the erosion of American influence, revelations about excess in the use of power would not be the worst thing. Revelations about the ineffectuality of American policy would be more troubling'[101].

So WikiLeaks was not a new, dynamic type of investigative journalism that tried to expose governments and unveil their misconducts, but rather an event that had its peak with the Collateral Murder video, but then started losing its revolutionary character with the publication of the Iraq and the Afghanistan War Logs, and even more with the diplomatic cables. One interesting aspect of the response to the WikiLeaks disclosures was that of massive 'twitting'. An exemplary study that was made, revealed that 'a total of 1029 tweets (Twitter posts) that used the #WikiLeaks hashtag (a type of user-set tag reflecting the topic) during May and June 2010 were collected'[102]. We see thus that thousands of people following the news of Assange and his disclosures commented and offered their support to him and his effort. This could be seen as a new form of online politics, as WikiLeaks was transformed in a new political space.   Lidgren and Lundstróm have argued that using the hashtag on Twitter '[…] not only serves the purpose of framing the political ambitions of the WikiLeaks organisation in positive terms. It also constructs a digital political space as a crucial arena for political action in a very broad sense'[103] . But after the Iraq War Logs the interest of the people was tremendously limited. In the description of the 2010 disclosures by Roberts, it is interesting that 'in August, 42 percent of respondents to an ABC News poll were prepared to say that WikiLeaks' releases served the public interest. By December, this had dropped to 29 percent. A December 2010 CNN poll found that almost 80 percent of Americans disapproved of its release of US diplomatic and military documents'[104].

All in all, WikiLeaks was a very inventive idea when it was first introduced; leaking great amounts of documents and revealing them to the public, intending to create more transparent societies, call the government to behave better and more responsibly, to introduce higher levels of democracy, and to offer greater political knowledge and participation to the

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[101] Ibid.,p.127
[102] Simon Lindgren and Ragnar Lundström, 'Pirate Culture and Hactivist mobilization: The cultural and social protocols of #WikiLeaks on Twitter', *new media & society,* Sage Publications, 13 (6) (2011), 999-1018 (p.1003)
[103] Ibid.,p.1006
[104] Roberts, Alasdair, WikiLeaks: The Illusion of Transparency, *International Review of Administrative sciences*, SAGE Publications. 78(1),2012, 116-133 (p.127-128)

citizenry. People were admiring Assange for his courageous resistance to the mainstream exercise of democracy, while the media were close to him showing admiration for his skills and the innovation he offered in the field of investigative journalism. But, throughout the WikiLeaks operation, things changed dramatically. WikiLeaks deviated a lot from traditional media in terms of the journalistic ethos and principles and was transformed into an event around Assange's peculiar personality and his conflicts, a cat-mouse game between him and the authorities, mainly those of the United States. Day by day he was being deserted and strongly criticized by the newspapers and his colleagues, while his disobedience and his irresponsible character became well known to everyone. In the same time, people started losing interest in the disclosures. This occurred first of all because what he revealed to the public was partially already known (or imagined) and, secondly, because people realized that Assange was bringing more trouble than real change. The irony that lies behind WikiLeaks is that, although it started as a war on secrecy and indeed revealed things, these did not cause outrage, but rather made people regain their trust in their governments' powers.

The most recent disclosure that came to shake the international community was this of the Panama Papers, revealing massive amounts of money in offshore companies. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists characteristically commented on the fact that wealthy entities and public officials are able to keep their personal financial information private[105]. Once more, we have seen people shown in this massive list being periled. However, this time something good happened for human rights across the world: the international community has taken in consideration the human rights implications of evading taxes and other illegal financial activities.

Pointedly, 'the United Nations Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights recently urged the international community to end financial secrecy and curb the flow of illicit financial flows that deprive governments' resources needed for the realization of human rights. […] The Independent Expert had already published a report on the topic of illicit financial flows, human rights, and development in February 2015 and recently added to it with a January 2016 report on the same topic, and the International Bar Association published a report in April 2015 that offers a rights-based analysis of tax evasion issues such as those brought to light in the Panama Papers. The reports suggest that illicit financial activities hold

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[105] The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, *A New ICIJ Investigation Exposes a Rogue Offshore Industry*, Apr.3,2016, https://panamapapers.icij.org/blog/20160403-new-icij-investigation-exposes-rogue-offshore-industry.html

negative implications for the realization of human rights because they limit the resources available for rights promoting programs, undermine efforts to eradicate poverty, enable the activities of international criminals who partake in rights-abusing activities, and perpetuate economic and political inequality among people and countries'[106]. As far as the duty-bearers on this issue are concerned, it should be highlighted that, although creating and implementing tax regimes are responsibilities of the State, 'the Independent Expert argues that corporations that implement "aggressive tax planning" must recognize the human rights implications and demonstrate respect for human rights guarantees. [..] States, the report further comments, in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, must protect against human rights abuses in their jurisdiction, including those perpetrated by businesses and must set out expectations for the behaviour of businesses'[107].

Nevertheless, the reports that have been made on the topic make references to the ICESCR, which requires that 'Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures'[108]. Last but not least, the civil society has joined the dialogue over this issue and have underlined the implications for human rights. For instance, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre reported an incident where 'a company seeking rights to an oil field in Uganda used the services of Mossack Fonseca to avoid paying US$ 400 million in taxes. As a third of people living in Uganda make less than US$ 1.25 a day, and where US $400 million is more than the country's annual health budget, such a large amount of additional funds in tax revenue could potentially have a major impact on the realization of human rights in the country'[109]. In other words, we see that this latest leak came as a shock and put in danger people whose names are publicly

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[106] International Justice Resource Center, *The Panama Papers: Connecting Tax Abuses and Human Rights,* Apr.13, 2016, http://www.ijrcenter.org/2016/04/13/the-panama-papers-connecting-tax-abuses-and-human-rights/
[107] International Justice Resource Center, *The Panama Papers: Connecting Tax Abuses and Human Rights,* Apr.13, 2016, http://www.ijrcenter.org/2016/04/13/the-panama-papers-connecting-tax-abuses-and-human-rights/
[108] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Part II, Art.2, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx
[109] International Justice Resource Center, *The Panama Papers: Connecting Tax Abuses and Human Rights,* Apr.13, 2016, http://www.ijrcenter.org/2016/04/13/the-panama-papers-connecting-tax-abuses-and-human-rights/

known now, but we see for the first time that through these disclosures, human rights are paid more attention and human rights treaties are getting more enforced.

In other words, we can see both victories and massive failures of WikiLeaks as another social medium in its effort to boost democracy. It is true that through the disclosures people got informed about abuses and governmental misconducts. However, this was realised illegally; for example, as the U.S. Code 18 §798 –Disclosure of classified information writes that '**a)** Whoever knowingly and willfully communicates, furnishes, transmits, or otherwise makes available to an unauthorized person, or publishes, or uses in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States any classified information—**(1)** concerning the nature, preparation, or use of any code, cipher, or cryptographic system of the United States or any foreign government; or **(2)** concerning the design, construction, use, maintenance, or repair of any device, apparatus, or appliance used or prepared or planned for use by the United States or any foreign government for cryptographic or communication intelligence purposes; or **(3)** concerning the communication intelligence activities of the United States or any foreign government; or **(4)** obtained by the processes of communication intelligence from the communications of any foreign government, knowing the same to have been obtained by such processes— Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both'[110]. Nevertheless, the governments saw that people are powerful, especially with the type of media we have now, and that the (social) media can go against tough political players. But as I mentioned before, the failure is that when governments are being attacked, they do not become more pellucid but rather more secretive. WikiLeaks, by disclosing the Iraq files indeed shed some light on the secret procedures of the governments, and raised awareness on what is happening without the people knowing. But, as I see the issue, what WikiLeaks has done is that, first of all, it put the lives of some innocent civilians in danger and then it made the governments more secretive. It is true that governments are paying now more attention to their people, but their practices have definitely become more covert.

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[110] U.S. Code § 798 – Disclosure of classified information https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/798 x

**Chapter VII: Anonymous**

Anonymous have publicly congratulated and supported WikiLeaks and the Occupy Movement. They have used hacking to fight injustices around the world, like WikiLeaks has done. People have felt that the Anonymous are their friends, the fighters for peace and justice and have supported them. However, how legal and ethical are their actions? Once more, how democratic is it to cyber-attack the governments and disclose classified or any governmental information? Who is responsible of disclosing and who can say if something needs to be disclosed in a way that protects citizens?

To understand hacktivism we should explore the two different political cultures it comes from; 'One is the hackerprogrammer culture, itself embedded in the broader social and political culture of the Internet. Another stream of hacktivists comes from the world of post-modern left, and its community of progressive artist-activists. These two backgrounds translate into very different identities – and very different kinds of hacktivist practice. As we will see in later chapters, there is some animosity between the two camps; hacker-programmers often see artist-activists as ignorant and careless about the infrastructure of the Internet, and as technically incompetent. Artist-activists often describe hackers as caring more about computers than people, and as technological elitists'[111] Nevertheless, Steven Levy introduced the term "hacker ethic" in 1984 and even that early in the revolution that was to come afterwards, people had been using hacking to manipulate legally or illegally the computers. The 'hacker ethic' contained a catalogue of seven principles; '(1) access to computers should be totally unrestricted; (2) hackers should always honor the "Hands-On Imperative"; (3) information should be free; (4) hackers should distrust authority and promote decentralization; (5) hackers should judge their peers only by their hacking, rather than any educational or professional pedigree; (6) it is possible to create beauty and art within the confines of a computer; and (7) computers can better a person's life'[112]. Despite though this common identity of hackers that was created, 'hackers have historically rejected a highly centralized, close-knit sense of community and instead opted for a nonclustered meritocracy'[113]. Thus, this leads us to an anarchical way of both collecting information and sharing it not as a team but as individuals. It

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[111] Alexandra Whitney Samuel, *Hacktivism and the Future of Political Participation*, Harvard University, Sept.2004, p.39

[112] Brian B. Kelly, Investing in a Centralised Cybersecurity Infrastructure: Why "Hactivism" Can and Should Influence Cybersecurity Reform, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol.92, 2012, pp.1663-1711, (p.1676).

[113] Brian B. Kelly, Investing in a Centralised Cybersecurity Infrastructure: Why "Hactivism" Can and Should Influence Cybersecurity Reform, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol.92, 2012, pp.1663-1711, (p.1677).

is indeed a radical way of democratisation, but how legal and ethical is it? Hacking, or hacktivism in this case, is highlighting neglected issues to draw attention and bring reform, however it is done in a way that is not moral or legally binding. Peoples' lives are sometimes put in danger and it has been shown that the governments cannot work properly and actually protect the citizens.

The Anonymous have had various targets. These have been the government agencies of the U.S., Tunisia, Uganda and more. Lately, they have waged war to the Islamist terrorists and they have been widely supported in this effort. However, the Anonymous have also had the same response by the people as WikiLeaks had- hate it or love it. They have been called 'freedom fighters'[114] by some, or cyber terrorists by others. As it has been described, there has been 'thrust repeatedly into the media limelight due to a series of high stakes digital protest attacks, stretching from Distributed of Denial Service attacks to high profile hacks. By 2011, Anonymous targeted Fortune 500 corporations and military defense contractors. Mercenary hackers doxed Anons, revealing their identities to law enforcement by publishing their legal names, personal photos, and addresses. Anons started to leak sensitive, classified, or humiliating information. Given the prevalence of cyberware and terrorism rhetoric, it would seem effortless and straightforward for government officials to paint Anonymous as a new breed of dangerous cyberterrorists. Despite a few notable attempts to forge this precise connection, the government has thus far failed in slotting Anonymous into this well-worn scaremongering trope; the great majority of news media accounts treat Anonymous not as violent cyberterrorists, but foremost as insurgent digital activists'[115].

The aforementioned incidents sparked the interest to make several attempts to reform cybersecurity. Barack Obama, in 2009, highlighted the importance of the issue. In 2011, he passed his Cybersecurity Legislative Proposal which is composed by four parts; '(1) "Protecting the American People"; (2) "Protecting the Nation's Critical Infrastructure"; (3) "Protecting Federal Government Computers and Networks"; and (4) a "Framework to Protect Individuals' Privacy and Civil Liberties'[116]. Nevertheless, the Republicans also had a proposal dealing with the reform: the October 2011 Task Force Proposal deals with four different issues;

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[114] Matt Krupnick, Freedom Fighters or Vandals? No Consensus on Anonymous, Aug.16, 2011, http://www.mercurynews.com/top-stories/ci_18686764
[115] Gabriella Coleman, *How Anonymous (Narrowly) Evaded the Cyberterrorism Rhetorical Machine*, May 6,2015, https://re-publica.com/session/how-anonymous-narrowly-evaded-cyberterrorism-rhetorical-machine
[116] Kelly, B. Bryan, Investing in a Centralised Cybersecurity Infrastructure: Why "Hactivism" Can and Should Influence Cybersecurity Reform, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol.92, 2012, pp.1663-1711, (pp.1687-88).

'(1) "Critical Infrastructure and Incentives"; (2) "Information Sharing and Public-Private Partnerships"; (3) "Updating Existing Cybersecurity Laws"; and (4) "Legal Authorities"'[117].

As for Europe, the Council of Europe drafted the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime in 2001 and entered into force in July 1, 2004. It has been ratified by 37 countries, including the US. In the site of the CoE, the description has been given in this way: 'The Convention is the first international treaty on crimes committed via the Internet and other computer networks, dealing particularly with infringements of copyright, computer-related fraud, child pornography and violations of network security. It also contains a series of powers and procedures such as the search of computer networks and interception. Its main objective, set out in the preamble, is to pursue a common criminal policy aimed at the protection of society against cybercrime, especially by adopting appropriate legislation and fostering international co-operation'[118] Nevertheless, 'most recently, in November 2011, sixteen EU member states and the United States, including representatives from DHS, planned and participated in Cyber Atlantic 2011, a simulated cyberattack on EU security agencies and critical infrastructure.121 The simulation contained two comprehensive, complex drills: a stealth attack attempting to extract and publish online secret EU member state information from their respective cybersecurity agencies, and a disruption of several power plants' data acquisition systems'[119].

We see thus the negative impact of organisations like the Anonymous. This could be said as the negative side of the social media. Anonymous have been a worldwide group of people who, on the one hand, strive for democratisation, but on the other hand have been a civil disobedient group of people who, through striving to expose, fight and push for the solution to gross injustices worldwide have been against moral and legally binding views of democracy. The governments and the institutions have been democratically elected by the people and are there to represent. Of course there is freedom of speech and freedom of gathering, either it is of an online form or not, but groups like WikiLeaks and the Anonymous go against these freedoms. Initiatives like the Anonymous or WikiLeaks are forms of transnational social movements. However, the governments have the right not to disclose information during the proceedings of a case and this has to be respected. Social media like Facebook and Twitter or sites like the Anonymous and WikiLeaks might be really intervening in the global political

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[117] Kelly, Brian B., Investing in a Centralised Cybersecurity Infrastructure: Why "Hactivism" Can and Should Influence Cybersecurity Reform, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol.92, 2012, pp.1663-1711, (pp.1690).
[118] Convention on Cybercrime, http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/185
[119] Kelly, Brian B., Investing in a Centralised Cybersecurity Infrastructure: Why "Hactivism" Can and Should Influence Cybersecurity Reform, *Boston University Law Review*, Vol.92, 2012, pp.1663-1711, (pp.1687).

sphere and might be helping citizens from countries that are oppressive- the way it happened with the social media in the Egyptian Revolution. However, there are other issues that remain controversial which I am going to discuss in the next chapter.

## **Suggestions for Policy Changes to Enhance Democracy through the Social Media**

Having discussed the positive and negative impacts that the social media can have on enhancing democracy and human rights, and having reflected them in the four different but also somehow similar cases, I will now proceed in the last chapter of my thesis, which is going to discuss my personal opinion and my policy suggestions to enhance democracy taking advantage of the existence of the social media through enhancing the freedom of the net and the security of the net for both the citizens and the governments. Most importantly, I am going to discuss how both the citizens and the governments should use the social media in order to make democracy flourish, especially in the midst of many important issues taking place simultaneously.

As far as the freedom and the security of the net are concerned, on the 5th of July on 2012, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations unanimously adopted the first resolution to protect online free speech. The resolution makes references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, relevant international human rights treaties including the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic Social and Cultural Rights and more. Specifically, the resolution '1. *Affirms* that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression, which is applicable regardless of frontiers and through any media of one's choice, in accordance with articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; [and] 2. *Recognizes* the global and open nature of the Internet as a driving force in accelerating progress towards development in its various forms'[120]. Nevertheless, the UNHRC adopted the latest resolution dealing with the promotion, the protection and the enjoyment of human rights on the Internet on July 1, 2016. The OSCE writes in its website that the particular resolution 'specifically condemns measures to prevent or disrupt access, and calls on all States to refrain from and cease such measures. It

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[120] [120] Wendy Zeldin, *Human Rights Council: First Resolution on Internet Free Speech*, Jul.12,2012, http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/u-n-human-rights-council-first-resolution-on-internet-free-speech/

further recognizes the importance of access to information and privacy online for the realization of the right to freedom of expression and to hold opinions without interference. The UN Human Rights Council had previously affirmed by consensus that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online" in resolutions adopted in 2012 and 2014. This is the third such declaration by the UN body'[121]. On the part of the citizens, these rights are mainly the right of free speech and the freedom of expression which, as I have aforementioned, enhance other rights, like the freedom of assembly or the right to elect, and on the part of the governments it is the right of privacy. I consider people and their governments to be as one, since the people have elected individuals to represent them. So the question is how we can boost these rights so we truly enhance both of the parties and consequently empower democracy.

The Freedom House has published online its 2015 report on the topic. The report writes that the removals of content (of political, social, religious issues) have been increased since last year. Nevertheless, 'authorities in 40 of 65 countries imprisoned people for sharing information concerning politics, religion or society through digital networks. [Adding to that,] Governments in 14 of 65 countries passed new laws to increase surveillance since June 2014 and many more upgraded their surveillance equipment'[122].

Nevertheless, the main topic that the Economist covered in June was the attack that the freedom of speech has been under, both online and offline. The article has tried to explain the three ways that the freedom of speech is being attacked: 'First, repression by governments has increased. Several countries have reimposed cold-war controls or introduced new ones. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia enjoyed a free-for-all of vigorous debate. Under Vladimir Putin, the muzzle has tightened again'[123]. The article also talked about the assassinations of people by non-state actors aiming to censor citizens' voices. In other words, we can see what happened in Egypt being repeated. In another article of the Economist that talks about Islamists murdering secular speakers, we have seen the case of Maruf Rosul, blogger and secular activist, who said that he gets death threats all the time: 'they say things like: "You are an atheist pig. We will kill you." Those making the threats cannot be identified since they use fake Twitter accounts or make phone calls from encrypted sources over the internet. "Last night I got a threat on [my] mobile [phone] from a Middle East number. This is

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[121] *UN Human Rights Council resolution on protection of human rights on the Internet as a milestone for free speech, says OSCE Representative*, Vienna, Jul.5, 2016, http://www.osce.org/fom/250656

[122] Freedom House, *Freedom of the Net 2015*, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2015.

[123] The Economist, *Free Speech under Attack*, Jun.4, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21699909-curbs-free-speech-are-growing-tighter-it-time-speak-out-under-attack.

common. "Mr Rosul admits to feeling afraid, but says he is determined to keep "fighting for a society based on pluralism and equal rights""[124]. This issue, however entailing the issue of terrorism which has been difficult to tackle for other reasons, is still relevant when we discuss online censorship and the threats that people get. It underlines the inability of state actors to improve the safety of the cyberspace, which would be beneficial both for the citizens and for the governments themselves. I aforementioned the cases of WikiLeaks and of the Anonymous that are related here, where I have underlined the urge for both the parts to be protected.

As far as the protection of the governments is concerned, to begin with, there should be a balanced and careful use of the social media. The governments and the civil society should offer detailed information to the citizens regarding the threats that they can get through the internet. More specifically, young people should be fully aware of the threats that unknown users use to harm them. This can be done through campaigns that are friendly to the teenagers, making the potential dangers easy to understand and manage. As these campaigns usually use a very formal language making them difficult to be understood by children or teenagers, these campaigns could entail games and interactive activities so the former get to fully understand the perils and nevertheless they should be also be addressed to parents in order for them to know their rights and how to protect their children. People should be protected against online discrimination and censorship, however this should be carefully done in order to continue enhancing the freedom of speech which unfolds other rights too.

As far as what the governments can do more to enhance democracy, transparency, but in the same time their safety, there are many things that can be done. The designated agents can create friendly sites to use and to be understood by all the citizens, regardless of age, education and nationality. Every website should create the feeling of familiarity, making citizens feel that their governments work for the benefit of the citizenry. Nevertheless, the social media could be used on a larger scale in order to avoid spending large budgets that can be rather used for different purposes. It is interesting how the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament have used the social media to be more transparent and make citizens feel closer to the people that work there. They upload their projects and offer live reports of what is happening. What more could be done is for them or in general for representatives of whatever other organisation to use open questions and utilize the

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[124] The Economist, *Muted by machetes*, Jun.4, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/international/21699904-where-state-sits-islamists-murder-secular-speakers-muted-machetes.

citizens' replies- this could make them be more amenable, compassionate and responsive to the citizenry.

However, some boundaries should be set clear in order to avoid a repetition of what happened with WikiLeaks and with the Anonymous. Apart from using technological means to protect the sites of the governments, the latter should be firm about their position on the topic. This does not mean to keep their distance from their citizens, but the latter should really get informed that there are issues that cannot be published during their procedures, but rather after the negotiations have finished and after the decisions have been taken. It is understandable that this is a difficult task, however it can be done. Most of the times the citizens are not satisfied with what is going on since there are many layers of problems to be solved in order to achieve a complete form of justice for all and that's why they turn to actions that remind us the cases of WikiLeaks and of the Anonymous. What needs to be done is that the governments truly abide by the laws and follow the conventions they have anyways already ratified in order for the lives of the citizens to be protected and to be wealthy. This might seem simplistic, but it is not that easy due to the existence of many other interests that have a role to play in the decision making. However, when the politicians talk about human rights, there is a need to re-examine the high stakes that are related to the procedures of the decision making and rather focus on the human beings politicians are responsible for. Not only because the politicians have to abide by laws, but because they are human beings too and the protection, the respect and the fulfilment of people's rights are the most important tasks in order for other sectors to be embellished too.

As far as the security of the governments is concerned, it is generally known that there are multiple mechanisms to protect the governmental archives. People with deep knowledge should be employed after careful examination to create firewalls in order to protect the governmental documents.

**<u>Conclusion</u>**

With the advanced use of the social media we have seen an enrichment of democracy. Human rights violations and injustices around the world have been unveiled due to posts on Facebook and Twitter and the international community has reacted accordingly. We have seen the case of the Egyptian revolution which helped people gain some rights, and with the Occupy Movement that acted in a similar way and has enforced some human rights too. Nevertheless,

from the WikiLeaks' and the Anonymous' actions, we have seen greater transparency in politics and, once more, the rights of the people being reinforced.

However, having reflected the good and bad outcomes of the use of the social media in these four aforementioned interesting cases, similar but in their way different too, I have shown that there is work needed to be done regarding the use of the social media in order to use their benefits to the maximum. Work needs to be done both on the part of the citizens' relationship with the government and vice versa. The freedom of the net, that boosts various kinds of human rights, has to be in accordance with the security of the net in order to see democracy deeply flourishing.

Last but not least, this year has been really exciting with all these new tendencies in politics. The last and most obvious example is this of the Brexit. After the result, we saw the implications that followed with people realizing that they didn't know what the European Union actually means and how it works, together with its benefits. After the announcement of the result and after the last plenary of the European Parliament that the UK took part in, as well as after the big shock around the world lasting for days after the results of the referendum, people started googling what the European Union is and how it works, realizing the disadvantages of not being a part in it. The famous #whatdidwedo tweet shows that the citizenry was pretty uneducated on how things work.

Of course people are the responsible ones to be educated about how things work in the EU, however I believe that there should have been a campaign clearly showing the advantages and the disadvantages of being a Member State of the European Union. Certainly, during the pre-election seasons or during the preparation for a referendum, there are other implications in the campaigns that mostly focus on the feelings of the citizens rather than their logic. But since we have this powerful tool of the social media, I believe that if they were used more wisely, we would not be in this position right now. We saw the petition of Facebook concerning a second referendum and massive protests organised through the social media however now the result cannot be changed. The example of the Brexit can shed more light on how the social media can be used as beneficiary for democracy and policy makers should take advantage of this to advance the social media use for the benefits of everyone.

Social media are an excellent tool for democracy. Using them wisely, we can eliminate the negative effects and rather focus on the positive effects so we truly boost human rights.

Social media can make people be well informed about what is going on and thus reinforce the citizens' trust in their governments. And the governments can learn through the social media a lot about the citizens' needs and put them into practice. Citizens and governments should act as one; as William Scranton, American politician, once said: 'the value of the government to the people it serves is in direct relationship to the interest citizens themselves display in the affairs of the state'[125].

The social media use both by the citizens and by the governments has a lot to offer to democracy. The social media act as places that bring people together and foster dialogue procedures that enhance democracy. They can document injustices around the world and make them known, so action is taken to fight them and have people enjoying their rights. They can help boosting human rights, like the freedom of speech or the freedom of assembly, as it has been documented in the Egyptian Revolution and in the case with the Occupy the Wall Street movement. On the other hand, there are dangers that should be carefully taken in consideration since governments as well as civilians' lives are put in danger by disclosing governmental affairs. Using thus the example of the Brexit, we can gain some useful insights of the aid of the social media once more. They bring people together and information is shared freely. However, the governments are the ones that have to use the social media in a more wise way to enhance democracy and to meet the needs of their citizens. Social media can truly enhance democracy: they just have to be used in a suitable and appropriate way so their positive effects supersede the negative ones.

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[125] William Scranton quotes, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/w/william_scranton.html

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