

Call for Papers

Workshop on

Social Contracts in the MENA – Drivers of Change

German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik
(DIE),

Bonn, Germany, 24-26 August 2022

Aspirations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to improve state-society relations predate the Arab uprisings in 2010-11 (e.g. Algeria 1991-2002, Iran 1998). However, developments after 2011 fell well short of meeting these aspirations in most MENA countries.

Considerable bodies of literature now use the social contract ‘lens’ for framing state-society-relations and its transformation. These include both, scholarly texts (Heydemann 2007, Regeni/Auktor 2017, McCandless 2018,) and development policy-guiding publications (World Bank 2004, OECD 2011, UNDP 2016). Loewe, Zintl and Houdret (2021) define them as the “*entirety of explicit or implicit agreements between all relevant societal groups and the sovereign (i.e. the government or any other actor in power), defining their rights and obligations towards each other*”. Typically, governments deliver protection (collective, individual and legal security), provision (social and economic benefits) and participation (in political decision-making). Citizens in turn accept the rule of the government and pay taxes.

Social contracts are not static. They are regularly renegotiated but most often, the contracting parties have either no reason to change their position or no leverage to see through such a change, and therefore reconfirm the existing contracts with just limited changes. However, every now and then, long periods of path dependencies end abruptly and sometimes unexpectedly with a much more substantial change in the social contract. Apparently, this can be due to changes in the framework conditions (economic or health shock) or the intervention of powerful foreign actors (e.g. invasion or economic sanction). However, there is not yet much systematic research on the questions of which factors can bring about such change, and what potential less powerful actors have for driving a change in the social contract (For further information on the concept see: <https://www.die-gdi.de/en/social-contract/>).

The German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) will therefore hold a workshop on **24-26 August 2022 in Bonn, Germany**, to discuss methodological avenues – both qualitative and quantitative – and empirical insights to:

- a) identify drivers of contemporary transformations of social contracts in the MENA-region,
- b) assess the drivers’ respective contribution to change – both in ‘objective’ terms and in the perception of the social contract stakeholders,
- c) gauge the options of less powerful actors (e.g. vulnerable groups in society) to bring about change in social contracts.

Empirical contributions will focus either on country-to-country or region-to-region comparisons (MENA included), on specific policy fields, or on the trajectory of specific social contracts over time.

We invite researchers in any country and from any relevant discipline (sociology, economics, political science, law etc.) to submit scholarly written abstracts (500-600 words) of papers in the making (not yet published!) to socioeconomic@die-gdi.de before **15 March 2022**. Abstracts should provide information on (i) the research question, (ii) the hypothesis, (iii) the methodology and (iv) the expected findings.

Authors of accepted papers will be informed **by 8 April 2022** and then be requested to send drafts of their full papers **by 31 July 2022**.

Participants are fully responsible for organising their travel and accommodation arrangements, but DIE will provide logistical and information support in this regard. In addition, DIE will cover the travel and accommodation costs of a limited number of applicants from outside Europe. Please let us know if you would need such support when you send your abstract. In case you need a visa to travel to Germany, please remember to contact the relevant German consulate asap, as it may take a long time to get an appointment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us:

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