

Interactive visualization / Social network analysis

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

MESSAGES OF HATE AND STIGMATIZATION IN

TUNISIA

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Problem formulation

It is no longer a secret that today the outcome of wars and conflicts depends more than ever on information and communication - which is even more true in a world gained by new technologies with which everyone can now collect and disseminate comments, sounds and images, without any filter or almost so.

Remark: users of social networks make increasingly their voice heard on political current events

In some cases, these media - in the sense of channels that can carry data to many as to a small number of individuals - are a real threat to international peace and security.

How to ensure the deployment of free and responsible media that prohibit incitement to hatred, violence and all forms of discrimination?

This is an enormous challenge, especially since any state intervention or media regulation can be misconstrued as a return to censorship and to the control of information.

Tunisia, as a symbolic case study

Why ? Because it has stressed the strong, ambiguous and polyvalent impact of technological changes on traditional and new forms of reporting information and messages.

Tunisia is the only remaining state in which a transition to a pluralist democratic system still seems possible after the “Arab spring”

Challenges for Tunisia

One first answer to the challenging situation of the media following the Tunisian revolution, was the establishment of an independent regulator of audiovisual media (HAICA).

RQ : we propose to analyze how the HAICA fulfills its three essential liberal functions related to the sustainability of the Tunisian democratic experience:

- openness to media pluralism and the promotion of freedom of expression
- the contribution of HAICA to the proper conduct of elections and to an honest and balanced coverage of the campaign by the media
- the transformation of state media, into a system of public service

Should new media be seen
like the God Janus, as having
two contrasting faces ?

Although it is not legally in charge of this issue, in the future the HAICA will be assessed on its ability to sensitize the animators and activists of social media in this post-revolutionary context.

In their daily activities, professional journalists are increasingly turning to more and more content from social media, which are often uncritically taken and disseminated through traditional news media.

The question of social media regulation arises therefore all the more acute since Tunisia is immersed in an environment where more and more hate content and stigmatization messages are developing and spread.

*Which social media impact
within the Tunisian transition to
democracy?*

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, did support those who militated in favor of democracy. They contributed to the creation of spaces favorable to free expression and the birth of new political networks; they allowed the opponents to the dictatorship to plan, organize and hold peaceful protests - social media served to their media coverage , showing repressive government responses to them; finally, they have provided forums for collaboration between pro-democracy activists.

Key challenge faced by Tunisia today

How freedom of expression
and pluralism of discourses
in media could be
guaranteed while at the
same time stemming the
tide of intolerance and
violence that can emanate
from a non assumed,
misunderstood and
misused freedom?

Vision and concrete contribution

The use of social media for spreading political propaganda, hatred, sexual and psychological harassment, and/or terrorists messages, shows the need of strong research on its causes, manifestations and its modus operandi - as well as it raises the necessity to launch an interdisciplinary reflexion that should focus on how to prevent such uses to possibly happen.

Therefore our research project also consists in collecting and analyzing messages of hate and stigmatization in social networks.

This could be done in conjunction with the help from some of you, as it is needed to develop and taylor software that will allow detailed analysis of the flow and frequency of such content, from carefully chosen keywords.

Methods: Data gathering, Quantitative and Qualitative content analysis.

Practicability

The project will start 1 September 2016 and continue for five years, allowing us to follow the work of the HAICA from a post 2014 election phase through the political cycle through the next election (in year 2019) and end on 31 december 2020.