

## Proposal

### 1. ORBICOM's research theme based on UNESCO priorities:

(4) Freedom of expression, right to information and democratic participation

### 2. The title of the project :

Mapping and characterizing social media role in the XXI century social movements (2<sup>nd</sup> part.)

### 3. UNESCO Chair :

Chair in Communication Research, Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain.  
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### 4. A summary of the project :

4.1. Background: present project was already selected in the Orbicom collaborative project call 2023, colleagues Prof. Fadia Hussein from Arab association for research and communication Sciences (AARCS), Beirut, Lebanon and Prof. Mohamed Abdelwahab from the Higher Institute of Information and Communication, Rabat, Maroc joined the project.

-New colleagues are welcome. Team working language: English

#### 4.2: What is the project about?

Introduction: ICTs have opened up new opportunities to organize collectively and to demand social changes, the key concept of this project is the “*smart mobs*” (Rheingold, 2004) meaning the empowerment of the digital citizenship being connected online, social media platforms allow citizens to network around issues in public affairs (Mattoni & Cecobelli, 2018), allowing them to express their opinions and to joint to claim for their social rights.

The mobilizations of citizens gained new relevance starting in the early 2000s with the rise of ICTs (Milan and Padovani, 2014), and grassroots participation has been evolving since then according to the evolution of the technology itself. ICT started as a means of calling for the mobilizations, e.g. national SMS call and the Philippine President Estrada overthrow (Philippines, 2001), until the social media became a space of protest itself, breaking physical limitations as in the case of the Velvet revolution (Armenia, 2018) when social media allowed the diaspora to actively support the social mobilization taking place in the motherland. Cases of interest in this research are not specific groups protests but national social mobilizations such us: Arab springs, 2010; Eurasian “colour revolutions”, 2000 etc.

-Objective: to map and characterise political revolutions and to relate them with the role played by digital communication

-First year project results: During the first year we addressed the construction of the model analysis. We first selected some representative study cases, such as the the Thawra or Lebanese October Revolution (Lebanon, 2019) and 15M social movement (Spain, 2015). The study of the cases allowed us to find the key variables and to define the categories to characterise the social movements results politically and communicative talking (e.g. democracy status or press freedom level before and after the social revolution).

-What is next: to add new study cases from different regions and keep on building the dataset to compare the variables in order to find correlations like the regional domino effect that we found in Eurasian colour revolutions between 2000-05; Arab springs between 2010-12 or Latin American movements 2019-22, making neighbours countries undergo similar processes in quick temporal succession.