The Internet in Transnational Advocacy Networks
The Forgotten Question

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of political science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Stefania Milan

Budapest, Hungary
(2011)

Abstract

This research sheds light on the use of the internet within a transnational advocacy network (TAN) and how it affects the shape, strength and density of the network. It is demonstrated that literature on TANs has neglected an in-depth discussion of the use of the internet in TANs and its implications. Through a case study of the TAN that formed around the issue of human rights in Tunisia, I find that the internet is used extensively for most cooperative and collaborative activities between non-governmental organizations within the TAN. The internet not only promotes a higher level of association between NGOs in the TAN, it facilitates the formation and functioning of highly dense and strong clusters. These clusters in turn are able to perform advocacy activities much more effectively. In addition, the internet facilitates the activities of the TAN within a repressive political environment, furthering the capacities of the TAN.

Table of contents

List of Figures

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PART 1

1.1 Introduction

The recent events in North Africa have garnered much international attention and the ousting of the repressive regime in Tunisia is of particular given its contagious effects. Tunisia had been under the domination of the authoritarian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali since 1987. Ben Ali, who came to power through a bloodless coup, promised to end the tyranny of Habib Bourguiba, but instead locked the country into continued repression and flagrant disrespect for basic human rights (Gränzer 1999). This repression has been consistently documented and denounced by international human rights organizations and domestic ones alike[1]. Despite this repressive environment, Tunisians managed to organize and overthrow this regime in mid January through massive street protests, forcing Ben Ali to escape the country. Several forms of repression, surveillance and censorship were used by this authoritarian regime however Tunisians were able to organize to form a meaningful and effective opposition to this government. Much ink has been spilled in academia on the processes that brings about successful revolutions and theories abound on this subject from Theda Skocpol's *State and Social Revolutions* to Sydney Tarrow's *Power in movement*. There is no single answer to explain this kind of political change, but one retains my attention through its interdisciplinary qualities, being at the intersection of international relations and social movements. The theory of transnational advocacy networks developed by several authors provides a part of the answer to this question. This particular process takes place around a repressive regime that disallows political opportunities in the country it rules. Local activists reach out

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[1] For example, see the many reports published by Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights, Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme, Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates.

to the international plane for help in advocating a specific target. A variety of international actors can then mobilize to exercise pressure on the repressive government. This process is explained through the boomerang model (Keck and Sikkink 1998) so called because it circumvents the repressive government. Subsequently the spiral model was developed by Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999) in an effort to describe in detail repetitive 'throws' of the boomerang and the evolution of this advocacy process. The spiral model has been used in several comparative analyses to explain the process through which networks form between domestic and external advocacy groups to mount ever growing pressure on the target government from the outside and the inside in order to force it to open domestic political opportunities.

We have all heard how the internet has played a key role in the Tunisian revolution of January 2011, and in particular how social networking sites were used to help the mobilization of Tunisians. Yet explanations as to the exact role of the internet remains anecdotal at best, with theories spawned in the mainstream media. Literature on TANs is rich, but the precise role of the internet in these networks is understudied, often relegated to the important, yet simplified role of an organizational tool. Some TAN scholars have highlighted this lacuna. While discussing the advancements made by Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink (2002) on TANs and their claims of the advantage that the internet gives to transnational campaigners, Richard Price points out that TAN literature still has not made significant progress in studying the internet as a source of information for TANs or even as an organizational tool: "... it is striking that mention is rarely made of the internet in these volumes with but a few passing references to its facilitative role" (2003, 597). He adds that more empirical information should be gathered before we can make any claims as to the benefits of

2

the internet in this context. R. Charli Carpenter (2007) builds on Price's words to identify ways in which the internet could be used in TAN research. She points out that the internet is a source of information on TANs themselves and their activities and gives several examples of how it could be used for research purposes. For example, through reciprocal linking practices, the internet can be used to map organizations in an issue network and identify the structural relations in the network such as gatekeepers who shape the issue pool, although this is an imperfect measure. These observations from Carpenter and Price highlight a specific gap in the literature on TANs as far as the internet is concerned.

Based on this gap in the literature, I want explore the role of the internet for TANs. Specifically, how it is used in the accomplishment of their activities; what are the advantages and disadvantages; how the network is organized through the internet; and the types of activities are made possible by using the internet. I think that literature on TANs could benefit from an in depth study based on the experiences of the members of the networks themselves. At this point we are faced with a more or less obvious question: if the internet is only an organizational tool or a source of information, what is worth studying about it and its effect on TANs? There are reasons to think that using the internet as an organizational and communicative tool can have formative influence on organizations and by extension their networks. Mario Diani (2001) highlights some of the main effects that computer mediated communication[2] (CMC) can have on networks of professional and their organizations. In a nutshell, there are several dimensions on which CMC can have an impact. At the

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[2] In this research, I use the concepts of computer mediated communication (CMC) and of information communication technologies (ICT). These are two distinct concepts. CMC refers to communications that are mediated by a computer, while ICT refers to any technology used for communication that is presently administered using computer networks. Therefore, the use of a telephone can be considered using an ICT if it is transmitted through voice over internet protocol, in other words, through the internet; but not a CMC as there is no use of a computer interface.

base of it, CMC can facilitate communication between different levels of organizations, strengthening linkages between members of an organization, and between different organizations. In the case of deliberative processes, conversations can become polyadic instead of dyadic, meaning several actors can be involved in a single deliberative process instead of only two. Yet another possible impact is the replacement of face-to-face conversations with CMC. The possible impacts of these will be more fully discussed further, but suffice it to say that CMC has an impact on how organizations work when it is used as an organizational tool and that this factor has yet to be considered by TAN scholars beyond an acceleration of communication between organizations.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

Given this gap in the literature, I believe it is important to explore this aspect of TANs further. First, I will explore and describe the TAN that formed around the issue of human rights in Tunisia. Temporally, this description will focus on the timeframe of before and after the January revolution. I will also describe if there are significant differences between before and after the revolution. This is a necessary step because from an analytical point of view it is important to know as much as possible about the network before moving on to explore the formative effects of the internet. *What are at present the characteristics of the TAN that formed around the issue of human rights violations by the Tunisian government under Ben Ali?* TANs can take several forms, as I will explain in the section of this thesis devoted to the literature review. Through preliminary research on the advocacy organizations involved in this network and a preliminary mapping of this network using a network mapping software called Issue Crawler, I expect to find that this particular network is

composed of central hubs that service smaller peripheral hubs, which themselves service smaller clusters that may not necessarily have strong connections with each other. I expect these clusters to take either hierarchical forms or horizontal forms depending on the relationships between each organization in the cluster. Overall, this network may have a large variety of actors because it is intertwined with other regional organizations that share the same advocacy goals but with a broader scope, namely the Arab world.

As I have already mentioned, I will use an online network mapping software called Issue Crawler in order to create a preliminary picture of this network. Such software is used as an exploratory tool. I assume the internet has the potential to be a source of information on TANs in itself, besides being a tool in the hands of the organizations composing the TAN. However, I will not rely solely on Issue Crawler to describe the network as it has some limitations that I will discuss further in the methodological section. To this end, I have formulated a sub-research question to the first main question, in order to address this interesting methodological issue: *Is Issue Crawler a useful tool to map TANs?* The map will be produced through a co-link analysis, which means that, from the starting points I input into the crawler, it will verify if there are outlinks that are shared by at least two starting point. I expect it to provide a partial map of the TAN, identifying most of the central hubs, but performing more poorly in identifying smaller peripheral organizations. Also, I expect that the co-link analysis will not be a good indicator of the actual types of exchanges between organizations. I expect that it will consistently misrepresent these relationships. This is because after analyzing the content of several websites of organizations that are part of this network, reciprocal linking practices do not seem to

be universal, hence providing a distorted image of the actual relations between organizations. These details will be discussed further.

These two research questions bring me to the heart of the research where I expect my research will significantly contribute to the literature on TANs (beyond adding observations of yet another TAN, the Tunisian human rights TAN. Specifically, I will seek to provide in-depth information on the possible formative effects of the use of the internet as an organizational tool. Hence, the second research question asks: *Does the use of the internet as an organizational tool shape the internal structure of the TAN in Tunisia?* As mentioned above, there are reasons to believe that the internet to a certain extent does structure the way in which the network is organized as well as its functioning as an advocacy network. It is general knowledge that the internet reduces communications costs and increases the types and volume of information that can be shared compared with other communications media. In a network such as a TAN, these aspects are immensely helpful to the overall effectiveness of the TAN by increasing the density of exchanges of information which is the main function of TANs (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Furthermore, Mario Diani (2001) outlines several possible impacts of computer mediated communication. He says that through this improvement in communication due to CMC, some of these kinds of networks are made possible. Furthermore, CMC may help to "strengthen identities and solidarities" (2001, 125). Therefore I expect the internet to increase effectiveness and efficiency, to increase the density of exchanges, and to increase to general normative cohesiveness of the network. All this also leads me to expect a blurring in the traditional separations between different organizations within a network and thus of the hierarchical relationships within a network.

The internet should not be considered as creating only positive effects for TANs. For example, Paul Gready (2004) points out possible negative effects of the use of the internet in the context of a repressive state. He points out that the internet is a double edged blade in advocacy activities: "if the Internet facilitates communication, information exchange, networking and activism, it is also used to invade privacy, as a means of surveillance, intelligence gathering and political control" (2004, 348). This sheds light on a different dimension of the possible formative effects of the internet on TANs that leads me to my last research question. Clearly, advances in communication technologies do not only benefit activists, but can become an obstacle to them when repressive regimes decide to use technology against them. According to the Human Rights Watch report 'False Freedom: online censorship in the Middle East and North Africa' (2005), Tunisia was a country where internet surveillance and censorship was widespread and quite intense, stemming from one of the harshest political repression machines in the region. Blocking internet websites, intercepting private emails, outlawing encryption and monitoring public blogs and forums were its main tools of repression; those caught could face various punishment, sometimes even long prison sentences or even rumored disappearances. The recent revolution in Tunisia opens an opportunity to explore how the internet influences the activities and practices of TANs under a regime that repressed not only the offline public sphere but the online one also. To this end, I ask the following question: *Did internet surveillance and repression neutralize the benefits of the internet to the TAN in Tunisia?* This is an interesting question as TANs operate specifically within repressive environments. In the case of Tunisia, this repression was extended to the internet and was especially strong. Answering this question will shed light on whether the internet still provides the same benefits to TANs in such an

7

environment. I hypothesize that the internet was a useful tool in circumventing repression despite this high level of internet surveillance.

1.3 Case selection

Since I am exploring a relatively untouched subject in TAN literature, I have chosen to do a case study. Because not much is known about this subject, it is important to generate detailed information form which further research can be based on. The case study approach is most appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of the research subject to produces detailed information about a specific subject and the specific context in which it is occurring (Snow and Trom 2002). This is the best method to generate in-depth information on the uses of the internet in a TAN and its effects on its shape, strength and density.

Why Tunisia? Tunisia has several characteristics that makes it a good and very interesting case to study. Human rights advocacy has been a key issue in Tunisia for a long time. The *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LTDH) is the oldest human rights NGO in Africa and the Arab world, having been established in 1976. The fact that a human rights organization was able to survive through two repressive regimes indicated that the defense of human rights in Tunisia could be an important issue. Tunisia is no stranger to TANs. In fact, a previous study (Gränzer 1999) has identified a TAN that helped with human rights advocacy under Habib Bourguiba. This TAN later regressed under the Ben Ali who made superficial reforms and commitments to the respect of human rights in Tunisia. This make it a good candidate for the existence of a TAN today.

During preliminary research, it was clear that there was some form of a TAN in Tunisia for several reasons. International attention was brought upon Tunisia

during the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Before, during and after the summit, several international NGOs denounced the control and censorship of information, and the surveillance and repression exercised by the Ben Ali regime upon Tunisians. Many of the key organizations that are involved in the today's TAN in Tunisia became involved through the WSIS. Furthermore, many reports by the large international NGO make it clear that there is cooperation and collaboration between these organizations and local Tunisian actors.

Tunisia also makes a very interesting case because of its relatively high internet penetration for a country in its region. This means that the internet is used by Tunisians, and is likely to be used to communicate with international organizations for organizational purposes. In addition, the high level of internet censorship and surveillance exercised by the Ben Ali regime makes it an ideal candidate to understand the role that the internet can play in a repressive environment. Because TANs are usually generated by and operate in a repressive environment, the information that is generated speaks directly to TAN literature. Furthermore, French is the second most spoken language in Tunisia after Arabic, and is the business language. Given that my first language is French, it is a useful quality for research purposes since I was able to conduct interviews in a language that is more comfortable for some interviewees than English. There are several actors within a TAN, but I have chosen to focus on non-governmental organizations. There are several reasons for this. Mainly, NGOs are the most visible, the most active and most accessible actors in the network (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

1.4 Methodology

This research aimed to produce meaningful information on the use of the internet within a TAN by NGOs. To accomplish this, an interpretive research design was developed. The interpretation is framed through theory on TANs. Risse and Sikkink define such a network as including "… those relevant actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Risse and Sikkink 1999, 18). This definition guides several aspects of this study: interviewee selection; definition of the boundaries of the study; the design of the interview scenario; and the descriptive elements of the TAN. I have used several sources to gather information for the analysis, including internet research, the web crawling software Issue Crawler and semi-structured interviews. My approach was to take the information produced, contextualize it to the human rights TAN in Tunisia and structure it from the existing literature on TANs. From this process, I was able to derive answers to the research question. A qualitative approach was used in gathering the information. This best suited the purpose of this study as it is an exploratory enquiry into the uses of the internet by TANs, a quantitative approach would not produce information that is relevant to this question. In what follows I expand on these methods and explain my research design.

First, I performed an internet search using various sources, search engines and internet reciprocal linking practices to identify NGOs that were possibly involved in the human rights TAN in Tunisia. I performed a content analysis of the information presented on each websites using the above mentioned definition of a TAN as a guideline. If the organization in question displayed any indications that it was involved in the advocacy of human rights in Tunisia, it was retained for the next step

of the research. The purpose was to gather information on possible actors in the TAN to expand the research using Issue Crawler.

Building on this information, I used Issue Crawler, a server-side software developed by Richard Rogers hosted on www.govcom.net to produce a co-link visualization of the issue network on human rights in Tunisia.[3] This is a powerful piece of software that analyses the hyperlinks between websites and creates a visualization of these links to illustrate the possible relations between websites about specific issue. In what follows I will describe how I will use Issue crawler in this research, how it works and the inherent limitations of such a research tool. Crawls, the term used to designate the process of a network map creation, can be customized on several dimensions. Without going into too much detail, the first step consists in entering starting points, i.e. websites of advocacy organizations that I identified as linked to the issue of human rights in Tunisia. Issue Crawler identifies 'outlinks', in other words hyperlinks that are embedded in the starting point webpage. The software actually goes through the code of the website to capture the outlinks. This means that even hyperlink that are embedded in an image or within the text on the page will be considered an outlink. Crawls can be made by page or by site. Crawls by page give a more specific map, where each node in the map refers to a specific page in a website. Crawling by site gives a less specific map where each node in the map refers to the homepage of the site. I used both in my analysis but privileged the crawl by page because it produced much more detailed maps. A co-link analysis proceeds by identifying if two starting points share an outlink. When this is the case, the third point becomes part of the network. This two step procedure is called an iteration. Several iterations can be made, up to three. In practice this means that after one round

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[3] More in-depth information on issue crawler can be found at www.issuecrawler.net. For examples of how Issue Crawler has been used in other academic articles and in research, please see Rogers 2010, Marres and Rogers 2005, Devereaux et al. 2009, Carpenter 2007b.

of identification of co-links, the first level of the network will be deepened to a second level, up to three levels. The final product is a map of these links indicating they types of linkages (ingoing, outgoing, reciprocal) between nodes and the number of linkages to and from the network. There are some limitations to this tool. Because the software only identifies hyperlinks, this does not necessarily imply a relation between the organizations, nor does a lack of a co-link between indicate that there is no relation between the network and this organization. Another key resource that must be mentioned is simple interpersonal networks. Through the interviews I was able to pinpoint organizations that are quite active for human rights advocacy in Tunisia, but that are not readily visible, given the nature of their activities. Through contacts with activists involved in Tunisia, I was able to add more organizations that are part of the TAN but were ignored by Issue Crawler. This ensures that there would not be any bias towards the effectiveness of Issue Crawler.

The main method of data collection is *semi-structured interviews*. Given the exploratory nature of this subject due to a lack of previous research on the specific topic, it is more appropriate to approach these questions by allowing a more fluid and dynamic data gathering process. The interviews served to answer all of the research questions. Through them, I was able to describe the TAN and how the internet is used by its actors. They also generated more reliable information about the relations between organizations to understand the shape of the network and to verify the accuracy of issue crawler. I asked interviewees to indicate what organizations are part of their network and to identify the type of relationship they entertain with the three most important organizations with which they work. From this I can present a general idea of the accuracy of Issue Crawler when applied to this TAN. These were conducted with individuals that are members of organizations that are part of the

12

advocacy network around the issue of human rights in Tunisia. I interviewed individuals with an intimate knowledge of the internal functioning of their organization, of its advocacy activities and of its working relationships to other organizations that are part of the network. I assume individuals fitting these criteria are qualified to answer questions about the organizational structure of their organization as well as their organizations relations to other organizations. Five interviews were conducted in total. The interviews were conducted and recorded through Skype (with the permission of each participant) given the international nature of the network. The information that I gathered includes organization working outside and inside of Tunisia. This is important for the analysis, because it allows for the most complete understanding of the characteristics of the TAN, of the ways in which the internet affects the shape of the network, and to evaluate the effectiveness of Issue Crawler. This way, information was gathered on several of the levels of the TAN. Furthermore, I interviewed organizations that fit the above defined criteria for being part of the human rights TAN in Tunisia but have not been identified by Issue Crawler as being part of the network.

1.5 Literature review

1.5.1 Transnational advocacy networks 101

In this section I will explore the existing literature on TANs, the brainchild of Kathryn Sikkink and colleagues (Sikkink 1992, Keck and Sikkink 1998, Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999, Sikkink 2005). TANs are networks composed of advocacy organizations, international organizations, social movement organizations and/or various "… relevant actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information

and services." (Risse and Sikkink 1999, 18) These networks usually form in a specific political environment where there is repression from the state and a weak opposition. Borrowing from social movement literature, TANs are rooted in an environment where there are no domestic political opportunities[4], but where international political opportunities exist. But why do TANs emerge, how do they function? Keck and Sikkink (1998) developed the boomerang model that was later expanded by Risse and Sikkink (1999) into the spiral model to describe the overall functional processes of these networks. The boomerang model in a nutshell explains how domestic advocacy groups create links with advocacy groups outside of the country and provide them with information; in turn these exterior groups can pressure international organizations, larger groups and their own states to impose pressure on the country of origin to open up domestic political opportunity. The spiral model delves into the long term process whereby several 'throws' of the boomerang begin to change how the repressive regime acts towards a specific issue. In what follows I describe the different phases in the spiral model as it appears in Risse Ropp and Sikkink (1999).

The spiral model demystified

There are five phases in the spiral model for the adoption of international human rights norms. Although they are conceptually different, the movement from one phase to the other is gradual and a country can exhibit characteristics of several phases at once. *Phase one* is aptly named *repression*. This is a situation where the domestic political opposition is too weak to challenge the existing government. There is no political opportunity in domestic arena. Repression is used, though to varying degrees. The level of repression can be important because in some cases it can be so

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[4] The concept of political opportunity, as defined by Tarrow (1998), refers to the perception by individuals or groups within a state of the possibility to participate meaningfully in the process of political change.

severe as to prevent minimal linkage between the inside and outside parts of the network. There has to be a sufficient flow of information coming from advocacy groups within a state to allow the network to become active. It is at this point that *phase two* is initiated called *denial*. Here the goal is to bring the target state to the attention of the international public. This activation can be triggered by a particularly flagrant violation of human rights. At this stage, the network cooperates to produce and disseminate information about human rights violations with which it will be able to lobby international human rights organizations and western governments using international human rights norms. This stage is called *denial* because the target state is expected to reject international human rights norms and argue that its internal affairs are not subject to international jurisdiction. If the government is weakened by international pressure and the network is strong and capable to mobilize, it is possible to move on to the next phase.

The *third phase* is called *tactical concessions*. As the name implies, the target state under pressure moves to make some tactical concessions to relieve some of the international pressure, however these are usually strategic or instrumental concessions and do not indicate a will to seriously adopt international human rights norms. That said, in many cases these concessions empower the domestic opposition and refocuses network activities to this level. Here, domestic activist networks can be strengthened by international attention and can gain legitimacy through the transnational network. A space opens up for them at the domestic level, and at the same time the network can amplify its activities in the international arena. This can become a self-reinforcing situation where the government is gradually forced to make additional concessions until it loses control of the situation. Although in other cases, the government can respond with intensified repression and successfully move back to phase 2. Another

15

possibility is that the government extends phase three and convinces all parties of its commitment to human rights through rhetorical commitments or concrete actions like enacting legislations towards the respect of human rights.

Phase 4 is titled prescriptive status. At this phase, the international human rights norms are accepted and used in the political discourse and are no longer controversial. Although human rights abuses are still expected and normal, there should be substantial and sustained political change. There are several criteria that should be fulfilled at this step. The basic idea is to not only to change discursive practices in the government but to integrate human rights norms in the formal sate institutions as well as proper methods for citizens to challenge and engage the government in a dialogue if violations occur. Phase 5, called Rule-consistent behavior, basically describes the point where the government has internalized these norms into institution. I have described this last step succinctly, because this research will focus on Tunisia, which is currently exhibiting elements of stages 2, 3 and 4 and hence these phases will be the most relevant for this research.

The works of transnational advocacy networks

Having established what TANs are, I will now move on to describing their basic organizational structure. Recognized as the pioneering work in TANs, Keck and Sikkink's *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (1998) will be my reference point here. TANs organize around common ideas or values, which serve as the rallying point of the network, and are therefore the spirit of the organizational structure. The main activities of the networks are characterized as "voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal exchange of information and services" (Keck

and Sikkink 1998, 200). Several actors can come into play in these networks, the major ones are

> "…(1) international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations; (2) local social movements; (3) foundations; (4) the media; (5) churches, trade unions, consumer organizations and intellectuals; (6) parts of regional and international non-governmental organizations and (7) parts of the executive and /or parliamentary branches of governments" (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 9).

Not all these actors need to be present or involved in the TAN, however, international and domestic NGOs tend to be the centers of the network. Keck and Sikkink see NGOs as being central for many reasons, stemming from their superior resources: they tend to initiate activities and bring in more powerful actors, they become hubs of information and ideas, and they also have the ability to lobby for policy change. Within a network there is a dense exchange of information and services that are either formal or informal. Foundations and NGO tend to exchange funds and services mostly between each other. Also, individuals tend to circulate around the network, going from one organization to the next. Structurally, networks can be formed of several interconnected networks. Keck and Sikkink illustrate several main factors that can influence the strength of a TAN. Because one of the main functions of networks is the exchange of information and services, the density of the network is an important factor. Density refers to the number of member organizations, the strength of the connections in the network, and the reliability of information exchange. The density of a TAN will determine the capacity of the network to overcome the difficulties associated with having a large and diversified composition, or its degree of social agency. Another challenge is related to the confrontational nature of the activities of TANs. In this context, the strength of the state against which it is mobilized and the strength of its domestic institution are also relevant. The stronger they are, the more

17

difficult advocacy will be. Finally, the advocacy issue itself is important, since some issues can garner more international support than others.

One of the main organizational obstacles is the international nature of the network. Simply put, international networking is costly (Tarrow 2005). Working on an international scale creates additional work load that does not exist at the domestic level, for example linguistic and cultural differences, geographical separations, communication and travel costs all put additional pressure on the network. This is compounded by the organizational objectives of TANs; as Keck and Sikkink point out: TANs' "ability to generate information quickly and accurately, and deploy it effectively, is their most valuable currency" (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 10). Put in other terms, effective and efficient communication is a key aspect of these networks. Sikkink and Keck acknowledge recent developments in communication technology and a decrease in travel costs have accelerated communication between activists. However, in their work the internet's role is not developed any further. In a subsequent book on TANs Risse and Ropp acknowledge that the "mobilization potential [of TANs] has, of course, been affected enormously by the recent evolutions in information technologies, from the fax to the internet" (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999, 266) however, the exact nature of this effect is not discussed, nor is it mentioned anywhere else. At this point in the review I will move on from these seminal works to discuss the multiple organizational forms TANs can take.

1.5.2 Varieties of transnational advocacy networks

Since Keck and Sikkink (1998), there have been several studies that have deepened our knowledge on the organizational structures that TANs can take (Bennett 2005, Hertel2005/2006, Carpenter 2007, Lake and Wong 2009, Yanacopulos 2009).

In this section, I will elaborate on some of the features of the organizational structure that have been observed, or that can be derived from these studies. A recurring key question in organizational structures is whether there is an identifiable leadership within the network. Lance Bennett (2005) compares NGO advocacy coalitions, which can include TANs, to direct activism. In what follows I will first discuss Bennett's comparative analysis of NGO-centered networks and the decentralized direct activist movement. On the subject of technology and organizational structures, Bennett explains that the direct activists use open source social network to render their networked decision-making as democratic as possible. In contrast, traditional NGO coalition networks have not embraced these technologies and have kept their organizational structure more hierarchical. This is what Bennett calls the two eras of transnational activism. What interests us here is the NGO coalition networks structure described by Bennett. This reinforces earlier literature discussed above in the sense that it seems to indicate there are centers of power within traditional NGO networks which can be approximated to TANs. Though this is not solid proof it is a good clue as to organizational structures of TANs.

Carpenter's article (2007) focuses on the emergence and adoption of issues by TANs. This process is relevant to this section because it can reveal internal structural dynamics of TANs through the process of adoption of issues. There are two main actors to this process, the entrepreneur and the gatekeeper. In Carpenter's words, "Advocacy is impossible until an underlying condition in world affairs is defined as a problem by political entrepreneurs and then adopted as an issue by major ''gate-keepers'' in an advocacy arena" (2007, 112). We can conclude that the organization structure of a TAN network is not confined to its internal dynamics, but interacts with outside actors in determining its issues. Carpenter identifies these gatekeepers in the

very large and central organizations, such as Human Rights Watch. This would tend to support the observations that were presented up to now. The gatekeepers can be understood here as leaders when it comes to choosing which issue will be part of the TAN. Through the research by Lake and Wong (2005) on Amnesty International, in which the authors describe advocacy networks as scale-free networks with hubs instead of the horizontally-distributed network where each node is equal. Carpenter concludes that in the least we can affirm that gatekeepers exist within an issue area, and that further research is needed to explore the role of such gatekeepers, the internal processes of gatekeeper organizations as well as network organizations as a group. Carpenter brings up a last point that I find very interesting: she question the existing conception of relations between issue networks as cohesive whole that do not interact with other issue networks of similar issues. Rather, she suggests, we should see the possible interrelations between networks that share similar issues that can be wrapped into a larger issue. Carpenter furthered our understanding of the organizational structure of TANs to see it not necessarily as a hierarchical construction, but in a network where some nodes are more important than others when it comes to controlling information flows.

Not all TAN scholars agree upon the boomerang and spiral model as originally conceptualized by Keck and Sikkink. Shareen Hertel (2006/2007) is one such scholar who question show norms are circulated within the boomerang model. She argues that members of TANs do not always agree on the nature of the norms of the networks, nor on the best way to promote and protect them. Analysing two case studies, she demonstrates that although large and well-endowed members of TANs can sometimes expect smaller organizations to accept their conception of norms and the best ways to promote them, smaller organizations are able to resist them. Hertel

20

develops two mechanisms to explain how smaller organizations are able to do this. These are relevant to this section because they deepen our insight in the operational power relations within TAN structures. The first mechanism, "blocking", which is performed by the activists on the receiving end, consists in using the receiver's normative reference points that are incompatible with the senders' normative reference points to stop or stall the progress of a campaign. These actions seek to pressure the other side to make them conform to the receiver's normative frame. The "backdoor mechanism" seeks the same goal but does not work in opposition to the sender's normative reference points to stall the campaign. Instead, the normative reference points of the receivers are added as secondary reference points to the main ones. Hertel equates senders of norms to insiders and receivers of norms to outsiders. These mechanisms shed light onto the relations between insiders and outsiders in a TAN, a subject which had previously not been studied. What is interesting here is that Hertel does not necessarily depart from the idea that central nodes exist in TANs that are responsible for much of the information and services exchanges. However, she has successfully demonstrated that smaller nodes can also influence the network, lending more weight to the horizontal model of TANs.

If we can learn anything from these few examples, it is that TANs are flexible networks that can take a variety of forms and still fulfill their main function, creating a flow of information between advocacy organizations across borders and within them help each other in their compatible overarching goals. This brings me to discuss how the internet can facilitate this main function of these networks and how the centrality of the tool can have a formative effect on these networks.

1.5.3 Can the internet influence shape, strength and density?

We have already seen how the internet has been acknowledged to be a powerful organizational tool for TANs, but what does this imply exactly? In his analysis of the unprecedented scale and speed of the protests against the Iraq war in 2003, Lance Bennett makes several observations and raises many relevant questions that could be of importance to TAN research. Bennett concludes that the creation of a large interpersonal network using digital communication networks may have facilitated the speed and scale of the transnational protests. Although this does not speak directly to TAN theory, TANs also use digital communication networks for their activities. Bennett calls for more research on the difference between digital and face-to-face connections. As TANs use the internet more for their activities, it is relevant to ask how operating through the internet affects their interactions and their activities.

But the internet is not only used as an organizational tool by TANs. It can be used to perform advocacy activities for the network. Taking a look at Mamudu and Glantz's (2009) analysis of the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) TAN[5], we see that not only does this TAN use the internet extensively for organizational purposes; it also used it to conduct several advocacy activities. For example, the FCA used an internet petition to exert pressure upon the German government to conform to the FCA's norms. Another example is the use of the internet to criticize and publicize the German and American governments' positions on tobacco control, which was geared towards the tobacco industry's norms. The FCA was successful in its goals, and the internet played more than a simple organization role. It opened up additional

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[5] The FCA formed around the issue of international tobacco control and became an important non-governmental actor that was able to influence the negotiations of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by mobilizing civil society groups and resources using the internet.

advocacy possibilities to this TAN that would not have been available otherwise, which directly contributed to the success of the TAN.

PART 2

2.1 Crawling the virtual presence of a transnational advocacy network

In this section I describe my multiple attempts at creating the most complete map of online links between organizations that are part of the human rights TAN for Tunisia. Using the software Issue crawler was my starting point for this research. The method of selection of organization's websites to be crawled was very straightforward and relatively simple. I did a basic internet search for NGOs that were presently advocating for human rights in general in Tunisia, or for a specific human right in Tunisia.

2.1.1 The beginning

The very first crawl was executed on the 27th of February 2011. As this was the initial crawl, its main purpose was to provide me with a rough idea of which organizations were part of this TAN. To that effect, I included pages where there were hyperlinks to other advocacy organizations and I also included pages that did not have any explicit hyperlinks to other organizations, although they did refer to the defense of human rights in Tunisia. Furthermore, I used the standard exclusions list that is provided by issuecrawler.net as the basic exclusions[6]. For this research, this is significant in the sense that this crawl did not exclude social networking commercial websites such as Facebook.com, Flickr.com or Twitter.com. These websites are often linked to by the organizations under study because they serve as an information dissemination point. Therefore, parts of the network could be mapped simply because

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[6] This list includes large commercial websites that could be linked to in a standard webpage, such as google.com, hotmail.com, wincip.com or adobe.com. These are excluded because they could be identified as a co-link although they have nothing to do with the issue that is mapped. For example two starting points could have an integrated search box that links to google.com.

of their shared links to these commercial websites. The settings of this first crawl followed the guidelines of govcom.org for the crawl of an issue network[7]. The results of this first crawl were very forthcoming and it what follows I will discuss the first map that was generated (see figure 1).
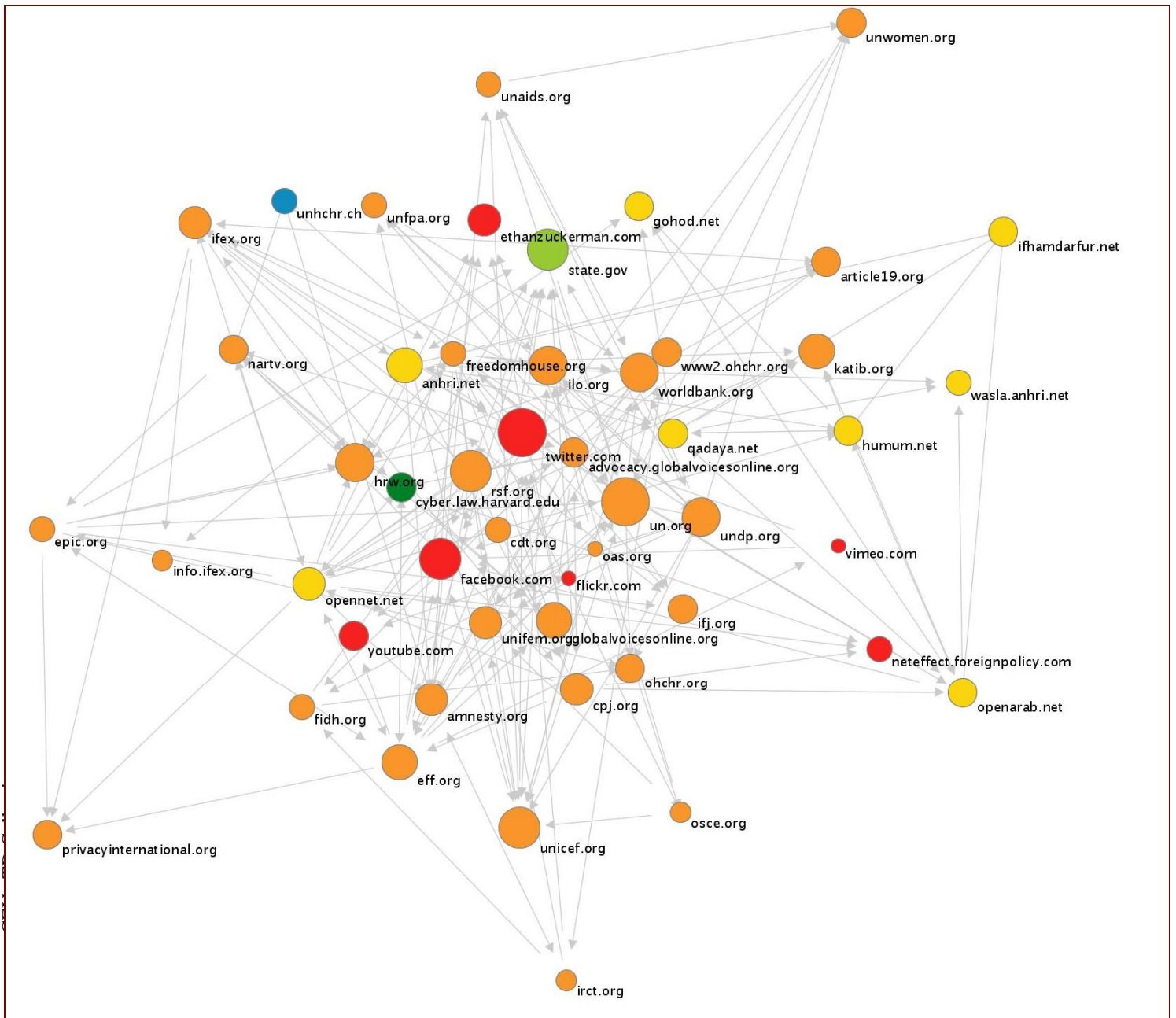

Figure 1. Crawl 1

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[7] Co-link analysis by page, two iterations, two sites deep.

This map does not include the starting points, meaning that it does not include the specific web pages from which the co-link analysis started. In other words, all of the web pages that appear here were not included in my initial internet search. This indicates that all of the web pages in this map are potentially linked to the issue of human rights advocacy in Tunisia. Next came the actual work. I proceeded to visit every node in this map to asses whether it is part of the human rights TAN in Tunisia or not. From this analysis, I was able to identify several more organizations that were possibly part of the TAN in virtue of their shared objectives and the advocacy of one or several human rights in Tunisia, and the ones that are certainly not part of the TAN. Afterwards, I geared my research of the organizations and their web pages towards a subsequent crawl that would map more organizations that are explicitly advocating human rights in Tunisia. Therefore, I could immediately exclude many of the organizations on this initial crawl as candidates for future starting points since they did not meet the basic criteria as advocating human rights in Tunisia on their web sites. Following this analysis I was able to get a much better idea of what organizations could be involved in this network.

After the interviews, I was able to come back to this map and analyze it more closely with the information that was gathered. Some of the most important NGOs involved in human rights advocacy appear here[8]. The arrow lines between nodes illustrate the relations between the websites. As I expected, these are largely inconsistent with offline relations, but there are some positive results. IFEX for example has several links to the network. These links accurately depict outgoing links to a number of its important partners, such as HRW. On the other hand, HRW as an important organization for the defense of human rights in Tunisia, has no links to the

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[8] International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), Article 19, the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)

network, but has several incoming links from the network. This difference can be explained by the fact that IFEX has a links page to its partners whereas HRW does not. It is also interesting to note that Twitter.com occupies a very central and relatively large place in the map. This crawl also revealed a wide range of actors, many UN organizations, many large international advocacy organizations and also several regional advocacy organization. However, if I were to use this map for more than a helpful tool to identify organizations that could be part of this TAN, I would have to improve the parameters, which was the objective of the subsequent crawls.

2.1.2 The challenges of crawling

After this initial crawl, I was very hopeful for this powerful tool and I wanted to produce a map that would approximate as closely as possible the offline structure of the TAN. I proceeded to try a best-case scenario crawl; one that uses only two starting points and that uses only hyperlinks pages. Also, I excluded the commercial websites that were part of the first crawl, in an effort to generate a map that would consist of a structure with co-links exclusively between non-commercial organizations. This proved to be overly ambitious as these parameters failed to produce a network. To ensure another map for the third crawl, I went the other way with the third crawl (see figure 2), including more organizations as starting points and several new organizations that had been discovered during the first crawl as well as others that had been discovered through additional research; I also removed social networking websites from the exclusions list that were added for crawl two. The map that was produced was interesting as some of the previous organizations, notably the Arab Network on Human Rights Information (ANHRI), were absent of the map although most of the main organizations are still present in the map. It did also reveal

several relevant organizations that I was not aware of before. Twitter.com is again the most central and important node in the network map.
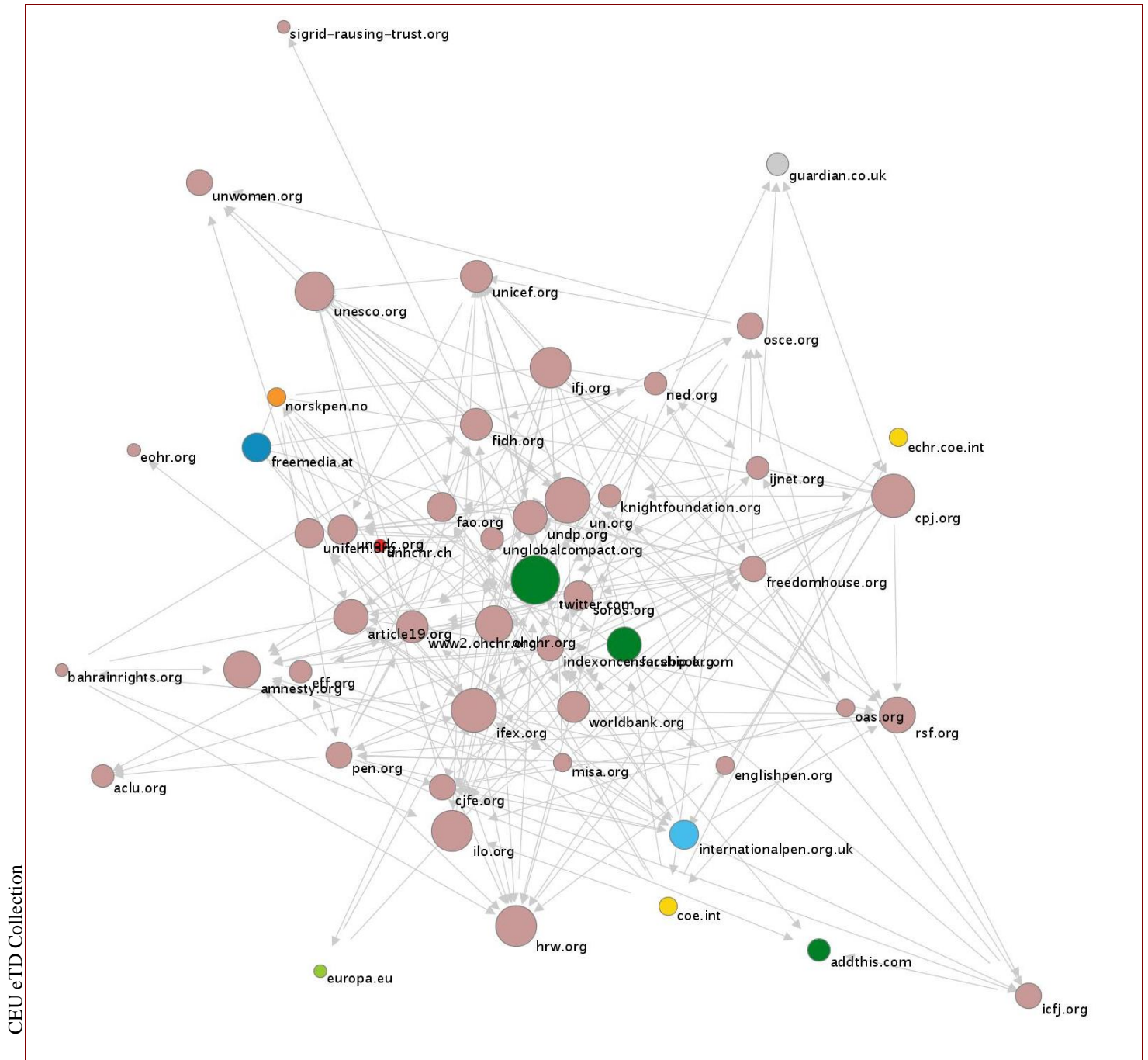

Figure 2. Cawl 3

Subsequent attempts four through seven aimed to produce a map that respected the parameters of a crawl for an issue network as much as possible. As

28

such, I included organizations that strictly adhered to the definition of an organization that is part of the TAN and that had, when possible, hyperlinks pages. I varied the crawls' starting points and levels of depth, but I kept the exclusions of the commercial organizations that I had found during the first crawl. Unfortunately, all crawls failed to produce a network. Even crawl eight, which was a snowball crawl meant to reveal a wider range of actors failed to produce a network. Perplexed by this, it became evident that I would have to relax my parameters to allow for a map of the network to be produced.

With crawls nine through 21 I experimented to determine the best set of parameters with the best set starting points. The best map, Crawl 21 (see figure 3), was produced using only six starting points that were links pages. It is the map that included the most organizations (seven) that were identified by interviewees as being part of their network using the less starting points. It is also the map with the most iterations and depth. I also experimented using 32 starting points in crawl 20, but the results were marginally better, including only two more organizations that were already included in the starting points. Throughout these tries, I noticed a recurring problem stemming from my exclusions. If I excluded Twitter.com from the network, I would consistently fail to produce a network. Once crawl 18 produced a network, I tried using the exact same parameter for crawl 19 while excluding Twitter.com. Crawl 19 failed to produce a network. This indicates clearly that Twitter.com is the linchpin for this particular set of starting points. This is interesting for a number of reasons that I will discuss in the following section.
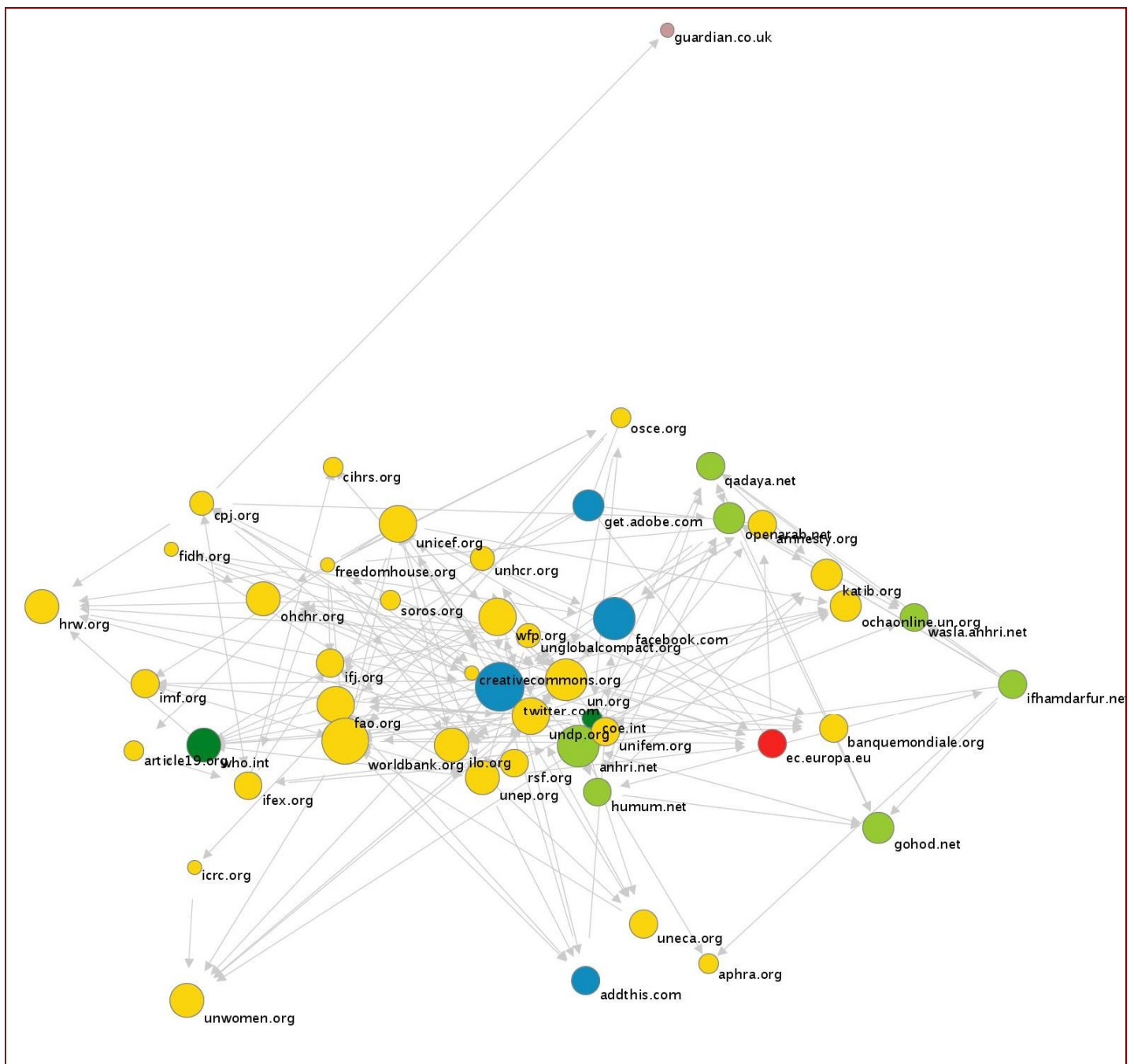
29

Figure 3. Crawl 21

2.1.3 Issues with the crawler

Issue crawler is a great tool, but how does it fare when it is used to map the TAN in Tunisia? In what follows I will discuss some of the problems in using Issue Crawler for the mapping of TAN issue networks. The first is a basic problem with the assumption upon which Issue Crawler is based. As it was described before, Issue

Crawler maps the network based on the hyperlinks embedded in a webpage. Specifically, relationships are mapped based on reciprocal linking practices. A network is formed when there are sufficient interlinks between pages. Though the creator of issue crawler do not affirm that the existence of a network is contingent on its web linking practices (Marres and Rogers 2005), this is still a weakness of the software.

In the specific case of the TAN in Tunisia, this caused many problems. First of all, very few organizations have a links page. The only prominent international organizations in these are IFEX-TMG and the Arab Network for Human Rights Information. Most of the prominent organizations in the network seeme not to have reciprocal linking practices. A second problem is that many of the local Tunisian organization do not have a website, or if they do, it is very bare and not up to date because of the heavy repression and censorship under the Ben Ali regime. This means that many organizations could never appear on the map of the network. Another major problem is the proliferation of web pages polluted with hyperlinks. Though theoretically a co-link analysis should be able to plow through these since a page is only retained if two or more pages link to it, this can still be a problem. Web pages today are rich with hyperlinks to a great variety of pages. For example, on one of my crawls the third most linked page was the creative commons home page. This can make it hard to disseminate relevant pages from irrelevant pages. A last issue is that the results are inevitably biased based on the starting points.

Simply put, even if there were reciprocal linking practices, interactions between organizations are much too complex for Issue Crawler to give any useful information beyond the indication of a possible relationship within a TAN. This is because in a TAN, the basis of the relationship between organizations is the exchange

of information and services. This exchange happens mostly behind closed doors or is explicated in reports that do not have hyperlinks. Furthermore, the actual exchanges and degrees of collaboration can only be revealed by the members of each organization. This has of course already been discussed in the TAN literature (Devereaux 2009) where it is recommended to use other methods to analyze a TAN. Issue crawler shines when it is tasked with finding what web pages could be related to a specific issue. This is not to say issue crawler is not a useful tool in the context of this study. On the contrary it was very useful to get an initial idea of some of the network dynamics and to explore possibilities that were not obvious through a simple internet search. This was the main reason Issue Crawler was used, although it was of interest to see how it would perform in mapping the actual network.

To conclude this section, I will discuss the curious problem that I encountered when attempting to map this TAN, that of Twitter.com. As I mentioned earlier, I had trouble forming a network without including Twitter.com. Crawls 2-8,11,19 all excluded Twitter.com from the crawl and did not form a network. I tested this by having the exact same crawl parameters with crawl 18 and 19 except for the exclusion of Twitter.com, which partially confirmed my suspicions that Twitter.com was the problem, since it turns out to have the most in-links in most of the crawls. Still, it is an interesting occurrence because it could point to another avenue for crawling the web. It is not very surprising that Twitter.com is a key point in the network as many of the interviewees have indicated they use Twitter in their daily activities to gather and disseminate information. Given how widespread twitter is, especially in the NGO networking sphere, it could be a worthwhile avenue to explore. Perhaps the issue crawler software could be adapted to crawl tweets instead of official web pages.

2.2 Describing the human rights transnational advocacy network of Tunisia

In what follows I will present my finding pertaining to the characteristics of the TAN that has formed in Tunisia around the issue of human rights, thus providing an answer to RQ1. This description should not be understood as a complete account of the human rights TAN in Tunisia, but rather a description of some of its main components. This is because it is impossible to give a complete description without more information than was collected. The timeframe described ranges from slightly before the January 14 revolution to the present. There have been significant changes within the TAN since the revolution, and the present state of the TAN is still changing as this is written. Throughout the description I will point out the significant changes which reveal interesting dynamics within the TAN. This description will be further relevant in the analysis of the data for RQ2. I will describe the main components through which the TANs are usually characterized. First I will describe the shape of the network. TAN networks can take many shapes. As we have seen before, early TAN literature predicts a horizontal exchange of information and services between organizations within a TAN, with organizations that are at the center of this exchange, creating a somewhat lopsided structure that is not entirely horizontal. Subsequent literature has found that this is not a constant, and that the exchanges can have different relationships. Second, I will discuss the normative cohesiveness of the network. By this, I refer to TAN literature where it is clear that shared norms and ideas are an essential part of any TAN. Normative cohesion is positively associated to the effectiveness of a TAN. This means that the more basic principles and ideas are shared, the better a TAN can function. Hence, a high level of normative cohesion increases the chances of the success of a TAN. The third characteristic is the strength and density of the network. As was explained before, the strength and density of a

TAN refers to the number and size of the organizations that cooperate on an issue and the intensity of their exchanges. In other words, the more organizations there are in the network, and the larger they are, the stronger the network is as a whole. Density then refers to how closely they work together. In early TAN literature this can be understood in terms of regularity of exchanges, but as my findings will show, it has progressed to include many other mechanism that go beyond simple exchanges.

2.2.1 Fitting a square peg in four round holes: shape of the network

The TAN in Tunisia is complex to say the least. Through semi-structured interviews, I was able to gather information on the domestic and international aspects of this TAN. The Tunsian TAN is presently in full metamorphosis because of the January 14 revolution, termed by one interviewee *La révolution de la dignité et de la liberté* [9]. Before I discuss in depth the characteristics of this TAN, I will present a simplified account from the interviews of the organizational structure before the revolution. Since a few years before the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and up to the revolution, two international NGOs were the main external partners of the local Tunisian human rights NGOs, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and IFEX. These organizations provided much help in the form of seminars, training, dissemination and exchange of information and reports, and advocacy. Regionally, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) and the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) both helped local organizations to have a presence on the internet from the outside of Tunisia. Internally, the key Tunisian NGOs included the *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LTDH), the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (ATFD),

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[9] The revolution of dignity and liberty.

Conseil National pour les Libertés en Tunisie (CNLT). Over the years, these key organizations learned to count on each other and developed close partnerships as they were constantly the targets of state repression. The shape of this network is definitely very horizontal as far as the decision making process is concerned. It has been consistently reiterated by all interviewees that their decision making process is and has always been completely independent. However the resource superiority argument brought forth by Keck and Sikkink (1998) that was discussed earlier stays true in this context. Not only do NGOs outside of Tunisia have superior resources, they were able to operate freely. The main contribution that was possible for many Tunisian NGOs was to inform the external NGOs of abuses within Tunisia. Therefore, at this stage, the large external NGOs like FIDH and IFEX can be understood as central hubs of the TAN, creating a somewhat hierarchical arrangement. However as I mentioned, this is a simplified description of the network.

There are several reasons that make a general description of this TAN challenging. First, I consider all NGOs that defend one or many human rights as part of this TAN. I will explain how this influences the shape through a specific example, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange - Tunisia Monitoring Group (IFEX-TMG). IFEX-TMG is a coalition of 21 NGOs that is administered by IFEX. IFEX is a coalition of organizations that was originally formed to coordinate efforts expose free expression violations around the world. IFEX-TMG is a natural extension of IFEX that has been very active in Tunisia since 2004. Though their main activities consist of "campaigns to raise awareness of free expression violations in Tunisia and to support independent journalists, writers, and civil society activists in their struggle to end censorship in the country"[10] their activities have brought them into continuous

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[10] http://www.ifex.org/tunisia/tmg/index1.php

contact with the larger human rights advocacy network. This is because the defense of freedom of expression is intimately linked to many other human rights. As was explained by interviewee 2, a system that respects human and civil rights must respect the rights of associative media; hence, the whole question must be seen through this lens. How does this complicate the TAN? IFEX-TMG has its own specific mandate, and each organization within it has its own respective targets. Despite these specificities, there is a high level of collaboration within IFEX-TMG. As interviewee 4 points out, when an issue is more specific to an organization, it takes the lead, but it is still working in concert with others in the group. In this sense, the network's shape still conforms to Keck and Sikkink's (1998) model of a lopsided horizontal network, but it is dynamic and responsive to the particular challenges and issues it addresses. While IFEX-TMG is only part of this TAN, it demonstrates the complex and fluid nature of it.

Another point of view reinforces this characteristic of the TAN. Interviewee 3's organization does cooperate with many NGOs in and out of Tunisia as far as exchanges of information goes. That said it is very difficult for this organization to cooperate with local Tunisian NGOs on concrete activities because of its very narrow interest. Although its specificity is a human right, it is too narrow to develop a wider range of partners in Tunisia, and has adopted a strategy of acting alone in Tunisia. This observation further points to the idea that organizational structures can vary on a case by case basis, making it difficult to give an overall form of the network. That said, the evidence so far points to what Carpenter (2007) has put forward, that despite differences in specific areas of advocacy, these can be tied back to the main overarching issue of human rights.

In addition, NGO operations in Tunisia are changing as we speak. The January 14 revolution has in some cases allowed an expansion the type of activities that are possible, or even changed the priorities of NGOs. In others, it has empowered actors that were previously weak, changing the organizational structure within Tunisia. This is in line with the spiral model of Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999) describing the shift from a closed system to a partial opening. For example, interviewee 2 has described the formation of a consortium of 18 organizations that have outlined a road map of common objectives. Furthermore, many international organizations that were constrained before the revolution have found a new freedom in their operations and are able to increase their work with local Tunisian organizations. Interviewee 5 has explained that many organizations within Tunisia have greatly expanded their operations in Tunisia and have initiated partnerships with regional actors that did not have a role in Tunisia before. In general, exchanges have intensified in all parts of the network, meaning between internal Tunisian partners, between international NGOs, and across the Tunisian borders. Because of the many tasks at hand in Tunisia, the largest of which are the holding of elections on July 24 this year, or the many allegations of ongoing abuses by government forces, there is much change in the TAN landscape. The LTDH is a good example as it is no longer restrained by the Ben Ali regime it is free to act and has become somewhat of a hub within Tunisia.

So after all this what is the shape of the network in Tunisia? Because of the many clusters that each have a specific shape, and the dynamic nature of the shape depending on the issue or activity that is being addressed, it is difficult to brand this network with a single label. General characteristics can however be described as generally horizontal with some organizations taking the lead on specific issues, with

every organization contributing with its specificities. The best characterization would be the very vague, yet proper adjective "asymmetric" and issue dependent

2.2.2 Indicators of success: network strength and density

According to Keck and Sikkink (1998) the success of a TAN is partially linked to its strength and density. The TAN in Tunisia has exhibited many signs of strength and density in the years since the second WSIS in Tunis. Many of the interviewees highlighted WSIS 2005 as an important event that brought human rights violations of the Ben Ali regime to the attention of the international community. As it was mentioned before, in the period since WSIS many organizations of varying size have been involved in advocacy in the TAN. When we talk about strength and density, it partially refers to the number and the size of the organizations involved in the TAN. However, a complete account of the organizations which were and are involved in the human rights TAN in Tunisia is beyond the scope of the research, therefore I will focus on the other aspects of strength and density: shared principles, goals and targets as well as interactivity and cooperation.

The power of human rights principles

I included questions in the interviews to gather information on the normative principles of this network and how important they are to TAN actors. These revealed what are the normative principles around which the TAN is organized, if they are shared by the organizations in the TAN, and also how important these are to the activists when they cooperate with others in the network. When referring to a specific value, all interviewees conceptualized them in the terms as outlined by the universal declaration of human rights (UDHR). This means that, even if there are very narrow

guiding principles, they are enshrined in the UDHR. In what follows I will describe how shared principles and values are important to each organization when cooperating with others in their networks.

Shared ideas and values as guiding principles of action are unanimously understood as essential components of any partnership by all interviewees. Interviewee 2 comments that sharing the same principles is an essential part of the network: it is the basis upon which organizations can work together. In a concrete sense, interviewee 2 explains that although there can be disagreements on how to carry out activities, sharing the same principles is what keeps organizations working together. Interviewee 4 carries this further by saying that shared principles allow for an underlying linkage, something to bring organizations together although they are working on very different issues. Interviewee 3 sheds light on a different aspect, stating that even though guiding principles can be shared, cooperation can be impossible if partners are not willing to defend some of these shared principles through concrete activities. This shows that shared principles are not always enough when implementing activities, rather, the willingness to defend can be a more important factor. In any case, every interviewee indicated without hesitation that within their networks, there is a very strong agreement on the basic guiding principles and that it would be nearly impossible to work with organizations that do not share them. In this sense, the TAN in Tunisia has a high level of normative cohesiveness, which doubtlessly contributes to its overall strength and density.

In what follows, I will share an interesting case that was brought up during the interview. Because of the difficult circumstances under the Ben Ali regime, a coalition was formed between advocacy organizations that take human rights as their guiding principles with advocacy organizations that are guided by religious principles.

This was made possible through the shared objective of a general amnesty, but it was not made easily. Some organizations would not work with each other because of contradictory values, and much debate was needed. However, in the end, the common objective overpowered even great differences in principles for the single shared objective. This example serves to show an exception to the need to share normative principles in order to cooperate given extreme circumstances, but it is nevertheless strategically sound. An old adage comes to mind: *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*.

Collaborating for freedom

Interview question were also added to determine how closely organizations work with each other and what specific activities they undertook through a partnership. Through these answers I will further describe the strength and density of the human rights TAN in Tunisia. Interviewees have described a wide range of collaborative and cooperative activities and have consistently described the importance of these in the development and delivery of their activities. In the following paragraphs I will provide detailed examples to illustrate the wide variety of partnerships in this TAN. Ultimately this will serve to characterize the TAN in Tunisia and will help establish factual information for further sections. I will present how the interviewees understand the role of cooperation in their work, how it enhances the achievement of their goals, and whether they share the same targets.

The specific activities of the members of the network depend on their position in the network, whether they are operating inside or outside of Tunisia. External organizations work with each other for information exchange and dissemination; joint missions to the field; synergizing research and reporting; and joint action on urgent and serious human rights violations. Interviewees reported a high level of

collaboration/cooperation when the specific issues were compatible, however, when targets are not shared this can make it difficult if not impossible. Often what can happen is that larger issues are broken down to specific ones and distributed amongst the partner organizations for a more efficient use of resources. Through the interviews a specific example was given: an IFEX-TMG initiative with local Tunisian organizations covered three main areas, freedom of association, justice and freedom of expression. The work was distributed amongst the collaborating organizations according to their specificities. In this sense, although the specific targets of each organization was not shared, it was still possible to take advantage of TAN dynamics and exploit the power of cooperation.

Organizations working from the inside often need to collaborate with external organizations to organize conferences and seminars; election monitoring and citizen education; law reforms; dissemination of information and reports; relay of information; exchanges of information, services, experiences and operational models. Internal organizations in Tunisia also collaborate with each other on a wide range of issues such as protesting; denouncing human rights abuses; political reforms and policy proposals; and disrespect of the law. However, these cannot be characterized as transnational since they occur within the borders of Tunisia. Nevertheless they contribute to the success of the TAN as a whole and are important to the study of TANs. Perhaps internal cooperation should also figure as an important aspect of the spiral model. Another example of collaboration was given by an interviewee that was quite specific. Local Tunisian organizations were able to rely on very small organizations formed by Tunisian emigrants abroad for a wide variety of support. This sort of collaboration does not figure in TAN literature, but is nevertheless part of the TAN network. It could be more difficult to analyze given the small contributions

41

of each organizations, however, if there are enough of these organizations, they could become significant actors.

As it was discussed, there is also a change and expansion in the specific activities after the January 14 revolution. Interviewees have generally described these new activities as having the general purpose of generating democratic institution to prevent a relapse to a repressive regime. Specifically, these can be political advocacy for specific policy change or collaborating for the elaboration of new policies to create solid democratic institutions. Every interviewee has expressed great enthusiasm at the opportunities the revolution has created. Again, many organizations are focusing on their areas of expertise, but all have the same over arching goal, which is to create an environment to foster the growth of democratic institutions.

Next I discuss how the interviewees have depicted their partnership experiences. This will help us clues as to the strength and density of the network. I remind the reader that the more collaboration there is, and the more intense it is, the better this is for the TAN. Generally, these have been positive but there have been negative experiences and many obstacles to collaborations. For NGOs working outside of Tunisia, organizational collaboration is not always deemed as necessary to the accomplishment of objectives, but it is always seen as desirable because of the many benefits associated to it. For organizations working inside of Tunisia, the repressive environment made international collaboration very beneficial and welcomed, sometimes even essential, to accomplish its activities.

Interviewee 2 was especially adamant about the benefits of collaborative activities in the context of the human rights TAN in Tunisian, saying it is a great advantage. It is the amalgamation of different organizations that allows the development of a strong and concrete vision for action. It creates a well-rounded

42

approach that is more effective. Efficiency is also achieved through this collaborative model by creating a synergistic effect of joint efforts. However different their micro objectives may be, they are united by the same purpose. In this sense, even though it does not share the same specific goals of other organizations, it is able to find ways to overcome this problem and collaborate. Interviewee 2's organization is very much involved in collaborative activities inside Tunisia and with international organizations. Interviewee 4 echoes this attitude towards collaboration, saying that there is a very good working relationship with other organizations in the network. When statements are made, all partners approve it and provide input, they meet very often to make project updates, and they exchange strategies and information. The network is characterized as quite cohesive.

There are however some examples of difficulties in collaborating with partners. Interviewee 2 gave an example where a lack of collaboration or even cooperation has impeded the development of policies and regulations in the use of a public good. A local organization that was a partner previously no longer collaborates and is now acting of its own accord without consulting with others. This is severely disrupting attempts at regulating the public good, which is damaging general progress. Though this is an exception, it could be reasoned that collaboration can be difficult once regime change happens and there is no longer an obvious advantage to collaborating with others. Although interviewee 3's organization conducts concrete activities largely without any other organizations save one inside of Tunisia, because of its very specific goal, it does exchange information with most of the larger organizations of the network. When asked why this is, the simple answer is that it is difficult to work in Tunisia. The interviewee did however indicate that the revolution and subsequent reopening of Tunisia has enabled additional potential partners. From

43

this bit, I would suggest that the repressive environment would have been a big factor in making collaboration difficult if not impossible with organizations in Tunisia for the specific interest of interviewee 3's organization. When prodded further about this lack of collaboration on concrete activities, the interviewee explained that sometimes, organizations act alone to gain more visibility for a variety of reasons. This would point to a possible disadvantage of working in collaboration, where individual organizations can get lost in the coalition and would not reap the benefits of a larger exposure. Perhaps to counter act this, coalitions should also focus on giving exposure to their individual organizations.

From these interviews, it can be said that the human rights TAN in Tunisia has managed to initiate much collaboration involving many organizations of different sizes and specific purposes. The differences in these specific purposes are usually mitigated by shared principles, although disagreements do happen and can hurt collaborative activities. This, however, does not affect the sharing and dissemination of information. In fact, organizations have learned to use these differences to their advantage. These interviews have also unveiled other organizational dynamics that should be taken into consideration when analyzing TANs.

2.3 The internet and the network

Throughout this section, I explore how the internet as a computer mediated communication technology that is employed at various degrees by all organizations in the human rights TAN in Tunisia has influenced the shape, density and strength of the network. First I describe how the internet is used, highlighting the specific uses based on differences due to the position of each organizations in the network; the nature of activities; or specific cases described by the interviewees. Then I will make a case for

the formative impacts of the internet giving examples of activities and collaborations that have a direct impact on the shape, density and strength of the network. This process, put to the scale of society as a whole, has been the object of a debate between the diffusion of innovations theory and the social shaping of technology perspective. Leah A. Lievrouw (2006) reviews this debate and proposes a middle ground solution to the debate whereas technological development and social development are intertwined and interactive, at differing degrees depending on the specific of each case. I position myself here theoretically although my argumentation does seem to go on the diffusion of innovation side, this is because the TAN is not a large enough social process to be able to draw conclusions of its effects on technology. However I argue that it is susceptible to adapt its activities to this medium as well as use it to innovate.

2.3.1 Using the internet beyond interpersonal communication

Every international advocacy organization uses the internet in its daily activities. Interviewees were asked how they use the internet in their daily activities in their organizations. The most common use reported by interviewees is email and Skype for communication. However, other social media, such as Facebook and Twitter are also used. Additionally, the internet is used as a source of information for these organizations. They can be aware of the activities of other organizations and share them with others. Finally it is used to disseminate information to a wider audience. More specific uses also vary between organizations according to their specific activities. For example, interviewee 1 describes a wide range of uses such as maintaining a world wide network of informants; a source of additional information from bogglers or concerned citizens. It becomes the first step in information research

and monitoring operations and allows to go above traditional contacts. There are most likely many other uses that were not reported because they have become integrated into our daily lives that they are taken for granted, for example making travel arrangements with an airline.

For organizations working from within Tunisia, the internet has many similar functions, but its importance as a mean of communication is much different in the sense that it offered the possibility to circumvent surveillance by the repressive government. Tunisians organizations could not rely on the internet the way international organizations do. Often, organizations could not even have an internet connection from their offices, let alone a website to disseminate their information. They used the internet primary to relay reports and activities to international organizations who would then disseminate the information. This often required a good measure of cunning from individuals who were known as activists, but the governments' ability to exercise surveillance was limited. One of the more innovative means was the use of facebook to disseminate information directly from the local organization by creating a page for the organization. Now, activities are being normalized and Tunisian organizations are using the internet much in the manner that was described above.

When asked how they use the internet for organizational purposes, interviewees had much to say about how it improves efficiency in their work. Again, the use of email for mailing lists is the most widespread use. Group emails are used for gathering input from multiple organizations quickly, for example to circulate open letters to get inputs and to gather signatures. The creation of email lists for specific types of actions and activities also makes activities more efficient by preventing the doubling of work by contact other organizations fast enough to verify that work is not

being doubled. The internet also allows for fast group action to react to an urgent event, such as the arrest of a colleague in their home country. In other cases, it can also be used to help with funding. The most interesting aspect of the internet for this study is its capacity to make group action much easier and faster. It makes certain forms collaborative of action much more feasible and practical than without the internet. In other words, it opens up new possibilities.

To attempt to expose these, I asked the interviewees how their work would be impacted if they did not have access to the internet, and subsequently how they though the internet had impacted the way they worked with other organizations. These two questions generated many interesting and relevant responses. A shared response is that the internet has sped everything up. This simple fact has many effects on the network. Because the information cycle is much faster, activists know they can send out requests and receive responses much faster. This expectation of a rapid response incites individuals in different organizations to solicit others when it is as simple as sending out a group email. Therefore, the internet does not only speed up interactions, it incites organizations to communicate with each other when they would not otherwise. The internet clearly contributes to network density in one way by speeding up communications, but in another by increasing interactions between organizations. This increase in speed does come with disadvantages. Gathering more information faster means more work needs to be done to process it, verify it, and share it. Interviewee 3 said this can be overwhelming, at times and that it is important to take a step back to see the bigger picture.

The increase in speed also decreases reaction time generally enabling organizations to be more productive in a shorter time span. Increased reactivity is a great advantage for these organizations because it enables a specific type of

collaborative action. Several interviewees gave examples of events where they had to react quickly in order to prevent human rights abuses by the Ben Ali regime. In each occurrence, a key factor was the ability to organize and quickly mobilize the resources of several organizations to apply immediate pressure on the government to stop the abuses. To coordinate and execute this kind of collective action would be possible without the internet, albeit much more difficult and less effective. Interviewee 5 puts this advantage in another context: time is a political force. The ability of organizations to react together quickly increases their ability to confront the government on human rights abuses, which makes them more of a political threat to the repressive government.

To highlight how important the internet is to some of these organizations, I will quote the response of one of the interviewee's when I asked her to imagine working without the internet "Without the internet, it would be difficult, almost impossible to do some of the work we do". When prodded for a specific example, the interviewee responded "Imagine coordinating a joint action [with several partners] and consulting with local partners on the content of that thing without the internet, what would I do? Would I phone everyone? Would I fax everyone? I mean [pause] that would not happen regularly". Clearly the internet has become an indispensible tool for some organizations to maintain their current level of operation which relies heavily on collaborating with other organizations of their network. Another interviewee who labeled themselves as 'old school' answered this question from a much different perspective. The preferred mode of communication of this individual is the telephone. As such, loosing the internet would indeed slow down operations, but it would still be possible to make ends meet. We should still stay somewhat

skeptical of the benefits of the internet because we cannot forget that organizations managed to do many of the same activities before the internet that they do today.

From these comments, we should start thinking about the possibilities that the internet creates. I will take the specific example of IFEX-TMG because it is a coalition of 21 organizations united by an overarching shared principle, yet where each organization has its own specificity. I argue that the internet makes organizations like the IFEX-TMG possible to exist and function at a level of effectiveness and efficiency that makes it worthwhile. The internet helps generate highly connected structures of organizations that would other not be able to collaborate together given the high costs of international advocacy, the time it would take to share information and get feedback on the collaborative activities. It allows for many specific interest organizations to participate to larger projects and contribute meaningfully. This is a cluster where no matter the small niche by which an organization is interested, it is possible for them to contribute to a larger fight for human rights, to do it on many fronts, and include diverse interests which all adds up to a superior strategy. This organizational model is made feasible and practical through the internet. Going back to the literature, this seems to work well with the general idea of the spiral model in the sense it sees the demise of the system as a gradual process of mounting pressure and changing of ideology. The internet helps create a TAN that is able to mobilize a greater variety of actors on a wider variety of issues with a more diverse set of means.

2.3.2 Beyond organizational benefits

Clearly the internet strengthens the TAN through many organizational benefits, but it also helps the overall TAN by empowering individual organizations in their daily activities. Interviewees discussed a wide range of these benefits, and in

what follows I present the most significant advantages. Though this does not speak directly to the research questions, it is still useful in the context of TAN literature. As it was discussed earlier, TAN literature sees the internets' role in TANs as increasing communications between organizations in a TAN. However, the expansion of the internet, its versatile nature and its widespread use makes it a great tool for organizations that are part of a TAN outside of simple organizational communications for collaborative action.

Interviewees reported that the internet allows them to reach a larger audience and gives much more exposure to their organizations, their activities and what is going on in Tunisia. There are many channels through which they can gain more exposure, such as an organizations' website and social networking websites. Exposure brings about many benefit to the TAN and its activities. Interviewee 4 gave a concrete example: initial exposure in some cases brings about the interest of the mainstream media, which can contact the organization for more information to highlight a specific case. Increased exposure of the issues that are defended by the TAN gives it more power and helps to put more pressure on governments. When making specific cases visible, there is more pressure on the government to react to abuses because they cannot divert attention from it easily. Clearly exposure helps the overall effectiveness of the TAN in Tunisia, and the internet helps increase the exposure of its organizations. Furthermore, most interviewees stressed the cost saving advantage of using the internet. This is especially beneficial for smaller organizations that constantly struggle financially. In the context of the TAN, this is especially relevant for organizations working under a repressive regimes. Through the interviews, it became very apparent that under Ben Ali, finances were very difficult as activists and their organizations were constantly being harassed by the government.

Another benefit is an increased accessibility to international organizations. Interviewee 1 indicates that prior to the internet, it was more difficult for grass roots activists or concerned citizens to contact these large organizations. With the advent of the internet, a quick internet search can turn up information on large international organizations and the means to contact them directly. This increases the capacity of international organizations to accomplish their activities, strengthening the TAN as a whole. In addition to these, it is seen as a possible recruitment tool, from interviewee 5's words "*C'est un moyen qui est militant, si l'on sait l'utiliser. Qui fait gagner du temps, qui nous fait gagner des militants, des sympathisants, qui nous apportent de nouvelles recrues*"[11]. Looking towards the future, interviewee 5 also gave several examples of how the internet could be further developed for the purposes of human rights advocacy in Tunisia. Seeing the internet as a relatively new tool, interviewee 5 envisions it as a way to bridge the gap between the old generation of activists and the younger generation. He says, "It is up to us to be creative and to find new ways to use it, to support the movement, to enhance the network, to enhance the message." These words resonate in the present as Tunisians struggle to recreate their government and their institutions.

2.4 The internet as a weapon against repression

Tunisians under Ben Ali were subject to some of the most intense internet surveillance and censorship. Anecdotal evidence puts the number of technicians actively involved in surveillance and censorship at around 600 for a country of 11 million people with an estimated 34% of its population using the internet. According

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[11] It is a militant medium, if one knows how to use it. It saves time, it wins over militants, sypathizers, it brings us new recruits.

to the 2009 OpenNet initiative report on Tunisia[12] the government pervasively blocked "a range of Web content and has used nontechnical means to impede journalists and human rights activists from doing their work". Under these conditions, using the internet for any activities related to the defense of human rights came with many risks. There are several examples of individuals being imprisoned and tortured for voicing their objections to the regime through the internet. In this section, I explain how this repression affected the use of the internet by the members of the human rights TAN in Tunisia and if it was still a useful tool for their activities.

All interviewees were very much aware of the risks associated with the use of the internet for their activities. This awareness influenced the way individuals used the internet when communicating to and from Tunisia. Again, there is a large difference between individuals working inside of Tunisia versus those working outside. For external organizations, the focus was to try to secure communications as much as they could. Some organizations tried to deal directly with the problem by providing training to Tunisians on how to circumvent surveillance and repression, the logic being that once these activists would return to Tunisia they could teach their peers these techniques. One of the most useful tools was the use of proxies, though these can be difficult to use. Tunisians who received the training could go back to Tunisia and train others in these techniques. This awareness also dictated what information could be shared over the internet. The most sensitive information would have to be withheld and provided in person through different means. These restrictions also applied when working in Tunisia. Certain information would have to be memorized since it could not be sent over the internet and activists could not risk loosing it to the authorities. One interviewee pointed out that for some Tunisians,

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[12] http://opennet.net/research/profiles/tunisia

circumventing internet surveillance was simply too complicated given all the restrictions on internet access. Once an email was received from an informant, there was just as much risk to simply call the person than to respond by email. In these specific cases, it was more effective to use the telephone.

Ultimately, Tunisian activists took the risks. Activists in Tunisia were aware of the many laws that incriminated the use of the internet for certain activities. These laws were often unclear, allowing great latitude for their interpretation. Several interviewees commended Tunisians for their adaptability and resourcefulness in finding new and innovative ways to circumvent internet surveillance. The constant pressure motivated Tunisian to find new and more secure ways to secure their communications and they met a good measure of success. For example they pioneered the use of Facebook to have secure communications. It was also generally accepted that the powers of surveillance of the government were not unlimited, and that a certain amount of misdirection by using friend's email accounts, fake names and other techniques could evade surveillance. Therefore, despite surveillance, the internet remained a useful tool to communicate with external organizations.

For some activists, using the internet despite all the mechanisms meant to restrain its use became a sort of protest. As one interviewee puts it "...at a certain point, we just didn't care. We were exercising our right to information, and it was up to the government to change its laws. If he [Ben Ali] wants to repress, it will be just another public trial for the militants to denounce." Because Ben Ali tried so hard to use the internet as an instrument to control Tunisians there was even a certain feeling of satisfaction of using the internet as a tool against the regime and its abuses. It is the

opinion one of the interviewees that internet surveillance and censorship actually worked against Ben Ali.

> "In a way, censorship and surveillance helped the demise of Ben Ali since he was working against a new generation that wanted more information, more communication. This youth that was not politically charged but wanted to talk and exchange ideas, and learned how to circumvent censorship. His actions only made people more knowledgeable on the internet and how to use it. And us human rights militant benefited from this creativity of the youth."

Despite suffering some of the worst internet surveillance and repression, Tunisians managed to use the internet against the very regime that had control of it. This is a significant finding for TAN literature because TANs usually operate around repressive regimes. It shows that the internet can still be a very useful tool despite draconian controls and intense surveillance.

Looking to the future, interviewees still se the internet as a useful tool for their activities related to the defense of human rights in Tunisia. Interviewee 2 says that as the situation normalizes, it will not have the same role, but that it will continue to be useful for communications. Interviewee 4 says that it is still indispensible "for us and for them". Interviewee 5 sees it as becoming even more useful since there will no longer be barriers to its use, local Tunisian organizations are now able to use it to its full potential. For example, some organizations have already set up an intranet to coordinate their offices. In conclusion, some of the information gathered from the interviewees paints the internet as something more than just a tool to communicate. In this case, the fight to use the internet free from surveillance became a mean of political contestation.

54

PART 3

3.1 Answering the questions

Throughout the last section, I presented the information that was gathered through five semi-structured interviews with activist working for NGOs that are part of the TAN that has formed around the issue of human rights in Tunisia. These interviews have revealed much information about this TAN and in what follows I present the findings that are relevant to the research questions that were presented earlier and compare them to the hypotheses that were made.

RQ1, *What are at present the characteristics of the TAN that formed around the issue of human rights violations by the Tunisian government under Ben Ali?* I hypothesized that this would be a complex network with different clusters that would have different shapes, such as more hierarchical or more horizontal. I expected the density and strength between the clusters to be low. Furthermore, I expected there would be a wide variety of actors involved in the network. The information that was gathered does not allow for a full falsification of this hypothesis but it does provide a partial picture. However, the information must be contextualized temporally since there have been significant changes in the overall structure of the TAN because of the January 14th revolution in Tunisia that allowed a subsequent opening of the country, drastically changing interactions between NGOs of the TAN. Before the revolution, there are indeed some identifiable clusters in the network that are largely based on different specific areas of advocacy. The best example of this is the IFEX-TMG cluster. This cluster is very dense and strong by virtue of shared principles and a shared understanding of the benefits of collaboration to the ultimate larger success of their activities. This cluster still has many connections to other organizations in the network because the issue of human rights is so large that collaborating on the larger

55

issue of human rights helps even the specific targets of individual organizations. The benefits of collaboration are largely recognized and desired by most of the individuals that were interviewed for this study. Therefore, before the January 14th revolution, the TAN as a whole did exhibit many signs of strength and density while having a dynamic shape that can vary depending on the specific clusters. The network is now changing in response to the fall of Ben Ali and the rush for elections. The emergence of new and older Tunisian NGOs that were repressed under Ben Ali has opened up many new possibilities for cooperation and collaboration both with international organization and between Tunisian NGOs. This has not affected the overall shape of the network but has made it stronger and denser by adding new actors in the TAN and by multiplying and intensifying the contacts between actors at all levels of the TAN. The future of the TAN in Tunisia is largely dependent on the organizations that are part of it and their will to continue to expand the network and intensify the exchanges within it. The issue of human rights in Tunisia is far from being solved and still needs to sustained commitment of all organization involved lest it regresses like it did when Ben Ali took power in 1987 after the TAN that had fought against Habib Bourguiba rescinded in the wake of superficial reforms (Gräzner 1999).

The sub-question to RQ1, *Is Issue Crawler a useful tool to map TANs?* I hypothesized that it would generate a partial map of the network that should include the central international organization of the network but would not include the smaller peripheral ones. On this aspect, the hypothesis is somewhat accurate. Several of the key international organizations were mapped. However, these represented only a small part of all the websites that were mapped. Therefore, there is still a good degree of research involved afterwards to identify what organizations are part of the issue network. Despite its limitation that were discussed, Issue Crawler is an excellent first

56

step in the research but it cannot be used to generate a complete map of a TAN, only a partial one. I also hypothesized that Issue Crawler would be unable to represent accurately the real world links between organizations, by which I meant it would misrepresent the relationships between organizations, whether they are reciprocal, unidirectional, or inexistent. This turned out to be partially true: there are several examples of clear failures on the part of Issue Crawler on this point, mainly because reciprocal linking practices are not universal. However, Issue Crawler was able to correctly represent relationships between several of the main and smaller organizations. To answer sub RQ1 directly, Issue Crawler is a useful tool to generate a partial map TANs that must be complemented by additional research methods.

RQ2, *Does the use of the internet as an organizational tool shape the internal structure of the TAN in Tunisia?* The general hypothesis was that the internet, through its many virtues in increasing the types and volumes of information would impact the internal structure of the TAN. In other words, that using the internet would affect the shape, the strength and the density of the network. I further hypothesized that it would increase normative cohesion and that it would blur the traditional separation between organizations. Most of these expectations proved wrong. Normative cohesion did not seem to be linked to the internet because the concept of human rights as defined by UDHR is well understood independently of the internet. Also, there was no blurring between organizations, in fact the separations between organizations are very clear. Despite much communication, collaboration, cooperation, and shared principles and values every interviewee was quite adamant that organizationally the separation between organizations is very clear. Beyond this, there is evidence to think that the internet increases the capacity of NGOs working inside and outside of Tunisia to collaborate and cooperate in a number of ways. I argue that this increase in capacity

57

does not only increase the speed and number of exchanges to create a very strong and dense TAN, it makes higher levels of collaboration and cooperation possible. This in turn allows for the execution of collaborative activities that would be too impractical otherwise. I give the example of IFEX-TMG, a coalition of 21 organizations that all have their own specific targets and that are widely dispersed geographically. This organization at times works on a very horizontal level when group action is taken such as declarations and in others takes advantage of its member's specificities to organize cooperative activities that take a more hierarchical form. I cannot say that the internet has shaped the internal structure of the TAN, but I can say that it has facilitated the evolution of TANs toward the establishment of forms of collaboration and cooperation that were very impractical before the internet became one of the main communication tool of NGOs in a TAN. These superior forms of collaboration and cooperation have made it possible for organizations with much different targets to collaborate and cooperate for the accomplishment of their respective targets through an understanding that their actions all contribute to the larger issue of human rights in Tunisia, and that the respect of human rights in Tunisia is intrinsically linked to the success of their respective targets.

The sub-question to RQ2, *did internet surveillance and repression neutralize the benefits of the internet to the TAN in Tunisia?* I expected that the internet would remain a useful tool to circumvent repression under the Ben Ali regime. Interviewees echoed this expectation and added much more than I was originally looking for. A direct answer to this research question then would be that internet surveillance and repression did not neutralize the benefits of the internet to the TAN in Tunisia for many reasons. International organizations were very much aware of the risks that internet surveillance posed to activists in Tunisia and took this into account while

using the internet. The strategy for actors was two fold, circumvention of surveillance and controlling the information that was exchanged. International organizations offered to train Tunisians in circumvention techniques, and Tunisians activists found various resources to help them circumvent surveillance. Because one can never be sure that communications are safe in this kind of environment, important information was withheld from electronic communications and was communicated through different channels. In this sense, surveillance and repression did not neutralize the benefits of the internet but it did hamper them since the communicative potential of the internet could not be used to its maximum. However, this can be put in another way. If the internet did not exist, and phones and faxes were monitored, then it would have been more difficult and costly to circumvent this type of surveillance. In this sense, the internet was especially useful in circumventing surveillance in general. In fact, the internet can become a tool to fight repression and surveillance.

3.2 Closing thoughts

With this research, I set out to explore specifically the implications of the use of internet for the human rights TANs in Tunisia. My findings have made clear an overarching point: the internet is worth more than a casual mention in TAN literature. It cannot be said from my findings that the internet shapes the network, but it does provide the tools to make it more horizontal, responsive and dynamic. In addition, the internet clearly contributes significantly to the strength and density of the TAN. According to Keck and Sikkink (1998) in a TAN, the ability to gather information and respond to it quickly is its most valuable asset. As I have discussed extensively, the internet is the most important tool in this process as it is practiced by the TAN in Tunisia. It has become an integral part of TAN operations, to the point where some

interviewees thought it is difficult to operate without it. Several examples have outlined this kind of advocacy activity as a key strategy of the Tunisian TAN. It has also been stressed that the effectiveness of the activity is greatly enhanced when it is done in concert with partner organizations. The expression 'strength in numbers' illustrates the advantage of working in concert in large numbers. This is precisely what the internet facilitates, pooling resources to gather, produce and respond to information in a way that no other ICT allows to do.

It has already been acknowledged in the literature that ICTs can enhance the mobilization potential of TANs (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999). However, the internet is in most cases a superior tool than the fax and the telephone for TANs. Its uses go well beyond enhancing the mobilization potential, for example, it can enhance visibility or provide new methods of fundraising. Furthermore, the internet is a very dynamic tool for TANs. It is constantly evolving and many activists see great potential for the internet in their advocacy activities in the future. The internet is not a single use static tool like the telephone or the fax. The potential to disseminate information through posting reports on website or using social networking utilities such as facebook and twitter, should figure as an important element in the study of how TANs work. It is characteristics like the malleability and multimedia capabilities of a webpage, or the quasi-limitless possibilities offered by computer programming that sets this tool apart from the other. To fully understand the dynamics within a TAN, scholars should focus on these uses, and develop tools to analyze them.

If anything, this research serves as a call to TAN scholars to expand the study of TANs to include the role of the internet. The impact of the internet on a TAN will be vastly different depending on each specific context. Tunisia has its own context given its history and current level of development. The role that the internet played in this case may be much different in another context. This indicates that the use of the internet by TANs is a significant variable in the overall effectiveness of the TAN. Therefore, it requires more attention from scholars studying TANs. Why the significance of the internet has been neglected

60

from further TAN research is unclear. I can only hope that there will be further efforts to study the extent of its significance.

Appendix I – List of interviewees

1. Interviewee 1
2. Interviewee 2
3. Interviewee 3
4. Interviewee 4
5. Interviewee 5

Appendix II - Interview scenario

During this interview, please try to contextualize your answer around the your organizational relationships and activities with other organizations in your network for Tunisia. Also, I am aware that the nature of these relationships and your activities may have changed since the ousting of Ben Ali and the ongoing crisis in Tunisia. Please feel free to indicate how these have changed.

Question 1:
What are the three most important organizations in your field for Tunisia? These can include local, regional or international organizations.
What are the three most important organizations that you work or cooperate with the most on Tunisian issues?

Question 2:
What kind of work do you do with the organizations we have just discussed? For example what kind of activities do you organize in cooperation with partner organizations?

Question 3:
Are there organizations that help you to accomplish you activities?
Does your organization help others to accomplish their activities?
Within your network, are there some key organizations that help others accomplish their activities?

Question 4:
Are there generally shared ideas and values within your network of organizations?
Which ones?
To what extent?
Are there ideas and values that you do not share?
Which ones?

Question 5:
When working with other organizations, do you feel that there is a clear separation between your organizations? [Precision] Do you feel that you are working more as one larger organization or that you are a separate organization?

Question 6:
What do you use the internet for in the day to day activities of your organization?
Here I may have to specify: How do you use it to work with other organizations in your network?

Question 7:
Imagine if you had to work without the internet. How would this affect your day to day activities of your organization? .
I may prod further by asking: How would you operate if you could only use the fax and the telephone?

63

Question 8:
In your experience, how do you think the internet has influenced the way you work with other organizations?

Question 9:
Was the internet an effective tool to circumvent interference from the Ben Ali regime in your activities with other organizations despite internet surveillance?

Question 10:
When using the internet for the organization, were you aware of the risks?
Did it affect the way you would use the internet in your daily activities?

Question 12:
Assuming that surveillance and repression in general is no longer an issue after the Ben Ali regime, do you think that the internet will be more or less useful for your future activities?

Appendix III – Detailed information on Crawls

Crawl Info	Starting points	Exclusions
Crawl 01	http://cpj.org/mideast/tunisia	download.cnet.com ;
Co-link analysis by page	http://ifex.org/tunisia	download.com ;
Privilege starting point off	http://ltdh-tunisie.org	download.net ;
Iterations 2	http://nawaat.org/portail	netscape.com ;
Depth 2	http://opennet.net/research/profiles/tunisia	www.adobe. ;
	http://www.amnesty.org/en/contact/521	www.amazon. ;
	http://www.anhri.net/en/?p=1248	www.apple.com/quicktime ;
	http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=117&language_id=1&category_type=2&category_id=771	www.hotmail. ;
		www.icq.com/download ;
		www.macromedia.com/shockwave ;
	http://www.hrw.org/en/middle-eastn-africa/tunisia	www.microsoft.com/windows/ie ;
	http://www.ifex.org/tunisia/tmg	www.napster.com/download ;
	http://www.womenpoliticalparticipation.org/template.php?code=20	www.opera.com ;
		www.real. ;
		www.winamp.com/download ;
		www.winzip.com ;
		microsoft.com ;
		rambler.ru ;
		macromedia.com ;
		wordpress.org ;
		blogger.com ;
		jigsaw.w3.org ;
		validator.w3.org ;
		movabletype.org ;
		news.google. ;
		www.google. ;
		statcounter.com ;
		yahoo.com ;
		google.com ;
		typepad.com ;
Crawl 03	ʹwww.amarc.org	download.cnet.com ;
Co-link analysis by page	ʹwww.anhri.net	download.com ;
Privilege starting point off	ʹwww.anhri.net/en/?p=1248	download.net ;
Iterations 3	ʹwww.article19.org	netscape.com ;
Depth 2	ʹwww.cartoonistrights.com	www.adobe. ;
	ʹwww.cihrs.org	www.amazon. ;
	ʹwww.cjfe.org	www.apple.com/quicktime ;
	ʹwww.eohr.org	www.hotmail. ;
	ʹwww.fidh.org/-tunisia-	www.icq.com/download ;
	ʹwww.freemedia.at	www.macromedia.com/shockwave ;
	ʹwww.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=117&languag 1&category_type=2&category_id=771	www.microsoft.com/windows/ie ;
	ʹwww.ifj.org	www.napster.com/download ;
	ʹwww.ifla.org/faife	www.opera.com ;
	ʹwww.indexonline.org	www.real. ;
	ʹwww.internationalpen.org.uk	www.winamp.com/download ;
		www.winzip.com ;

65

	www.internationalpublishers.org	microsoft.com ;
	www.jed-afrique.org	rambler.ru ;
	www.maharatfoundation.org	macromedia.com ;
	www.misa.org	wordpress.org ;
	www.norskpen.no	blogger.com ;
	www.wan-ifra.org	jigsaw.w3.org ;
	www.womenpoliticalparticipation.org/template.p de=20	validator.w3.org ;
		movabletype.org ;
	www.wpfc.org	news.google. ;
		www.google. ;
		statcounter.com ;
		yahoo.com ;
		google.com ;
		typepad.com ;
Crawl 21	http://ifex.org/tunisia/tmg/index1.php	download.cnet.com ;
Co-link analysis by page	http://www.arabhumanrights.org/en/countries/o rganizations.aspx?cid=20	download.com ;
Privilege starting point on		download.net ;
Iterations 3	http://opennet.net/research/profiles/tunisia	netscape.com ;
Depth 3	http://www.anhri.net/en/?p=1248	www.adobe. ;
	http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=117&l anguage_id=1&category_type=2&category_id= 771	www.amazon. ;
		www.apple.com/quicktime ;
		www.hotmail. ;
	http://www.womenpoliticalparticipation.org/te mplate.php?code=20	www.icq.com/download ;
		www.macromedia.com/shockwave ;
		www.microsoft.com/windows/ie ;
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