

## **How Digital Technologies Enable Women's Public Praxis in Morocco**

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### **Abstract**

How are women utilizing the capabilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the service of social and political transformation in the wake of the Arab Spring Uprisings? The structure of information flows on new media platforms have enabled activist groups to gain leverage in political systems and social contexts that otherwise marginalized them and this was never more apparent in the use of ICTs during the Arab Spring. However, Morocco continues to be a largely forgotten hub of revolution as researchers grapple with the systemic shifts observed in countries like Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. Women's rights movements in Morocco exploded in increased action, engagement and influence during the same period, largely by increased accessibility and innovative capabilities of ICTs. Morocco's movement for women's rights and democratisation (gradualist movement) is a lesser-explored context of women's heightened engagement since the Arab Spring and hence, the focus of this research. Women's use of alternative civic spaces to organize and enact social and political change has resulted in global networks of activism that are changing the climate of the MENA as well as perceptions of it from elsewhere. The region, while often politically turbulent, is also characterized according to a single narrative in the West. The "resistance against communal norms" and broadening use of digital media as an extension to existing women's voices (Robinson, 2014, p. ii) has helped disseminate critical knowledge on the importance of gender equity to democratic ideals. It has also put an emphasis on women's public praxis in Morocco over their religious affiliations or domestic labour.

### **Keywords**

new media, Morocco, activism, communication, technology, social justice

### **Introduction**

In the years following the Arab Spring, women's political engagement across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has continued to play a vital role in "ongoing democratic transitions" (Moghadam & Gheyntanchi, 2014, p. 2). In a region "largely characterised by authoritarian political systems and lack of political space for... citizen demands" (Castillejo & Tilley, p. 11), women rely on alternative civic spaces to organize and enact social and political change. Thus, this research will make a case both for the notion that "women's movements, participation and rights" are necessary in the building of democratic cultures (Moghadam, 2014, p. 141) and that women's political engagement in the Morocco is undergoing a transformation due to the accessibility and capabilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In doing so, I will explore women's use of new media, citizen journalism and online civic participation in the context of Morocco's movement

for women's rights and democratisation (gradualist movement) as well as specific case studies in which web-based organizations in Morocco have succeeded in pushing back against various forms of oligarchy and patriarchy. In conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis of the #RIPamina campaign on Twitter, I explore women's public praxis and creation of meaning in digital spaces—more particularly, how their use of hashtags in mediating and constructing discourse has shaped the course of political change in Morocco. The social and political reforms in Morocco exemplify a shift in dialogue towards women's public praxis over their religious ties or private lives (Robinson, 2014, p. 4). The ways in which Muslim women are conceptualized in both Western and non-Western contexts is changing as a result of their "resistance against communal norms" and their use of digital media as an "extension to their voices" (p. ii), disseminating critical knowledge on the importance of gender equity to the bolstering of democratic ideals.

For those looking at the large-scale structural changes that occurred in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia after the Arab Spring uprisings, one might be tempted to say that Morocco saw little significant change in the way of democratization or social inclusion after 2011. However, the women's movement in Morocco has ballooned into a globally recognized force. It initially emerged as the "Feminist Spring for Equality and Democracy" (Yachoulti, 2015, p. 903), having formed in reaction to the February 20<sup>th</sup> uprisings across the MENA, pushing for constitutional reform, changes to Moroccan family law and increased social freedoms for marginalized groups. Women's relatively high rates of literacy, education, health and independence in Morocco, allowed them to engage in civil participation and advocate for "substantive equality" despite women in other areas of the MENA lacking sufficient access to ICTs so as to participate in a comparable manner. Even with the manifold socio-political forces in Morocco that contribute to a relatively favourable environment for feminist activism, communities such as the Berber continue to enforce strict gender divisions that block women's access to alternative publics (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 79).

Samira Kabir (2015) describes the exclusion of women from online activist circles, whether as a result of economic, social or educational restraints as a gender-based digital divide. While this is a hindrance to women's online civic activism in almost all regions of the global South, it "assumes an extra-acute form in...conflict-ridden countries" (p. 2). Public spaces in the MENA are aggressively and explicitly male dominated due to politico-religious (Kabir, p. 3) traditions that dictate where power resides and who can acceptably participate in government, industry or civic discourse. Therefore, as it turns out, the popular notion articulated by Egyptian Google Executive Wael Ghonim at the height of the Arab uprisings in 2011, who proposed that "to liberate a society" one must "just give them the Internet" (p. 4) is both an oversimplification and a refusal to account for gender differences in access to, and inclusion in online spaces. Nevertheless, examples in Morocco's gradualists and other prominent women's movements throughout the MENA region are demonstrating that when access is achieved, the discursive narratives produced by and about women are vast, abundant and transformative.

## Methodology

The methodology employed in this research draws primarily from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The aim is not simply to consider structural elements of platforms like Twitter and Facebook as sites of activist organizing, but also to consider how processes of meaning-making and defining the boundaries of online communities take place. In addressing these inquiries, I analyze the use of #RIPamina as a mediator of discourse in the debate over Morocco's penal code. I argue that not only does the hashtag log movement and popularity of the topic, it serves as a call to action, a mourn-

ing and a condemnation of the mistreatment of Amina Filali, sometimes all at once and at times, according to its particular use and placement in the context of a Tweet or Thread.

Dominant ideologies are codified in “laws, rules, norms [and] habits” (Tannen et al., 2015 p. 469) yet Fairclough (2014) notes that power dynamics are discursive and it is therefore, important to consider how power is negotiated by marginal groups and institutions (p. 355). “Access to or control over public discourse is an important symbolic resource” (p. 355) and ICTs are among the mediums through which we grapple over access and control. Narrative has developed increasingly as a means of public praxis whereby “code-based grammatical knowledge of sound, form, and meaning” (Tannen et al., 2015 p. 469) is co-opted as a tool for challenging political hegemony. As such, activists online use a form of “storytelling not only as a way of creating community but as a resource for dominating others, for expressing solidarity, for resistance and conflict” (p. 161).

In analyzing how #RIPAmina was used in the Twitter community to push for legislative change in Morocco, I captured 25 tweets containing the hashtag between January and March of 2014. Aside from date specification, the captured tweets were randomly selected. I narrowed the Twitter search to this time period as it was the 2-year anniversary of Amina Filali’s case first going viral and thus represents a moment of reflection on pending changes to Moroccan family law, a final push to urge the government to follow through on changes and a moment for activists to grieve the loss of another young woman to unjust edict. Captured tweets were then coded according to three functional categories: evaluation, engagement and scaling (or degree of affective evaluation) as outlined by Alexah Konnelly in “#Activism: Identity, Affiliation, and Political Discourse-Making on Twitter” (2015). These categories were chosen because they afford room for consideration both of the hashtag’s isolated function (archival and categorical purposes), as well as how it interacts with the content of the tweet, including its relative placement.

Prior to conducting a CDA on #RIPAmina, which seeks to understand the operational usage of a hashtag in activist discourse online in the context of one particular Moroccan women’s rights movement, I also consider a number of structural elements of the site. This provides some insight first as to why activists choose Twitter as a space for dissident thought and civil protest and second, how the infrastructure of the site determines the direction, range, patterns and restrictions of such information flows.

## Structure of Information Flows

Information flows online are lateral and horizontal, not top-down linear or hierarchical so while it is true that political movements in the MENA during and after the Arab Spring have largely sidelined women’s concerns, fundamental features of online activism can “expose critical data, leading to an eruption in transmissions of possibly revolutionary ideas” (Sara, 2015, p. 3). This can be seen in the most recent Moroccan feminist movement, which has expanded and gained momentum as a reflection of increased female participation in the digital civic sphere. Information and subsequent awareness that would have previously been obscured from widespread public acknowledgement is afforded a means of dispersal via new media communication technologies, including social media and mobile messaging. In 2012, sixteen-year-old Amina Filali killed herself after being forced to marry a man who, she alleged had previously raped her. A campaign that would have likely been ignored or silenced locally, was picked up by the international community under the Twitter hashtag, #RIPAmina. Citizen journalists capitalized on the story, which subsequently opened a transnational dialogue regarding Morocco’s penal code, effectively bypassing state authorities that would have preferred to stifle and censor news of the tragedy.

Further applications and capabilities of ICTs that lend themselves to activism and the rapid fostering of social or political change include video or meme sharing as explicated in Ethan Zuckerman's "Cute Cat Theory" (2013). Zuckerman proposes that the very qualities of new media that make it ideal for non-activist based activities like sharing cute cat videos or communicating with distant family and friends, guard it as a medium for civil dissent and political protest. Activists may harness these generally innocuous features of social media in order to disseminate their content. Exploiting the capacity of social media in this way makes government censorship of said content more difficult to execute. State authorities would likely inadvertently censor non-activist content and thereby notify the non-activist public about government suppression of information (p. 3). Furthermore, civic participation and activism online tends to take on certain attributes of the non-activist Internet landscape. Information is repackaged with elements of humour and often is presented in a mixed media form, making it accessible on a mass scale (p. 4). The interspersal of non-activist and non-critical posts with activist-driven content online, results in the making of "accidental feminists and activists" via inadvertent consumption of the latter type content (Gheytanchi & Moghadam, 2014, p. 8).

Narrowcasting is yet another feature of new media that changes both the methods and efficacies of online organizing. As the term suggests, narrowcasting entails sharing information to one person or a small and dedicated network rather than broadcasting to a large number of viewers (Barasch & Berger, 2014, p. 2). In analyzing the data from six studies on the effects of audience size on the content of communicators, Barasch and Berger find that narrowcasting results in the sharing of "(1) more useful content and (2) less self-presenting content" (p. 2). In other words, narrowcasting to one or a few people allows for the presentation of more "other" focused information and less concern for that which might reflect poorly on the one doing the sharing. Women activists in the MENA are bound by behavioural and cultural norms that while harder to enforce online, are still commonly backed by threats of violence and public shaming (al-Natour, 2012, p. 73). Narrowcasting allows them to side-step such restraints both in the sense that their activity is less likely to be publicly exposed to unfriendly actors when promulgating information within a trusted network, and in the sense that as a result, they are less likely to be concerned with self-censorship (Newsom & Lengel, 2012, p. 32). Use of narrowcasting in Morocco was perhaps most visible during the February 20 movement when small networks of grassroots reporters became vital in targeting messaging about government corruption without notifying authorities (Howard, Hussain, & Agarwal, 2013, p. 121). Finally, new media as a system unique among traditional mediums of communication can produce order from chaos (al-Natour, 2012, p. 60): a significant strength when organizing groups toward a common interest or goal. Not only does chaos theory relate to the order generated by a system, in this context it also has consequences related to the power actualized by the users of that system. Information flows in digital spaces are interrupted by noise — in essence; new information is added to an original message upon every transmission of it, making the system more "intricate, complicated, and 'heterogeneous'" (p. 61) and effectively magnifying the voices of those collecting and sharing the information. Micro-blogging sites like Twitter date stamp posts and any shares that post generates in the form of "retweets", is recorded numerically on each successive replica. In this way, every repetition of the "same" content includes the original information plus all the additional "noise", documenting its online history. The patterns that emerge from this ordered complexity function as evidence of a movement's galvanized support and potential impact.

## Morocco: Then and Now

Women in Morocco have been active in public organizing since the colonial period and fought with men for independence throughout the mid-20th century (Yachoulti, 2015, p. 895). Many women took active roles in armed militia in resistance to French colonization during that time. In the 1930's, Malika El-Fassi and a select few other wealthy and well-educated women advocated for the importance of women's education (p. 896). In the 1960's, authoritarianism experienced a revival and the lack of female leadership among Morocco's prominent political parties, further narrowed the capabilities of women to participate in civil society (p. 897). Indeed, until 1990 which saw new social initiatives and improvements to healthcare and education, over 48% of urban and "87.2% of rural females were illiterate" (p. 898). Women's lack of political power in the MENA is thought to be one of the factors that have prevented the region from joining democracy's third wave. There seems to be a "democratic and modernising" influence that accompanies women's movements (Moghadam, 2014, p. 139).

Recent political protests in Morocco coincided with widespread uprisings in the MENA during the spring of 2011. However, Morocco's movement differed in that it was largely an affluent, student-led demonstration that King Mohammed VI responded to swiftly with a number of progressive legislative changes. As such, he was able to stay in power (Landorf, 2014, p. 15) while multi-decade dictatorships fell in Morocco's neighbouring states of Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Tunisia. While Morocco's fight for democracy was ineffectual in garnering fundamental change at the state level, the unrest and protests introduced opportunities for women activists to engage in civic discourse both on and offline. Slutwalk Morocco was among the gender equality initiatives that got its start during the Arab Spring (Landorf, 2014, p. 13). Inspired by similar marches in the West, Slutwalk Morocco aimed to tackle the widespread issue of sexual assault and harassment in the MENA. As it evolved, the movement took on the name, "Woman Choufouch" (p. 132), choufouch being the transliteration of a colloquial term in Moroccan Arabic, commonly used by Moroccan men to harass women. Woman Choufouch, like other marginal social movements in Morocco including the LGBTQ and atheist movements, are politically suppressed in the public sphere. Digital ICTs are a means of mitigating these forces with lessened risks of persecution. The anonymity occasionally afforded by online spaces, means that women are better protected when voicing concerns related to gender equality "within authoritarian or patriarchal contexts" (Gheytanchi & Moghadam, 2014, p. 18). This carries weight for the effect of ICTs on democratization more generally but in particular, subjects of interest such as women's rights and diversified political participation, which were previously taboo in public discourse, become topics of lively debate and discussion in the virtual public.

With respect to the case of Amina Falali's protest suicide, state-run media in Morocco attempted to justify the decision to enforce compulsory marriage and quash dissenting views. However, feminist activists countered this rhetoric with an international campaign against Article 475 (Zaid, 2016, p. 58) of Morocco's penal code, which reduced or negated prison-time for rapists on the condition that they married their victim (Devlin, 2012, p. 3). The resulting transnational networks (Hunt, 2016, p. 2) of dedicated individuals and groups put weighty pressure on the regime such that in early 2013, "the government officially announced plans to revise the controversial article" (p. 58), a move that was passed by parliament a year later.

It is vital therefore, that we understand just how this change was propelled and bolstered by activity online. #RIPamina surfaced first in 2012 when news of Falali's suicide went viral. My analysis seeks to address how the hashtag was used strategically as a tool for leveraging and sharing information, as well as how it contributed to the construction of liberal, feminist narratives that otherwise lack traction in political discourse in Morocco. In approaching the first of these questions, I

borrow from “The Theory of Appraisal” which categorizes the function of text in three broad groups: as modifying the attitude of a message or “making evaluations”, as inciting engagement (in this case, retweets, likes or responses) and specifying the degree of an evaluation, “scaling [it] up or down” (Konnelly, 2015, p. 4). These categories determine how a hashtag is interacting with the other content of a tweet.

Konnelly (2015) notes that tweets containing Cause Hashtags, or hashtags that arise in reaction to an injustice and call for action for or against a particular cause, tend to “express an opinion, judgment, or relate to ethics” (p. 6). Capturing tweets containing #RIPAmina from early 2014, I consider the ways in which the hashtag was used discursively to reflect on Morocco’s legislative change to Article 475 as well as to stress the need for further action, create a conceptual link to other movements or to express a judgement or emotion related to the events. On March 26th, 2014, a user tweeted:

We finally got rid of that law in #Morocco @WLUML. So much work to be done in so many places! #Sec475 #RIPAmina #gonebutnotforgotten

While the tweet itself is a call to action in places that similarly oppressive laws have yet to be challenged, the hashtags serve a different function. #Sec475 incites engagement and contextualizes the tweet by naming the Moroccan article that was amended. The final two hashtags are evaluative and emotive: they express sadness and mourning despite a technical political victory. Another tweet on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 reads:

#RipAmina "@TwitterUser1: "@TwitterUser2: Morocco (fucking finally) amends controversial rape law: [nytimes.com/aponline/2014/ ...](http://nytimes.com/aponline/2014/)"

In this instance, the content has been retweeted twice; the original message written by TwitterUser2 (identity has been anonymized for use here) reads:

“Morocco (fucking finally) amends controversial rape law: [nytimes.com/aponline/2014/ ...](http://nytimes.com/aponline/2014/)”

I classify this as an evaluation, accompanied by a link to mainstream coverage of the issue, which implicitly solicits engagement. #RIPAmina has been added in a later replica of the content as a means of ordering it and archiving it temporally within the broader narrative surrounding the case, making it searchable for other users. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, the day of parliament’s ruling on Article 475, an activist affiliated with Médecins Sans Frontières/MSF tweeted:

Members of #Morocco's parliament can today honor Amina Filali by voting for the abolition of #Article475. #RIPAmina

Yet again, we see how “language is used to build power and solidarity by adopting stances and referring to other texts” (Konnelly, 2015, p. 4). Konnelly claims that this is the primary function of hashtags, despite their additional use as means of ordering and archiving texts. Brought to bear in the above Tweet are notions of honour, the institution of Moroccan parliament and the tragedy of Amina Filali’s death. In this way, referential information is compounded to produce layered cause-driven messaging.

The narratives emerging in this thread are indicative of the ongoing tension between hope, progress and mourning — notions that in Morocco’s fight for participatory government and progres-

sive social reform, are almost impossible to untangle, evidenced in the use of #RIP Amina as simultaneously a Cause Hashtag and a signifier of respect and condolence for her death. The nuance of the narrative is resilient to nationalism precisely due to its ability to consider the paradoxical experience of activist work and its heartbreaks.

## Gender Digital Divide

As we have seen, the push for increased gender equity and greater participation for women in public and political life in Morocco has relied increasingly on Information and Communication technologies. However, barriers to Internet access, state censorship and a national illiteracy rate of 32% (Hemidach, 2015), mean that the majority of cyberactivists in the MENA are middle to upper class, college educated and in the case of Morocco, fluent in French (Landorf, 2014, p. 141). Rural women in Morocco who may speak Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or Darija, are unable to read literature from “liberal-secular feminist organizations such as the Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM)” (p. 142) which publishes almost exclusively in French. As such, the most marginalized populations in Morocco and the MENA at large, are excluded from participation in popular streams of civic discourse and least likely to easily utilize ICTs as an alternative means of communication and knowledge production.

The Mobiles for Development Movement employs the conventional notion that ICTs such as SMS messaging may be used to further infrastructural and cultural development in southwest Morocco’s traditional Muslim-Berber communities (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 79). While this approach has enjoyed limited success in the area, it has encountered issues related primarily to gendered norms and politico-religious practices that act as barriers to women’s access to these technologies and their potential utility as a tool for social transformation. Most women in oral Berber communities are unable to “negotiate letters and numbers on their phone without the help of proximate literates and trusted others” (p. 82). This necessarily limits their capability to use the device in any discursive manner that might be counter to accepted cultural customs. The challenging of accepted dynamics of power can present a risk: street harassment in Morocco “emerged from the interaction of the feminization of public space, threatened masculinities, and restricted sexuality” (Landorf, 2014, p. 142). As a consequence of hierarchical family structures, Berber women are also usually the last in a family to receive mobile technology (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 85).

Digital divides, including those codified by gender disrupt and “problematize the notion of Internet freedom” (Landorf, 2014, p. 32). However, Samina Kabir (2015) asserts that the accepted binary between “Internet haves and have-nots” (p. 2) is neither so straightforward nor quite so dichotomous. She recalls her own experience living in Islamabad, Pakistan as navigating a point on a spectrum of access. At times, information was “gathered through [the] Internet by fellow activists — mainly men” and would reach her later by word of mouth or printouts (p. 2). Though many women are challenging patriarchal preconceptions of feminine roles and the acceptability of women in the public sphere, Moroccan conservatism still seeks to define women in terms of silence, weakness and obedience. These constructions constitute what Manal al-Natour (2012) terms “historical fictions” (p. 74) or long-running myths that must be shaken and fractured in order to allow for new narratives and new publics to fully manifest.

## Meaning and Narrative

Women’s political participation in online forums and social networks subverts the notion that men are the primary makers of meaning in the digital realm. More profound even than that, their online

organizing is a door to a public sphere to which their access has traditionally been policed. Transnational feminist networks (TFN) seek to address “the deficit of knowledge about young women’s experiences” in activist circles worldwide (Hunt, 2016, p. 2). This entails the inclusion of woman-centred narratives about revolution and social change; narratives that were largely erased from popular representations of the February 20th uprisings. Even in other activist networks, the role of women and feminists in digitally driven revolutions is minimized. Instead, the focus tends to be on men in the global North (p. 5). Consequentially, women activists in the global South are left with the task of “carving out [...] ‘autonomous spaces’” (p. 5) and often, digital spaces present the most available means of doing so. Mohammed El Marzouki (2015) argues that the formation of “discursive social space[s]” allow those engaged in them to experience a sense of “estrangement” whereby they become “more self-reflexive and self-critical” of “ready-made and essentialist local narratives of the nation, religion [and] gender (p. 294). Thus, discursive or alternative publics influence the construction of identity at both an individual and a collective level. States retain “neopatriarchal policies” but the digital, 3rd space (Newsom & Lengel, 2012, p. 32) operates as a medium through which women and other marginalized communities can wield power as citizens, consumers and global advocates (Sreberny, 2015, p. 359).

Narratives created through digital communication mediums are fundamentally pluralistic. Though nationalistic or shared notions of gender and politics may influence them, the lateral web structure of ICTs is such that ideas begin on a more even playing field. Not only does this allow for narratives of resistance to effectively counter hegemonic systems of power, but women’s narratives also reveal themselves as a wealth of diverse experiences. As Morocco is “overwhelmingly Muslim and pious” a number of online “women’s groups formulated arguments rooted in an egalitarian interpretation of Islam” (Gheytaichi & Moghadam, 2014, p. 15) while others adopted a liberal-secular feminism more in line with dominant Western values, as evidenced by Slutwalk Morocco. The multiplicity of voices online is as much a key to the democratising forces of ICTs as the fact that they can quickly and broadly disseminate information produced at the margins.

Having been historically pushed out of public praxis, women in the MENA have traditionally relied on symbolic and literary contributions as gateways to “visibility in regional, national and global conversations” (Abunasser, 2015, p. 316). The novel was among the first narrative mediums that allowed women to “appropriate and revise traditional discourse” (p. 317) throughout the Arab world. New media expands the possibilities of narrative as an avenue for “innovative cultural production” (p. 319). Hence women as online activists are able to reinvent, remix, and subvert state messaging that would otherwise represent them as a monolithic “signifier[s] of tradition and nation” (316). This emancipatory method of knowledge production allows the full diversity of identities and perspectives within marginal communities to find new audiences and ultimately shift the political status quo in the MENA and beyond (Landorf, p. 22). Citizen journalism serves a particularly important purpose in digital narrative building as it entails conversations that transcend borders on topics such as human rights, governance and women’s lived experiences (Abunasser, 2015, p. 318). Online activism ceases to be of simply symbolic importance and enters the realm of what Rebecca Robinson (2014, p. 53) terms a “cosmopolitan praxis” through which women oppose “dominant political and religious discourses with their digital countersentences”.

## **Conclusion: Hope and Optimism**

Despite only minor legislative alterations to Morocco’s political system occurring in the wake of the Arab Spring, small yet transformative changes are abundant as progressive ideals of gender equity and open civic participation among marginal groups clash with religious and cultural norms that

uphold patriarchal and nationalistic traditions. Women are at the forefront of movements for inclusive democratisation and in Morocco, have been advocating for a gradual transition to representative government since the 1990's (Moghadam & Gheytaichi, 2014, p. 15). Their participation is invaluable to the development of democratic ideals region-wide (p. 2). With a "long tradition of offline surveillance" (Howard et al., 2013, p. 122), activists in Morocco have found new means of pushing for political and social change via Information and Communication Technologies including image and video sharing, micro blogging and podcasting. Thus, while King Mohammed VI maintained his hold on the Moroccan government, he has been met with swift and constant criticism from alternative public spaces since the 2011 uprisings.

The use of social and new media as a non-distinct 3rd space allowing greater participation in public and civic life is not merely a temporal coincidence with the rise of the digital age. A number of innate structural elements of ICTs are ideal (whether intentionally or accidentally so) for this brand of activist work. Flows of information online are in general, not policed by government gatekeepers and operate in accordance with a lateral design, whereby marginal voices are able to both find a wider audience and affect a greater impact than in offline spaces. Ethan Zuckerman's *Cute Cat Theory* expounds why social media is uniquely immune to government censorship (2013, p. 3) and how viral flows of information are made possible by the simple merging of consumer interest and what became the Web 2.0's primary use: "a space for the creation and dissemination of amateur content" (p. 4). The direction and efficiency of government censorship specifically targeting the Web, as we observe in China, will no doubt test the future reliability of this theory. Other structural advantages to digital mediums as tools for activism are narrowcasting and the system's ability to create order from seeming chaos (al-Natour, 2012, p. 60).

Critical Discourse Analysis of #RIP Amina in relation to the movement that the hashtag fostered, reveals the complex ways in which online activists are using discursive narrative as well as the idiosyncratic customs of Microblogging to spread awareness and express both sadness over Amina Filali's death and vigor for the change that her actions catalyzed. Hashtags operate in two functional fields simultaneously: they situate discourse within the wider structure of Twitter and they enhance the semantic breadth of Tweets. A hashtag can signify a meaning that is not contained in the Tweet itself. In this way, it increases the complexity of the message and its ability to translate through multiple nodes of communication and understanding.

Despite increased engagement on platforms like Twitter, a gender digital divide in access to information technology is still apparent in Morocco's most rural and marginalized communities. This was strikingly demonstrated by the introduction of SMS messaging to Berber tribes in the southwest of the country (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 79). Women experienced the most pronounced barriers to utilizing ICTs discursively and without the explicit permission of male relatives and guardians. They were also unable to interact and engage with content in French, which represents much of the affluent online activist material from Morocco's Western-influenced feminist groups including the ADFM (Landorf, 2014, p. 142). However, rather than create a binary that could be oppressive and limiting in and of itself, it may be more productive to conceptualize the divide between those who have and those who lack easy access to ICTs, as a gradient of varying positionalities and methods of access (Kabir, 2015, p. 3). Even with few resources and disadvantages in terms of Internet speed and connectivity, women continue to push democratization in the MENA through self-reflexive discourse and estrangement from national values (El Marzouki, 2015, p. 294).

The plurality of voices and wealth of subversive narratives in women's dialogue and communication in the digital public sphere are challenging the traditional and male-centric norms of leadership and political agency in Morocco. In analyzing Islamic versus liberal-secular approaches to activism in the MENA, more research is needed on the respective outcomes of these relatively diver-

gent streams of feminism, particularly in Morocco. It was only with massive public upheaval and the convergence of both secular and religious activism that other MENA states succeeded in ousting their dictators (Lauw et al., 2010, p. 16). Lastly, a continued exploration of how online narratives differ from traditional symbolic forms like novels will further elucidate how these activities constitute women's public praxis: activism enacted not simply thought and talked about.

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