Digital Media and the Transnationalization of Protests

Michael Dahlberg-Grundberg
Sociologiska institutionen, Umeå universitet

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Introduction and aim

Political and activist uses of the Internet have been on the rise ever since the early days of the medium. Opinions seem to differ as to whether this development is of good or bad, and deliberations on the political potential of the Internet have therefore been recurring during the last decades, making this technological – and discursive – phenomenon “a ‘contested terrain’” (Kahn & Kellner, 2005: 80; cf. Castells, 2001: 137) as well as “a centre of political struggle in and for itself rather than a mere adjunct of other struggles” (Halpin, 2012, p. 19). It is important to note that digital media, as everything else in crisis-ridden capitalist societies, exists within a contradictory context where different interests fight over the “content” of produced media as well as media production in itself (cf. Fuchs 2014a & 2014b). New channels of communication offer new preconditions for movements, at the same time as they are accompanied by severe limitations that are material as well as discursive (Cammaerts et al, 2013: 10).

One the one hand, alternative, progressive political groups, such as the controversial and ominous activist cluster Anonymous (Norton, 2011, 2012; Coleman, 2011; Coleman & Ralph, 2011; Beyer, 2013), have made critical uses of the Internet, in a variety of ways working – not always with legal means – to, amongst other things, challenge state oppression and support freedom of speech; the Occupy Wall Street protests (Gaby & Caren, 2012; Penney & Dadas, 2014), the demonstrations during the Arab Spring (Howard & Hussein, 2011; Wilson & Dunn, 2011; Lotan et al, 2011; Lim, 2012) and the Indignados movement in Spain (Anduiza et al, 2013; Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2013) have all to some degree been described as dependent on social media; Wael Ghonim, one of the key figures in the Egyptian uprising 2011, has even gone as far as claiming, in an interview with CNN, that “if you want to liberate a society, just give them the Internet. If you want to have a free society, just give them the Internet” (Ghonim, 2011).

On the other hand, there are actors that in different ways have tried to limit the affordances that the Internet offers to social movements and political activists. During 2009-10, the election protests in Iran (which some termed a Twitter revolution) was, among other things, met with Internet censorship as the government blocked access to certain websites (Morozov, 2009); in 2011, during the Arab Spring, the Egyptian government shut down Internet access completely in an attempt to quell the escalating protests’ (with little success, one should add); in 2013, when large groups of activists in Turkey ardently objected the destruction and commercialization of Gezi Park, the prime minister Erdogan condemned the demonstrators’ use of digital technology, dubbing social media “the worst menace to society” (Letsch, 2013). It is, in other words, quite evident that the Internet and social media have been, and still are, subjects of political struggles.

Having said that, views are mixed when it comes to determining the political potential of the Internet and digital communication technologies. Even if most of us can agree that it is likely that the digital media can affect the sphere of politics in some ways, answering how is more complicated and debatable. “The Internet does matter”, writes Morozov (2011, p. 30), “but we simply don’t know how it matters. This fact, paradoxically, only makes it matter even more: the costs of getting it wrong are tremendous” (cf. Juris, 2012: 260; Flesher Fominaya, 2014: 162). Thus, because digital technology is neither, with Castells (2001, 164), “an instrument of freedom” nor a “weapon of one-sided domination” the most central concern is not to study if digital technology plays a part within the political processes of social movements but, instead, how it plays a role and what that role is. This dissertation aims to provide more knowledge regarding this how.
Expressions of political activism and social movement politics are of course in no way new phenomena, but new technological developments may alter (rather than replace) their circumstances of operation. This means that even if one, due to technological advancements, can trace the emergence of new ways of functioning for social movements, this does not necessitate neither that traditional ways of understanding movements nor that previous technologies become obsolete. Instead, as certain forms of activist or social movement practices are here given the means to be revitalized, the development of digital media, and the effects accompanying this development, must be understood in terms of both variation or transformation and (dis)continuity as old forms of politics, identities, histories or places continue to be of importance (cf. Flesher Fominaya, 2014: 194-195).

This dissertation is interested in the balance, or interplay, between local, national and global spaces of protest. As we will see, some scholars have argued that new media furthers grassroots mobilization; leads to additional democratization of activist politics; and that local contexts are supplanted by transnational or global counterparts. But it can also mean that older forms of extra-parliamentary actions are strengthened; that local spaces are augmented; or that conventional organizational forms are given new, but equally prominent, roles. Yet, according to Dahlgren, even if old forms of media are still "vital to political life [...] if we are concerned with alternative democracy, we simply find many more manifestations of it on the web" (Dahlgren, 2013: 4).

One essential issue being addressed in several studies in this field relates to our present societies’ economic, social, cultural and political internationalization and globalization, and its implications for extra-parliamentary politics (see for instance Castells’, 1997, influential distinction between ‘spaces of flows’ and ‘spaces of places’; Olesen, 2005; Flesher Fominaya, 2014). On the one hand, the proliferation of and access to digital media have meant that corporations and other financial interests, less and less circumscribed by national regulations and laws, are in a position – on a global, or at least non-national scale – from where to obstruct and destabilize the previous power of the nation state and national or regional political movements. This does not, however, implicate that states, or the local, have become politically obsolete. On the other hand, for social movements and activists, given the same technological advancements, the preconditions for connecting with geographically distant like-minded actors and establishing counter-publics (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Milan, 2013: 138-140; Sasson 2012; Olesen, 2005; Tarrow, 2005), that can engage in struggles working to change the economic and political status quo on a scale outside the local or national, have changed. Thus, as financial organizations and corporations that are standing outside and moving beyond any democratic control have continuously been gaining more power, the radical politics of some social movements have also been subject to processes of re-scaling. And one mean with which to accomplish such a scale-shift are interactive digital media platforms. This need to address additional scales, and the change in movement politics that it in some cases has made necessary, has been conceptualized in terms such as transnational activism, translocal politics, and the transnationalization of protest (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Tarrow, 2005, 2011; Vicari, 2014; these notions will be discussed further below). It is in this field, addressing issues such as changing levels of political activism, and the role of digital technology within this development, that the present dissertation aims to make a contribution.

This dissertation aims to explore how the local and physical may be supplemented and extended by the situated employment of social and digital media (and vice versa), and to analyze if this may occasion the establishment of translocal/transnational political patterns and how such patterns can best be understood. It tries, in other words, to study how digital media are assisting different social movements in the process of transnationalization of protest. Specifically, it aims to analyze differences between movements with different organizational
cultures and political scopes when it comes to how their use of digital media enables transnationalization or not. In focusing on the juncture where terms such as locality, space, protests and digital media coalesce, the dissertation is a contribution to the field of media studies, protest cultures, and social movement studies of transnational and translocal phenomena.

To problematize the influence of digital media on social movements, this compilation dissertation comprises a spectrum of movements ranging from networked and new to traditional examples. What ties the different studies together is that they, besides targeting social movements that have made use of some sort of digital media when doing politics, relate to dimensions of locality and contention (for a more detailed discussion on the commonalities of the movements, see the section “Case studies”). Drawing on a theoretical framework focusing on transnationalism and transnationalization of protest (which will be introduced below), the purpose is to capture the movements’ differences as well as what unifies them, providing a proper conceptualization of the phenomena and mechanisms they are an expression of.

Given the backdrop presented above, and in order to study these issues, a set of research questions, underlying the separate case studies, stand at the center of the dissertation:

- What is the role of digital media in the transnationalization of protest?
- How do different organizational characteristics of movements influence the process of transnationalization through digital media use?
- How can a conceptual framework for transnationalization and social movements’ use of digital media be elaborated? How can we best understand the notion of ‘transnationalization of protest’ and what does the concept contribute to studies of contemporary – networked – social movements?

With a case study approach, the dissertation covers several important parts of the spectrum of digital political activism; from net-based, mainly digital, or ‘Internetworked’ (Langman, 2005), movements to traditional social movements that have employed digital media. An Internetworked social movement is targeted in paper 1 focusing on the digitally enabled movement Telecomix. New social movements are targeted in papers 2 and 3 which focus on two indigenous and environmental movements: the first studying a protest campaign opposing a hazardous mining project in Kallak in the north of Sweden; the second studying the Canadian movement Idle No More. A traditional movement, finally, is targeted in paper 4 which focuses on the digitally working labour right’s network LabourStart. These cases, and their differences and similarities, will be outlined in more detail under the section “Case studies”.

On the one hand, this sweeping, inclusive strategy risks, by assuming such an all-embracing position, erasing dissimilarities between the cases. On the other hand, it might offer a vantage point from where larger effects of digital media on social movements and non-parliamentary politics can be observed (see the section on methodology for further discussion), enabling more general conclusions to be drawn. By juxtaposing different case studies, targeting movements with different structures and adversaries that are all employing digital media, my hope is to present a comparative study of if and how, through digital media use, transnationalization comes into expression within different social movements.

Since there is a difference between new forms of organizing and the capacity to affect political outcomes, one cannot take for granted that new forms of organization or mobilization, enabled by digital media technologies, also alters the opportunities for actually affecting, for example, policy making. In other words, the analysed transformations do not automatically entail better prospects of having an impact in broader political terms. It should thus be noted that the main area of research in this dissertation is not so much the success or failure of
digital media usage among social movements and activists but, rather, if and how certain circumstances for communication influence and are influenced by locality and space.

The ensuing parts of this introductory paper has the following design: after this introduction, briefly delineating and highlighting some central trajectories and events underlying the last couple of years' heightened interest in the relationship between digital media and extra-parliamentary politics together with the dissertations aim and research questions, comes a section on the research field of digital social movements and previous research. This section describes social movements’ media use in general paired with a particular focus on digitally (Internet)networked social movements and publics, and on new forms of social movement organization. In addition, the section offers definitions of central concepts used throughout the dissertation while it also provides a brief account of critical perspectives on and approaches toward technology in general and digital media in particular. The succeeding section presents the theoretical and analytical basis for the dissertation. Then follows two sections, “Methodology”, which presents the dissertation’s methodological approach; and “Results”, which describes the case studies and what methods were used in each of the papers. The latter section also goes through the individual papers in more depth and outlines the conclusions drawn from each of them. The final and concluding section re-engages with the dissertation’s aim and research questions, focusing on the implications of the different studies taken together.

Definitions and previous research

Digital activism and social movements – some initial definitions

By social movements (cf. della Porta & Diani, 2006; Tarrow, 2011) will here be understood extra-parliamentary formal or informal political groups, organizations, networks or more or less loosely connected individuals with shared goals or common objections regarding the way – aspects of – contemporary society is constituted. Furthermore, social movements will be viewed as processes (cf. Melucci, 1996; della Porta & Diani, 2006), or flows, that are in an incessant state of flux as additional dimensions of contention, or actors, are continuously being incorporated and/or removed – which is one of the reasons why I will speak not only of transnational or translocal protests’ but also of a transnationalization of protests. Transnationalization is used in order to emphasize transnationalism as process. Here, it will also be possible to use the definition Costanza-Chock (2013: 98) provides of the concept "social movement formations", which describes “any set of actors engaged in a shared process of collective action” and can be “individuals, informal collectives, non-profit organizations, projects, formal networks, ad hoc networks and political parties”. Hence, it “is not necessarily a formal organization” as it “may be ad hoc and temporary in nature, and it is not always organized around a discrete mobilization.” A similar processual approach will be taken regarding the notion of collective identity. Here, I mainly draw from the work of Melucci (1995, 1996). Such continual movement processes are facilitated by communicative practices, in particular such media practices that make possible and encourage continuous, horizontal networked interaction between several actors within a (or between) movement(s) (cf. Askanius, 2012: 55).

Activism will be understood as non-parliamentary political communication or action, performed with the purpose to redefine, disrupt, criticize, or challenge some current economic, social, cultural or political structures with the intention to replace those structures with more egalitarian ones. (Of course, activism could also designate conservative or non-egalitarian movements. Here, for the sake of clarity, the term is preserved for alternative, progressive initiatives.). Digital activism, online activism, cyberactivism, activism 2.0 and so on (Jordan,
In this dissertation, the term digital media will be used in order to denote all digital communication taking place on social media and other communicative platforms (such as, for instance, IRC-channels and email), as well as these platforms themselves. There are, I realize, differences between different media platforms and their affordances. Yet, I will argue that there are certain key similarities between them allowing comparisons to me made and joint conclusions to be drawn.

**Previous research: political potentials and shortcomings of digital media**

Amongst social movements and in activist circles, the use of digital media has been extensive, and the variations among such movements and their use of web-based resources have been the focal point for a multitude of studies (for some recent articles on the matter, see: Juris, 2012; Maireder & Schwarzenegger; 2012; Anduiza et al, 2013; Bastos et al, 2014; Kavada, 2015). Some scholars have argued that digital media, such as social networking sites or other communicative platforms, have given contentious political actors new means with which to practically carry out or discursively disseminate their agendas. For instance, it has been suggested that access to digital media can open new paths for activists to disseminate their own material (Loader & Mercea, 2012; Kavada, 2010, pp. 106; Vissers et al, 2011) and to construct their own media channels, providing spaces in which the policies and repressions of authoritarian governments can be exposed (Breuer, 2012: 5) or from which alternative news can be proliferated. One example of this is IndyMedia (Kidd, 2003; Garcelon, 2006), an independent media centre. Such a development means that movements can, in a best case scenario, do without having to turn to conventional mass media conglomerates (della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Lievrouw, 2006, 2011; Penney & Dadas, 2014; Gaby & Caren, 2012). The same technological development may enable new decision-structures, making social movements more receptive to the views of the activists operating within its compounds and improve the means of communication between actors in a specific movement (cf. Mercea, 2012 & 2013). Also, social movements may by digital media be given new possibilities for mobilization and coordination (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Earl & Kimport, 2011). This has, according to some scholars, been the case for Occupy Wall Street, the Spanish Indignados movement, and the British student movement that, in 2010, fought against increased university fees (Croeser & Highfield, 2014; Fernandez-Planells et al, 2014; Theocharis, 2012).

However, one can also identify certain problems and pitfalls that accompany the diffusion of the Internet and digital media, both in themselves (their infrastructures) and when it comes to their contextual or ideological settings. Cammaerts (2007b: 266) writes that "an overempha-

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1 Such practices, however, risks turning in to what Kahn and Kellner (2005) names “soft activism” or, as described below, slacktivism/clicktivism.
sis on the Internet and communication as such tends to obscure that social change and achieving political aims has to be fought for beyond the media too”. Others stress that technology in itself cannot provide the remedy for the shortcomings of the political and democratic system of today, and to claim otherwise “would be to succumb to a kind of technological determinism” (Meikle, 2002: 101; Enzensberger, 1970). Thus, broad general comments on the political potential of digital media need to be avoided (Cottle, 2011, p. 652). For instance, the mere existence of a flat, open-access organizational structure, supported by social media, does not automatically result in further democratization nor does it mean that “the political discussion they [social media] engender is necessarily in line with idealized conceptions of civic discourse” (Howard & Parks, 2012: 362; cf. Loader & Mercea, 2012: 3).

Also, the freedom of information, which was said to follow as a consequence of the decentralized and democratic structure of the Internet (Rheingold, 2000), has rather than engendered a scenario where egalitarianism and freedom prevail, introduced us to a situation where questions of power and dominance have reappeared in other forms (Halpin, 2012). Since the Internet offers a plethora of ways to communicate, connect and mobilize, the sheer amount of information may, by enabling an informational overload (Wright, 2004; Jordan, 1999; Garrett, 2006: 215; Hwang, 2010) and an economy of attention characterised by scarcity (Marazzi, 2010; Berardi, 2009a, 2009b; Fenton, 2012a), come to restrain political actions motivated by a will to transgress a societal status quo (Dean, 2005, 2010). In addition, increased informatization can aid in the transition from a society of discipline to a society of control (Deleuze, 1992), for instance by enabling new forms of surveillance, control and information gathering (cf. Galloway, 2004; Galloway & Thacker, 2007; Fenton, 2012a: 138; Carlsson, 2013). Others, on their hand, emphasize that high usage of digital technology and strictly online ways of mobilizing, which may result in alienation and fragmentation as an effect of the lack of face-to-face deliberation (della Porta & Mosca 2005: 165; Gerbaudo, 2012), can fail in creating the means for building the movement-forms necessary for radical social change (Gladdwell, 2010), or that the political use of social media may lead to a rise in slacktivism and clicktivism (Morozov, 2009a & 2009b; White, 2010a & 2010b; Christensen, 2010).

As a consequence, internet communication and the activism following from it has also been criticized for only creating weak social ties (Gladdwell, 2010; cf. Harp et al, 2012) that tend not to go beyond low-risk protests (cf. Earl & Kimport, 2011). This can create a situation where activist and social movement uses of communicational technology lead to the creation of mere temporal political groups that lack longevity (Juris, 2012). A broad dissemination of digital technology can also foment an strongly articulated individualism (Dahlberg & Siapera 2007; cf. the notions on liberal(-individualist) usages and conceptions of internet activity in Dahlberg 2001 & 2011). Such a development risks strengthening an individualistic outlook on society by overemphasizing “the role of individual actors and neglects the relative autonomy of the sphere of communication” (Albrecht, 2006), opening avenues for more atomistic political participation that moves toward self-promotion rather than collective action (cf. Langlois et at, 2009; Mercea, 2013, p. 1309; Fenton, 2011 & 2012a; Fenton & Barassi, 2011).

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2 These terms refer to the tendency to be politically active in front of the computer (or at least at safe distance from “actual”, offline events such as riots or demonstrations). These tendencies risk, according to Morozov (2011), to create a climate where activists feel important politically albeit their acts, in the long run, have no real political effects other than what he terms “civic promiscuity” (p. 190). However, even so called slacktivism can bring something positive with it as “it can be argued that these forms of mediated resistance make it possible for those whose everyday lives prevent their participation in ongoing activism, to engage, pledge support and donate, which subsequently serves as a leverage to legitimate and strengthen active activists (Cammaerts, et al, 2013: 14; cf. Halupka, 2014).
In addition to the discussion of the political shortcomings of digital media above, some notes on the technological and social foundation of said media are needed before we proceed. Without saying too much, recent (and previous) social and technological transformations can, in the best of worlds, be the seedbed of a more democratic society. Yet, such notions (or even myths) about the Internet can themselves be detrimental, especially as they risk affecting actual interpretations and outcomes (Mosco, 2004; Hindman, 2009). Sure, the Internet and digital media may profer new pathways into the future, but far from all will lead toward democracy and emancipation (cf. Fenton, 2012a: 142 & 2012b). It is then, from a somewhat more critical standpoint, necessary to point out that – communicational – technology always can be used in contrary fashions (Negri, 2005: 48; Feenberg, 1995, 2002; Dyer-Witheford, 1999), meaning that it also can be used as a means of power: “Technology as such cannot be isolated from the use to which it is put; the technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques” (Marcuse, 2002, xlvi; cf. Jordan, 1999, 2002b). For instance, because "social media are not neutral tools, as they are always already entangled in complex techno-cultural and political economic relations" (Poell, 2013: 2), their material modes of existence can affect the discourses on and the effects of phenomenon’s such as Internet politics and digital activism (cf. Christensen, 2011).

In other words, even if one can envisage emancipatory uses of digital media (cf. Enzensberger, 1970), it is in no way given that digital mobilization, communication and technology automatically will have democratic outcomes since the Internet “is embedded into the antagonisms of contemporary society and therefore has no in-built effects or determinations. [...] The actual implications depend on contexts, power relations, resources, mobilization capacities, strategies and tactics as well as the complex and undetermined outcomes of struggles” (Fuchs, 2012: 781; cf. Poell, 2013: Lindgren, 2013a: 13-17). As an example, as many social media platforms activists use to disseminate messages or execute resistance are corporately owned and thus open to censorship and control (Yenimedia, 2013), and since “[c]yberspace is deeply embedded in both finance capital and the creation of commodities” (Jordan, 1999: 150), commercial interests may be obstacles to an emancipatory way of employing digital media (Langlois et al, 2009). As a consequence, the social inequalities and exclusions that exist in our society of networks and informational capitalism may actually be exasperated via or resurface through digital divides that characterise or is inherent to a technology (Norris, 2001; Castells, 2001; Fuchs, 2008, 213ff; Albrecht, 2006; cf. Jonsson, 2011).³ Thus, it is important to stay clear of the trap of cyber-utopianism, a concept denoting the idea that political or social problems can be solved via the innovative use of digital technology (Morozov, 2009b & 2011), something Harvey (2005: 68) calls the “fetish belief”. In short, even if the field of political communication is changing, it is still important to note its fundamental material and economic foundations (Mosco, 2004; Fuchs, 2008, 2011).

One conclusion one can draw from this is that digital media must not be viewed as existing outside of either the movements that are using them nor the material or political contexts in which they are created or employed. In other words, one thus needs to view the material circumstances and factors on the one hand, and the affordances brought about by digital media and new communication technology one the other, as interplaying in a wider sociopolical and media ecological context (Christensen, 2011: 156; Srinivasan & Fish, 2011; Cottle, 2011: 649; cf. Fuchs, 2012). Given the preceding sections, it becomes clear that the (in-)relationship between digital media, or the online, and the offline world is a complex one.

³ The notion of digital divide aims to address that new technologies (such as faster and improved communication and more flexible money-flows) predominantly tend to benefit the already propertied classes, thereby curtailing Internet’s democratic or radical political potential. This can, in a worst case scenario, render a situation where existing discrepancies pertaining to socio-economy or culture are, if not augmented, at least sustained.
As Dahlgren (2013: 38) calls attention to, “[w]e can and should still distinguish between on- and offline contexts, but our daily lives have become dependent on their entwinement.” One way of avoiding the types of dichotomies presented above is to treat the political dimensions of society and – old as well as new – media as entangled and to focus on their interrelationships rather than trying to prise out their individual characteristics (Kavada, 2014: 363). Here, one can speak of hybridity (cf. de Souza e Silva, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Kluitenberg, 2006, 2011; Chadwick, 2007, 2013; Lindgren, 2013b), a concept alluding to the entanglement of online and offline. The dimensions (or spheres, or what have you) are always intertwined, and cannot be detached from one another – except with serious methodological and theoretical implications. Even if they “are analytically different” they still exist “within the same world” (Joyce, 2013b, n.p.) as online and offline tactics used by activists are in a dynamic relation. Digital and non-digital resistance is co-dependent which means that any theory of digital dualism, which approaches online and offline as separate spheres, must be avoided (Jurgenson, 2012).

When it comes to hybrid relations between online and offline, some scholars have identified a movement from online mobilizations to offline equivalents, indicating that online and offline activism can strengthen one another (Harlow 2012a & 2012b; Harlow & Harp, 2012; Wojcieszak 2009; Varnali & Gorgulu, 2015; Carty, 2010: 170; Farinosi & Tréré, 2010). Others have shown that online mobilization does not necessarily cause a spillover effect to the offline (Vissers et al. 2012). Researchers therefore maintain that even if digital politics are becoming more and more prevalent and accepted it still, to manifest or engender real political change, has to reach beyond mere media use or be translated into conventional offline political modes, actions and concepts. To succeed and exercise influence in the offline world, an online political movement therefore needs to have an (non-media) offline counterpart (Ayer, 2003, p. 162; Joyce, 2010; Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2013; della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Langman, 2005: 56; Fenton, 2012b: 164).

**Social movements and digital media**

Developing some of the aspects mentioned in the preceding section regarding social movements, more can be said about their use of digital media. With the evolvement of new, more informal movements (e.g. those expressing grievances in relation to issues regarding the environment, human rights or broad cultural values), the playing field for extra-parliamentary politics and collective action is being transformed. Social movements, previously understood mainly in terms of large administrative bodies – e.g. unions, NGOs or different class-based associations – where individuals gathered to aggregate resources or ease mobilization or collective action (cf. Melucci, 1995; della Porta & Diani, 2006), have in certain cases become less dependent on coherent movement identities and fixed organizational frameworks (cf. Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013; Bennett et al, 2014; Juris, 2012). This is a result of transformed social, political, cultural and economic contexts, local as well as global, and in no way only a consequence of innovations in technology. But the rise of digital media and other networked technologies have, some claim (Castells, 1997, 2012; Bimber et al, 2012: 60), in recent years been proven to affect the political activities of and constitutions within social movements, for instance altering the purviews of collective action and the conditions for mobilization and coordination.

More profoundly, from a social movement perspective the affordances on offer from digital media might occasion that the classical dilemma of the free-rider (Olson, 1967) now can, since it according to some scholars have become easier and cheaper to communicate, be bypassed or challenged (cf. Bimber et al, 2005; Breuer, 2012; Tufekci, 2014; Lupia & Sin, 2003). This may have important consequences for social movements and social movement theory. For instance, it has been argued that organizational and strategic cultures within so-
societal movements may correlate with their communicative cultures, meaning how a movement is structured influences the means of communication it uses and vice versa (cf. Bennett, 2005; Castells, 2012: 15; Kavada, 2013). This can entail that media in itself to some extent supplants traditional forms of organization for social movements (Tarrow; 2011: 137) as “the internet is more than a form of communication; it is at the core of a new movement form” (Tarrow, 2005: 136). For example, by using new, digital media, movements may be able to, at an unprecedented scale, interconnect several different forms of movements and grievances. This can stimulate what Ruiz (2014) terms “polyvocal dissent”, and enable situations where heterogeneous voices can come together in protests. With Langlois and colleagues (2009: 420), these new possibilities of communication and modes of political participation “is not simply one of human actors mobilizing communication technologies, but also of communication technologies enabling new patterns of political organization.”

According to some scholars, such a scenario may contribute to the emergence of new organizational forms characterized not by hierarchical structures but by horizontality and participation, engendered by the horizontal – social as well as technical – architecture inherent to certain digital media (cf. Anduiza et al, 2013; Joyce, 2013a; Bennett, 2003, Bimber et al, 2005; Bimber et al, 2009; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013; Theocaris, 2013). In a more modest fashion, one conclusion here can be that even if Internet supported networked organizational forms do not make traditional social movements redundant, it can implicate that their presence becomes less necessary (Barnard, 2012) by enabling, for example, an “organizing without organizations” (Shirky, 2009; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Bimber et al, 2012). Internet use can, therefore, lead to a form of participatory political culture that, by being mediated by divergent digital networking tools, is based not on formal organizational involvement but on more personal and decentralized ties. (Such decentralized, more individualized social movement structures, will be further described in the theoretical section below.)

As mentioned in the first, introductory section, this dissertation will compare a range of different social movements in order to examine if, and how, transnational processes are articulated differently depending on what organizational dynamics that underpin and characterize the movements in question. In order to make grounds for such a comparative analysis, I will make a distinction between traditional social movements, new social movements and Internetworked social movements. Traditional movements, mainly labour movements and unions, have a centralized and hierarchical structure, but also often rest on structures of formal membership and tend to have more economic and organizational resources than other forms of social movements. New social movements are more fluid, identity focussed and complex than traditional movements (such as the labour movement) while at the same time promoting decentralized organization and an atmosphere of participation (Melucci, 1996; Castells, 1997). They also tend to have a loose notion of membership, and – in comparison to traditional movements – small amounts of economic and organizational resources. Internetworked social movements, a notion put forward by Langman (2005), are a consequence of the rise of the network society (cf. Castells, 1997). Such movements “can better be understood as flows than formal organizations” (Ibid.: 46) and are made possible by digital communicational technology. They function according to temporal linkages that are made as much between contentious individuals as between various movements (i.e., loose membership structures). "Further, whereas earlier social movements depended on face-to-face interaction and leadership structures, for the ISMs [Internetworked social movements], much of the information, analyses, meanings, and understandings come through the Internet. There are comparatively fewer face-to-face, person-to-person interactions, but at certain times, millions of people can participate in some way” (Langman, 2005: 55).
Theoretical and analytical framework

The movements studied in the papers comprising this dissertation are, even though they share some features when it comes to organizational infrastructures and struggles, more or less dissimilar. But they are all, as will be further described in the section “Case studies”, fighting for more democracy and against restrictions in people’s autonomy. They also, to some extent, all reflect the complex relation between individual actors and larger movement structures, or the “power dynamics between individual and collective modes of action and agency in contemporary forms of social movement politics” (Askanius, 2012: 23), that during the last few decades has been a prominent area of study in social movement research. In the following, I will introduce the theoretical and analytical framework of this dissertation, transnationalism/translocalism (which are seen as dialectically connected) and connective action, that will be employed in order to understand these power dynamics and to conceptualize the movements and their underlying (dis)similarities.

Transnational and translocal activism

According to many scholars, the modern and globalized world is characterized by people as well as organizations being less and less dependent on being in the same place in order to interact. Giddens (1991: 17; cf. Langman, 2005), in his famous account of modernity and self-identity, argues that “[m]odern social organisation presumes the precise coordination of the actions of many human beings physically absent from one another; the ‘when’ of these actions is directly connected to the ‘where’, but not, as in pre-modern epochs, via the mediation of place.” Even though such a development cannot be reduced to or explained by only technological advancements, access to digital means of interaction have been said to affect the process. This development also has consequences for social movements and radical politics because, with Dahlgren (2013: 35), “[a]s power and political issues take on an ever stronger global character, the web facilitates protest and solidarity on the global arena”. Thus, as the instances of powers that social movements are fighting are becoming increasingly global or international, a similar pattern has been identified for social movements (Castells, 2007: 249).

One result of these advancements is the emergence of transnational social movements (Vicari, 2014). Such movements are, it should be noted, not only a result of the development of digital media. Internet and other technological changes have facilitated transnational activism in the sense that diffusion of ideas and practices have become easier, at the same time as interaction amongst geographically dispersed activists has been simplified; still, since the phenomenon precedes digital media, by themselves communicative instruments are not able to give a full account of transnational social movements (Tarrow, 2011: 254). Thus, the pre-conditions of transnational social movements are altered with the advent of digital media as connections between different activist circles can be facilitated by online communication (Askanius, 2012: 51; Curran, 2012: 11-12), but such movements were possible also before networked communication and digital media.

In this dissertation, where the notion of transnational social movements is placed in the theoretical epicentre, I will mainly depart from Tarrow’s (2005a, 2005b; cf. della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Flesher Fominaya, 2014; Vicari, 2014) work on transnational social movements. Tarrow also adds higher, and better access to, education; knowledge about and skills in domestic mobilization; and increasing insights regarding that important decisions affecting peoples lives/economies are taking place in international arenas, as contributing sources to an increase in transnational activism.

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4 In addition to communications technologies and fast travel, Tarrow also adds higher, and better access to, education; knowledge about and skills in domestic mobilization; and increasing insights regarding that important decisions affecting peoples lives/economies are taking place in international arenas, as contributing sources to an increase in transnational activism.
row describes transnational social movements as “sustained contentious interactions with opponents – national or non-national – by connected networks of challengers organized across national boundaries” (Tarrow, 2011: 241) whereas transnational activists are defined “as people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts” (Tarrow, 2005a: 29). It is important to note that global social and economic processes and mechanisms do not automatically establish transnational social movements. Such movements need to be actively constructed through scale shifts as well as interconnections of and identity building between movement actors (Tarrow & McAdam, 2005).

Transnational movements are therefore to be viewed as dynamic processes rather than structural entities. As processes, they are targets of negotiations, instances of (re)frameing, temporary coalition forming and much more (Ibid.). The process is constituted by subjects acting to establish relations with each other, and movements/organizations, on a transnational scale in order, for example, to interconnect grievances. In this sense, the actors involved in them can be viewed as “rooted cosmopolitans” and, as such, they can be understood “as individuals and groups who mobilize domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favor of goals they hold in common with transnational allies” (Tarrow, 2005: 29). With the theoretical framework here presented, I aim to explore how digital media may aid in the creation of transnational social movements and, in addition, examine if and how transnational frames, which can work as bridges and connect disparate movement actors, are engendered and maintained via digital media.

Even if there today exist various global protest movements that are interconnected through a variety of ideas, diffusion mechanisms, and political processes, the local and national, despite the importance of the global, are still highly essential ingredients in the protest cultures and movements of contemporary society (Olesen, 2005; Farinosi & Treré, 2011; Flesher Fominaya, 2014: 186). That transnational movements are established, or that transnational connections emerge during temporary upsurges, does not mean that national particularities are removed or are less important (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Tarrow & McAdam, 2005) – it has even been argued that it is within local spheres that transnational social movements attained “advocacy power” (Vicari, 2014: 106). Instead, what we have is a transformation rather than a removal of locally situated social movements. Differently put, “[w]hat we normally see in transnational contention is the transposition of frames, networks and forms of collective action to the international level without a corresponding liquidation of the conflicts and claims that gave rise to them in their arenas of origin” (Tarrow & McAdam, 2005: 123). One way to simultaneously re-establish the local and the international/global is to use translocality (a concept that recur in the papers). Translocality is a useful concept when studying communicative deterritorialization and connectivity (political, for example) without losing track of the national or the local by privileging an international and/or global theoretical-empirical starting point (Hepp, 2004).

In the analyses to follow, transnationalism and translocalism will, as both can be used to capture connections between different social movements and various spaces, (albeit with different starting points), be seen as interconnected concepts that form a dialectical totality. This, I argue, is a reasonable point of departure as today local, national and trans/international dimensions of space tend to – simultaneously – some social movement (cf. Olesen, 2005). This goes hand in hand with Castells (2012: 222-223) conviction that contemporary networked social movements are “local and global at the same time” meaning that “[t]hey prefigure to some extent the supersession of the current split between local communal identity and global individual networking”; and with Tarrow’s (2005: 206) formulation which argues that transnational activists “are the connective tissue of the global and the local. This should be
kept in mind also because transnationalism (and variations of that notion) will be the concept mostly used in this dissertation.

**Connective action and individualization**

Yet, one must acknowledge the fact that access to technology is not, in itself, sufficient as a means to establish such – more or less stable – transnational social movement networks. An identity or ideological dimension has to be present as well (cf. Melucci, 1996; della Porta & Diani, 2006: 89-113; Flesher Fominaya, 2010) – given that such identities, viewed as processes, also become transformed by the collective/connective actions of the movement in question. As Gerbaudo (2012: 9) argues, “the process of mobilization cannot be reduced to the material affordances of the technologies it adopts but also involves the construction of shared meanings, identities and narratives” (cf. Ruiz, 2014: 80; della Porta, 2013: 34; Papatcharissi, 2015). When trying to understand how connections are made between and within movements, in relation to an increasing individualization paired with a lack of trust in established organizations and states, Bennett & Segerberg’s work on “connective action” (2012, 2013; Bennett et al, 2014) can prove helpful. This is so because, according to the authors behind the concept,

[[the linchpin of connective action is the formative element of ‘sharing’: the personalization that leads actions and content to be distributed widely across social networks. Communication technologies enable the growth and stabilization of network structures across these networks. [...] Connective action brings the action dynamics of recombinant networks into focus, a situation in which networks and communication become something more than mere preconditions and information. What we observe in these networks are applications of communication technologies that contribute an organizational principle that is different from notions of collective action based on core assumptions about the role of resources, networks, and collective identity (Ibid.: 760).]

Social movements characterized by connective, rather than collective, action and identities are, the authors claim, more individualized, meaning that that those who participate in the movement are doing so not so much to follow a collectively formulated and articulated ideal but their personal convictions, thus blurring the lines between individual and organization (cf. Bimber et al, 2012: 68). To establish a collective action frame, some sort of collective identity is needed, and to form a collective identity, which needs to be viewed as a continuous process, some form of collective action is required. Differently put, the concept of collective identity “cannot be separated from the production of meaning in collective action” (Melucci, 1995: 42-43). In contrast, connective actions are based not on pre-established collective identities but on personalized sharing of content or personalized action frames, that is, combined or aggregated individualized forms of meaning making which tend to be more flexible than their collective action counterparts as they are not based only on the ideologies or identities of particular groups (at the same time as they are enhanced by digital media).

Connective action differs from collective action because the latter term is related to traditional social movements with hierarchical structures, more cohesive ideological foundations and stricter identities whereas the former term is informed by the network structure of digital media and is related to less cohesive, and more flexible, identity structures within, in comparison, personalized or individualized non-hierarchical social movements that are characterized by inclusivity. Some transnational social movements are, to a high degree, based on sharing (texts, ideologies and political frames, images) and, I would argue, connectivity. They are brought together more by sharing individual, personalized ideals and motives than by having faith in institutionalized values or belonging to formal organizations, working more in favor of selected causes than cohesive organizational structures, even if certain organizations con-
tinue to have some prominence (cf. Castells, 2007; Bimber et al, 2012: 5-6 & 67-68; Varnali & Gorgulu, 2015).

Juris put forward similar thoughts when contrasting the "logic of networking" (2005; 2012) and "logic of aggregation" (2012): "Whereas networking logics entail a praxis of communication and coordination on the part of collective actors that are already constituted [...] logics of aggregation involve the coming together of actors qua individuals. These individuals may subsequently forge a collective subjectivity through the process of struggle, but it is a subjectivity that is under the constant pressure of disaggregation into its individual components" (Ibid.: 266). Maireder & Schwarzenegger (2012: 172) make a similar point when they write about "post-traditional issue communities" – which are facilitated by digital media – that are more of an aggregation of interlinked individuals than formal or traditional types of social movements. In sum, “the novel capacities created by technological innovation have altered the structures and forms of collective action efforts today toward the direction of enhanced individual agency” (Bimber et al, 2012: 3). This can also have affect on the relation between social movements and places/spaces, as the preconditions for framing and scale shifts are altered.

Scale shifts and the act of framing

Through connectivity, personal proximity becomes less important at the same time as the value of individual emotions and affects increases. “Increasing personalization, wireless portability and ubiquitous connectivity of the Internet foster the development of ‘networked individualism’ in ‘networked societies’”, state Varnali and Gorgulu (2015: 3), and goes on to posit that “with the increasing use of the information and communication technologies, individuals become less dependent on people in their immediate surroundings for social interactions” as “[i]n this era, connections are to people and not to places”. The point is that even if conventional communities are not always created through digital media use, such use within movements can still engender a common consciousness and a shared sense of solidarity among activists engaged in collective political actions and struggles – even if there is no one physical place that connects the actors. Hence, even though a social movement needs a place to, for instance, gain attention or perform political activities, such a place does not need be physical today. If, for instance, access to a public space is limited (or if it is located in a geographical periphery), the use of digital media may aid the movement by functioning as a public square (cf. Hemsley & Eckert, 2014: 1844, and their concept “the relational public squares of digital interaction”). This was the case, according to Croeser and Highfield (2014) with some strands of the Occupy movement. Access to such – digital – places can help “connect geographically dispersed but politically linked physical places” or, if access to physical spaces is limited, some actors may use social media to be able to “enter” a certain protest site (Ibid.).

This is one of the reasons that digital communication platforms can, hypothetically, enable transnational ties; if actual proximity to places becomes less important identification and participation transgressing geography could be an outcome. Put differently: relational place, and not just physical space, is of importance during circumstances where digital elements are central in protest manifestations as “geography is more than just ‘where a person is,’ but includes one’s relationship to and identification with the geographic spaces, cities, neighborhoods, and communities in which we live” (Hemsley & Eckert, 2014: 1844). This can be accomplished via “transnational framing”, a communicative and interactive process which “inspires a sort of transnational imaginary – that is to say, a common ‘mental picture’ of activism that works as a homogenizing force, fostering mutual recognition” (Milan, 2013: 138-139).
But in terms of the theory of connective action, a collective action frame is not necessary. Instead, Bennett and Segerberg (2012: 744-756) use the notion, given the contemporary – often technologically organized – increase in individualization of collective action and social movement politics, of inclusive “personalized action frames”, that is, frames that are based not on collective forms of communication but “personalized communication”. But for such a framing to be established, ideas, tactics and strategies have to be diffused over the world, and conveyed between movements and individuals, according to the scheme of scale shifts (Tarrow & McAdam, 2005; Tremayne, 2014). Scale shifts occur when movement actors connect movements by relational diffusion (where previously unconnected actors/movements are connected) and brokerage (where previously non-connected actors/movements are connected). A scale shift can be upward, but also downward, i.e., it can go from a local movement to a global level, but also from a global level down to local movements. These ideas can help us understand how transnational movements are built as many struggles, issues, or grievances are established according to similar patterns.

Through such procedures a collective, or connective, frame may be created. In particular, this goes for brokerage as “when borders are to be crossed and distant social actors brought together, brokerage is the more likely mechanism of scale shift” (Tarrow & McAdam, 2005: 146). Frames (cf. Snow et al, 1986; Benford & Snow, 2000) are central to social movements as they frame “grievances, connecting them to other grievances, and constructing larger frames of meaning that will resonate with a population’s cultural predispositions and communicate a uniform message to power holders and to others” (Tarrow, 2011: 144) Also for transnational movements, the main concern is to establish a common frame of reference which determine a common project (Milan, 2013: 143). The point of analyzing transnational framing processes is that this procedure “allows us to analyze how transnational networks are formed as opposed to why they emerge” (Ibid.) – and such an analysis can be aided by the use of connective action.

Scale shifts, or forms of (transnational) framing, are not made possible by digital media, but digital media change their conditions (cf. Tarrow, 2005: 136; Kavada, 2014: 358; Tremayne, 2014). Through digitally enabled scale-shifts, groupings of activists and movements, sharing similar ideas or ideological and political rationales, may be able to become critical publics that are objecting to certain aspects of a social or political culture. (It is, however, vital to remember that even if digital media may aid processes of diffusion, such “mediated diffusion”, as it tend to have less direct interpersonal connections and trust amongst actors may be harder to sustain over time (Tarrow, 2011: 192-193)). In the concluding section, we will discuss if and how scale shifts occur within the studied movements, if they lead to transnational coalitions, the extent to which digital media animate such a process, and whether connective action can used to explain such patterns.

Methodology

This dissertation consists of four different case studies of distinct social movements (cf. Gomm et al, 2000; Yin, 2003). Case study research is often based on generating in-depth data, often through the use of multiple methods (e.g., interviews, observations, different quantitative methodologies), on a singular/multiple organization/s, event/s, phenomena, or movement/s. The cases in question can be local cases, key cases or outlier cases (Thomas, 2011). The papers in this dissertation are to be viewed as key cases as they offer crucial knowledge about a particular phenomenon: the transnationalization of protest and social movements through digital media. Also, viewing the different papers as part of a larger case study of transnational movements makes it possible to view the actual movements, and the data generated from the analyses, as complementing each other (in this regard, see also
below where the movements are presented as strategically chosen in order to complement another).

In paper 1, the main method is content analysis of interview data; in paper 2, the main method is qualitative content analysis of Facebook data (from user posts); in paper 3, we use a combination of social network analysis and content analysis of Twitter data; and in paper 4, we use social network analysis and geomapping of Twitter data in combination with some descriptive statistics. Each of these methods offer a specific point of view from where to analyze – potentially transnational – social movements. I argue that the methods complement each other by enabling a broader interpretation of transnational social movements than can be provided by single studies or approaches. Because, as Snow and Trom (2002: 160), write, a “case study can be both, a study of a single case or of multiple cases, so long as the cases share some attributes in common and are variants of some larger, encompassing category” (Snow & Trom, 2002: 160).

Thus, with each included paper looking at some specific movement or event where extra-parliamentary contentious politics has been paired with use of digital media, the dissertation comprises a variety of empirical materials (for example, recorded interviews and collected written statements) as well as more specific methodological and analytical approaches (from thematic coding to content analysis). The strategy seeks to gain exhaustive and deep knowledge and understanding of particular social phenomena by using a variety of methods and perspectives (Snow & Trom 2002: 151-152). This is achieved, I argue, by the approach to viewing the papers both as separate, single case studies as well as parts of one larger case study of transnationalization and digital media within an encompassing framework of social movement theory.

Case studies are useful because, first, the field of digital, or Internetworked, social movements and political activism is a highly topical subject that is still under development, meaning that close empirical investigations are important. Second, it gives researchers a rich material with which to further conceptual and theoretical development in the field (Joyce, 2010). When it comes to case studies and social movement studies, different levels of analysis exist. According to one conceptualization, one can focus on the microscopic, such as recruitment processes within one or several movements; the meso-level, such as the features of and relations and connections between movements acting within a similar protest culture; and one the macro-level, such as cycles of protests, for example using a longitudinal approach (Snow & Trom, 2002: 149; cf. Rueschemeyer, 2003: 333). The approach in this dissertation focuses, as hinted at above, on the first of the two (studying single cases) but, when comparing them and viewing them as parts of a similar dimension of movement development (being influenced by increasing access to digital media), also interpreting them as belonging to a larger movement coalition, possibly sharing traits, in order to explore whether there is a family resemblance between them.

Case studies are, however, an approach to which is attached certain problems. For instance, one limitation with this choice of general method concerns interpretation of cases. As suggested before, scholars offer divergent views on the political potential of the Internet and digitized social movements. This can, as Earl and Kimport (2011: 29-31) point out, be the result of the scholar’s choices of cases and methodological premises (in short: choice of case will affect the general conclusion one can draw). If one studies a case where the Internet is proven to have a central role, one will probably describe the potentials of the technology in more optimistic terms, but if the case at hand shows Internet technology to be unhelpful or unimportant (or even harmful) for movement actors, one will draw more doubtful conclusions. In a similar vein, different media have different affordances, meaning that we need to be careful when comparing and making conclusions about different cases. It is essential, differently put,
that we recognize how different media platforms, with different characteristics and affordances, may affect media use in various ways (Dahlgren, 2013: 37-40). Yet, generalization need not be the main aim of case studies (Gomm et al, 2000: 5).

Another problem is that case studies tend to be attached to a certain particular time period, meaning that they can quickly become outdated, in particular since the field of study (as with anything that focuses on novel technological advancements) is characterized by significant and rapid technological developments (Lovink, 2011) – this can, however, be overcome (Askanius, 2012). One way for such a problem to be handled concerns usage of theoretical notions to guide us as well as give us broader fields to which one as a researcher can offer more longstanding contributions (Ibid.: 38). By creating concepts that are usable in several fields, and can be employed as analytical tools over time, this dilemma of case studies can be partly resolved (Lovink, 2011: 7). For instance, it is possible that one, by having a theoretical focus (e.g. transnational activism or connective action) when focusing on the cases at hand, can gain guiding principles for one’s studies as well as a field to which the research can offer input. This is also a relevant strategy since one of the central advantages of case studies are that they, to a high extent, “serve the purpose of theory testing " (Rueschemeyer, 2003: 310).

This is, however, not an unproblematic methodology since we also have to acknowledge the dilemma of generalization and transferability: is it methodologically feasible, or even cognitively reasonable, to draw more general conclusions from a specific case (with particular characteristics) and, in a later stage, compare it with others (perhaps achieved with different methodological means)? Put differently, can one compare cases with certain, more or less salient, particularities? As the aim of the broad approach of this dissertation is to illustrate the effects of digital communication on social movements in quite general terms, and since there in this sense are apparent similarities between the cases, the point of departure will be the principle that this is a reasonable strategy, as long as one is aware of its complications and address them when conducting comparisons.

When working with case studies it is important to remember that “statistical generalization is not the only form of generalization” as one can also focus on “analytic, or theoretical, generalization” (Snow & Trom, 2002: 164). There are indeed other benefits than generalization of case studies. Snow and Trom (Ibid.) define three different forms of theoretical avenues for theoretically focused case studies: theoretical discovery, theoretical extension and theoretical refinement. This dissertation primarily aims to extend existing theory, applying transnational social movement theory on a number of heterogeneous empirical cases in order to explore how different movements articulate or embody transnationalization and how digital media influence that articulation. Because, as the authors go on to write, “the utility of movement case studies is not limited to the generation of richly detailed, thick, holistic descriptive accounts of the movements or processes investigated, but that case studies can also function as an important mechanism for theoretical generalization” (Ibid.: 166; cf Rueschemeyer, 2003: 330). Thus, as a theoretical as well as empirical focus is equally important in this dissertation, comparative case studies, hopefully generating transferable insights and concepts, seems as a viable approach.

Results – summary of the papers

The cases/movements

The cases chosen in this dissertation share commonalities, even if there are some pertinent differences between them. As one of the aims of the study is to compare movement with dis-
parate patterns of organization, the cases were strategically chosen in order to complement each other by offering particular movement characteristics as well as "reactions" to media use. Telecomix, the movement studied in paper 1, struggled against certain forms of information politics, illegitimate surveillance, and authoritarian states (fighting for democracy and the free flow of information) which meant that they amongst other things, as shown in the paper, became involved in the Arab Spring. The labour movement LabourStart, studied in paper 4, is struggling against – with more or less vehemence depending on the target – the capitalist society, infringements in labour rights, non-democratic economic systems. The anti-mining struggle that took place in Kallak, Sweden, and Idle No More, the movements that are studied in paper 2 and 3, are struggling, respectively, against the mining industry, politics harmful to indigenous populations, global capital (corporations), and politics that are detrimental for indigenous populations (Kallak) and against environmentally harmful intervention by financial interests, politics that are detrimental for indigenous populations, certain form of state politics, (Idle No More). Nevertheless, even if the movements are fighting against and for fairly divergent forms of politics, there also share unifying characteristics. Mainly, they are all fighting against authoritative forms of politics and for an increase in transparency and democracy. In terms of organization, Telecomix can be viewed as an Internetworked movement (loose organizational structure, to a large extent working digitally), Kallak and Idle No More as new social movements (place-bound decentralized movements with loose organizational structures) and LabourStart as a traditional movement with decentralized membership structures but, nonetheless, an organizational kernel. (For more about their specific media use, see the paper presentations below.)

When it comes to the digital platforms and forums the movements make use of in their endeavors to reach their respective goals, there also are some similarities. They are all communicating on and from different forms of social media, notwithstanding they mainly use specific platforms. For instance, Telecomix used Twitter as well as Facebook but mainly used an IRC chat-channel (which is the forum mainly studied in the paper presented below). The other movement's studied in this dissertation also used a variety of platforms for communication and organization. Notwithstanding, in the papers there is a focus on particular platforms from where the data is gathered (Twitter for Idle No More and LabourStart, Facebook for Kallak). I argue that even if there is a difference regarding forums of communication studied below general, similarities between the cases make general conclusions about them possible. In the following, the aims, methods, theoretical perspectives and conclusions from each paper is presented in more detail. In the next section, "Conclusion", the studies will be interpreted in tandem, making more general conclusions possible in relation to the research questions presented in the introduction.

**Paper 1. Technology as Movement: On hybrid organizational types and the mutual constitution of movement identity and techno-logical infrastructure in digital activism**

2011 saw several uprisings in the Middle East. The events, labelled the Arab Spring, took somewhat different turns in different countries. In Egypt, it caused the forced dethroning of Hosni Mubarak, the country’s president. This paper studies how digital politics in general, and the – mainly – Western activist network Telecomix in particular, influenced this process. An interview study, the paper is based on interviews with individuals that were involved in Telecomix. The interviews where thematically coded, focusing on 1) the practical activities of Telecomix and 2) the networks organizational structure and how that structure influenced, and was influenced, its technological underpinnings and communicational strategies. Central codes in this procedure were communication, hybridity, internal constitution and organizational dynamics. Telecomix – comprising members from all over the world – became involved in the Egyptian struggles, in various ways trying to aid the demonstrators that physically took to the streets when fighting the repressive regime. By offering tools for non-governed com-
munication, opening up channels of communication that circumscribed the Internet politics of Egyptian state representatives, or faxing in pertinent information on, for example, how to treat tear-gas attacks, techno-political activists from e.g. Sweden, France and the US were able to be part of a conflict hundreds, or even thousands, of miles away. Approaching communications technology in somewhat unconventional ways, that is, by trying to debunk, circumvent or disrupt communicational enclosures and facilitate open communication and non-surveilled forms of information dissemination, Telecomix worked with what could be described as “alternative computing” (Lievrouw, 2006 & 2011). The main question of the paper, however, concerned Telecomix dynamic, organizational network-form. Having no apparent leaders, and no fixed administrative structures, members of Telecomix (or agents, as they preferred to call themselves) were able, using only an open IRC-channel as a communicational platform, not only to decide on what actions where necessary but also to actually coordinate and carry out said actions. How? In an attempt to answer this questions, and to study the “organizational ramifications of the communication” (Mercea, p. 2013, p. 1307), the paper employed concepts such as hybridity and media ecology with the aim to better understand (the effect of) the conjunction of human and technological networks. It set out to explain if, and how, Telecomix' communicational architecture interplayed with and affected its organizational form. It concludes by claiming that in this particular case, the structure and identity of the movement/network and its technological infrastructure mutually constituted each other. In such a case, where “communication is always also a form or organisation” (Gerbaudo, 2012: 138) and organizational dynamics and communicative tools are placed in a complex dialectical relation, we see the emergence of what the paper, following Chadwick (2007; cf. 2013), calls a “hybrid organizational type”. Therefore Telecomix may say something regarding the hybrid status of some contemporary protest movements, a status that may come to become more frequent; the actions of Telecomix may be taken as an illustration of how activists not only used technology to make their messages heard, but how they by using certain techniques and methods simultaneously are being shaped by that technical infrastructure. Also, as the network was able to bridge geographical gaps separating regions and continents, it clearly became a movement with certain transnational characteristics – and this development was, to a high degree, facilitated by access to and usage of digital media.

**Paper 2. Extending the local – activist types and forms of social media use in an case of anti-mining struggle (Co-written with Johan Örestig)**

Digital political activism does not have to be an urban process, even if, as most studies of contemporary social movements that are making use of digital media tend to focus on cases from urban areas, one can easily be tricked into believing so. This paper focused on a case of environmental anti-mining activism taking place in the rural area of Kallak (outside of the northern town of Jokkmokk, Sweden) in 2013. (In addition, the struggle also came to be fought in terms of indigenous rights, as the threatened area is important for the local Sami population). The protest campaign, which tried to obstruct the commencement of test extraction by a British mining company, combined on-site resistance (e.g. creating roadblocks to impede the company from reaching the test or, by trespassing, thwarting blast tests) and digital media use by employing Facebook as a means for creating resistance. Whereas the former, quite obviously, was a highly located phenomenon the latter took, as the study later showed, on rather global tendencies. The aims of the paper were, when trying to analyze how potential of digital media use by social movements acting from/in rural/peripheral areas, 1) to, by studying who used Facebook and to what uses it was put, explore what areas of applications Facebook came to have and 2) to – by departing theoretical notions such as hybridity and, in particular, translocality – study what larger practical and theoretical implications one can derive from this specific case. The paper is based, in terms of data, on a qualitative analysis on all posts on the two main Facebook-pages the protesters used. This data was, in regards of activists roles, thematically coded according to the posts sender, its loca-
tion and its on- and offline relationship and, in regards of forms of media use, we used the same themes while also focusing on the goal of the post. The central theoretical analyses done in the paper in particular gravitates around the notions of translocality/transnationality but, also, concepts such as scale shift (such as relational diffusion and brokerage). When analysing the material, we found that three ideal types of activist roles emerged during the conflict: local activists (actors that actually were protesting on-site, but also communicating outwards to followers), digital movement intellectuals (actors that, by contributing to discussions on the Facebook-pages, communicated inwards and hereby intervened in the struggle by being part of discussions and offering arguments in different critical debates – these took active-interventional part in the struggle) and digital distributors (actors that liked and shared posts from other contributors – these took passive-redistributive part in the struggle). Following this we also identified four different forms of media use amongst the activists: the media was used for mobilization, construction of the physical space, extension of the local, and augmentation of local and translocal bonds. Using these categories and roles, we argue that the paper shows how digital media use may give, through processes of scale shift, a local and marginalized political struggles and conflicts a translocal dimension, meaning that geographically remote places can become politically relevant in new ways by way of media connections. From this follows that transnational ties, connecting partly different, albeit ideologically and politically neighbouring movements, can be established by digital media use.

Paper 3. Translocal Frame Extensions in a Networked Protest: situating the #IdleNoMore hashtag (Co-written with Simon Lindgren)

As with article two, one central, underlying aim of this paper was to study how a locally situated movement made use of digital media and to interpret the consequences of that use. To do this, we studied the Canadian social movement Idle No More, focusing on how it employed Twitter. The social movement Idle No More emerged in the end of 2011 as a reaction to the bill proposal C-45 (a proposal that, amongst other things, posed a threat to the autonomy and sovereignty of Canada’s indigenous populations and their territories as well as to the Canadian environment). Criticizing the initiative in a number of ways, the decentralized movement used a myriad of tactics and strategies. Amongst these, social media use was of central importance. The broad aim of the paper was to study how Idle No More used Twitter and, more specifically, how the #idenomore hashtag was deployed the time just following the movements appearance within Canada as well as to explore how it transgressed both national boundaries and the – organizational structures – of a social movement. In order to accomplish this we analysed circa 500,000 tweets that was published in January 2013 (which was all tweets, containing the hashtag #idenomore, published during that month), that is just after the movement made its appearance. The more specific aim was to, by studying how #idenomore co-occurred with other movement hashtags, to explore how connections can be made during a movement’s emergence and consolidation and to better conceptualise Twitter’s potential as a medium for political communication and organization. There were three research questions: To the extent that the #idenomore hashtag co-occurs with other hashtags, what political struggles and movements do these hashtags signify and how can we interpret any ideological or political affinities between them? How can the diffusion of, and interconnection between, #idenomore and other co-occurring hashtags be interpreted geographically and can any translocal or transnational connections or patterns be identified? How do any such connections relate to processes of framing? As theoretical points of departure, the notions of networked protest and translocality were put to use in order to conceptualize the geographical aspects of the protest ecology of Idle No More whereas framing theory, and theories of ad-hoc publics, were used with the purpose to provide an understanding of, first, how hashtag can function as movement frames and, secondly, how movement connections can be established via co-occurrence of Twitter-hashtags. The data was analysed in a threefold manner, corresponding to the three research questions: in a first step, we con-
ducted a network analysis focusing on which hashtags co-occurred with the #idlenomore hashtag and interpreted the hashtags in question to determine whether or not they had any ideological or political affinities. In a second step, we focused on all social movement and indigenous groups hashtags which where identified in the first step, focusing on the struggles the other hashtags represented and what geographical context they signified. In a third step, we did a qualitative content analysis of a number of tweets containing #idlenomore and some additional – social movement or indigenous – hashtags in order to study how discursive ties between movements were formulated and, possibly, framed. In the concluding section we argue that, despite some limitations with the study, our analyses and interpretations do indicate that a connection of hashtags can establish chains of meaning (with longer duration than the particular movements involved and represented). We also argue that the Twitter sphere surrounding and embedding #idlenomore, stemming from the discursive connection of several movement actors, did create an issue or ad-hoc public that can be importance for single actors, in particular as they can gain strength and legitimacy by being connected to a larger public. It can also engender a sense of solidarity between and among different social movements. Because such a shared public, in our study, transgress local and non-local bonds one can also claim that such a common discursive project have translocal and transnational characteristics since it connects geographically dispersed movements.

**Paper 4**

*Social Media and the Transnationalization of Mass Activism: The Role of Twitter in Trade Union Revitalization* (Co-written with Ragnar Lundström and Simon Lindgren)

In comparison two paper 1-3, where we studied what was described as networked and new social movements, in this paper we studied what we term a traditional social movement. The movement chosen for this occasion is the labour rights network LabourStart, a workers rights network working against encroachments in labour rights and advocating and working for better conditions and rights for workers all over the world. Not really a labour movement (nor a union per se), and not merely a union, in the article LabourStart is defined as a “hybrid organizational type” (Chadwick, 2007; Chadwick, 2013). The reason for this approach is that LabourStart uses multiple forms of digital media, at the same time as it has numerous “purposes” or projects (it functions as a platform for campaigning for workers rights, a news site and a advocate for labour rights). In this paper, however, we focus on LabourStarts use of one platform in particular, namely Twitter. The aim of the study was twofold: one the one hand, we wanted to explore how LabourStart used Twitter for communication, mobilisation and organisation; on the other hand, we wanted to gain knowledge regarding how that Twitter communication was structured in terms of geography. In order to accomplish this, we posed to sets of research questions where the first set targeted how LabourStart employed Twitter and which of the platforms affordances it utilized (did it, for instance, use Twitter interactive features in order to create a decentralized climate within the movement); whereas the second targeted certain geographical aspects by, amongst other things, asking how user accounts that contributed to the data where geographically distributed and what countries were mentioned in the analysed tweets. Our theoretical point of departure was the notion of connective action (as we analysed if LabourStart, through its media use, was able to establish an individualized, or personalized, connective action frames) and translocality/transnationality (as we analysed if LabourStart, via its media use, was able to engender translocal/transnational connections between various struggle, thus interconnecting grievances). The data set consisted of all tweets, from 2008 until the beginning of 2015, stemming from any of the LabourStart accounts (there was one official account, based in Great Britain, and several additional, national ones) and all tweets mentioning LabourStart or using the LabourStart hashtag. The methods used was, first, a tentative content analysis of a selection of tweets from 2008-2009 and 2014 and, second but most importantly, network analysis. In the concluding section, we present three results from our study. 1) LabourStarts use of Twitter can-
not, as the network maintain centralized and hierarchical forms of communication structures, be described as generating digitally stimulated connective action. 2) Due to LabourStarts centralized Twitter use, the network is not, it seems, able to establish any translocal or transnational connections between struggles and grievances. 3) In short, for unions (as in most cases of politics), the context within which a media is put to use influence the effects the media use has and the range of said use. In conclusion, the paper illustrates that a centralized and hierarchic organization or movement structure drives the media use of the organization/movement in question toward similar, i.e., centralized and homogenous, communicative methods and styles.

Conclusions

This dissertation poses three research questions:

- What is the role of digital media in the transnationalization of protest?
- How do different organizational characteristics of movements influence the process of transnationalization through digital media use?
- How can a conceptual framework for transnationalization and social movements’ use of digital media be elaborated? How can we best understand the notion of ‘transnationalization of protest’ and what does the concept contribute to studies of contemporary – networked – social movements?

Regarding the first question, focusing on the role that digital media played for the different movements, answers differ. In paper 1 it became clear that the communicative platform used by Telecomix, together with the fact that the movement primarily communicated on and acted from their IRC-channel rather than being tied an actual physical place, encouraged the growth of a transnational movement logic. In addition, as the movement grew via its interventions in the Arab Spring uprisings, a processual transnationalization whereby new actors, from different places in the world, continuously became involved in the network took place. In the cases of the new social movements (paper 2 and 3), another pattern was discernible: via the use of digital media, the movements studied were able to create social movement frames by using hashtags in the case of Idle No More and text and images in the case of Kallak. Through such frames it was, at least partly, possible to bridge divides between movements acting from within regions and nations from all over the world, hereby instituting individualized transnational publics with more or less cohesiveness and longevity using connective technology. In the last paper, focusing on a traditional form of movement, the outcomes of digital media use, in terms of transnationalization, was less distinguishable (or even completely absent). The reason for this, we argue, was that by and large LabourStart maintained a centralized and hierarchic use of Twitter with small or no connective elements. The role of digital media for transnationalization was, hence, neglectable as the movement structure really was not affected but, instead, a geographical and digital Western epicentre continued to be reinforced (at the same time as this structure also affected the way the media was used).

Looking at the second question, focusing on how the organizational characteristics of the movements studied influenced the process of transnationalization, we again see somewhat different outcomes from the movements’ respective media use. In the case of Telecomix, the organizational structure was highly decentralized as the movement lacked perimeters clearly separating the outside and inside of the movement (as anyone could join and contribute). This helped contribute to transnationalization as new members could continue to contribute to, and actually affect, the movement’s work as it unfolded. A similar pattern, albeit with less possibilities to affect the work of the movements, was found in regards to the new social
movements studied in paper 2 and 3. In both these cases, a flat organizational structure made it possible for individual actors from areas distant to the actual protests to connect to other movements, and perform connective actions, and, hereby, create common, yet personalized, frames of reference. Lastly, LabourStart, studied in paper 4, still having a conventional social movement structure with a somewhat cohesive organizational core, was less able than the other movements to form a transnational public – and this can be explained by its organizational (lack of) dynamics. Here, I would like to argue that the structure and organizational logic underpinning a movement clearly affects its abilities to make transnational connections. When establishing a functioning transnational public, intervening in political struggles and campaigns, organizational structure is vital – the more decentralized the movement, the more vibrant the transnational (counter)public. One way to understand this is that more flexible and decentralized movements, as they are less dependent on relational diffusion and thus better adjusted to stimulate interconnections between previously non-connected actors (i.e. diffusion through brokerage), are better suited for creating individualistic, albeit border transgressing, frames and ties between actors. This does not, however, imply, as will be discussed below, that such publics are sustainable over time.

The last question, focusing on how an empirical and conceptual framework can be elaborated from the papers that constitute the empirical basis of the present dissertation, I argue that certain notions are crucial in order to understand the processes touched upon and described in the papers. Even if the need to be in the same place to, for example, coordinate a mobilization, plan activities, and establish movement ties is becoming less important via the presence and use of digital media, a certain degree of ideological, or affectual, affinity is needed for a transnational movement to emerge. Such affinity does not need to be in relation to large, traditional movements but can be built using only temporary linkages, forming coalitions, between individual actors within a movement. And such temporary or loose ties, or rather personalized action frames, may, I argue, be facilitated by digital media (cf. Svensson et al, 2014). To explain how such personalized action frames or identities can be established, I introduce, as movement identities tend to build on emotions and affectual ties (Castells, 2012: 13; Tarrow, 2011: 152-15), the notion of “affectual proximity”. I believe this concept to capture how transnational movements are established by interconnecting various individuals and dissimilar movements from all over the world. Even if physical proximity is today, in some cases, less important, some sort of proximity is needed, I argue, in order for a movement identity to surface in a political struggle. And with the advent of digital media, that can create ties and diffuse movement frames, affectual proximity – supplementing, not only replacing – emerges next to physical proximity. Thus, transnationalism, and transnational framing, can provide “symbols for collective identification and cross-national solidarity via the modular diffusion of ideas and formats” (Vicari, 2014: 107). However, affectual proximity, here viewed as closeness in personalized ideology and movement frames (cf. della Porta & Mosca, 2005: 181) that lacks a closeness in a physical sense, need to be established and communicated in order to be of any value.

I would posit that all but one of the papers in this thesis demonstrate a certain degree of affectual proximity. And such an affectual proximity is, to a high degree affected by access to digital media and the connective action, and connective action frames, that they facilitate. Even if digital media cannot, in itself, fully explain all aspects behind the processes of transnationalization of protests, they can, I maintain, facilitate such a development. This can be accomplished, for instance, through digitally enhanced scale shifts were acts of brokerage, connecting previously non-related actors acting in or from non-related localities, are established. Affectual proximity is not, of course, made possible by digital media alone, and connections transcending national borders occurred long before the Internet. Yet, the conditions for affectual proximity is, I argue, transformed via access to digital media. Expressing support for, and intervening in, struggles far from one’s own geographical position is, as is shown in
the papers, possible to a higher degree when using digital media as a complement to other activist tools – something which can explored in terms of connective action or. In paper one, the affectual and ideological cohesiveness of the individuals involved in Telecomix clearly structured the working of the movement. What actually held Telecomix together was not some organizational structure but, rather, the communicative platform itself together with the cognitive praxis, based on affectual proximity, that united the engaged members. A similar pattern was noticeable also in paper 2 and 3, where distances in terms of geography were bridged in terms of ideological propinquity. This took place, for instance, by tying different movements together through hashtags on Twitter or the use of text and images on Facebook. In paper 4, however, we could not find a similar pattern. We argue that the absence of transnational ties, and also a sense of affectual proximity, in that specific case could be derived from the fact that LabourStart’s use of media, which in itself is based on its organizational culture, was centralized with few interactive elements. Here, one could argue that the first three movements where characterized by a “membership” base that were having “multiple belongings” (della Porta, 2005) as several actors within them “belonged” to different, loose movement structures and geographic arenas in parallel.

Thus, in conclusion: the role of digital media in processes of transnationalization of protest and movements was indeed of some significance. The transnationalization was accomplished through the establishment of common frames of reference, and through brokerage between activists from different localities. These were, in turn, if not made possible only by digital media, at least to a high degree facilitated by them. These processes were also, it became clear in the analyses, informed by the particular movements’ organizational cultures and infrastructures. In cases of more decentralized movements, transnationalization was aided to a higher degree than in cases with more centralized, traditional movement structures. These organizational dynamics also influenced how movements and different groups of movement actors used digital media. Lastly, the transnational connections made possible by digital media can be understood in terms of bridging ideologically and affectually, through common frames within and between movements and individual actors, actors from different parts of the world. In order for this to be possible, I argue that what has been labelled affectual proximity can be understood as a key dimension.

It is also central to remember that even if transnational ties are made though scale shifts, a movement does not have to become transnational (cf. Tarrow & McAdam, 2005: 146). Still, even if the movement remains tied to its local setting it can, by also being connected to struggles in other parts of the world, engender a process of transnationalization which is both local and non-local by way of transposing its agendas and, also, embracing other movements’ agendas.
References


