

There are many conversations in Social Media. Finding the ones that may be of value often depends on the human networks to which you are connected and the kinds of conversations to which you pay attention.

The Arab Spring is widely agreed to have begun on 19 December 2010 when a young Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi set fire to himself in protest after police seized his vending cart. This event cascaded into revolutions that dismantled the governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya in addition to inspiring social movements in other nearby nations. This event seems to have been the moment when Tunisians began to coalesce around the call to action. It is likely that organizers, who had been planning some type of movement for more than a year, simply made use of this symbolic act to engender support for their [efforts](#).

Social Media as a Sensor

Knowing that conversations on Social Media are connected to real world events raises interesting possibilities for using Social Media tools, such as Twitter, as a sensor and possibly a predictor. While Twitter data is not a replacement for hard evidence, it is proving to be a good mechanism for alerting officials to the need for investigation and action.

Medical experts already know that Social Media provides a faster indicator of new epidemics than traditional reporting. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) found that by using Twitter as a sensor they can provide local alerts faster than scientific sensors. Twitter is particularly useful as a potential sensor because it is popular and has a very large, openly available, volume of data. It seems logical then, that Twitter could provide a sensor for emerging social movements as well.

Social Movements in Social Media - ACT

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