



The Emergence of Collective Action Networks

Dynamic Protest Waves and Mobilisation Spirals in Egypt

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Abstract

In broad terms, this research is inspired by the founding questions of social movement studies: what triggers the process of recruitment and mobilisation that leads to the demise or success of collective action? In particular, I was puzzled by the mobilisation and emergence of Egyptian contentious actors: how and why collective action evolved in the country from seemingly random and disconnected events and agents? Using Egypt as a case-study and the first decade of the twenty-first century as time frame, I set to solve this puzzle and find an answer to the leading research question: Does the emergence of Collective Action Networks in Egypt explain the increasing levels of contention and, ultimately, the 25 January uprising?

This question focuses on the topic that gives title to the thesis, which is the relation between the hypothetical emergence of CANs and 1) a phase of heightened contention from 2000 to 2011 and 2) the revolutionary situation of 25 January, 2011. It also provides the basis to assess the manifestation of the two other relational patterns that appear in the subtitle of the thesis, namely dynamic protest waves and mobilisation spirals. In addressing the research question, I mixed quantitative and qualitative methods, combining protest event data collection and analysis, social network analysis with interviews. This allowed me to test if, how and why Collective Action Networks emerged and whether the revolutionary situation of 25 January 2011 was an unexpected spontaneous uprising or the natural outcome of a decade of sustained mobilisation. The main finding of this thesis is that, indeed, the intensification of contentious action in Egypt, between 2000 and 2011, was the product an emergent and increasingly complex Collective Action Network that stirred up protest waves and mobilisation spirals thus determining the Egyptian 25 January revolution



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Bio:

Hugo Leal is a Research Associate working on the internet strand of the 'Conspiracy and Democracy' research project at CRASSH, University of Cambridge.