

***Call for Papers: Rethinking Social Movements in the Digital Age:  
Activism, Dissent and Rebellion in the Post-Arab Spring***

**International Conference  
Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB)  
July 29, 2016**

**Keynote Speaker: Dr. Laila Shereen Sakr**  
Assistant Professor of Film & Media Studies  
University of California, Santa Barbara

The pivotal and unprecedented role that digital technology has played in instigating, as well as documenting the Arab Spring has without a doubt renewed the interest in social movements beyond the traditional realm of the “physical”. As the revolution in digital technology is slowly revolutionizing the way people communicate, debate existing norms and are exposed to other social and cultural practices and forms of governance worldwide, it is also providing new means for coordination and mobilization. In the advent of the Arab ‘Spring’ revolts throughout the region, digital technology has successfully pushed its way into politics: allowing people across borders, class, and formal venues of associations to debate, coordinate, and transform the ‘digital’ into the ‘physical’.

Today, political leaders around the world utilize digital technology to communicate and debate their political agenda to and with the public. Twitter and Facebook have pushed their way to becoming pivotal venues of mediation in state-society relations worldwide. News sharing, debating, and critical collective views of governments across the world has given more ‘power’ and leverage to the ‘people’ in the framework of collective ‘shaming and blaming’ for exposing human rights violations, abuses and the denial of basic rights and freedoms. Employing satirical language in the critical reproduction of news, as well as developing cartoons and videos, digital activism has taken on a new face that bridges cultures and allows a wider public to engage in and relate to political, social, economic, and cultural debates. Examples from around the world can demonstrate how social media venues in particular are becoming a venue for dissent, activism, and campaigning for social, political and even economic causes.

Activism in social media has furthermore reflected existing social and political debates in societies around the world. During the Arab ‘Spring’ revolts across the region, it reflected not only the ideological, but also the political divides between people across various spectra. As the region witnessed the rise of political Islam, social media networks became flooded with debates on identity, religion, and politics and the rising polarities and peripheries of secularism and Islamism.

This call for papers aims to bring in contributions from scholars across disciplines and social media activists to shed light on the increasing role of the digital in mediating state-society relations, particularly during and after the Arab Spring revolts. Contributions can be theoretical in nature aimed at examining the role of the digital in rethinking social movements and the changing nature of activism, (political) dissent, rebellion and revolutions. They can also be empirical and examine particular venues of the digital or case-studies across the Arab region.

Abstracts will be accepted **until May 8, 2016** and applicants will be notified whether their abstract has been accepted on May 11, 2016. Accepted applicants will be required to submit a draft paper for their conference presentations by July 5, 2016, where they will be presenting their work in an international conference organized by the Orient-Institut in Beirut (OIB) on July 29, 2016 in Beirut, Lebanon. After the event, articles will be peer-reviewed and edited accordingly by the authors to be submitted for publication either as a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal or as a book publication by a well-established university press.

Abstracts should not exceed 500 words and submissions should include a short bio of the author(s). All submissions should be sent directly to the conference organizer, Dr. Dina Mansour-Ille ([dmansour@aucegypt.edu](mailto:dmansour@aucegypt.edu)), who also welcomes any questions or inquiries on this call.

**Timeline for Submission:**

<b><i>March 30 – May 8, 2016:</i></b>	Call open for abstract submissions
<b><i>May 11, 2016:</i></b>	Applicants will be notified on the status of their abstract submission. Accepted applicants will be requested to submit their draft papers <b>by maximum July 5, 2016.</b>
<b><i>July 29, 2016:</i></b>	Conference to be held at OIB in Beirut, Lebanon
<b><i>October 15, 2016:</i></b>	Submission of final revised paper for peer-review

**The Keynote Speaker:** Laila Shereen Sakr (a.k.a. VJ Um Amel) is Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies at UC Santa Barbara. Her creative and scholarly works use digital logic and technique to map global participation in virtual worlds and networked publics. She is the creator of R-Shief media system for archiving and analyzing social media content, and the cyborg conceptual art project and performance, VJ Um Amel. She has shown in solo and group exhibitions and performances at galleries and museums across the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East, and has published extensively. Prof. Sakr is a leading voice in the open source movement, in particular for Arabic localization. She is a co-editor for the open access journal: *Media Theory*, and also co-editor of *After.Video* (a paperback book and video stored on a Raspberry Pi computer packaged in a VHS case) published by Open Humanities Press. Recent reviews appear in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Science*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Fast Company*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Voice of America*, *The Monocle*, *Art Territories*, *Digital Media and Learning*, *Egypt Independent*, *Mada Masr*, *Jadaliyya*, and *The Creators Project*.