OPINION LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE IN A LEADERLESS NETWORKED MOVEMENT VIA TWITTER: A CASE STUDY OF #UNDIROSAK

SYIBRATUL FAUZANA BINTI MOHD PAUZI

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by

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informed, and most importantly curious, friends — and in return, I have the support of a small circle who would continually build me up and become my perpetual sounding boards.

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1MDB	1Malaysia Development Berhad
AWAS	Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Conscious Women's Front)
BN	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
Bersih	Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EC	Electoral Commission of Malaysia
GE14	Malaysia's 14th General Election. In some instances in this thesis, GE is used to indicate General Election — for example, GE12 stands for 12th General Election, GE13 for 13th General Election, and so on so forth.
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
PAS	Pan Malaysian Islamic Party
PBBM	Malaysia United Indigenous Party (Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia)
PKMM	Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (Malay Nationalist Party)
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party)
PH	Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope)
PSM	Parti Sosialis Malaysia (The Socialist Party of Malaysia)
SNA	Social Network Analysis
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation

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ABSTRAK

Beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini, aliran yang menonjol telah muncul daripada gerakan berangkai pada abad ke-21, iaitu gerakan tanpa pemimpin. Teknologi digital seperti media sosial mempunyai peranan penting dalam pembentukan gerakan ini. Pada ketika ini, gerakan sosial bermotifkan politik dapat berjalan tanpa kepimpinan institusi. Hal ini menimbulkan kerisauan mengenai sejauh mana keberkesanan gerakan tersebut. Walau bagaimanapun, didapati bahawa para pemimpin masih boleh muncul melalui gerakan berangkai ini tanpa berlakunya sebarang pelantikan rasmi atau percubaan merebut kuasa. Apabila kepercayaan terhadap wakil kepimpinan semakin berkurangan dan pemimpin dapat muncul daripada gerakan berangkai tanpa pemimpin, cara mereka menggerakkan dan mempertahankan kepimpinan mereka merupakan sesuatu yang menarik untuk dikaji. Berdasarkan keadaan ini, pengkaji menyiasat kemunculan kepimpinan melalui *#UndiRosak*, iaitu sebuah gerakan berangkai tanpa pemimpin. Pengundi Malaysia mempertimbangkan pilihan dengan merosakkan undi mereka ketika Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia ke-14 sebagai cara untuk meluahkan perasaan ketidakpuasan hati dengan pilihan terhad calon-calon berkelayakan dalam sesi pilihan raya tersebut. Berpandukan tiga persoalan kajian, kajian ini dilaksanakan menerusi gabungan kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif, iaitu analisis tematik dan analisis rangkaian sosial dengan menggunakan data Twitter sebagai sumber rujukan. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa walaupun tanpa kepimpinan institusi secara tradisional dalam #UndiRosak, satu bentuk kepimpinan pendapat masih muncul, di mana para pemimpin dikenal pasti menerusi tahap pengaruh mereka dalam rangkaian Twitter. Tahap pengaruh

ini ditentukan oleh idea pertumbuhan yang baik, di mana semakin relevan dan berinformasi sesuatu ciapan (*tweet*) itu, semakin banyak pengaruh yang akan diterima, dan semakin banyak interaksi yang diperolehi dan didengari daripada seseorang itu. Namun begitu, gerakan *#UndiRosak* tidak dapat bertahan setelah berlangsungnya Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia ke-14 pada 9 Mei 2018, berikutan para pemimpin pendapat yang muncul gagal menggalas tanggungjawab dalam menyusun rancangan strategik dan menggerakkan sumber kolektif pengundi *#UndiRosak* bagi mencapai sesuatu yang lebih mapan dan boleh dilakukan. Oleh itu, menerusi kajian gerakan *#UndiRosak* dalam latar belakang sosio politik di Malaysia ini, dapat dibuktikan bahawa sebarang gerakan sosial tidak akan muncul daripada suatu kekosongan, sama ada menerusi rangkaian dan dengan adanya pemimpin, ataupun tanpa kedua-duanya. Gerakan sering muncul menerusi fenomena yang besar dengan gabungan pelbagai rungutan secara kolektif.

OPINION LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE IN A LEADERLESS NETWORKED MOVEMENT VIA TWITTER: A CASE STUDY OF #UNDIROSAK

ABSTRACT

In recent years, a glaring trend that emerges out of 21st century networked movements — where digital technologies such as social media have a key role in choreographing them — is the rise of leaderless movements. This is where these politically-motivated social movements could run within the absence of any institutional leadership, which raises concerns on the extent of their effectiveness. However, it is found that leaders can still naturally emerge out of these networked movements without any formal appointment or any attempt at a power grab. When trust in representative leadership is decreasing and leaders can emerge naturally out of these leaderless networked movements, it is interesting to understand how they mobilise and sustain. Based on this premise, the researcher attempted to investigate the emergence of leadership within *#UndiRosak,* a leaderless networked movement where Malaysian voters were weighing the options to spoil their votes in Malaysia's 14th General Election as a way of expressing dissatisfaction by their limited options of eligible candidates in the election. Guided by three research questions, the study was conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, namely thematic analysis and social network analysis, using Twitter data as an archival source. The findings of these research questions suggested that in the absence of traditional institutional leadership in *#UndiRosak,* a form of opinion leadership — where leaders are identified by their amount of influence within the Twitter network — still emerged. This level of influence was determined by the idea of meritorious growth, where the more relevant and more informative one's tweets are, the more influence one will get and the more they will get

heard and interacted with. However, *#UndiRosak* did not sustain after Malaysia's 14th General Election took place on 9 May 2018, as the emerged opinion leaders failed to take responsibility to lay out strategic plans and mobilise collective resources of *#UndiRosak* proponents towards something actionable and sustainable. Furthermore, contextualising this research of *#UndiRosak* movement within the sociopolitical backdrop of Malaysia, it has proved that any social movement — networked or not, leaderless or not — does not emerge from a vacuum, and often stem out of a bigger phenomenon and are compounded by a myriad of collective grievances.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Troubled by the lack of eligible candidate options in the Malaysian 14th general election (GE14), many young voters in Malaysia were questioning the point of voting for any of them at all. These potential voters had come together under the hashtag *#UndiRosak* ('spoiled votes'), debating whether they should spoil their votes as a form of protest in GE14. *#UndiRosak* had been an ongoing debate which was indexed and viewable on social media platforms, especially Twitter, with thousands of tweets daily received on the matter.

With *#UndiRosak*, predominantly advocated by engaged but increasingly alienated younger generation of Malaysian voters, the campaign gave rise to a networked movement in Malaysia. While there were many examples of political parties around the world advocating spoiling the ballots to show discontent towards the choice of candidates or the general political system as a whole, *#UndiRosak* emerged as the first grassroots social movement to champion the rights to spoil the ballots in an election. This movement was under no affiliation to any political institutions — where the formation, discussions & tactics are connected and reconfigured by social media — hence the term 'networked movement'. With this, we see that there were no institutional leaders taking place, giving way to concerns on the effectiveness of these movements towards political change in the country.

1.2   Problem Statement

Throughout the years, protest vote movements were often mobilised and initiated by political elites and parties (Superti, 2006; Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009; Patrawart, 2011). Blank and spoiled votes are nothing of a new phenomenon. Across the developing world, there was a considerable record of blank and spoiled votes (IDEA, 2002), which they could fall under two circumstances. First, they always happened when voters lack information about the candidates or the current political situation. Second, they were often done as a protest to the elected candidates or the system (Driscoll & Nelson, 2014). The latter should be given more electoral weight, as they sent a message that something is wrong in the current system and needs to be fixed.

In Malaysia, the *#UndiRosak* movement was the first known grassroots social movement to advocate protest votes, formed largely out of dissatisfaction of the lack of qualified candidates for GE14 (Cook, 2018). The debates largely took place in social media, where Twitter as the most active platform with already over 32,278 public tweets by over 2,954 unique authors around the issue as of December 31, 2018. The movement demonstrated the characteristics of a networked movement, connected through the Internet and social media, as well as it is multimodal, viral, self-reflective, non-violent, and leaderless (Castells, 2012). The characterisation of leaderlessness is a very striking change from the common, traditional form of movements of the 20th century, where they would have an appointed, representative leader on the forefront.

However it was observed in many cases of networked movements, figures of leadership could still emerge in a relatively flat network without official appointment or any attempt of power grab. These emerged leaders are generally characterised by their higher motivations of information seeking & dissemination, mobilisation and public expression, more so than their non-leaders counterparts. The fact that these leaderless movements, with the help of social media, will continue to come forth, we might want to ask more productive questions, such as: How did this leaderlessness shape the dynamics of the movement? How do the affordances and the networks of the social media platforms allow the emergence of a form of leadership in a leaderless networked movement? Eventually, the bigger question arises — what is the future direction of this politically motivated leaderless networked movement, and can it significantly affect a country's political future?

This thesis was written with an aim to investigate the emergence of leadership for *#UndiRosak*, a leaderless networked movement where Malaysian voters were weighing the options to spoil their votes in Malaysia's 14th General Election as a way of expressing dissatisfaction by their limited options of eligible candidates in the election, especially after it was announced that Mahathir Mohamed, the previous 4th Prime Minister, was nominated as the potential 7th Prime Minister in GE14. Based on the premise that mass collaborations and coordination conducted through digital networked media — this whole phenomenon of 'technology mediated social participation' (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012) — could bring major changes in societal and political landscapes (Golbeck, 2013), the research was conducted through a combination of qualitative and qualitative methods, namely thematic analysis and social network analysis, using Twitter as an archival source.

1.3   Significance of the Study

In this thesis, tweets surrounding *#UndiRosak* were retrieved in between mid January 2018 till end of December 2018, and then analysed through a series of thematic analysis and social network analysis to answer the arising research questions. It took a look into the inner workings of a 21st century movement without an institutional leadership, and the movement functioned without a visible hierarchy. It examined not only its contentiousness issues, but also the structures of its online networks, and its leadership, or the lack of it. At the same time the thesis attempted to explore the impacts of this networked movement towards the society and the country's political future in a bigger picture. This section explains the significance of conducting this thesis and how it is going to help bridge the existing gaps in sociology in the area of social movements, politics, and technology, specifically social media.

First, it is important to understand that social movements and the act of expressing political dissent, online or physical, show that the root causes are much more complex and more than often stem out of a bigger phenomenon and are compounded of a myriad of grievances, sometimes suppressed for years. The emergence of this phenomenon — in this case *#UndiRosak* — therefore should not be solely be misrepresented by framing it as something limited as to be triggered by the nomination of a single individual of charismatic leadership, Mahathir Mohamed as the 7th Prime Minister in GE14. This is why analysing the content of tweets hashtagged as *#UndiRosak* seeks to illuminate on the collective grievances that gave rise to the Undi Rosak movement and phenomenon. In researcher's observations within the context of Malaysian politics, grassroots politically-charged movements and the acts

of expressing dissent are often put aside whereby ones that are expressed through institutional reforms are more preferred. However, not everyone has the access or could afford to join the institutional politics arena. Not only that, the scope of democracy is wide, and definitely one that is not confined within institutional reforms and through representational individuals. This is why the findings of this study is hoped to better illuminate the plight of voters and the citizens of Malaysia in a grander scheme of things. Moreover, this thesis is hoped to be able to provide better insights into the current knowledge level and literacy of the citizens of Malaysia regarding electoral issues. In general, electoral literacy within Malaysians is often confined to the privileged view where the knowledge is not easily accessible to the public. According to the Electoral Commission of Malaysia (EC), as of September 2018 there were still 3.8 million Malaysians not yet registered to vote. The findings of this study are hoped to be able to inform the EC as well as the policy makers of the country on the moving forward steps to be done as we have gauged the electoral literacy of the people of our country.

Second, in a leaderless networked movement, it is understandable that some form of leadership will eventually emerge. The scope is within a movement called *#UndiRosak* in Malaysia. In the age of networked social movements, studying social movement leadership needs to go beyond the concept of the traditional idea of leadership, where leaders were often elected out of their social status, more so than their skills and knowledge. This thesis is one of the ways to a better understanding of leadership emergence in an online movement and how affordances of social media platforms allow these mechanisms to happen. This is especially important as multiple social media platforms — despite allowing ease of movement building — could still

challenge contemporary movements with information credibility, as more and more messages are circulated as the many things are happening at the same time. In the future, social media is going to evolve and continue to be used by activists of all fields. This particular study is hoped to shed light into understanding the potentials of social media platforms — or other digital platforms that may exist in the future — in the intersection of social movements organisation, and what this might bring to the country they are in.

Third, existing literature on networked movements is often centred on the role of social media as the sole harbinger of dissent. These works generally emphasise on the usage of technology during historical disruptive periods in popular movements such as Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street (Gledhill, 2012; Krinsky & Crossly, 2014; Tremayne, 2014). They often interpret these political protests as 'social media revolution', painting is as purely technological determinism, without giving more thoughts to many other underlying factors which made these movements a success in its own definition, and how it affects the society (Tufekci, 2011a). For this reason, the content of tweets in *UndiRosak* were treated as central. The focus were given on the nature of political, ideological, and sociological themes underneath every 280-character post — one where it never fails to consider every contextual factor of the *#UndiRosak* movement before putting any assumptions of the triggers and situations in place. In conclusion, the findings should be interpreted less than how social media and digital communication could be the cause of these grievances, but more on the sociopolitical contexts of the country. In light of this, the findings were hoped to also fill the gap on how these channels could provide new paths of opportunities for research in the field of social movements, politics, and technology.

Fourth, existing literature on leaderless networked movements is also largely predominantly specific to Western and Middle Eastern settings. Recently, more literature also had been focused within Asian and European settings — especially after following the recent protest movements in Hong Kong, India, Catalonia, and France, among others — in 2018 and 2019. This research intends to fill the void of networked social movements scholarship in Malaysian settings, where it will provide an insight into *#UndiRosak*, a new political phenomenon in Malaysia that had greatly impacted the direction of Malaysia's 14th general election.

Fifth, while there is a long list of existing literature on social network analysis and opinion leadership in the topics as detailed in *Section 5.6 Research Question #2: Social Network Analysis,* until now there had been little work in specifying the establishment of the emergence of opinion leadership through the method of SNA. However, when taking into consideration of how SNA could analyse relationships, the logic was that it could also be used to look for a form of leadership, since in relationships there would be individuals that would stand out from the rest. This thesis is hoped to fill in the methodological and literature gap where SNA could be used to ascertain the emergence of opinion leadership.

Finally, this research is hoped to enlighten grassroots social movements in the digital age — whether one with leaders or without — on the power of the collective and the importance of sustaining attention towards what really matters. Despite the importance of leadership in social movements and the ease digital technologies have afforded activists today, it is very important to acknowledge that no social movements

arise without collective analysis, serious strategising, organising, mobilising, and consensus building. In the words of activist and author Angela Davis, "every change that has happened has come as a result of mass movements" (Davis, 2016; p. 36), instead of our flawed focus on individualism, and this is the one social movements should put their energy on.

1.4   Operational Definitions

#UndiRosak. In the context of this thesis*,* the term — which includes the hashtag and the term 'Undi Rosak' without spaces or punctuation — refers to the Undi Rosak movement. In several cases, *#UndiRosak* were used to refer to the act of spoiling votes, in which it will be stated e.g. "*#UndiRosak*, as the act of spoiling ballots" or "*#UndiRosak* (the act)".

Contentious Issues. The term is adapted from Tarrow's (1998) perspective of contentious social movements, in which "people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention" (p. 19). 'Contentious issues' in this case refers to issues which could be used to set the agenda for the networked movement, and be used to amplify throughout the lifecycle of the movement, or expansion of new ones.

Hashtag. The term refers to (#) sign, a form of indexing used on social media platforms, especially Twitter, to identify messages on a specific topic. Hashtag is preceded by the word or identification of the index it will belong to, e.g. *#UndiRosak*, and it is searchable on social media platforms.

Institutional Leadership. The term refers to a form of leadership consisting of formally appointed leaders conducted in a visible hierarchy. In this research, it can refer to leadership in a political parties or movements.

Leaderless Networked Movements. The term refers to movements — as an extension to Networked Movements (below definition) with digital technologies playing a big role in aiding their mobilisations — that emerged without any form of

institutional leadership or hierarchy. In this thesis, it is interchangeably used with 'leaderless networked social movements'.

Networked Movements. The term is referred so due to the fact that digital technologies such as social media have a key role in choreographing these social movements (Gerbaudo, 2012). Castells (2012) suggested that networked social movements are the predominant form of mass movement in a networked society, as they are all networked around the Internet and mobile communications. In this thesis, it is interchangeably used with 'networked social movements'.

Social Media. The term refers to the Internet-based human communication that involves audiences as the active producers and disseminators of content online (Burgess & Green, 2010).

Social Movements. The term 'social movements' refers to group actions in which individuals or organisations join a collective action to achieve a common goal (Jenkins, 1983; Tilly, 1992; Tarrow, 1998).

Twitter. The term refers to a popular social network and microblogging service.

Tweets. The term refers to a form of posting on Twitter. Tweets can include a text message, images, videos, links and a Graphic Interchange Format (GIF) animation, not exceeding 280 characters.

1.5   Research Questions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the emergence of leadership in a digitally networked movement such as *#UndiRosak*, where there were no institutional leaders present. At the same time, the researcher decided to contextualise it within the nature of a contentious discourse regarding the issue of unconventional and controversial voting tactics such as ballots spoiling in the context of Malaysian politics.

The research questions to address within this project are:

Q1:   What were the contentious issues discussed among *#UndiRosak* proponents and opponents on Twitter?

Q2:   Who were the opinion leaders produced by the Twitter network in *#UndiRosak* leaderless networked movement?

Q3:   What were the leadership practices involved in *#UndiRosak* networked movement?

1.6   Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, these were the following objectives that the researcher hoped to achieve:

O1:   To interpret the contentious issues discussed among *#UndiRosak* proponents and opponents

O2:   To identify the opinion leaders produced by the Twitter network in *#UndiRosak* leaderless networked movement

O3:   To demonstrate the leadership practices involved in *#UndiRosak* networked movement

1.7   Scope of the Study

The thesis was written with an aim to investigate the emergence of leadership in a leaderless social movement called *#UndiRosak* in the context of a networked public sphere. The research were conducted within a temporal dimension, starting from 25 January 2018, when the activists held their first forum on *#UndiRosak* (Ruban, 2018) all the way to the end of December 2018. The movement was used as a case study with an aim to provide empirical evidence on the political and societal impacts of collective action in a grassroots movement, formed and sustained through digital networks. According to Creswell (2009), case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the research explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or more individuals. Researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. In many cases, an individual, organisations, groups, events, any spatial unit, or movements can be treated as a case study. The movement *#UndiRosak* was treated as the case study in this research. In placing the movement within its temporal and spatial space, and contextualising it within its history, we can learn about its beliefs, operations, and its appeal (Creswell, 2009).

Online social movements, or also called networked movements (Castells, 2012) are movements that have gained momentum in the late 20th century and early 21st century (Dreier, 2012) as new generations got more technologically literate and began to seek social change through the widening access of the Internet and World Wide Web. Networked movements have brought polarised opinions among scholars — they are praised for their ability to raise awareness to important causes across boundaries, but at the same time they are criticised for their abilities to perpetuate

'slacktivism' (Gladwell, 2010). Despite the criticisms, networked social movements have had real impacts and for this very reason, *#UndiRosak*, despite being conducted entirely online until the time of writing (January 2020), were valid to be considered as a social movement of its own.

To conduct this research, data were collected from Twitter. According to Marshall McLuhan, the medium is the message (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). In holding this phrase to such a high regard, scholars of digital media technology were made to believe "design of a social technology can greatly determine the kinds of actions that people may coordinate through it" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; p. 34). In order to explore the emergence of a leaderless networked movement, Twitter turned out to be an ideal choice of archival information. It is a social media platform often used for dissemination of informational, opinionated and emotional contents (Papacharissi & de Fatima Olivera, 2012) due to its quick sharing features (Weller, Dröge, & Puschmann, 2014). It is also a common practice for politically influenced individuals to use Twitter for the purpose of information propagation to a diverse range of population (Small, 2011). In contentious situations, it is common for groups with contradicted views to share disagreements over various issues. These opinions are useful to discover political issues and themes that beget a movement. Exploring hashtags in tweets during social movement provides opportunities to study the events on a more granular scale (Weller et al., 2014). Twitter also offers more publicly available data than any other platforms of its kind. The tweets are made available to other tools with the consent of its users through Twitter's Application Programming Interface (API) (Twitter Inc, 2019). Twitter was also the most active platform for discourse on *#UndiRosak*, with over 32,278 public tweets by over 2,954 unique

authors around the issue as of December 31, 2018 as collected over social media aggregator app called DiscoverText. In light of this, tweets from the platform were chosen as the main data in this research to explore political events within the scope of *#UndiRosak*.

The dataset consisted of tweets hashtagged *#UndiRosak*, posted in the period between 25 January 2018, at the point of time when the activists held their first public forum (Ruban, 2017) through the end of December 2018. The justifications for temporal scope of January till December 2018 are as follows:

- Malaysian general election (GE14), which triggered *#UndiRosak* took place on 9th May 2018 (The Star, 2018a)
- The remaining 7 months of 2018 was to allow for the residual discourse on *#UndiRosak* on Twitter, so further impacts on GE14 resulting from the movement can be analysed

As of December 31, 2018, there were already over 32,278 tweets so far with the hashtag *#UndiRosak* (personal communication, 2019). This hashtag was selected as it was the one adopted by the movement to perpetuate their claim-making.

A combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods — namely thematic analysis, and social network analysis (SNA) — were conducted to understand the emergence of a leaderless networked movement in *#UndiRosak*.

1.8   Summary

To set the context for the entire thesis, this very first chapter is comprised of sections to introduce the background of this doctoral research, its problem statement, its significance, the questions and objectives to guide the journey of the research, and the extent of the scope that constituted within the research. The emergence of networked movements — where digital technologies such as social media have a key role in choreographing them — was a new phenomenon that was often talked about in the area of contemporary social movements. Coupled with the trend of the lack of institutional leadership due to the features afforded by these technologies, it is interesting to understand how they mobilise and sustain. Within this premise, the scope of the thesis revolved around *#UndiRosak,* a leaderless networked movement where Malaysian voters were weighing the decision to spoil their votes in Malaysia's 14th General Election, using Twitter as an archival source. In order to guide through unfamiliar terms which could be found throughout the thesis, this chapter also included a list of operational definitions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

Social movements are one of the important vehicles towards social and political change — so powerful that they are said to have the potential to transform the current system of the institutionalised politics in wherever they take place (McAdam, 2001). Social movements — referring to 'group actions' where people or organisations join a form of collective action to achieve a common, unified goal (Tilly, 1992; Tarrow, 1998) — are becoming one of the means of empowering people to push for change in a manner outside the established institutions. Unlike political parties or any institutional organisations, they do not belong to any stable political entities, ones with constant access to elites and power. At the same time, social movements are also not a trend, which is in some ways unorganised, fleeting, and without proper demands of their own — but more like something in between (Freeman & Johnson, 1999). Social movements' characteristics can be described as how they are "involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, linked by dense informal networks, sharing a distinct collective identity" (della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 20). In a way, we can conclude that while social movements are social entities that are sometimes deemed informal, they are still organised, oriented towards a certain unified goal, and are ready to engage in extra-institutional conflicts in order to achieve the goal.

In trying to understand social movements as a collective entity that had contributed tremendously throughout the world, scholars have devoted a great deal of

time to understand the mechanics of this phenomenon. Much of what can be concluded is that social movements do not just happen — people do not suddenly decide to be upset with some policies or a government and form a social movement with demands for change. In other words, it can be said that they develop through four stages — emergence (social ferment stage), coalescence (popular stage), bureaucratisation (formalisation), and decline (institutionalisation) (della Porta & Diani, 2006). The decline stage, however, can happen due to many reasons, namely: failure, repression, co-optation, failure, becoming mainstream, and not to mention, success. In trying to understand how movements have formed, grown, and dissipated, many scholars have chosen to apply this development model to social movements around the world.

As the social movements happen in different parts of the world within different historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts, a lot of these movements vary in ideologies. In general, sociologists have identified three types of social movements according to the nature and extent of the change they seek. They are reform, revolutionary, and reactionary (Snow & Soule, 2010) social movements. Reform movements seek limited, yet significant, changes of a nation's political, economic or social systems. While they do not seek to overthrow existing governments, their goal is to improve the conditions within the existing regime. In United States, this includes the Civil Rights movement, the women's suffrage movement, and even ones against big corporations such as the Occupy movements (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Sue, 2010). Other popular movements belong under reform movements are the Zapatistas in Mexico (Godelmann, 2014), the Indignados in Spain (Rainsford, 2011), Occupy Gezi in Turkey (Kaya, 2016) and the most recent Hong Kong protest (Kharpal, 2019). A revolutionary movement seeks to overthrow the existing government, bring about a

new one and revamp the entire political landscape. A number of movements in the past were revolutionary, like the great revolutions in Russia and China (Seton-Watson, 1960). More modern revolutionary movements include Arab Spring, when a series of riots, demonstrations, protests, coups, civil wars, and not to mention foreign interventions took place in the Middle East beginning 2010 (Ghannam, 2011) and 2014 Euromaidan Revolution in which led to a new interim Ukrainian government (Alexander, 2014). Reactionary movements are the only movements that propose retrogressive change, and attempt to block or reverse social changes which already been implemented. They are mostly conservative and extremist in nature. This includes the likes of those who advocate for Neo-Nazism, white supremacism, men's rights, as well as religious extremism such as the Taliban and ISIS (Baradat & Phillips, 2017).

As what have observed, social movements throughout history managed to change the fabric of the societies in a considerable manner (Amenta et. al., 2010). At the same time, there are many failed social movements as well. Nevertheless, the escalations of social movements helped to magnify the grievances of the people and bring pressure on the government agencies, corporations, or other targets of the protest – eventually making a significant difference to the societies today.

2.2   Social Movements of Malaysia

In Malaysia, social movements are nothing short of a new phenomenon. Often of political nature — driven by the motivation of striving towards a better social, political, and economic conditions for a community, or the citizens as a whole — the

practice of social movements dates way back from the colonial time in Malaya during the British administration all the way to today. They were also found to have substantial roles in contributing towards democratisation in this country, making way for more positive transformations to take place (Khoo, 2014).

In Malaysia, movements existed long before 1946 when massive protests happened after the British introduced the Malayan Union, jeopardising the Malay monarchs and indigenous rights (Fernando, 2012). Whilst the nature of social movements in Malaysia have always been politically-inclined, there is a lot to be said when it comes to the evolution of this form of collective action in this country. The differences can be viewed ranging from its formation, mobilisation, dynamics, and many more. A number of reasons could be attributed to this transformation. A glaring variant that contributes to this is the development of the media sphere and its relation to the movement's leadership.

In order to understand the current role of leadership in a leaderless networked movement in Malaysia, first we must take a look into the background of social movements in Malaysia through the framework of the country's developing media sphere. Media is one of the important keys to the discourse of social movements all over the world, particularly in understanding common protest mobilisation patterns. In the context of Malaysia, the role of alternative media is crucial because government controls many traditional media such as TV stations and print media. Alternative media, especially the Internet, is the main channel for the opposition and civil society where a myriad of grievances, perspectives, and commentary are aired and exchanged.

For this purpose, the researcher chose to run through the history and background of three important movements which have shaped the political journey of our country from colonial Malaya till Malaysia today: Angkatan Wanita Sedar or Conscious Women's Front (AWAS), Reformasi, and Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih), before being introduced to the Undi Rosak movement, taking place in the period leading to the last GE14. Bearing in mind that these three movements differed in the form of motivations — AWAS as an anticolonialism movement in Malaya while also fighting towards an egalitarian society, Reformasi calling for the corruption and cronyism to end in the country, Bersih fighting towards fair and clean elections — and that these movements also had distinguishable and/or appointed leaders, it was hoped that from the evaluations of these movements we could learn to understand the distinct characteristics of social movement dynamics and leadership, and how their roles transformed in the age of networked movements where leadership is very much a thin line between a literal presence of an individual and segregation of roles (Koustova, Kwantes, Thrasher, & Fernando, 2013).

2.2.1 AWAS, Physical Public Spaces, and Facilitative Leadership

AWAS, which stands for Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Conscious Women's Front) was the first nationalist women's movement in colonial Malaya. It was created in 1945 as the women's wing for the PKMM, which stood for Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya or Malay Nationalist Party.

Progressive ahead of its time, AWAS believed that when it came to the social position of the Malay women, the existing traditional practices needed to be remodeled

so Malay women would be better educated. In addition, women should also be allowed to decide on their life choices especially when it came to marriage, motherhood, as well as their own career trajectory. To ensure this, Malay women were actively encouraged by AWAS to participate in politics, with a specific goal that they were aware of how important their roles would be when it came to the struggle for independence. Over the years, towards its main aim to gain freedom from colonialism, AWAS served as a vital platform for Malay women to fight for female emancipation and gender equality (Said, 1992).

Aishah Ghani was the first leader to serve AWAS. With her convincing demeanour, along with her many experiences in education and her journalism stint for PKMM's newspaper the Pelita Malaya, she managed to recruit a number of Malay women into AWAS during her public talks and visits to towns (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997). Her speeches called out the actions of men who practiced discriminatory attitudes towards women, citing them to contribute towards the weakening of the society, particularly the Malay community. In addition, she added that only when men and women were to work equally alongside each other towards a liberated society, we could put an end to colonialism. Under Aishah's leadership, the membership of AWAS grew exponentially (Said, 1992)

After Aishah tendered her resignation in 1946, she recruited Shamsiah Fakeh to be her successor (Ghani, 1992). Shamsiah's appointment was believed to be strategic, as Shamsiah lead a tough domestic life that rendered her determined to battle against gender subordination in the society. In return this made her the perfect representation to the plights of the women in the country (Fakeh, 2003). Shamsiah's

first task upon taking over was to ensure that the key members of the organisation were in the same page with her vision towards a newly reformed and liberated Malay women movement. On top of this, she also made sure the newly appointed committee and district leaders were highly committed to advocate female emancipation. Not only that, she also expected them to be an embodiment of this vision through their actions and speeches. These women had been acquainted and had vast experiences of interacting with the community of both urban and rural societies — which made it easy for them to recruit and address members in all areas of Malaya, especially in the rural. Not only that, they also made use of their close ties by recruiting their sisters, daughters, wives and/or relatives, friends and extended friends (Kahn, 2006).

As their members grew, AWAS wanted to do more than just being a portion of the party that complements PKMM. Hence, Shamsiah and the rest of the members worked towards making the movement more self-sustaining and autonomous. The first thing they did was to raise funds and procure supplies for the organisation. Villages donated a few cents each day out of their wages of tapping rubber, and women paddy farmers kept some rice for the members. Some women also donated or pawned jewelry and other valuable to pay for the AWAS offices rental. The peasants were not reluctant to donate to AWAS activists as they had helped them to cultivate their fields and rear their poultry, which showed the efforts of the AWAS activists when it came to social welfare of the community they were fighting for (Crinis, 2004). AWAS activists also joined other activities organised by the villagers such as *kenduris* (mass feasts) and the daily congregational prayers in mosques. In attending these occasions, they managed to spread awareness on anticolonial sentiments. Not only that, they also held classes for Malay women on the subject of social and political issues. In spreading their

agenda, AWAS activists also participated in activities involving non-Malay communities. Members of other ethnicities were also invited to attend AWAS meetings (Aljunied, 2013).

Despite its growing prominence, AWAS had to struggle with multiple hindrances in the society, including from the colonial state, to the societal and cultural pressure who both saw them as a threat (Aljunied, 2013). The movement fell into disarray and met its downfall during the Malayan Emergency declared in June 1948, which saw more than 1,700 communist sympathisers and leftist leaders detained (Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

Through the grassroots activities of the activists and the tenacity of its leaders, the women of AWAS pioneered the history of female activism and anticolonialism. The activists of the movements made full use of their offices and public spaces where they could spread their agenda, train new members, and recruit potential ones. The downfall of a well-organised movement such as AWAS — although predictable considering the number of struggles they had to go through — showed that if organic grassroots are to possess any lasting quality and impacts, it could not afford to be leaderless. Constant effort in fortifying the movement must also be maintained. This style of leadership where leaders are hands-on as facilitators in a collaborative process could be called as 'facilitative leadership', where it "plays a vital role in collaborative planning processes by overcoming conflicts, imagining vision, structuring knowledge and resources, nurturing trust, persuading stakeholders to collaboratively perform tasks and build a learning framework." (Fahmi, 2015; p.16)