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**Social Media and Social Protest**

The implication of digital media as resource for national and transnational mobilization ofprotest [working title]

**Concept Note**

1. **Background to the German Development Institute and the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre**

The German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) is one of the leading research institutions and think tanks for global development and international development policy worldwide. The DIE's unique research profile combines research, consulting and professional training. DIE builds bridges between theory and practice and works within international research networks.

The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre (OGC) is a unit of the Democratic Governance Group in the Bureau for Development Policy of UNDP. It was established in 2002 as a centre of excellence designed to provide support to the practical and operational work of UNDP in assisting partner countries in developing more democratic and effective forms of governance for sustainable peace and development. OGC is a well-networked knowledge centre, optimally positioned at the intersection of codified ‘expert’ knowledge and practitioner knowledge on governance. OGC aims to facilitate flows of knowledge between these worlds to encourage learning.

1. **Background to the project**

The prominent role of digital media in the emergence of the Arab Spring movements has re-energized the academic debate on the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in reshaping the dynamics of social and political protest worldwide. Digital media have considerably lowered the transaction costs associated with political action, for both the individual citizen as for social movements and other collective actors that engage in the representation of group interests vis a vis the state. The decentralized and informal procedures offered by social networking sites and other Web2.0 platforms constitute an important addition to the strategic toolkit for the mobilization of social protest in both developed and developing countries.

From the Arab Spring uprisings (2010 – 2011), to *Los Indignados* in Spain, *Occupy* in London and New York (2011), *Kínima Aganaktisménon Politónto* in Greece (2010 – 2012), to the latest mass anti-government protests in Brazil and Turkey (2013), social media platforms have significantly contributed to the national and transnational diffusion of social protest. New forms of Internet enabled communication have therefore come to be inextricably linked to the debate about civic rights and democratic participation.

However, the scholarly debate about the larger implications of this phenomenon for modern societies is divided. It has frequently been argued that social media platforms offer a way of extending the democratic franchise and encouraging civic participation in the organization and operation of the state. At the same time, however, more pessimistic voices have also raised concern about related issues of security and stability. Over the past years, on various occasions large-scale protests, coordinated via social media, have been marred by violence, vandalism and hate speech. The 2011 London riots and the 2007 – 2008 post-election violence in Kenya are illustrative examples to this point.

Understanding the ways in which social media is transforming civil society and social mobilisation is key to reconceptualise democratic institutions and spaces for social engagement. Policy-relevant findings are likely to be derived from the study dynamics of social media in social and political protest – concerning, for example, resilience and early warning systems; political economy and context analysis methodologies; strengthening of civil society; or e-spaces for civic participation.

1. **Scope of work / Output**

The project will result in a joint Report on “*Social Media and Social Protest*” [working title], that highlights and analyses trends in digitally-enabled protests worldwide and discusses their policy implications for democratic development in varying socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts.

1. **Methodology**

* Review of relevant scholarly publications and existing data bases
* Critical discussion of conceptual, methodological and theoretical issues pertaining to digitally enabled protest mobilization
* Systematic mapping of worldwide trends in diffusion of digital Information and Communications Technology (ICT), digital media usages, and protest events
* Desk study of 10 to maximum 15 selected cases of digitally enabled events of social protest, ensuring variance on crucial contextual factors including region, political regime, socio-economic development, and ICT diffusion (case vignettes)

The publication will comply with UNDP’s quality assurance processes for knowledge products. UNDP OGC will act as UNDP focal point, working closely with the UNDP e-governance team in the Democratic Governance Group, BDP. In addition to internal reviews, two feedback mechanisms are envisaged:

* Feedback from a Readers Group (10 - 15 people), made up of UNDP’s and DIE’s staff as well as experts from civil society and academia.
* A peer review with two independent academics will be conducted. The reviewers will be selected by DIE/UNDP and will provide technical review to ensure quality and consistency.

1. **Timeframe**

* Review of relevant scholarly publications and existing data bases started – By September 2013;
* Annotated outline for internal discussion – By October 2013;
* One-day working meeting DIE – UNDP OGC in Oslo, with possible ½ day presentation to selected external experts - October 2013.
* First full draft for internal review – By January 2014
* Revised draft for external review (I) (readers group) - By February 2014
* Revised draft, integrating feedback by readers group, shared with for external review (II) (peer reviewers) - By March 2014
* Revised draft, integrating feedback by peer reviewers - By April 2014
* Final document – By 7 April 2014
* Editing, proofreading and design finalized – By 5 May 2014
* Printing (75-100 copies) – May 2014
* E-launch – May 2014

1. **Authorship**

Dr. Anita Breuer, Senior Research Fellow, DIE (lead author). Writing support will be provided by Javier Fabra-Mata.

1. **Budget**

* Peer review - flat rate of USD 1,250 per person (x2): USD 2,500
* Copy-editing – USD 2,000
* Design – USD 3,000
* Printing – USD 3,000

DIE will cover 2/3 of the total costs, with UNDP OGC covering the remaining 1/3.