Social Media and Social Mobility: Exploring the Role of Social Networks in the 2018 Boycott Campaign in Morocco

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Abstract

Social networks have been resorted to as effective platforms for social mobility in many parts of the world. This mobility occurs when social media users exploit their interpersonal relationships, especially their 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973). Social networks enable their users to be producers of information, rather than mere consumers, and to be socially and politically well-informed. They have come to function as the alternative media serving citizens rather than governments' agendas. The paper investigates whether or not social networks are used for social and political mobility in Morocco. Practically, the boycott campaign 2018 in Morocco is considered to uncover the new services which these networks are offering. All these issues are investigated in this paper through administering a survey questionnaire to a Moroccan population. A quantitative and a qualitative analysis of 112 questionnaires show that the majority of the participants not only follow social and political content on social media but also share, post, and re-tweet the content. The paper indicates that social media are useful platforms for political and social mobility since they are risk-free, costless, and accessible by everybody. The participants do not deny the outstanding roles that social networks play in organizing campaigns as forms of social mobility, yet they do not consider social media as a prerequisite for making such an events a success, because the world has been witnessing successful mass street protests wherein no use of social media platforms has been mentioned.

Keywords: boycotting, online activism, social networks, social and political mobility, weak ties.

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Introduction

In 2000, the former chairman and chief software architect of Microsoft Corporation, Bill Gates, declared that in its early years, the internet was restricted and accessible just to a small community of researchers and information technology departments of research. He added that, at that time, hardly anyone imagined that the Internet would play such an efficient role in our lives, or contemplated the idea that anyone would be able to possess a personal computer via which the individual would become regularly connected to a global network (Gates, 2000). Likewise, just several years ago, people could not imagine that internet users would be able to register their presence in many social networks and whereby communicate with each other and with the entire world. They did not entertain the fact that internet will create an era whereby people become producers and diffusers of information. Evidently, they could not predict the fact that Internet users will operate as citizen journalists who produce information and forsake the mainstream media that used to be the only source of news and information.

Currently, while academics and scholars are discussing issues such as democracy, social mobility, political awareness, and freedom of speech, they absolutely evoke the role of social networking sites play in facilitating and realizing these ends. People start to feel that they are involved in the process of realizing these ambitions. This becomes evident when people are no longer exposed just to one-way flow of information by which people remain passive consumers of information. Mainstream media platforms are usually state-owned, partisan and controlled. They give room for expression to only a small portion of the community; the elites. On the contrary, communication on social networks is unmediated and social platforms are accessible for everybody to voice his/her opinions (Smuts, 2010). Consequently, new social and political practices are held on social networks as a outcome of what is referred to as citizen journalism and online or cyber activism. This online activism gives birth to a new individual who is no longer passive, but rather, an individual who is socially and politically more active than ever. The aforementioned concepts inform the approach which I take in this paper.

The exceptional role of social media has been spotted in many areas, mainly in social and political arenas. The use of social media has prevailed in social and political issues. Surprisingly, those media proved to be effective during the Arab spring(2011),to the extent that some media outlets go further as to call the Arab revolutions, for example, a "Twitter revolution" tailored by Facebook pages users (Khondker, 2011).

However, the role of social media in social movements is not

acknowledged by all scholars. Therefore, scholars like Lerner (2010) underestimating the role of social media in social movements and arguing that social movements' organizers do not actually use the internet when their demonstrations are threatened. To support his view, Lerner evokes the case of Iran, where the first blogs emerged in 2001 based on this case, the Internet had never been used as a tool to democratize the country since this technology could also be accessible by anti-democratic forces and the government. Relatedly, Lerner asserts that offline activism has proved more effective (2010).

Social media users in Morocco are currently taking advantage of Facebook and YouTube to express their anger against the rising cost of living, and literally boycotting some leading top brands in Morocco– milk, mineral water and petrol (Ben Saga, 2018). This research focuses mainly on the Moroccan Boycott campaign, has started on 20th October 2018 and still going viral on social media, because it is considered a real reflection of the power of social media when used in social mobility. This paper trying to answer to this question; how effective social media are in informing people about political issues, in contributing to the creation of people's political awareness as well as being a public sphere for virtual demonstrations will be discussed?

By considering the 2018 boycott in Morocco, this paper seeks to explore these questions: (1) do social media users exploit Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram for social and political mobility in Morocco? In other words, do they take advantage of their weak relationships (weak ties) held online to spread their word? (2)Would the 2018 boycott campaign in Morocco be successful without social media?

The researcher hypothesizes pre-supposes that as far as the research informants are concerned Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram are effective platforms for social and political mobility. It is also hypothesized pre-supposed that the 2018 boycott in Morocco would not have been successful without social media.

In this paper, social and political mobility in social media are considered a form of online activism where individuals make use of technology to diffuse their opinions, ask for their rights, criticize officials, and win the consent of more followers so as to get their messages diffused quickly and reach important numbers of people. The fact that social media users are able to reach and share with millions of people online is a great 'technological affordance', which paves the way for many possibilities of interaction (Boyd, 2010). These possibilities of interaction are realized through what Granovetter (1973) calls

people's weak ties. In Castells' words, "Weak ties are useful in providing information and opening up opportunities at a low cost. The advantage of the internet Net is that it allows the forging of weak ties with strangers" (Castells, 1996). Putting in other words, weak ties or weak relationships are more to link members of different groups together than strong ties (family and close friends) which keep the members of the same group linked to each other in a limited circle.

Review of Literature
Social Networking Sites (SNSs)
Social networking sites' discourse is unmediated. It is frequently unmediated in the sense that "it has not been tampered with or altered to serve particular interests" (Abramson, Arterton & Orren as cited in Smuts, 2010). It was even argued that online discourse increases political participation and will pave the way for a democratic utopia. Likewise, online discourse facilitates discussion that promotes a democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. What is very appealing in these SNSs is that they give space to every single individual to have a voice. In other words, it makes it "possible for less known individuals and groups to reach out to citizens directly and restructure public affairs" (Grossman & Rash as cited in Smuts, 2010). This is while much room is given to only a few people in the old media platforms. Social media cause a noticeable influence on society to the extent that, for example, when the Arab world was witnessing many revolutions, some argued that: "The Middle East is still in the throes of a democratic revolution, a revolution that might not have been possible without social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. There is no better way to express the power of the social media than showing that they were useful to mobilize, organize, and enable people to take to the street and revolt against authoritarian regimes."

SNS, mainly Facebook and YouTube, are a powerful public venue for free expression (York, 2010). Some observers imagined the Internet as an unregulated forum without borders, able to bypass laws and virtually render the nation-state obsolete (York, 2010). That is why authorities in many countries tried to censor these platforms. Some authorities even banned or blocked them (for example, Syria and Tunisia banned Facebook before February 2011).

Relatedly, Khamis and Vaughn (2011) see that the significance of the Internet in general resides in the fact that it defies boundaries, challenges governmental media censorship, and provides a real alternative for the traditional media platforms that produce a discourse, which carries the state of official policies.

Morocco, Social Media and Social Mobility

The use of social networking sites has largely proliferated in recent years in the region of North Africa and especially in Morocco. Moroccans immigrated to the virtual world in huge numbers lately, especially after the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions (2011). Since SNSs, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been known as a platform for establishing simple conversations between individuals, they have unfolded as tools which Moroccans can express their attitudes, share information, and challenge state censorship (Haug, 2011). It is argued that such networks have become "an electronic mouthpiece for cyber activists to speak out in defense of the freedom of expression online and in the media in Morocco" (Ben Gharbia, as cited in Jankari, 2009).

The majority of Internet users in Morocco use social networks. According to the Internet_world stats.com, more than 22 million Moroccans are internet users and more than 15 million are active Facebook users (until December 2017). Facebook is a network wherein people communicate, share information, and organize campaigns, and YouTube is a video-sharing network. Through these social networks Moroccans become citizen journalists and sharing, posting and re-tweeting content.

Many writers and journalists inside and outside of Morocco agreed upon the fact that the majority of Moroccan youths trust social media and hold a negative attitude to the mainstream media. AboubakrJamai (2011) argued that in Morocco "Digital media are becoming an agora where unfettered voices for change can express themselves". He adds that tamed traditional media are being superseded by nascent and economically struggling but editorially daring news websites. In Bouziane and Ibahrine's formulation, the power of the new media in Morocco leads to "the marginalization of mainstream media and the mainstreaming of marginal media" (2011).

Online Activism in Morocco

Bouziane and Ibahrine (2011) in their report 'Mapping digital media: Morocco 'analyze what they call digital platforms and civil society activism in Morocco in an effort to discuss how young Moroccans use social networks to generate their own media content and consequently become citizen journalists. For them, thanks to the low entry barriers of social media, young Moroccans use the latter to inform, mobilize, campaign, recruit, and build coalitions. Moreover, they argue, "social media triggered a revival of the watchdog function of the media and paved the way for it to act as a fourth estate in monitoring political abuses by the regime (Bouziane & Ibahrine, 2011). Above all, the medium that

is able to make people think about taking to the street is obviously the most effective medium.

There is a myriad of examples that reflect the utility of social media in fighting corruption in Morocco. The so called 'Targuist Sniper' is a case in point. He exposed police corruption in the South of Morocco by videotaping officers taking bribes (Bouziane & Ibahrine, 2011). The video-sharing site, YouTube, is where the so-called Targuist sniper posted his videos. Subsequently, the Targuist sniper's videos were viewed close to 400,000 times in the few days after they were posted (Abdo, 2007). Concrete positive results were reached thanks to the sniper's actions:

> "The videos led to the arrest of nine corrupt policemen and the transfer of others. ...The corrupt policemen themselves have become wary of 'citizen journalists'; Moroccan citizens report that in some regions, the gendarmes have started to scan their surroundings suspiciously looking for hidden 'video snipers'....His superstar status on YouTube has inspired many other young Moroccans to follow in his steps" (Abdo, 2007).

Bouziane and Ibahrine (2011) support the view that such a content "raised cyber-activism against routine corruption to a new level" They argue that "despite the fact that the 'YouTubization' of corruption resulted in the arrest of further police officers, its overall impact remained short-term and limited"(Bouziane & Ibahrine, 2011).

Cyberactivism is transforming in Morocco. Activists organize campaigns in Facebook and create pages to support their demands. "All against the Prime Minister's family" is one, among others, which started with 20,000 members. It denounces the presence of one family in the current government, which controls many government ministries and budgets (Bouziane & Ibahrine, 2011).

In Morocco, the movement of the 20th February is still considered a very strong example of cyberactivism. It emerged from the virtual world of social networks. In 2011, "20 February, tens of thousands of Moroccans across the country took to the street to demand democracy. Many banners carried slogans castigate state media and demanding freedom of the press" (Jamai, 2011). This movement was born on the internet and is considered "the Moroccan extinction of the Arab spring" (Mamfakinch, 2011). It was those bloggers and activists, especially social networks' users who decided to organize a day of action (February 20, 2011) to demand reforms in an attempt to follow the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions (Mamfakinch, 2011). According to Mamfakinch (2011),

the success of the 20 February movement is reflected in the fact that a "wall of fear has fallen". That is, self-censorship in the media landscape in Morocco has been noticeably reduced. Though the movement was described by the government as "a danger" and accuses it of "plotting against the stability of the kingdom",the 20 February movement was supported by many political parties, associations, organizations, and unions including the General Labor Union (Mamfakinch, 2011).

Likewise YouTube permits many Moroccan figures to "broadcast themselves" in effort to demand dignity, democracy and social justice. Relatedly, in Bouziane and Ibahrin's words (2011):

> Internet users demonstrated intensive use of YouTube to aggregate and collect user-generated reports of riots and regime violence against students, labor unions, and other activists. The videos collect testimonies and user-generated facts. Many online newspapers post videos to ridicule and mock public officials and government personalities during their speeches, especially during open sessions at the parliament. Other videos also include podcasts that show unemployed university graduates protesting in front of government buildings and how the police responded with force.

All these activities come into existence thanks to social media. Internet users recognize the fact that via SNSs they can make truth visible to all people in the Moroccan society, they can vent their frustration and condemn the injustice the Moroccan society suffers from.

The 2018 Boycott Campaign

In Morocco, starting from the 20th April 2018, "*Khelih Irib*" which can be translated into "let it spoil", is an Arabic hashtag that was shared and re-shared by social media users on social networks. This hashtag used not only to express their resentfulness towards the exorbitant prices of products sold by three leading companies; mineral water (Sidi Ali), milk (Centrale Danone)*,* and gasoline(Afriquia), but also to express their rejection of the market monopolization and price manipulation in Morocco (Ben Saga, 2018). Facebook and Twitter users posted pictures and videos comparing the high prices of mineral water, milk and gasoline in Morocco with the cost of the same products in many parts of the world (Karam, 2018) to show that even in countries where the minimal wage is six times more than Morocco, the prices of the same products are three times or four times cheaper. Given the fact that

the leading boycotted Gazoline company (Afriquia) is owned by the Moroccan Minister of agriculture andfisheries, AzizAkhenouch, social media activists are expressing a deep desire to call for an end to the marriage between authority and business (Bouz, Chahir, as cited in Agency France-Presse, 2018).

A survey of 3575 people, most of them are middle class Moroccans, conducted by *L'Economiste* newspaper, shows that about 57% of Moroccans are participating in the boycott (Agene France-Persse, 2018). Relatedly, "Facebook pages with more than 2 million users have backed the campaign" (Eljechtimi, 2018).It seems that the online boycott of these three specific products is just the tip of the iceberg in the sense that the online campaign is tailored to sensitize, to create awareness for people and to trigger people to demand their rights; in one of the boycotters "the goal of this boycott formulation to unite the Moroccan people and speak with one voice against expensive prices, poverty, unemployment, injustice, corruption and despotism" (Beigh, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, Facebook has been resorted to as the most suitable platform for such mobility. This is quite logical "in a country where the official Facebook page of a company receives more attention than its corporate website" (Borremans, 2018). Borremans(2018)tells us that the boycotters exploit other social media such as Twitter for the promotion of the campaign, yet it is "considered trivial next to Facebook's impact".

Theoretical Framework
Many theories can be used to explain peoples' choice to communicate on social media platforms even though most of them have been introduced to readers long before the advent of online social networks. Though he experimented in the arena of the labor market and sociology in general, Granovetter's (1973) theory of the strength of weak ties is often quoted when discussing information flow through social media. Relatedly, Granovetter expressed that his theory provides a solid framework in which a myriad of issues hasbeen raised. In other words, he makes clear that the strength of weak ties is a "limited aspect of small scale information" and that "network analysis can relate this aspect to such varied macro phenomena as diffusion, social mobility, political organization, and social cohesion in general".

Granovetter (1973) tells us that for effective and updated information flow in interpersonal communication, the existence of weak ties among people is fundamental. Strong ties alone would lead to the circulation of old and repeated information that takes place in a closed group of

individuals who are mostly connected by either family relations or close friendships. On the other hand, the existence of weak ties among people, simple acquaintances or seeing someone once in a year or more, proved to be vital for information sharing. This guarantees the circulation of information among groups of people rather than only among members of the same group connected by strong ties. These weak ties were also referred to by Granovetter (1973) as 'bridges' that enable the diffusion of information among social groups.Put differently, the role of these 'bridges' is to guarantee the flow of information between groups. In case where these 'bridges' do not exist, people will communicate in closed groups characterized by strong ties, and will have no chance to receive information from outside of their groups.

Granovetter's elaboration on the strength of weak ties are reflected in social media use nowadays. Information that is diffused via Facebook or YouTube can be viewed by both people whom the social media user has strong ties with as well as those connected to him or her by weak ties. Tweets or posts sent by a Facebooker or a YouTuber are to be viewed, shared, commented on and even categorized as liked content by parents, brothers, close friends, neighbors, friends of friends and even foreigners. These technological facilities that social platforms afford to their users enable information to go viral very quickly. Relatedly, weak ties among people proved to be the reason behind the success of many social and political mobilizations which started online and led people taking to the street; the Arab spring 2011 is a case in point.

One of the goals of this paper is to approach the use of social media for social and political mobility in Morocco byusing Granovetter's theory of the strength of weak ties. For the three months to June 2018, social media have been take an advantage of to call for a boycott campaign of leading brands in petrol, water and dairy products due to their prices exceeding the purchasing power of Moroccans. Fifty-seven percent (as at 27 May) of Moroccans are responding to the boycott demand favorably (Agence France-Presse, 2018), purely a result of the circulation of the boycott demand via social networks. The weak ties created online made the boycott campaign known to a huge number of Moroccans in the few minutes after it was launched.

Methodology
Research Objectives
In an effort to determine whether social networks (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram) are a convenient starting point

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for political and social mobility in Morocco, a survey questionnaire is used to gather Moroccans' perceptions towards the issue. This survey investigates the rate of social media use for political and social purposes. It questions whether people share and communicate with others despite the absence of physical contact between these people in real life. The aim behind the aforementioned inquiry is to test the efficacy of their 'weak ties 'in the digital sphere for social and political purposes. The paper also aims to examine the practicability of social media in social and political mobility in Morocco and targets the 2018 boycott in Morocco as a reflection of social media use for social and political ambitions.

Population, Sampling and Method

My investigation targets Moroccan social media users. Posting a survey online, which is an effective technique for getting the requisite data from research participants through the Internet (Bhaskaran&LeClaire, as cited in Molaei, 2017), has been highly used in media and communication research(Molaei, 2017), and especially in Facebook studies (Joinson, Roblyer et al.;Steinfield et al.;Wang et al.,as cited in Molaei, 2017). In the context of Facebook studies, Molaei (2017)maintains that integrating online surveys in such research increases the reliability of the paper in the sense that the researcher will be certain that all the informants are Facebook users. Accordingly, the survey targets social networks' users, to examine how Moroccans take advantage of social networks; the respondents have to be social media users.

Therefore, the sample of the study is non-probable and nonrandom. Specifically, it is a purposive sampling and using a technique called "judgment sampling". It refers to a deliberate choice of the participant according to the qualities that respondent has (Bernard, Lewis & Sheppard, as cited in Tongco, 2007).

Relying on both qualitative and quantitative research method guarantees the study with a sense of completion. The aim behind the combination of these two methods is to enrich the study with quantitative data as well as with data that cannot be gathered quantitatively. In this way, that is, respondents will have the chance to employ their analytical competencies and to freely express their attitudes when answering open-ended questions.

The research duration was May to July 2018. I discarded about eight questionnaires due to their inclusion of unanswered questions, leading to a total of 112 completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent to Moroccan Facebook pages in two languages; English and Arabic.

Seventy-nine questionnaires were completed in Arabic and 33 were filled in in English.

Data Analysis and Discussion
This section presents the results in two main parts; the first part provides the results gathered from the responses of the closed-ended questions, and the second part deals with the r responses to the open-ended questions.

Closed-Ended Questions
Respondents' Personal Information

　Age:
　　a) 18-29: 32.05%
　　b) 30-39: 52.02%
　　c) 40-49: 9.05%
　　d) 50+: 6.1%.

　The majority of the respondents belong to the age category 30-39 and very few of them are older than 50.

　Education:
　　a) Primary: 0%
　　b) Middle school: 0%
　　c) Baccalaureate: 9.05%
　　d) Bachelor/License: 29.91%
　　e) Master: 43.2%
　　f) PhD: 17.85%.

　Most of the respondents, forming more than 80% of the sample, havean undergraduate degree. This means that most of them are well-educated people. Accordingly, the results do not represent the whole Moroccan population, yet they do provide important evidence about this section of society.

The Use of the Internet and Social Networks
Social Media Use Frequency
Table 1 shows the frequency of social media use and which social networks are the most frequently accessed by the informants. The table demonstrates that an outstanding majority of the surveyed respondents, forming 82% of the sample, use Facebook constantly whereas no respondent denies using Facebook .YouTube is also accessed by all the respondents, with 66% of them using it continuously. Approximately 80% of the participants either rarely or never use Instagram and Twitter. Unsurprisingly, the fact that more than 15

million Moroccans are active Facebook users is reflected in the data gathered apropos social networks use.

Table 1. Social media use

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Facebook	0%	3%	15%	82%
Twitter	48%	33%	15%	4%
Instagram	48%	24%	21%	6%
YouTube	0%	1%	66%	33%

When You Are Online What Do You Do?

Based on this table, people go online for many reasons other than those mentioned earlier, the study shows, as demonstrated in Table 2, that consulting social networks is almost a daily routine for the informants; more than 90% of those surveyed either always, often or sometimes access social networking sites. Still, activities such as reading newspapers, listening to the radio, and more significantly sending and reading e-mails remain important reasons for which the informants use the net.

Table 2. Activities done online by social media users

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Reading newspaper, watching Tv, listening to radio	2.94%	29.41%	29.41%	20.58%	17.64%
Reading and sending E-mails	2.94%	2.94%	38.23%	29.41%	26.47%
Using social media (Facebook, YouTube etc.)	2.94%	2.94%	23.52%	26.47%	52.94%
Playing games	70.58%	14.70%	8.82%	2.94%	2.94%
Other	35.29%	17.64%	17.64%	17.64%	11.76%

You Use Social Media for

From within the numbers presented above in Table 3, social media are basically used for communication; more than 90% of the respondents see that social networking means communicating. Additionally, a sizeable mass of respondents, about 80% of them, share content through social media. Approximately 50% of the informants use social networks for entertainment while about 45% of them use social networks for other reasons, other than those stated above.

Table 3. Objectives behind using social networks

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Communication	0.00%	2.94%	14.70%	35.29%	47.05%
Entertainment	2.94%	26.47%	35.29%	8.82%	26.47%
Sharing	2.94%	11.76%	26.47%	20.58%	38.23%
Other	26.47%	20.58%	23.52%	8.82%	20.58%

How Many Contacts or Followers You Have on the Social Media You Access the Most?

Table 4. Numbers of online contacts/followers

Lessthan 200	23.3%
Between 200-500	37.85%
Between 501-1000	14.95%
More than 1001	24%

How Many of Them You Often Meet?
The survey respondents' answers to the two questions asked above, as demonstrated in Tables 4 and 5, show that almost the half of the respondents meet very few or few of the people they contact virtually, while about 35.29% of the respondents see just some of their online friends in real life. Obviously, it can be understood that the weak relationships people develop online are greater than the close relationships that have a physical extension in real life.

Table 5. Numbers of online contacts/followers who are met offline

None of them	8.82%
Very few of them	23.52%
Few of them	23.52%
some of them	35.29%
Many of them	8.82%

The Political Use of Social Media
Very valuable information is gathered from the survey when survey respondents are asked about their political use of social networks. A great preponderance of the informants, forming approximately 80%, agree that social media enable them to stay in contact with people they do not know or cannot see in real life. Granovetter's strength of weak ties concept is reflected in these results in the sense that social media users are able to interact virtually with people they do not know or have

weak ties with. Additionally, more than 70% of the informants share or re-tweet posts on social media. This means that social media users are not mere consumers of posts or tweets, but rather they can generate, produce and send their own content. In the same section, a great number of respondents, forming more than 80%, confirm that they arefollowers of social and political issues on social networks while about 47% of them declare that they both follow and share social and political issues on the same platforms. In the same vein, 40% of the respondents would like to take advantage of social media for political purposes but they self-censor their opinions. Generally, there is a great consensus that social media are a suitable sphere for political discussions and political awareness, as it is used by most of those surveyed for these purposes. Unlike traditional media outlets, social media gives its users the chance to be producers of information and to able to share with people they do not have strong ties with.

Table 6. Social media use for political and social purposes

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1. Social media enable you to stay in contact with people you don't know or you can't see in real life.	0%	0%	20.58%	50%	29.41%
2. When online, you just follow others' sharing.	0%	17.64%	47.05%	23.52%	11.76%
3. When you are online, you share content.	2.94%	2.94%	20.58%	47.05%	26.47%
4. When you are online, you both follow and share content.	2.94%	5.88%	20.58%	47.05%	23.52%
5. When you are online, you neither follow others' sharing nor you share content.	29.41%	35.29%	26.47%	8.82%	0%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6. You are among those who often share political and social subjects on social media.	5.88%	11.76%	35.29%	5.88%	41.17%
7. You are among those who don't share political content but follow political content shared by others.	26.47%	11.76%	11.76%	35.29%	23.52%
8. You are among those who would love to share political content on the social media but they self-censor their opinions.	5.88%	17.64%	35.29%	23.52%	17.64%
9. You are among those who don't spend time on politics on social media.	35.29%	29.41%	11.76%	23.52%	0%
10. You show Your discontent, dissatisfaction or/denouncement over political and social conditions in Morocco on the social media	5.88%	0%	41.17%	11.76%	41.17%

The Open-Ended Questions

Boycott Campaign 2018 and Social Media

Including open-ended questions in the survey enriches the paper with qualitative data and insightful information that the respondents may reveal. In this section, informants were asked five questions regarding the use of social media in the promotion of the 2018 boycott

in Morocco. This online campaign is considered in this paper as a form of social mobility. Initially, surveyors were asked whether or not they use social media to support the boycott. Only four people out of 112 declare that they have not shown their support to the boycott via social networks. However, the significant remaining number, forming more than 96 percent of the informants, declare that they support and are still supporting the boycott via social media especially Facebook.

The boycotters in Morocco opt for an online campaign, rather than a street mass protest, to force companies of mineral water, milk and gasoline to decrease their prices. In this context, respondents were asked about the reasons behind resorting to an online campaign rather than taking to the street. Terms such as "safer", "safety", "peaceful", "peacefully", "easily", and "easier" aroused by the respondents, more than 50% of the survey respondents use one or two of them, to confirm that joining an online campaign guarantees a great degree of security and safety when compared to translating campaigns demands into mass protest in the street. Relatedly, few respondents state that joining the campaign behind the screen from home is risk-free and enables the boycotters to avoid the brutality of the police forces in the street. In this regard, the word "fear" is frequently used by the informants to argue that it is one of the main reasons behind the decision in favor of online mobility in an autocratic country like Morocco. Additionally, a few responses hint that offline campaigns are risky and considered mostly illegal by the state. Other informants state that boycotters resort to social networks because they are powerful tools for attracting and engaging huge number of supporters, while it is challenging to convince the same number of people to join a street protest.

The respondents' evaluation of the online boycott was the issue of the third open-ended question. There is a wide consensus among the informants that the role social media play makes the boycott a great success. Two respondents, forming 1.78% of the sample, acknowledge the outstanding role social media play in making such campaigns a success, yet they maintain that social networks are definitely not tools for change.

The respondents were asked in the fourth question about the ways social media were exploited to make the boycott a successful event. Generally, most of those surveyed declare that social media technological affordances enable them to participate from home, share photos, post pictures, articles and videos toencourage others to join the boycott and inform Moroccans about the positive results of the campaign. The fact that it is difficult to find a Moroccan person without a smart phone

or a laptop nowadays have played a great role in letting people know about the boycott easily, and allowing them to be active supporters and participants in the campaign.

Finally, the informants were asked to comment on the statement that "without social media the boycott wouldn't have succeeded". More than 60% of the respondents agree with the statement. One of them maintains that it is impossible to make an issue known for people inside and outside Morocco within a street protest compared to what happened with the social media use. Many of them evoke the technological potential of social networks (as mentioned earlier in detail), such as Facebook, offer to their users to be effective participants in the boycott. However, more than 30% of the respondents argue that people could organize offline campaigns and made them a real success without social media; in one of the informant's statement "there were examples throughout history which did not use any social media, but were very successful." Other significant responses in this regard,cite historical examples of street protests in different parts of Morocco to argue that a huge number of people have participated in protests, that their demands were fulfilled and that the whole world came to know about the events without the use of social media or before the advent of social media platforms.

Conclusion

This paper uncovers Moroccans' perceptions apropos the utility of social networks in online social and political mobility. The survey respondents react to the issue having in mind the current 2018 boycott campaign which is launched on the social media as a *cri-de-coeur* against the hard living conditions in Morocco, especially the exorbitant prices of the most consumed products.

By and large, the sample comprises well-educated people; most of them have an undergraduate degree. The informants are active Facebook users who use social networks mainly for communication and sharing. They can be considered 'digital natives' who interact with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people with whom they have weak ties. Granovetter's strength of weak ties concept is relevant to social media use because social networks guarantee a wider flow of information among users. This is understood from the fact that people meet very few or few of their online friends or followers in person. About half of the sample share political and social content on social media, making it a suitable sphere for political and social awareness, especially as social media users can inform each other without being close friends or family members. Accordingly, Granovetter's strength of weak ties is valid for

social networks since people are informed of political events and news through their weak ties.

Regarding the 2018 boycott as a form of social mobility in Morocco, the survey results prove that social media are no longer mere entertainment platforms, but rather they have become useful tools for social purposes. Most of respondents support the boycott by sharing photos, articles, videos to spread the word of the boycotters or to encourage others to join the campaign. Relatedly, it has been asserted that social media provide a suitable sphere for political and social mobility since these platforms are safe, risk-free, free of charge, confidential, can be accessed by everybody and can gather millions of people for the same objective in a short period of time.

Though there was a wide consensus about the utility of social media in such social mobility, past experiences are recalled when Moroccans and people at large proved to be capable of creating their own history by revolting against injustice, despotism, corruption, and tyranny without the existence of social networks. People have fulfilled many objectives and demands both with social media and without it. The difference resides in the human cost that follows every street mass protest; protesters are repressed, arrested, kidnapped, or even killed. With social media, during the boycott, people revolted against injustice, high prices, and corruption without being repressed or injured. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram users criticize the officials and push some to apologize publicly to Moroccans. Therefore, resorting to social media for social and political mobility in Morocco is seemingly the right choice, at least in undemocratic countries like Morocco.

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