

## Chapter 12

# Can Revolutionary Media Be Made Online?

**Noha Atef**

*Independent Researcher, Egypt*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents Mosireen, a non-profit media collective and an alternative media outlet founded by a group of activists, writers, journalists, and filmmakers in the midst of a political change in Egypt. This group developed a special interpretation of the concept of “revolutionary media,” and for more than two years have been executing their ideas on the ground. Thus, Mosireen is a case to study the instrumentalization of the Internet in political activism, and the revolutionalization of the use of digital and social media at the time of struggle against the regime.*

### INTRODUCTION

The 2011 uprising against the former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, furthered the use of the Internet in activism enormously. After Mubarak stepped down in February 2011, Egyptians relied on online news resources as a strong predictor of credibility, while traditional media did not provide the same assurance (Hamdy 2013). Therefore, the number of Internet users in Egypt reached 32.62 million in June 2012. The increase continued the following year. In January 2013, the number of Internet users in Egypt grew to 38.75 million (Ministry of Communication & Information, 2013).

Organically, a convergence between the employment of the Internet in the political struggle and the practices of citizen journalism in reporting and documenting events was taking place. Political activists such as journalists, creative writers and artists translated their engagement in the protests into content. Social media became a tool for civic engagement. Users of social network sites primarily used their accounts for documentation purposes (Willson & Dunn 2011). Numerous documentation projects were run by citizen journalists, such as Thawaret 25 Yanaer (egyptrev.net), a website run by volunteers who collected digital materials covering the 18 days of protests in January 11 to make them available in one place, and Wiki Thawra ([wikithawra.wordpress.com](http://wikithawra.wordpress.com)), a project to document all the incidents from 2011 onward.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0377-5.ch012

This chapter presents Mosireen, a non-profit media collective and an alternative media outlet founded by a group of activists, writers, journalists and filmmakers in the midst of political change in Egypt. This group developed a special interpretation of the concept of ‘revolutionary media’, and for more than two years have been executing their ideas on the ground. Thus, Mosireen is a case to study the instrumentalisation of the Internet in political activism, and the revolutionalisation of the use of digital and social media at the time of struggle against the regime.

The data for this chapter was collected in 2013 and 2019 through participant observation and in-depth interviews. The researcher used observation as a method of data collection in Mosireen, the group knew who she was, what she was researching and why she wanted to observe their work. The observation lasted for almost six weeks at Mosireen (5th April - 14th June, 2013). Although this time sounds short, it was actually enough to meet most of the members and observe their work. On average, the researcher spent eight hours a week in their office. Her main work task was writing descriptions for the videos produced by Mosireen, as well as carrying out research, a short film treatment and scripting new videos.

A common problem for the researcher is the conception that an individual’s behaviour may change if they know they are being studied – what is known as the “observer effect”, “researcher effect”, “reactivity” or the “Hawthorne effect”. To a great extent, I did not feel an observer effect in Mosireen, because staged behaviour is a tactic used to appear as an ideal person or entity, while ideality involves meeting the highest standards. In the case of Mosireen, it was not presented by its members as an ideal media outlet, or as a collective meeting the highest standards in the media industry; on the contrary, Mosireen is an alternative form of media, where standards of excellence do not exist. The researcher was not able to repeat the use of this research method in 2019, as the Mosireen premises were shut down in 2014.

The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with a number of Mosireen’s co-founders. As she started to collect data and spend time at the office, she was able to set informability and power as criteria for selecting participants. Informability here means awareness of the history of the institution as well as its current structure, administrative, financial and editorial position. The key sources at Mosireen were Philip Rizk, an independent filmmaker and writer for some local and international media, Salma Said, who studied English Literature in Cairo and used to work for AlMawrad AlThakafi, a leading cultural NGO in the Arab region and who was also an actress in a number of independent movies, and Lobna Darwish, who had been studying Sociology and Comparative Literature in the U.S. after obtaining a B.A. in Engineering in Egypt. Darwish was living abroad between 2006 and 2013 and came back to Egypt in February 2011. Thus, Darwish was not part of the online or grassroots activism against Hosni Mubarak between 2005 and 2011.

The researcher was not able to conduct in-depth interviews with all the participants again in 2019, as most of them were living abroad, and therefore communication with them might not be digitally secure enough on their part. Alternatively, the researcher relied on secondary sources, mostly the work of Omar Hamilton and Philip Rizk, to obtain the updated data she needed. The communication with these participants only involved double-checking their agreement to reveal their names, because of the change of circumstances. All the participant agreed to keep their identity uncovered.

The chapter starts with introducing the foundation story of Mosireen, its administrative and financial policies and major projects, and then explains their vision of the revolutionalisation of media, and the role of the Internet. Subsequently, identifies the circumstances of the emergence of the ‘revolutionary media’ as explained by Mosireen co-founders, by asking Why the Revolutionary Media was needed? Lastly, it explains the agency of the Internet in the work of Mosireen, as regarded by its members.

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/can-revolutionary-media-be-made-online/238225](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/can-revolutionary-media-be-made-online/238225)

## Related Content

---

### Consequences of Social Listening via Mediated Communication Technologies (MCTs): Application Across Levels of the Communication Hierarchy

Margaret C. Stewart, Christa L. Arnold and David Wisehart (2023). *International Journal of Social Media and Online Communities* (pp. 1-20).

[www.irma-international.org/article/consequences-of-social-listening-via-mediated-communication-technologies-mcts/324104](http://www.irma-international.org/article/consequences-of-social-listening-via-mediated-communication-technologies-mcts/324104)

### Stakeholder Perceptions and Word-of-Mouth on CSR Dynamics: A Big Data Analysis from Twitter

Andrée Marie López-Fernández and Zamira Burgos Silva (2021). *Research Anthology on Strategies for Using Social Media as a Service and Tool in Business* (pp. 1165-1179).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/stakeholder-perceptions-and-word-of-mouth-on-csr-dynamics/283023](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/stakeholder-perceptions-and-word-of-mouth-on-csr-dynamics/283023)

### Negotiation by Software Agents in Electronic Business: An Example of Hybrid Negotiation

Nosheen Riaz and Moez Rehman (2013). *Organizations and Social Networking: Utilizing Social Media to Engage Consumers* (pp. 327-349).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/negotiation-software-agents-electronic-business/76768](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/negotiation-software-agents-electronic-business/76768)

### Simulating Experiences of Displacement and Migration: Developing Immersive and Interactive Media Forms Around Factual Narratives

James N. Blake (2019). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 49-60).

[www.irma-international.org/article/simulating-experiences-of-displacement-and-migration/241306](http://www.irma-international.org/article/simulating-experiences-of-displacement-and-migration/241306)

### A Taxonomy of Censors and Anti-Censors: Part I-Impacts of Internet Censorship

Christopher S. Leberknight, Mung Chiang and Felix Ming Fai Wong (2012). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 52-64).

[www.irma-international.org/article/taxonomy-censors-anti-censors/65552](http://www.irma-international.org/article/taxonomy-censors-anti-censors/65552)