Social Media and the Public Policy Process in Egypt

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Abstract

For the past three years the political environment in Egypt, and the middle east in general, has undergone substantial change such as increase in public opinion and awareness, increase in political participation, increase in voting turnout franchise as well as introducing a new paradigm of communication that has great influence on the political and social landscape of the world "Social Media".

The Facebook is the most used social media in Egypt, governmental reports put the number of internet users' at 29,809,724, 35.6% of the population, of which almost half are Facebook users'. According to an information ministry report issued in May 2012, this increase in number of Facebook users in Egypt has, placed Egypt in a high rank worldwide in terms of Facebook usage. The report states that this increase in Facebook users' is directly related to the political developments in Egypt particularly after the January 25th revolution.

The aim of this paper is to explore the impact and effect of social media (Facebook) on the changing political environment of the public policy process in Egypt. This article analyzes the different stages of the Public Policy Process in Egypt, with application to the minimum and maximum wage policy, and examines how it was influenced by the Facebook, as a device of the social media, as a new channel of political mobilization.

1http://www.capmas.gov.eg/pdf/EgyptInFigure/EgyptinFigures/Tables/English/pop/population/index.html
Introduction

The spread of technology – after the foundation of the "industrial society" - among various social classes resulted in what is now known as the "information age" or "information society", a society which is characterized by unlimited interactive means of communication.

It is believed that such communities are the ones that thrive and achieve positive results for their citizens because they are in constant touch with them and continuously keeping their citizens informed with what is new in the world, whether it’s scientific, social, economic, cultural, or political.

This development has led to a more integrated world after news and financial information as well as visual images about society and political culture, navigated faster around the world via media.

Most studies that have looked at the relationship between technology, society and politics, show that technology has been instrumental in improving existing institutional structures, which resulted in the emergence of new forms of relationships between individuals, groups and political institutions. As it is undisputable that the invention of printing press had a significant impact on knowledge in Europe, and resulted in the invention of other devices such as the telephone, radio and television which led to major shifts at the level of people's awareness and the way they connect and communicate with each other.

Not mentioning the extent of the change in the lives of the people by the introduction of satellites and the spread of satellite television as well as Internet revolutions which in turn massive information explosion that accompanied all these modern means.


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3 Osama El Kholly & Nayef Abied, The Arab and Information Revolution, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2005, p28
4 Yehia Elyehiawy, The New Media and Revolutions, paper work submitted by Namaa Centre for Research and Studies, 28 Feb 2012, KSA, p 4
This was asserted by Lister Throw who said that the winning power in the twenty-century is the one who has the keys to technology.\textsuperscript{5}

Today, the internet links 200,000 networks in 150 countries around the world, taking into consideration that its size is increasing due to the high demand for them for educational purposes and business by academic institutions, research centers and companies.

The Internet set a record versus other communication means illuminating all the barriers to blocking access to the largest number of subscribers. For example it took the radio 83 years to reach the number of 50 million users, it took the television 51 years to reach the same number, while the Internet needed only a few years to gather subscribers from all over the world to participate in its services. According to Statistics, the number of websites on the Internet network, in 2011, reached, 555 million.\textsuperscript{6} There are 2 million users joining the Internet every month, an average of (46) every minute.\textsuperscript{7} China’s rank is the first in the world in terms of the spread of the Internet, where the number of users (485 million).

In the Arab countries, Spread of internet was unprecedented and surpassed all expectations, statistical data retrieved from TNS network published in 2012 shows that internet users in the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries rose over the past ten years from (7.8 million) to (871 million), an increase (2300\%\textsuperscript{8})

With regard to the geographical distribution of Internet users, statistics show that: (922 200 000) users are in Asia only, of which 485 are in China alone, (476 200 000) in the European continent, (271 100 000) is used in the North America, (215 900 000) in South America, (118 600 000) in the Africa, (86.6 million) in the Middle East, and (21.3 million) in Australia.

This massive use of Internet services and Considerable technological progress led to what has been known as the “new media” or the “electronic media”.

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[7] Mostafa El-Sayed, Your comprehensive Directory to Internet networks, Scientific Books House for publishing, Cairo, p17
\item[8] Steve Hamitton, the Internet Usage in MENA Countries, TNS Report issued on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of February 2012
\end{footnotesize}
**Egypt: The Internet and the New Media**

In Egypt, numbers and statistics of internet and social network users, indicate that the extent of usage has contributed to the creation of the general climate that prevailed prior to the outbreak of the January 25 revolution, while was considered one of the political actors during and post the events of the revolution.

A report prepared by Techno Wireless, an Egyptian company specialized in e-marketing and mobile phone networks, reveals that the number of Internet users in Egypt before January 25 was about 21.2 million, but the number increased after the revolution to 23.1 million, an increase (8.9%), and duration of use of the Internet has increased also significantly, estimates were made after the revolution asserting that users spend double the time (1800 minutes a month), compared to (900 minutes) before the revolution.⁹

With regard to the users of social networks, Egypt scores as high in terms of usage, the report makes clear that the number has risen from (4.2 million) registered to Facebook before January 25th, to (5.2 million) new user after the revolution.¹⁰ While recent statistics show that the number of Facebook users in Egypt is growing rapidly from day to day and varies between (9-11.3 Million) growth rate 41% ranking Egypt the first among Arab states in terms of the number of Facebook users, this means that the current number of users 18.84 of Egypt’s population¹²

Nearly two-thirds of Internet users Worldwide use some type of social media, according to an industry estimate.¹³ The New Media, which began after the invention of the Internet, mediators and the introduction of new media tools such as forums, blogs, chat, etc. Is characterized by being free of any mediators everybody is everybody’s anchor or journalist everybody is a sender and recipient in the same time quickly and smoothly with privacy and convenience. Traditional media (radio, television, and the press), in which masses are informed through a mediator which

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⁹ Transforming Education in the Arab World: Braking Barriers in the Age of Social Learning, Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government, 5th edition, June 2013, p13,14


¹¹ Ibid, p14

¹² Doaa Farid, Egypt Has the Largest Number of Facebook Users in the Arab World, about the Online Competitiveness Intelligence Report, Daily News, issued on the 25th September 2013

leaves room for institutional and government interference in shaping public opinion, wasn’t able to cope with the speed of social network.\textsuperscript{14}

The ability of social networking sites to provide many benefits and services helped in spreading dramatically between people, encouraging major companies to provide such services, allowing all users to share activities and interests as well as making friends and shaping new communities with similar interests, through exchanging comments and instant messaging. Social Networks enable users to form a virtual community of their own, allowing for those who choose to be a part of it.

The readiness of many young, digitally-savvy Arabs to turn to social media as a means of communication and organization to express their political discontent is now apparent to the entire world. The fact that was not possible without information and communications technology (ICT).\textsuperscript{15}

There are many characteristics of social media in Egypt such as\textsuperscript{16}:-

- Sharing and transferring information and thoughts among protesters quickly, allowing protesters to easily connect with friends and with friends of friends, coordinating and organization roles among protesters, expressing in various forms and shapes, such as text, image and audio visual, circumventing the Egyptian police and combating its tactics in withholding information or even filtering it out, social networks in Egypt were able to break conventional barriers and traditional red lines that were preventing communication between citizens and officials, replacing the culture of words with a Visual one, as users nowadays don’t read long pages but prefer to move on to other audio-visual sites, its effective contribution in the formation of public opinion and public policy making or in the opposition of many forms of corruption, injustice, dictatorship and so on; due to the freedom of expression provided by social networks to users who manage to voice their opinions and ideas freely and finally, it is suitable for the Egyptian society in many ways, most importantly the conservativeness of people which in this case allows different genders to meet freely without reservations.

\textsuperscript{14} Amar El Shahin, Social Media is the influence and change power, The Basra Voice Journal on Jan 24 2012
\textsuperscript{15} Pamela Ann Smith, ICT the Arab world’s bright hope?, Business ICT: The Middle East, May 2011, p.31.
\textsuperscript{16} Essam Mansour, The Role of Social Networking Sites in the January 25\textsuperscript{th} Revolution in Egypt, Information Studies, issue No.14, May 2012, p35, 36
The first few months of 2011 have greatly changed, due to the events it witnessed, the perception of social networks to generate change. This resulted in the increase of interest in social media by various governmental and even commercial institutions. These institutions were more attentive to what users are communicating via social networks, especially Facebook, to the extent that it surpassed being a source of announcing news and commenting on it, to be the source for most print media and television talk shows. This in turn increased the effect and spread of social media in Egypt.

This lead to the rise of a new type, of what could be called, not in the profession media players, which enabled anyone who is familiar with making media material to reflect his point of view and prejudices on the public. Transferring of photos and video clips across social networks introduced a new source of supervision and control over the government, parliamentary officials and the military council.

These new political actors share in the process of transferring demands and exerting pressure as well as the representation of new forces in the contemporary society influencing the public policy making process especially in the agenda setting phase.

The authors examine the role played by the new media, especially Facebook in introducing issues of the community and how the impact of social media on the policy-making process in Egypt, by analyzing the "Maximum and Minimum wage" public policy.

Although, there are various sites of social media, the paper will focus on FB as it is the most used in Egypt.

**Facebook in Egypt**

Facebook is a social networking that despite the fact that it is not more than ten years, however, their months and became the most widely used and influential in Egypt.

Facebook was created in February 2004, by the student Marc Zukrbera, in his room at Harvard University. The site was initially available only for Harvard students then access was given to other university students and later to high school students and a limited number of companies, then finally it became available to the public for anyone
who wants to open an account.\textsuperscript{17} Currently, the number of users reached about 880 million, in other words, one person out of every 13 people on Earth who has an account on Facebook, in 75 different languages. These users spend more than 700 billion minutes per month on the site.\textsuperscript{18}

Mark Zochriberg the inventor of Facebook believes it is a social movement and not just a tool or a means of communication. It will supersede email, he asserted, and replace it, to dominate all aspects of human activity on the Web. Thus, describing it as a "the world's population guide"

This is because the site allows ordinary people to form a public entity of themselves, by deciding what to give and share in the form of information (about themselves or others, their interests, their feelings, personal photographs and video clips). Therefore, the objective of this invention is to make the world a more open and connected.

We have increased the number of Facebook users in Egypt by about 41\% during the first nine months of 2013, compared to the same period last year, to reach 16 million users, equivalent to about half of the Internet users and about 19\% of the total population in Egypt, according to the monitoring of the annual report of the company «E Marketing Egypt» specialized in studies of competitive electronic, issued in October 2013.

Egypt had occupied the second place in the world in a report « ten countries most addicted to Facebook » , which was issued by the Foundation « Social Media Statistics » which followed 142 Egyptian Facebook pages, and found that the rate of deployment of posts on these Pages exceed 53 thousand per month, putting Egypt at second place after Brazil , with about 86 thousand monthly posts , while the United States occupied the third place despite ranking as the first worldwide in the number of subscribers, followed by Turkey in fourth place and Spain the fifth .

The number of Facebook users in Egypt is estimated to be about a quarter of users in the Arab world, while UAE continues to be in the forefront of Arab countries in terms of users’ growth rate. More than 75\% of them are young people, less than 30 years old, the highest percentage at the age of 18 years.

\textsuperscript{17} Laura Locke, The Future of Facebook, , 17 July, 2007. Time
\textsuperscript{18} Lev Grossman, Person of the Year 2010, 15 December 2010. Time
The official site of «Facebook» in his recent report, released in October 2013, stated that the number of active users in the Middle East and North Africa has reached 56 million people each month, including more than 28 million people using the site daily. In Egypt, there were 16.8 million Facebook users at the beginning of 2014, while the number of Internet users in the Arab world has reached 51 million. Head of Facebook in the region Jonathan Lapin explained in the report, that this development is due to the use of Facebook via mobile phones, adding that numbers show that 33 million active users in the Middle East and North Africa are currently Communicating through Facebook using mobile phones, of which 15 million people use the site on a daily basis.

**Social Media sheds a light on Issues of Corruption and Human Rights in Egypt**

This section examines the role of Social Media in the overseeing of issues pertaining to corruption and violations of human rights and to influence policy makers in Egypt. These issues were the major concern of Egyptian young activists in the pre-revolutionary period which in fact lead to the January 25th revolution, corruption and human rights violations that has become a daily reality for Egyptians. This provoked activists to use social media, especially Facebook, to organize opposition against governmental officials especially policemen. Activists used media to broadcast video clips of policemen violating the rights of citizens by exercising severe torture of detainees. Which led to the fueling of anger and resentment against the regime and it's security, among Egyptian youth. This resulted in the formation of many groups and political movements that grew rapidly and worked together using social media (mostly Facebook), in the absence of governmental control.\(^ {19}\)

Professor of journalism and media at American University in Cairo Rasha Al-Abdullah, believes that the January 25th revolution did not start in 2011, but started with the emergence of blogging in Egypt in 2003. These bloggers were advocates for regime opposition as well as the call for organizing different activities of protest and media campaigns helping in the creation of a climate and suitable conditions for the

\(^ {19}\) Hatem Ezz Eldin, *The Anger Egyptian Revolution: From Facebook to Tahrir Square*, El-Madina Journal on Feb 27, 2011
start of the revolution in Egypt, a few days after the success of the Tunisian revolution and the departure of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.\(^{20}\)

Professor Abdullah added, Social networks practically helped Egyptian people (especially youth) to organize themselves before and during the revolution as well as gradually establishing communication loops among users, giving them a sense that they have a voice and that they have a right to express their opinion. These loops were able to play a prominent role in sparking the January 25 revolution, which would have occurred but much later.

These movements and groups have succeeded in using the Internet and social media as a platform for the announcement of their opposition positions as well as mobilizing supporters for many of the political and social issues. It was able to achieve what week Egyptian political parties have to do throughout the decades, especially with regards to the moving of masses and getting them to the street.

According to Dr. Amr Hashem Rabie, expert of "Al Ahram Political and Strategic Studies," that these groups contributed to the January 25 revolution in the creation of political movements and instituting the culture of popular protest as well as expressing the liveliness of the Egyptian society, achieving what should be accomplished by political parties in democratic states.\(^{21}\)

**April 6 strike: -**

Perhaps the most powerful example of the success of youth groups to convert social media into a tool for change, whether politically or economical, was witnessed by Egypt, in 2008\(^{22}\). The incident which was the reason Facebook gained its fame in Egypt, the "April 6" strike. This was the 1\(^{st}\) time in Egypt that any social media was used to gain popular support for a public issue. Through Facebook many Egyptian people showed solidarity with the workers of Mahalla\(^{23}\) strike in protest against price hikes and the high cost of living

the strike occurred at the invitation of a Facebook group created by an Egyptian girl named Israa Abdel-Fattah and attracted more than 71 000 subscribers, prompting the

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\(^{20}\) Rasha Abdallah, Social networks have accelerated the revolution in Egypt, ElShorouk news on Feb19, 2012

\(^{21}\) Shaimaa Mahdy, the electronic protest: The new voice of opposition, The Original Constitution Journal on September 8, 2010

\(^{22}\) Mohamed Attia, Arab Spring from cyberspace to reality, Industry Focus, MultiLingual October/November 2011, p. 37.

\(^{23}\) Mahalla is a small city in Egypt
Egyptian Ministry of security to issue a statement warning that it will take the necessary and immediate firm measures toward any attempt to demonstrate, or traffic disruption, or obstruction of work in the public utilities, or the absence from government jobs and the various ministries, or provoking any of these acts.24

The strike was considered by many an important turning point in the use of social networks, which was transformed from just social sites to get to know friends and share photos to an important way to organize protests and mobilize supporters. While others see April 6 strike as "a milestone in the history of contemporary Egypt " on the grounds that the call to strike was not issued by a political party or group, but rather by a social media site - Facebook, that quickly turned into a tool for enlightenment as well as a means for changing and reforming Egyptian people freely without threats or fear of detention and displacement.25 The success of the strike gave a strong boost for young people in order to continue their efforts and their attempts aiming to change, and equipped them with the ability and will to challenge the regime. And after only four months of the strike an Egyptian political movement was founded that bore its name "the youth of April 6th".

Media and the policy-making process in Egypt

There can be no doubt that public policy is very important in shaping our daily lives, it serves as a system, which is agreed upon to achieve the objectives of the state; this system may be financial, political, or administrative.

At any country, public policy is a set of programs adopted by the political system, and at the same time, it is an action taken by the decision-makers to solve public problems facing the community or to achieve the objectives pursued by a large number of that community, to take their way into legislation and then the implementation phase after that.

Media is playing an important role in monitoring, criticizing, and evaluating all public policies; it has the ability to prioritize people’s interests, guide public opinion, unify speech, and to make a compressive force to deliver it to policy makers. Social

24 Shaymaa Mahdy, op cit.
25 Mohsen Awadalla, Is the Facebook arrested in Egypt, Al-Ghad Journal on http://www.elghad.com
networks inform, mobilize, entertain, create communities, increase transparency, and seek to hold governments accountable\textsuperscript{26}.

Perhaps the most effective and practical way of cooperation between official policy makers and media institutions, is to open channels of communication between the two parties for finding a formula to joint working between each other, and to involve the media institutions in public policy-making in order to ensure a large number of society’s interests.

It is noticeable that the role of communication in public policy making is not at required level, despite its importance- especially after years of change to show the community's problems, and to find appropriate solutions- the weakness of media institutions role in communication essential for public policy- making cannot be the sole responsibility of media alone, the lack of completeness of the political maturity of decision-makers themselves which resulted in a limited views of communications media and understanding the dimensions of the defect in the media work.

It does not deny the effective role of media in influencing policy makers for the implementation of decisions.

Enhancing participation of media institutions in the policy-making process is crucial for improving the performance of these institutions, which will become a partner in decision-making through gaining the confidence of the society.

The role of the media in the policy-making process does not end at the definition of the community’s problems, but also to address the public and working on awareness through the media campaigns to identify the nature of the laws that have been legislated, and to show the positive and negative impacts which accompanied the implementation process in a way that these campaigns may coincide with the public policy, If we wanted to succeed in the public policy making process, awareness must become a part of citizens and societal culture, and this is a role that can be played by the media efficiently.

In order to promote public policy-making, media institutions should use targeted programming plan, which include the creation of certain effects in the course of policy making analyzing these polices in a scientific and objective using logic and predicting the degree of success.

These should take into consideration similar experiences whether regionally and internationally in order to reach the best methods to choose the appropriate policy, in addition to organizing public opinion polls and the distribution of questionnaires as well as publishing their results with full transparency, and conducting studies to analyze those results, the use of research centers and consulting offices, university professors and specialists to know the advantage of laws enacted, where the stages of implementation has been reached.

The role of media institutions various between either a strongly supportively of laws, or mostly opposing and rejecting them when these policies harm the community’s interest, in this media trying to influence the legislative and executive bodies to enact alternative laws, taking into account the damage that resulted and try to avoid them in the new legislation.

Media in general and specifically social media plays a role in directing individuals to identify various issues in order to create political and economic awareness of the community informing them the rights and duties.

The importance and influence of the media in policy-making process that could be highlighted, including the following:

1 - It provides governmental institutions with information on current events and political environment for their policies and in many cases provide them quicker than the official channels.

2- Decision makers and government in Egypt now use media to anticipate people’s needs, directly through broadcasted feature programs of public opinion, or indirectly through news stories that shape the public debate and public opinion.

3- Media also provides officials with necessary channels to transmit their messages to the public "members of the community" to explain their policy positions and attacking their opponents.
4- Also, It affects on the positions of decision-makers and public attitudes toward government officials, the media coverage can increase the public support for some of the government's policies, in addition to all the above, media is faced by the important task of clarifying the public policy making process or vice versa.

**On Wages in Egypt**

In Egypt, the Ministry of Planning conducted a study entitled “The Variance and Dimensions of Wages 2010”\(^{27}\), the study observed a group of results as following:

- The wages averages of the public and the private sectors was noticed that the monthly average wages of the public sector is two time of the private sector one where its equal 2235 LE compared by 1124 LE at the private sector.

- The ratio of the employee who get equivalent wages for the general wage average or more than it in the public sector than its equivalent in the private sector so the public sector foundations still have an relative advantage according to the wage than the private sector although following the privatization policy in a lot of companies.

- The highest average of wages according to the profession were for the workers in legislation ,senior officials and managers where it reaches to 4634LE in the public sector and 5042 LE for the private one. Concerning the variation in both sectors we can find that the disparity in the public sector wage is less than the private sector one and we can notice that the least wage average in the public sector was 1350LE for the workers in agriculture and fishing compared with 656 for the private sector.

- The study of “how to calculate the minimum wage in accordance with average ages, poverty line, and the basic needs” highlighted the importance of establishing a minimum wage through the development of some proposals for calculating the minimum such as determining it according to the average wages in order to reach to 841 LE per month, and according to the poverty line, it ranges between 315 to 752LE per month.

- The wage reaches to 977.44 LE per month according to the basic needs basket for the class which less than 20% in its expenditure and 1192LE per month for the second class.

It is observed from these results, they are indicating to a bad status of social life for employees and workers, particularly in the public sector in Egypt, it is not consistent with the principle of the social justice - which advocated by the January 25 revolution.

**Facebook and its role in Maximum and Minimum wage policy making**

Egyptian activists used Facebook, to advocate the idea of employing a law that requires the enforcement of minimum and maximum wages. This was shown in the establishment of several pages some even have the same title, total number of visitors are not to be considered low because activists form opinion Leader networks which in turn possess social leaders—those with great social influence—who drive behavior directly via their numerous connections to followers. Hierarchical networks transmit leaders’ influence downward through deputies to the followers at the bottom.28

Examples of Facebook pages are presented in the following table:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Name</th>
<th>Date of issue</th>
<th># of Likes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions about the &quot;Minimum and Maximum wages&quot; in Egypt</td>
<td>March 30, 2011</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The issue of policy making &quot;Minimum and Maximum wages&quot; in Egypt</td>
<td>March 17, 2011</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is the minimum wage law which those talk about</td>
<td>June 25, 2011</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, Freedom, Social Justice</td>
<td>Jan 24 2011</td>
<td>11197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, freedom, social justice</td>
<td>Feb 22, 2011</td>
<td>13669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, Freedom, social Justice</td>
<td>Jan 2012</td>
<td>62603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>Dec 2012</td>
<td>1292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>89977</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: - The author based on data retrieved from www.facebook.com

As a result of activists pressure to put the policy of "Minimum and Maximum wages" in Egypt into effect through setting the governmental agenda (the Agenda Setting

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Stage) using Facebook among other public opinion means, Law No. 242 for the year 2011 has been issued by the Military Council, not to mention that the creation of these pages was before issuing the stated Law.

Sources at the Ministry of Finance confirmed the publishing of such a Law by a decree issued by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, asserting its application on the salary of the next January, worth early February 2012.

The ministry pointed out the importance of applying Maximum wages during those current circumstances and regarding this as a national project bonding Egyptians together, but it did not mention the size of the financial resources that must provided by the public treasury in order to implement this project efficiently which is considered a deficiency in the policy formulation stage, that will no doubtily affect the policy enactment or adoption stage.

The final text of the draft decree on "Minimum and Maximum wages" stresses that the increase in the total income received by any person subject to the provisions of the State Civil Servants Act No. 47 of 1987 should not exceed the Minimum wage in the same organization multiplied by thirty-five.

This decree should apply to those employed by private laws, and working in the public sector whether it is services, economic activities or other public legal persons, and private cadres, whether it is work for the permanent or temporary job, leadership job, a consultant, national expert, or in any other capacity.

It is added that the maximum applies to the person’s wage, whether it is in the form of salary, bonus, incentive, overtime pay, allowance, or for attending meetings board of directors. (These statements were added because terms like consultant or national expert were heavily used as excuse for corruption and skyrocketing wages)

Unfortunately, the law was not implemented in the date mentioned above, due to the bad conditions of the country at that time; but it’s continued the pressure, during PM Hazem El- Beblawy, through the social media particularly via Facebook on the implementation of such a law.

The significance of this is that Egyptian people were able for the first time to share in the agenda setting stage of public policy by pushing for the implementation of the policy of "Minimum and Maximum wages" using social media especially Facebook.
The implementation of the “Minimum and Maximum Wage” public policy in Egypt

The "Minimum and Maximum wages" became a reality in 2014, labeled Law No. 1 for the year 2014, and the publication included a group of instructions that should be adhered to when receiving the minimum wage bonus.

The publication constitutes obligation for auditors, financial managers and Ministry of Finance representatives taking into account the strict commitment to instructions when spending the minimum wage bonus, which was conceived for civilian employees through the Prime Minister's endorsement No. 22 of 2014.

The publication indicated in its first article that the minimum wage bonus which follows the Prime Minister's Decision No. 22 of 2014, is to be applied in the beginning of January 2014 for the civil servants appointed on a permanent positions and contracted persons who are employed in governmental sector.

The Evaluation of the minimum and maximum wage policy

if we look closely in the consideration of that matter, we will find that all the social media's demands for increasing wages are the result from the state of the confusion and disarray, which the Cabinet's meetings are witnessed, in particular the economic ministerial group that fell in the trap to obey these demands by approving quickly to the minimum wage policy, despite what the budget faced of an unprecedented deficit has achieved 14 % the previous fiscal year.

The application cost of the minimum wage policy for workers in the governmental sectors is a 10 billion LE during the last 6 months of the fiscal year.

It also was approved to all the increases for government workers, and the exclusion of public companies and public business sector, While still there is negotiations between the government and representatives of the workers and business owners about the application of the minimum wage policy for private sector workers, without access to a clear result except the constant declaration By the parties with the convergence of views.

The most unusual in that matter until now, is most of government sectors have not been able to entitlement the minimum wage from the actually applied, while still many financial observers, in several sectors, sink in the sea of minimum wage and
cannot calculate it till now.
The lack of finish of calculating the minimum wage by these sectors, threatens to escalate protests among governmental employees till get the increases of wages. Furthermore, what has already seen by the economic ministerial group is considered as a confusion and disarray of the application of minimum wage with respect to the exclusion of public business sector and other economic agencies.

It was very clearly evident in the declaration of the ministers of the investment and planning - in resigned government -, from that point, some believe that the labors protests, which have become the focus of events during past few days from the minimum wage application, are the main reason in the acceleration of the government resignation in this sensitive time, which precedes the presidential election, and completion of the new budget for the state.

**Conclusion**

This paper concludes that the fundamental changes in Media in general, and what is known as “New Media”, whether technological or in the content, has changed the familiar form of media, and made it more responsive to the requirements of the public. People found in them more freedom to address all issues without reservations or being exposed to censorship, as well as a source of overcoming difficulties pertaining to the way they access correct information.

Media consumers were able to follow the developments and events that took place anywhere all over the world, not to mention being the easier and simple interface, which connects between individual and their friends, acquaintances, family, and teachers as well as formal and governmental institutions in any spot of the earth.

It has been concluded that social media in Egypt has broken all the previous restrictions of traditional media; it became a pluralistic media without limits or restrictions. This multiplicity of means in the media qualified it to play an important role because it performs a distinct one and very advanced, while the traditional media (whether state owned or private) could not do the same due to governmental censorship.

In Egypt, most public problems and interests did not reach public policy-makers for decades, simply because these interests were not able to find their way to the agenda setting stage of Public Policy Process, for many reasons including:
First: The contradiction of some demands or issues with considerations, values and principles of the policy makers and implementers which are in believe.

Second: The domination of a particular group on the government institutions means of mass communication, and political parties, especially "in all developing countries including Egypt.

Third: illiteracy, lack of awareness, or social and political maturity to the majority of community’s members, much needed for public opinion the basic means for setting a certain policy on the governmental agenda.

The Egyptian public’s failure to contribute to the selection of policies that should be enacted by the government through Public Policy, has completely changed after the Arab Spring visited Egypt in January 25th, 2011 and revisited it in June 30th, 2013. Now, Media in general and social media more freely, plays an important role in the delivery of some issues and demands to the public policy-makers, and forcing them to the agenda setting stage.

This was obvious through following the path of one important and crucial public policy, “Minimum and Maximum Wages’, set on the agenda of the Egyptian Government in 2011 forcing it to do something about the citizen’s well conveyed demands using media, especially the “New Media’ or Social Media (Policy enactment stage or Adoption).

And once more, the role of Social Media was clear in voicing dissatisfaction of the way this policy was put into practice during the implementation stage, which in turn made it a necessity to come to the conclusion that the stated Public Policy needs to be revised (Policy evaluation Stage).

As simple as this process may seem to the western society, it is an enormous achievement for the Egyptian society, it is a huge step towards true democratic ideals that is to say freedom of expression, political participation, governmental accountability and equality.