

EDITORIAL

GLOCALISM
info@globusetlocus.org

There is an important connection between the protest movements which have crossed the world in recent years and the use of the new networks. These movements are perceived globally both as representative of the new forms of political organization and as political agents able to fully utilize the Internet's potential for connection and exchange. In these processes, the social media play a particularly significant role: thanks to their capability for linking and sharing information and claims, they appear to be well suited to establishing a "network society", a virtual and social space capable of moulding power. Certainly, people's rallies always start from actual facts; however, these facts are often decoded and made public through this virtual space. The outcomes of the latest protest movements reveal that the Internet and the social media are not sufficiently influential to bring about political changes in the way they hoped; and yet they have the merit of opening up a public space for political discussion and activism, albeit a virtual one. A space in which a new form of global democracy could be experimented with.

In this issue, *Glocalism* aims to examine the relationship between actual spaces and virtual ones, as in Azza Sirry and Sandra Bustamante's essay, focusing on the two metropolises of Buenos Aires and Cairo. The authors explain the connection between the social, political and economic contradictions in the two cities and the appearance of demands linked to the need for new political forms of citizenship, and how these were conveyed and claimed in Tharir Square and Plaza de Mayo. Any stable and democratic state, the two authors argue, cannot ignore the integration of urban planning strategies with social and economic programs for all urban citizens.

When the actual public sphere is not able to hold the citizens' demands, the people seek the opportunity to speak and organise improvements in their lives in the virtual space. Ihediwa Nkemjika Chimee and Amaechi M. Chidi's paper presents precisely the relationship between social media and political changes in Africa. The authors show how social media, thanks to the global sharing of

ISSN 2283-7949
GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION
2016, 1, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2016.1.6
Published online by "Globus et Locus" at www.glocalismjournal.net



Some rights reserved

information, can penetrate closed and non-democratic societies and even help in spurring on the push for mass mobilisation. Their analysis starts with the Arab Spring, but includes the other African states and the continental consequences of more recent events in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

In any event, the relationship between the Internet, new media and democracy is not so direct. This is clear in Esha Sen Madhavan's essay, which examines three Indian social movements that are able to affect policy-related decision-making. As regards the Indian case, the social media have given new strength to social activism, and have experimented with a new model of governance: open, inclusive and deliberative. Nevertheless, this paper shows that social media and the Internet are only tools: citizens need to approach these tools with knowledge and responsibility in order to fully open up their potential.

Among these possibilities it is that of increasing the voices in the public space that stands out. Cara Robinson and Nia Canteley explain this issue by analysing the "Black blogosphere" as an example of virtual space, an alternative to mainstream information. This "counterpublic space" offers a change of perspective which is essential for the democratic capacity to include different views in public discourse.

Starting from these analyses, it is clear that nowadays reflections on democracy cannot ignore either the local contexts in which democracy is demanded or the new technological tools through which it is experimented with. The next issue of *Glocalism* will be devoted precisely to the relationship between global and local democracy.