



## MeCoDEM Kicks Off Research on Civil Society and Political Activism

**How do political activists and civil society groups in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa mobilise support? What do they do to make their protest visible to the public and the media? The ways activists communicate during conflicts will be central to the forthcoming fieldwork activity of EU-funded project “Media, Conflict and Democratisation” (MeCoDEM). The new research phase kicked off at MeCoDEM’s latest fieldwork planning meeting in Oxford, United Kingdom, on 17-20 June 2015.**

Rainbow flags alongside heavily armed police officers in the streets of Belgrade, pigs and spilled pig's blood at the entrance to the Kenyan parliament, Twitter hashtags #Egypt and #jan25 as real-time information sources about the protests at Cairo's Tharir square – activists' communications can take various forms. In the next six months MeCoDEM country teams will examine communication practices and strategies adopted by political activists in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa. Starting in July 2015, MeCoDEM country teams will conduct interviews and content analyses to find out how civil society tries to shape public debate and policy outcomes.

Guests from the European Commission and MeCoDEM Advisory Board contributed to discussions at the recent fieldwork planning meeting in Oxford. MeCoDEM's Project Officer at the European Commission **Anne Nielsen** is an experienced researcher and policy analyst. **John Downey** is an expert in the field of comparative media at Loughborough University (UK). Co-founder and Director of Albany Associates **Simon Haselock** is a pioneer in media intervention in countries emerging from violent conflict. **Helmut Osang** is head of journalism training at DW Akademie and co-founder of the German Forum Media and Development FoME. London School of Economics Professor **Terhi Rantanen** is a specialist in global media and communications.

“We are very lucky to have these advisors on board. They play an important role in providing guidance and feedback on our research activities”, said **Katrin Voltmer**, MeCoDEM's coordinator. “We are well-prepared to start our next fieldwork phase now.”

### **About MeCoDEM:**

MeCoDEM began on 1 February 2014 and will run over three years. The project investigates the interplay of communication and democratisation conflicts in four emerging democracies, Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, each of them representing unique aspects of transitional / post-transitional divisions. Based on a comparative case study design, the research covers constitutional conflicts, civic conflicts and conflicts surrounding accountability and good governance. These conflicts constitute arenas of dispute where the media interact with the communicative strategies of governments on the one hand, and political activists and political movements struggling for recognition on the other.

MeCoDEM is funded by the European Union within the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. With a budget of 2.2 million Euros, the project consortium includes eight partner institutions from six countries: University of Leeds (coordinating institution), University of Belgrade, University of Hamburg, University of Cape Town, University of Oxford, Stockholm University, Ruhr University Bochum and American University in Cairo.

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