

Call for Papers

International workshop on

Social contracts and environmental change in the Middle East and North Africa and elsewhere

German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS),
Bonn, Germany, 26– 28 August 2024

Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation increasingly affect the living and production conditions of people worldwide and acts as a risk multiplier, for instance in the areas of health, energy, water and food security and livelihoods. Heatwaves, the increasing intensity and frequency of droughts, floods and sandstorms but also sea level rise negatively affect infrastructures and agriculture. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is particularly vulnerable to and affected by climate change effects. However, the impacts do not hit all inhabitants in the same way; some groups are already suffering more than others, and the absence of appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures will further exacerbate existing marginalization.

Environmental change challenges the legitimacy of governments wherever they cannot deliver provision, protection and participation anymore as provided by their social contracts, which might thus have to be renegotiated. We define a social contract 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 toward each other” (Loewe, Zintl and Houdret 2021). At the same time, many social contracts contribute to environmental problems themselves. For example, some of them grant rural elites almost unlimited access to water and arable land, which results in environmental damage, harms other social groups and undermines the existence of the social contracts themselves (see Figure 1).

From 26 August 2024 (evening) to 28 August (afternoon), we will hold an international workshop to discuss these relations between environmental change and social contracts and their implications for future development and policy-making in the MENA region and beyond. Papers may focus on one or more of the following questions:

- How does environmental degradation affect social contracts in the MENA and other world regions? To what extent can these effects be cushioned on the national level, i.e. by amendments in social contracts that provide for a better compensation of parties suffering particularly from environmental change – that is by more or better *protection*, *provision* or *participation*? To what extent does the social contract erode or do political actors delegitimize themselves when they cannot adequately protect their citizens from the consequences of environmental damage and disasters?
- How do current social contracts contribute to environmental degradation? Which social groups benefit from current modes of natural resource exploitation, and which ones loose? What role does the unequal access of different social groups to natural resources (*provision*) play in this regard? How can adaptation measures be designed in a way that helps addressing environmental problems, but also promote social contracts that are more inclusive (*participation*)? Can social contracts be reformulated such that the societal groups who are primarily responsible for environmental change compensate those who suffer most from it?

Can the compensations paid by external actors (for example in the loss and damage framework) be used on the national level to strengthen the social contract?

- How does environmental change affect parties that have no say on the shape of social contracts such as children, future generations, people in other countries or other species/ biodiversity? What can be done to ensure that renegotiations of social contracts ensure their *participation* and take better account for their legitimate interests?

The workshop will also discuss how different stakeholders within a country can reframe and renegotiate social contracts in a way that is both more environmentally sustainable and more inclusive, for instance through agreements on compensations paid to reinternalise external effects of current patterns of production, consumption and natural resource use (see figure).

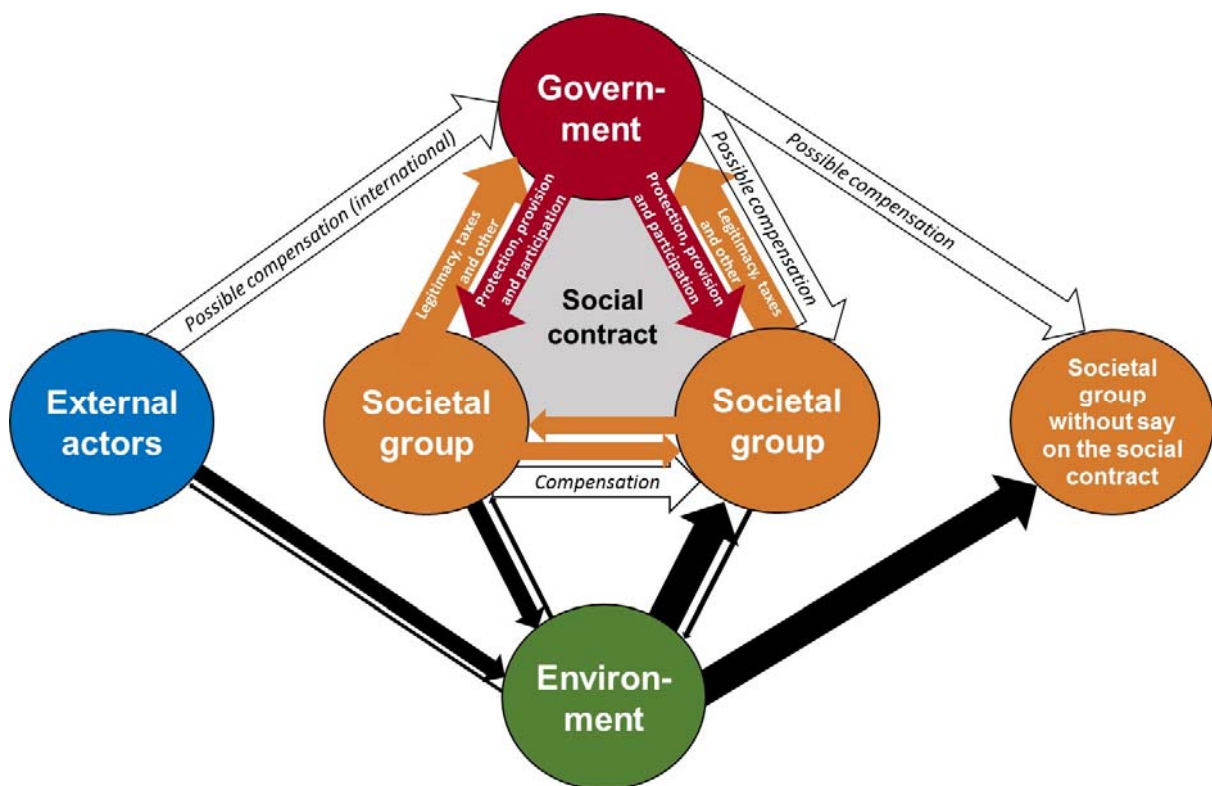


Figure: based on Loewe, Zintl and Houdret (2021) and Loewe, El-Haddad, Furness, Houdret and Zintl (2024)

We invite researchers in any country and from any relevant discipline (sociology, economics, environmental studies, political science, law etc.) to submit scholarly written abstracts (300-500 words) of conceptual or empirical papers in the making (not yet published!) to socioeconomic@idos-research.de before **15 March 2024**. Empirical contributions will focus either on single country cases, on country-to-country comparisons (MENA or any other world region) or on the trajectory of specific social contracts over time. Abstracts should provide information on (i) the problem or research gap to be addressed, (ii) the research question, (iii) the main message, (iv) the methodology and (v) the expected findings.

We will select a limited number of submissions until 15 April 2024, provide authors with some comments on their abstracts and invite them to send us a short version of their papers (about 2000 words) until 15 June 2024. We will take our final decision on acceptance by 30 June 2024.

Participants are fully responsible for organising their travel and accommodation arrangements, but IDOS will provide logistical and information support in this regard. In addition, IDOS will cover the travel and accommodation costs of a limited number of applicants from outside the OECD world. 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 on the topics covered by the conference or the process of selecting papers, please feel free to contact us: markus.loewe@idos-research.de

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