Editorial

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This booklet is dedicated to an exploration of the theme *Mediterranean Network Publics and Citizenship*. *Civic engagement, political participation and cultural practices in the social media landscape in the Mediterranean area.*

Over the last few years, interest in the potential of social media for increasing people's participation in public spaces and citizenship has gained momentum. In addition to use for sharing cultural, social and educational content, social networking has come to the fore in political contexts, especially during the 2011 Arab uprisings. Since then, their role in supporting civic participation and political/cultural change has been widely debated, with authors adopting contrasting positions. On the one hand, social media have been recognised as a technology that fosters a participatory attitude, supports civic engagement, and acts as a driver for young people's participation: from discussion forums to the creation of wiki content, from sharing useful resources to using information in every field of life – education, politics, economy, society. On the other hand, some scholars have questioned their participatory power, claiming that, despite new opportunities to engage in the distribution of content, relatively few people are taking advantage of these recent developments. Furthermore, though social media might seem to have great potential, the research on online participatory culture is still in its infancy.

The papers presented in this booklet report on the role of social media in different contexts and for a variety of purposes: for civic learning, political engagement and cultural practices; as an instrumental part of the Arab Spring; as an element of religious and spiritual life; and for civic education in formal and informal learning contexts.

The first of the six papers, ″La naissance du mouvement antiraciste tunisien: nouvelles pratiques militantes à travers les réseaux sociaux. Une étude qualitative″ by Afef Hagi explores the role of social networking sites in

supporting citizenship practices and civic engagement during Tunisia's transition to democracy in 2011. Through analysis of data relating to a civic movement born online in that period, the paper investigates the new dynamics of citizens' mobilization online and offline, and concludes that social networking sites hada significant impact on citizenship practices.

In "#TNelec: les élections législatives en micromessages", Sami Zlitni and Fabien Liénard examineTwitter use by those involved in politics before, during and after Tunisia's 2014 general election. The political events occurring in this young and fragile democracy provided the authors with anopportunity to reflect about the rise and development of new political communication strategies, allowing them to explore how specific features of Twitter, such as hypertextuality and hashtagging, have been used by parties and candidates for their political campaigns.

In the third paper, "The role of social media in Maghreb after the Arab springs between migrants and associations: the case of Boukhalef (Tangier, Morocco)", Tiziana Chiappelli and Federico Trentanove report their first-hand experience as witnesses observing the tragic events that took place in the district of Boukhalef, on the outskirts of Tangiers, in August 2014. A number of immigrants were attacked by local residents, and foreign journalists and activists made extensive use of Twitter to inform the world about these events. Here, Twitter use proved to be an effective means for disseminating information, but failed to make a significant impact in transforming words into action.

Maria Ranieri and Francesco Fabbro, reporting in "Primavera Araba a Primavalle. Un'esperienza di Educazione ai media e alla cittadinanza nel tempo dei social network", discuss the results of an educational action-research initiative carried out at high-school level in Rome, Italy. This was dedicated to civic engagement and new digital media, involving students in a learning process designed to promote critical understanding and active use of media in the political arena. Activities involved analysis of political websites and the events of the Arab Spring, providing the opportunity to reflect on these themes through the lens of media and citizenship education, and to identify appropriate pedagogical strategies for fostering students' understanding of complex political issues.

In the fifth paper, "Medios de comunicación y nuevas prácticas ciudadanas de adolescentes y jóvenes", Juan Bautista Martínez Rodríguez and Elisa Hernández Merayoreport the results of a study investigatingthe role and agency of adolescents and young peoplein social network sites for media activist purposes. Through a number of focus groups and case studies, the authors

present the several degrees of agency adopted by young people in their civic participation mediated by social digital technologies.

Finally, in ″Media, Minority, Visibility: Gurbet Roma in a Virtual World″, Zoran Lapov provides a detailed investigation ofhow Roma people make use of digital technologies to spread Romani culture on the web. The author specifically explores how Gurbet Roma who are native to Kosovo and Macedonia rely on video sharing sites to engage their communities in spiritual, linguistic and cultural issues, and also to gain visibility among a wider audience. The study offers a thorough investigation into the complex Romani world and provides interesting insights into how different communities use digital technologies.