

Call for Papers for Vol. 18 (12/2012)

New ICTs and Social Media: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Social Change

edited by Christopher Coenen, Wolfgang Hofkirchner, José María Díaz Nafría

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- Deadline for extended abstracts: **June 15, 2012**
- Notification of acceptance to authors: **July 31, 2012**
- Deadline for full articles: **September 15, 2012**
- Deadline for revised articles: **November 30, 2012**
- Publication: **December 2012**

The use of the Internet and new media for political activism has been researched and debated on since the 1990s. In countries under authoritarian rule in particular, the new public sphere and scope for political organisation provided by the Internet and social media offer great potential for political and cultural democratisation and for resistance against authoritarian rule. While it is widely agreed that this potential exists, there are warnings not to get caught up in the spirit of early Internet euphoria and hope that the dissemination of new media will make democratic political and cultural change happen by virtue of some sort of technological determinism. During the Arab Spring, for example, some people argued that we are witnessing a new form of social and political revolution in which social media play a crucial role. Others have criticised this point of view as exaggerated or as a narrowly Western or Eurocentric perspective. The discussions often overlook the fact that the Internet and new media are not only repressed by authoritarian regimes but are also used for counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic purposes by such regimes or by pro-authoritarian social movements of various shades.

Focusing on the Arab Spring and other recent resistance and democratisation movements, this special issue will explore the complex interplay of old and new forms of political protest that take advantage of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including politically controversial cultural activism. ICTs appear to enable or at least support certain new forms of political organisations (thematically oriented, loosely coupled, quickly gathered, allowing for anonymous affiliation). They appear to be very different to "classical" forms of political organisation and are used for actions targeted not only at national and international but also at local levels. Do ICTs facilitate an increase in revolutionary acts, revolts or acts of resistance as political measures? Against the backdrop of the discussions that have taken place since the 1990s, the impacts, shortcomings and potentials of the use of new ICTs and social media by political activists will be scrutinised. Besides a variety of such political uses in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the recent developments in Europe and North America also justify a closer look at the role of ICTs in movements aimed at bringing about radical social change. The revolts in Greece, the indignant movement in Spain and Occupy Wall Street all

developed as a reaction to political and economic measures and policies that were more typical of developing countries in previous decades; this allows for interesting comparisons, for example with regard to differences between movements which claim and those which defend rights.

We welcome empirical and theoretical papers that analyse the use of new ICTs and social media in recent political and cultural resistance and democratisation movements with regard to such questions/topics as:

- What has been the actual role of new ICTs and social media in such movements?
- Do new ICTs and social media allow for the development of political community building and thereby help movements to grow, consolidate and proliferate, or is the use of ICTs an obstacle in this regard?
- How does the political use of new ICTs and social media relate to processes of globalisation and democratisation?
- What relationships exist between the use of new ICTs and social media on the one hand, and street demonstrations and other traditional expressions of social revolt and political protest on the other hand?
- How can new ICTs support human rights and anti-authoritarian social change and what dangers are conceivable in this regard (for example pro-authoritarian online campaigns against critical bloggers, or possible instances of 'human rights imperialism')?
- Does the use of new ICTs and social media go hand in hand with new, less hierarchical forms of political activism and, if so, what are the strengths and weaknesses of these new forms?
- Does the use of new ICTs and social media allow for stronger and new forms of political engagement of women or other traditionally marginalised groups?
- If new ICTs support political and cultural empowerment, do certain social groups profit more from this than others?
- Have the Internet and new media become a new sphere of political conflict and cultural change and, if so, how do revolutionary, reformist and counter-revolutionary movements interact in this new sphere?

Guest Editors:

Christopher Coenen

christopher.coenen@kit.edu

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), ITAS, Karlsruhe, Germany

Wolfgang Hofkirchner

wolfgang.hofkirchner@tuwien.ac.at

Associate Professor, Institute of Design and Technology Assessment, Vienna University of Technology, Vienna, Austria

José María Díaz Nafría

diaz-naf@hm.edu

Visiting Fellow Professor, Faculty of Interdisciplinary and General Studies, Munich University of Applied Sciences (Germany); Researcher, Universidad de León (Spain).

Abstracts and Submissions

Potential authors are requested to provide an extended abstract (max. 1,500 words) by **June 15, 2012**. Abstracts may be submitted in the native language of the author though an English translation of the abstract must be included if the chosen language is not English. IRIE will publish articles in English, French, German, Portuguese or Spanish. The author(s) of contributions in French, Portuguese, or Spanish must nominate at least two potential peer reviewers.

Abstracts will be evaluated by the guest editors. The authors will be informed of acceptance or rejection.

Deadline for the final article (usually ca. 3,000 words or 20,000 characters including blanks) is **November 30, 2012**.

All submissions will be subject to peer review. Therefore the acceptance of an extended abstract does not imply the publication of the final text unless the article has passed the peer review and revisions (if required) have been included in the text.

All submissions should be sent by email with 'IRIE Submission' in the header to the guest editors.

For more information about the journal see: <http://www.i-r-i-e.net>