Cyberactivism through Social Media: Twitter, YouTube, and the Mexican Political Movement “I'm Number 132”

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Abstract

Social media is increasingly important for political and social activism in Mexico. In particular, Twitter has played a significant role in influencing government decision making and shaping the relationships between governments, citizens, politicians, and other stakeholders. Within the last few months, some commentators even argue that Mexican politics has a new influential actor: “I’m Number 132” (a student-based social movement using Twitter and YouTube). After the Arab Spring and the uprisings that have led to significant political changes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Iran, the Mexican case could provide new insights to understand these social movements. Understanding the students’ political mobilization “I’m Number 132” in the context of the 2012 presidential election in Mexico, and how they have been using social media tools to communicate their concerns and organize protests across the country, could help us to explain why and how these social media-enabled political movements emerge and evolve.

1. Introduction

A social protest in the main streets of a city causes traffic congestion and usually attracts the attention of authorities. These social manifestations are not new in Mexico. In 1968, a movement with political motives in Mexico City caused a violent riot and a bloody massacre of students. In 1988 and 2000, social protests erupted after presidential elections in response to electoral fraud and a fair counting of votes, which created greater political awareness among citizens. However, the first protest using online technology emerged in the state of Chiapas in 1994, with the indigenous Zapatistas and their leader “sub-commandant Marcos.” They used email to communicate their ideas around the world and to garner the attention of international newspapers and opinion leaders.

Social protests, which started on the streets, are now taking place and evolving on the Web [1]. The Mexican online protest of #InternetNecesario is one of the most recent movements using social media in that country. This protest started because in 2009 Congress proposed to tax the use of Internet for the first time. The bill was approved in the low chamber. However, the president of the Mexican Chapter of the Internet Society, Alejandro Pisanty, made a strong statement against this bill, and posted this message against Internet taxation on his Twitter account: “Promote, not tax” and using the hashtag #InternetNecesario (Indispensable Internet), following the lead of a Venezuelan movement with the same name.

Pisanty sent out this message on Monday, October 19, 2009 at 10:00 pm. The post fostered social disruption among Twitter users in Mexico, with more than 10,000 users posting and retweeting Pisanty’s complaint. This online protest became a trending topic in a few hours, reaching fifth place among the world’s top trending topics [2]. On October 22, the message had reached up to 32,864 Twitter messages and senators from the high chamber met with a group of these protesters to hear their claims and proposals for the Internet tax. More than 10,000 messages were sent out on Twitter in support of these “virtual representatives.” This meeting was widely covered by newspapers and television news and also streamed online. Pollster Maria de las Heras, from Milenio Newspaper, published a national poll in which 78% of Mexicans were against taxing Internet use and considered it a basic need [3]. Approximately 100,000 messages were posted during 10 days of protest.

During the subsequent days, 11,156 Twitter messages using the hashtag #InternetNecesario were sent daily. Twitter followers moved their protest from a virtual world to the face-to-face one. On the following Sunday, October 27, they gathered together at Parque Hundido in Mexico City. This face-to-face meeting was replicated in other states like Nuevo León, Yucatán, Jalisco, and Chiapas. After several weeks, the Internet tax was officially rejected. But cellular phone communications and satellite and cable television were taxed. The hashtag #InternetNecesario remains active on a protest website (www.internetnecesario.org).
Today a new online protest is in progress. Mexican students from public and private universities have taken to the streets, but they have organized themselves using social media tools. This paper attempts to understand how this social movement emerged and how it has evolved over the last few months. The rest of the paper is organized in five sections. Section two provides a brief review of the literature about social movements and Internet technologies. Based on a review of recent studies, section three proposes a preliminary stage-based model of cyberactivism and social media. Section four applies the conceptual model to the case of “I’m Number 132” in Mexico and highlights some differences and similarities between this case and what was expected in theory. Section five includes the discussion and implications of the study and section six provides some final comments and suggests areas for further research within this topic.

2. Social Media and Cyberactivism: A Preliminary Stage-based Model

This section provides a review of recent studies on the Internet, politics, social media, and collective action and proposes a preliminary stage-based model to understand cyberactivism using social media tools and applications. First, it provides a brief literature review on the Internet and its relationships to social and political movements. Then it presents recent studies on social media and collective action. Finally, this section proposes a stage-based model to understand cyberactivism.

2.1. Internet, Politics, and Social Movements

Some social and political movements are related to political parties [4][5]--but not exclusively. Examples include the revival of the socialist movement in France [6] or research by Rapp, Button, Fleury-Steiner, and Fleury-Steiner that shows the evolution of how a dialogue among black female victims using the Internet became a social protest [7]. By using the Internet, social movements have evolved more global political protests around the world [8]. In recent years, social media tools have helped to organize social protests [9], like the 1999 "Battle of Seattle" that saw more than 70,000 protestors come together by means of online organizing to take on the World Trade Organization [10]. Are social movements changing because of technology? This question is difficult to answer; however, some scholars’ research seems to indicate that technological tools improve the organization of social movements [11][1].

Social movements and e-democracy research are very recently linked to each other. Some scholars state the use of technology supports democratic practices [9][10][12][13]. Particularly, Mosca [1], establishes the concept of the political use of the Internet as follows: “Using the Internet to gather political information, to discuss political issues, and to perform acts of dissent online” (p. 4).

Political communication is another theoretical framework that could be used to analyze the link between politics and social movements. Norris [14] proposes the idea of the virtuous circle between the media and the political parties, which provide information to the media for their own purposes. Bimber [15] argues that differences in political communication exist on the Internet due to gaps related to connectedness and gender. Other studies are consistent with these findings [16][17]. Blumler [18] describes five trends in political communication: (1) intensified professionalizing imperatives, (2) increased competitive pressures; (3) anti-elitist populism, (4) a process of centrifugal diversification, and (5) changes in how people receive politics. The present study could be categorized in the last trend.

Calderaro [19] adds additional features of the Internet to Mosca’s conception of it as a political tool: “The Internet also includes tools other than the WWW, such as E-Mailing Lists, collaborative on-line software, Peer-to-Peer Networks, Instant Messaging tools, and so forth.” Although Calderaro’s research is primarily focused on email, it shows the potential of other tools in politics. On the other side, the work of Ayres [20] presents a less optimistic view, highlighting the unreliable and unverifiable information that could circulate the Internet via social movement websites, producing more uncertainty and confusion rather than a real political discussion. Furthermore, Baumgartner & Morris’s [21] study of the young users of social network websites finds that this cohort is not more inclined to participate in politics than users of other media.

2.2. Social Media and Collective Action

Social media have transformed the collective action field [22]. The use of Web 2.0 technologies has empowered citizens to disperse ideas, organize, and pressure governments in contrast to traditional mass media. [23]. Despite the novelty of the field, some theories have been used to study this kind of protest. The structural-cognitive model, collective action, resource mobilization, political opportunity theory, resources theory are all ways to explain collective action or protest [24]. However the Internet as a catalyst of social expression is a different phenomenon
that could be understood with the same measures. Research from Garret [25] states that ICTs are changing the way activists communicate and organize; however, research work in this field is still emerging, and there is a need to establish a common theoretical ground to understand this phenomena.

Social movements could also be analyzed using collective action theory [26]. Olson states that if people share interests, then they will act collectively to achieve them. These groups are also working together to provide public goods following ideas from the rational choice perspective [27]. Tarrow [28] analyzes social movements by studying the interactions between institutions and politics. He considers them a collective action, based on four properties: collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and sustained interaction. Following this idea, Ostrom [29] provides another stream of research where we found a useful concept for this paper: the common pool of resources (CPR), which introduces the Internet as a new public good shared by commons.

Social movements are becoming aware of the potential use for technology. The cases of Ukraine [30] and later on Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria [31] are good examples of this new use of the pool of resources. However, very few of them have been carefully studied so far. Research about the Arab Spring follows two different paths. One path is related to technical components of the platforms and how they influence the protest. A second path is the social one, to understand the motivations behind the use.

On the technical path, the use of Twitter to promote action through credibility has been a stream of research for several scholars like Morris and her team, who surveyed users and conducted several experiments to demonstrate the lack of critical judgment users of Twitter exercise when they encounter information sent on this platform [32]. Castillo’s [33] research on trending topics and retweets is part of this stream of work. Gupta analyzes the credibility ranking of tweets on high impact events, finding that only 17% of the total tweets contained credible information [34]. Another area under exploration is the study of hashtags. Lehman [35] has studied them by a behavioral perspective, while Chen [36] analyzes how content is recommended through Twitter. Yang’s research attempts to understand the content and motivations of hashtag use [37].

A second stream of research is the impact of technology implementation on social aspects of the political protests. Shanthi [38] presents the first international reports about this kind of protest; Zhang analyzes cases of civic participation and online networking and their relationships [39]. Nahed provides an overview of the Egyptian uprising before and during the event, analyzing the use of technology through a survey after the riots [40]. Kavanaugh and colleagues have explored the use of Twitter as a main channel of communication in the context of Egypt [41]. Later research from Kavanaugh uses diffusion theory to explain the acceptance of information technology and implements a survey in Egypt to conclude that opinion leaders in Egypt are the ones who primarily use social media tools [42]. Some attempts to integrate this research into models are Friedland [22] and Kiss [43]. Friedland’s literature review is divided in four sections: the first one conceives of the Internet as a space in which people meet; second are the types of organization and internal communication patterns; the third section is how this group communicates externally; and the fourth is how they use social media technology to affect internet-based mobilization (p. 2).

Kiss and Rosa-Garcia [43] explain that efficient mobilization relies on the flow of information. For these authors, mass and social media affect mobilization, understanding mass media as TV and radio and social media as technologies like Twitter and Facebook. Following this idea, mass media technologies allow individuals to have aggregate information about the actions that have already been taken; with social media technologies, the individuals can observe the individual actions of each predecessor of the information and decide if they want to participate or not. More information access using technologies increases the probability of success of the revolution (pp. 6).

Both models are related to theoretical models to understand social protests, like Lohmann’s model of informational cascade [44] and Opp’s structural-cognitive model [24] that explains the new connections of media, technology, and social protest. According to this research into social media’s impact on social protest, we develop a four-stage model to understand the different levels of maturity of the protest using social media technologies. The stages are: (1) Trigger Event Factor; (2) Media Response, (3) Viral Organization and (4) Physical Response.

2.3. Model Description

A circular flow model is proposed because collective action is constantly adapting to new contexts or technologies. Activists organize actions in less time, and have more power to disseminate information across the web to their supporters [22]. With this idea in mind, an iterative model to introduce new data that generates discussion and promotes actions – online and offline –is the best model to explain this kind of online social movement. Figure 1 shows the interaction of the four stages.
1. Triggering Event

The flow of information is intense during political campaigns. Comments over the social media networks spread easily and fast. The cases of Egypt and Tunisia both had a triggering factor to start the social mobilization. In Egypt, Wael Ghonim created the Facebook titled “Kullena Khaled Said” (“We Are All Khaled Said”) in support of a 28 year-old brutalized by police and called for the critical Tahrir Square day of protest on January 25, 2011 [45]. In Tunisia, the protests began in December 2010 with a college-educated street vendor’s self-immolation in the coastal town of Sidi Bouzid; Mohamed Bouazizi was in despair over corruption and joblessness in the country [45]. The detonating factor is an extraordinary event that promotes a social reaction to it. Despite the cause of the event – murder, aggression, lack of attention, distrust - the result is social reaction. This factor could be linked to what is called “a political opportunity,” in social protest theory, which Lohman [44] defines as “the notion that people become active not when they are most deprived, oppressed, or discontent, but when a closed system of opportunities opens up” (p. 46).

Accordingly, this political opportunity arises from the social media tools, which empower people to organize the protest [23]. This kind of detonating event has these characteristics: (1) it breaks the status quo of the society; (2) it is autonomous; and (3) citizens organize it. This triggering event component is supported by the common interest of a collective group [26][28][29].

2. Media Response

The trigger factor creates an immediate response and is part of the communication model: a message passes from sender to receiver, and later on the receiver answers the message [46]. However the use of online social media expands the channels for and velocity of the message and creates a different space to share ideas about the message [47]. This space is a virtual one of political interaction, which enables citizens to share, collaborate, and cooperate using social media technologies with no information costs and a common ground of technology [48]. This media response fosters information aggregation for the activists [49] and promotes a second or third information cascade [50], allowing late activists to join the movement [43].

Electronic media journalism publishes information using their normal channels (TV, newspapers, and websites), despite the fact that citizens might not have access to these channels and instead use the Internet as the main channel for communicating their ideas. As a result, social media can be helpful in three ways: a) mobilizing protesters rapidly; b) undermining a regime’s legitimacy; or c) increasing national and international exposure to a regime’s atrocities [45]. The virtual space cannot be as easily censored or limited by government, as TV and radio companies sometimes are. Dahlgren [51][52] has analyzed how deliberation in this online public sphere becomes a natural environment for political communication. According to Sandoval-Almazan [16], there are three important characteristics that allow online protests to happen: ubiquity, anonymity, and time.

3. Viral Organization

Once a group can create a mass reaction, they start building an online community. This community has efficient communication channels, an encrypted language where they use common words or concepts, and shared ideas of co-production and collaboration [40] [54]. The movement starts developing a collective identity, giving new names to problems, pressuring the government over formal channels (TV, newspapers, radio), and building a discourse and a consistent message [31].

Some characteristics of the virtual organization are free access, no moderation, no rules for access, no leadership, horizontal organization, free information flow, and online discussion. This form of organizing becomes viral and other cells could replicate the initial model of communication (be it YouTube, Twitter Facebook, or another platform). Organization must be horizontal and decentralized as one characteristic of the e-movements [22], contrary to traditional movements,
and empowered by the use of Web 2.0 technologies [23].

This viral organization influences mobilization in two ways: online mobilization (or cyberactivism) [10] and offline mobilization. Both of them require management, consistency, and strategy for the movement’s discourse. Effing [55] proposes two constructs to understand this viral organization: community engagement and sense of community. Means contention and internal organization arise in this stage as different pressures bring together divergent groups and interests to share ideas, collaborate, and cooperate [20].

4. Physical Response

This stage is to show the power and strength of the social protest. Using street demonstrations and technology simultaneously are ways to produce a physical response and organize resistance. An important advantage of e-movements is that the spread of information on the Internet may many times bypass the speed and coverage of the mainstream media [22] [40] [45]. The physical response shows new activists the power of the organization and encourages them to promote and duplicate the movement. The movement does not necessarily need traditional media to organize the mobilization, but it does need individuals to communicate their concerns to other audiences and act as a catalyst to have their voice heard by government and politicians.

3. Research Design and Methods

This study explores the emergence and evolution of social media tools in social protest. For this reason, the study used an iterative design strategy, which involved a literature review, content analysis, and website analysis. The literature review served to inform the authors of previous social movements that used social media, determine variables, and focus the analysis. The content analysis, based on the preliminary findings of the literature review, identified and analyzed newspapers, magazines, blog entries, and reports regarding social media’s impact on social protest activity among Mexican youth—cyberactivism.

Following the literature review and content analysis, the website analysis that followed served as the foundation for an initial analytical framework to assess this relationship between social media and mass media tools through the measurement of comments or messages from social media sources. This hybrid between content analysis, literature review, and the object of study – online social media – could be approached using different models of data collection and analysis [56]. With the recent trend of Internet research, these kinds of mixed models for analysis are still in debate and are a site for further research [57] [58].

4. The Phases in Action: The Social Movement “I'm Number 132”

4.1. Triggering Event

In the Mexican case, the triggering event was created by the presidential candidate Enrique Pena Nieto from the oldest political party in Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled the country for over 70 years. On May 11, 2012, Pena Nieto was invited to lecture at a Catholic university, named the Universidad Iberoamericana, in one of the wealthiest zones of Mexico City. During his lecture, he was strongly questioned for several matters related to his term as governor in the central State of Mexico, and at the end he was confronted by a massive protest of students that waited for him, shouting things like “coward,” “murderer,” and the “Ibero University does not like you” [59].

After encountering a barrier to the way out, the candidate could not get out from the front door, and had to leave the University using another exit. During his exit, he was interview by the media, and stated that he presumed that the protesters were not students from the university, but were instead supporters of the other candidate. Later on, the president of the PRI party was interviewed on television and radio stations; he mentioned that these were not students, but provokers, and regardless they did not represent the whole university. Other politicians from the PRI party supported calls to investigate and punish the students [60]. The next day, the mass media – mainly newspapers and television – declared Pena Nieto’s presentation a success at the University and avoided publishing the students’ claims. This outcome, coupled with the politicians’ statements, offended the students, who demanded an apology and an objective media [61].

4.2. Media response

The students from the Universidad Iberoamericana pursued two responses [38]. The first response was to bypass the media and respond directly to the PRI. The consequence was that students used a virtual space to reply to statements from the traditional media and politicians. “One of the brilliant things about Twitter is that it kills propaganda,” said Paul Mason, referring to
the Egyptian uprising [31]. Mexican students took action by uploading videos taken from their cell phones to the YouTube platform on May 12 and 13, showing the “escape” of Pena Nieto from the University and the student protests that had hundreds of students shouting complaints against the PRI candidate [62]. The students were able to demonstrate a different perspective than the one the traditional media published.

The second action took place on May 14, when 131 students organized themselves to record a video, in which they show their student ID cards, say their names, and make a small declaration against the PRI candidate. In the 11 minute video, they promote open and fair access to information through the electronic media and complain about the protest coverage of the two main TV broadcast stations- Televisa and TV Azteca. No one could say that these activists were not students or deny the originality of their claim. This homemade video, named “#131 Ibero Students Respond,” received more than one million views in one week [63] [64].

A few days later, students from other universities made more videos like this one, with the hashtag “#I'm number 132.” Figure 2 shows the number of mentions for a call for a street protest named #MarchaYoSoy132. This hashtag was mentioned more than 769,000 times in four days and exceeded the number of mentions about the presidential candidates, as shown at the bottom of the chart. Students have created a virtual space, collaborating and communicating with each other by sending information through the social media tools.

Figure 2. Hashtag #MarchaYoSoy132. Source: [65]

4.3. Viral Organization

The student activists, using the hashtag “#MarchaYoSoy132,” began climbing in the trending topics of Mexico and the world during May 17-18. Students used YouTube to upload videos calling for a street demonstration. They sent out ideas and warnings about the organization of the march: “Do not provoke, bring a book under your arm, use social networks to communicate.” Electronic media did not facilitate the spread of the movement; instead, all organizing was done using Internet devices and Web 2.0 platforms. The Twitter account @MarchaYoSoy132 had 6,251 followers and sent 969 tweets during this time.

The Twitter account @YoSoy132 had 41,226 followers, sent 163 tweets, and followed 204 accounts as of June 3. Using the MentionMap technology to observe the network changes around the primary Twitter account and the march account, we can see the increase of connections and interactions among students, universities, and subjects in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 presents the “I’m number 132” Twitter relationships. The Facebook page of the movement has over 100,000 fans (http://www.facebook.com/yosoy132). A website was created (www.yosoy132.mx) that has videos, pictures, online forums, and, most importantly, is divided by states so that every member can register and be linked with his or her state’s information. There is also an automatic invitation for contacts using a search engine and the site creates a closed community that could be linked with the broader movement. A horizontal organization has been established; no single leadership controls the movement and demands are presented and cooperatively agreed upon through different mass media spaces. A general assembly of delegates from the movement met on May 30 and defined the cause as a national one. The organization of the protest march, the assembly, and media statements was done using social media tools – Twitter, email, and websites. Additional activities include protests against two official institutions, the Department of State’s Ministry of Government and the Federal Electoral Institute, to pressure them for a national broadcast of the presidential debate.

4.4. Physical Response

The march on May 19, 2012 in Mexico City drew 45,000 people [65]. A second march on June 10, 2012 jumped to 90,000 people in Mexico City and was replicated in 20 cities [66]. Students demonstrated the strength of the online movement on the streets. They held signs with different messages, congregated
downtown, and walked to the independence monument using one of the main streets in the capital city.

Incomplete reports were made and biased news about the event was broadcasted around the country. Electronic coverage, including websites, mobile text messages, and tweets, was the only means of providing accurate information about the number of people and main events at the demonstration. The following list of activities shows how the movement took physical form and how it spread across the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Enrique Peña Nieto visits Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Street protests held against the broadcast station Televisa’s headquarters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Street protests in Mexico City with 45,000 people present and simultaneous protests in ten cities across the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>Petitions are released for signatures. Release of the official website (ww.Yosoy132.mx).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Call for the Federal Electoral Institute to hold another presidential debate and fair elections. A general assembly of delegates from universities at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6</td>
<td>Students issue a call via YouTube for a new presidential candidate debate to be held on June 19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7</td>
<td>Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI) declines the debate invitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>Call for a street protest on June 10 in different cities using YouTube, Twitter and Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10</td>
<td>The second street protest is held, with 90,000 attendees and similar protests held in 20 cities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion and Implications

Shanti & Taylor [38] state that Internet use threatens governments. The power and independence of the people can be clearly seen and felt by politicians and government alike. However, the Mexican spring movement “I’m Number 132” is different from the previous uprisings in places like Egypt and Tunisia in several aspects. First, “I’m Number 132” occurred during an electoral campaign, which is different from most of the other movements (with the exception of Iran). Electoral campaigns trigger social mobilization and public opinion. The previous behavior of the Mexican Twitter movement – “InternetNecesario” – has pointed to new directions of citizen participation through a virtual space based on social media with free speech, easy access, instant updates, and no restrictions.

The second difference is that the young Mexican democracy is different from authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Detractors of the use of social media tools argue that these technologies exert a very small change or impact [67]. In fact, it is hard to understand the role of these tools in activist organizations, street protests, and cyberactivism [68] [69]. Nevertheless, the ability of Twitter messages to organize and to shape public opinion is remarkably important and provide evidence to support some previous research [32] [34] [70].

Social media tools can be seen as a catalyst to produce real-life changes. In the Mexican experience, the main broadcast TV companies, newspapers, and radio stations changed their content restrictions overnight and started covering the students’ activities. In addition, the students’ main achievement was to force the Mexican electoral authority to broadcast the second presidential debate nationwide, which, together with many other actions, reduced the 20-point advantage of the frontrunner PRI candidate to less than ten points [71] [72]. This cyberactivism reduces the intermediary power of Mexican television, and threatens the credibility of the electronic mass media. Mexican social protest through online tools is promoting more accountability and improving communication among citizens. It has placed important
topics on the political agenda, such as fairness in media coverage and the use of public funding to sponsor political campaigns. But probably the most important result is to bring young citizens back into the political arena, which is extremely important for an emergent democracy.

6. Final Comments

As mentioned before, the purpose of this paper is to present an analytical model to understand the use of social media in the Mexican case study of the movement “YoSoy132” (“I’m Number 132”), which formed and consolidated during the presidential campaign of 2012. We argue that this paper provides new insights into the emergence and evolution of these movements, as well as shifts in the power of traditional media. We also think that this model could be useful to understand other social and political movements that use social media as their main platforms. The model and its four stages are continuous; every time a social protest becomes physical, it starts a new triggering event. More research is needed to test and refine the model in the future.

The proposed model has strengths and weaknesses. The main strength is that it could be used for any social media, because the focus is on the consequences of use, not the technical platform itself. Another advantage is the consideration of viral organization as an open space in which different kinds of interactions can take place. Finally, the model is iterative and allows for the observation of different maturity levels of a social movement. In contrast, the main weakness is the difficulty in capturing the time dimension of these phenomena. Since online interaction is very fast, collecting and analyzing data in a timely manner could be a real challenge, particularly when the focus is dispersed across multiple social media applications and tools.

At least three potential areas for future research emerge from this study. First, there is an opportunity to develop more research about the use of social media tools for cyberactivism. In many instances, Twitter and Facebook have become the selected platforms for activist or organizations. However, in the Mexican case, YouTube and the website of “I’m Number 132” were also prominent spaces to place information, promote connections, and post messages and videos.

Second, it is essential to understand the role of trust among people using social media tools and applications. Trust among social media users is crucial to the organization of social and political movements, particularly when no personal interactions or very few face-to-face interactions exist. Previous events like “Indispensable Internet” (“Internet Necesario”) in 2009 and the Zapatistas’ email communication in 1994 reflect different levels of trust in using these technologies and serve as examples of how new technologies can be used as independent communication channels. More research to understand the importance of trust when using social media tools is needed.

Third, it would be also important and interesting to understand the network of actors involved in the cyberactivism surrounding a social or political movement. How strong or weak are the links among nodes? What kind of messages – hashtags or tweets – are they producing and sharing? Finally, the role of social media and other technologies in changing political behavior by introducing more information, supporting certain opinions, and, creating awareness, accountability, and open government is also a topic that needs further research. We are just entering an era of e-movements and e-democracy. There is a long way to go to understand, support, and improve democracy using technology, particularly social media. This study is just a small step towards that goal.

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