

Non Pre-Organised Panel Proposal

The XIII Conference of the Italian Society for Middle Eastern Studies
(SeSaMO)

Panel Title: Knowledge and Power. Discussing the BDS and Academic Boycott Campaigns

Panel Coordinators: Enrico Bartolomei (independent researcher) and Paola Rivetti (Dublin City University)

Discussant: Paola Rivetti (Dublin City University)

Panel description:

In 2005, Palestinian and Israeli activists committed to justice and peace called for a boycott against Israel. This call originated a broader campaign, calling for the boycott, disinvestment and sanction of Israel, as a means to raise awareness around Israel's violations of international law and systematic denial of Palestinian's fundamental right to self-determination. As a non-violent struggle, the BDS campaign has increased its international visibility and is today well-known and widely debated in political and economic circles around the world. Along with the BDS, another call was issued. The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel was launched in 2004 and has so far been debated in a number of academic professional circles, with differing reactions. In the past few years however, we have seen a rise in the number and effectiveness of the initiatives linked to the Campaign, with internationally important professional organisations devoting general assemblies to discuss it (this is the case for MESA, the American Middle East Studies Association, BRISMES, the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, and AAA, the American Anthropology Association) or endorsing it (as did the ASA, American Studies Association).

The goal of the panel is to illustrate the two campaigns, although, considering the broader setting, we envision devoting more attention to the Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. We aim to offer data and share knowledge about them. For this reason, the panel aims to present and discuss the campaigns with the help of individuals involved in them in different capacity: scholars, activists, experts, supporters, opponents.

Panel structure:

We envision the panel being composed of six contributions. Although our proposal is not a pre-organised panel proposal, Laleh Khalili (a keynote speaker at the conference) accepted to be involved and will contribute to the discussion by presenting the experience of SOAS student unions, which voted and endorsed the Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.

We are calling for papers that can contribute to build knowledge and present data and information about the campaigns. We also call for papers that shed light on the workings of the campaigns and discuss experiences with them.

Research dissemination:

We envision contributing to the broader debate about the BDS/PACBI by collecting contributions presented at our panel and propose them to *International Journal of Middle East Studies* or *PS: Politics and Society* for their “round table” section. However, we also aim to inform the Italian scholarly community and therefore, we plan to propose a “round table” to the Italian journal *Afriche e Orientali*.

Bios:

Enrico Bartolomei holds a Ph.D. in History, Politics, and Institutions of the Euro-Mediterranean Area from the University of Macerata. His research interests focus on Palestinian and Arab contemporary political thought, power/knowledge and discourse analysis. He translated into Italian and co-edited ‘Planning Oppression. The Complicity of Israeli Academic Institutions’ (2010) and ‘Israel’s Occupation’ (2015). His articles have been published in miscellaneous and journals, including ‘Oriente Moderno’ and ‘Afriche e Orientali’. He has recently co-authored ‘Gaza and the Israeli Industry of Violence’ (2015, in Italian). He is a member of the Italian Association of Middle Eastern Studies (SeSaMO). Email: bartolomeienrico(at)yahoo.it

Paola Rivetti is a Lecturer in Politics of the Middle East & North Africa and International Relations at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, Ireland. She is the secretary of the Italian Association of Middle Eastern Studies (SeSaMO) and a co-founder and board member of the Lund University-based European Iran Research Group. She published in 'British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies', 'Journal of European Integration', 'Democratization?', 'Middle Eastern Studies', 'Mediterranean Politics', 'Alternatives: Global Local Political'; 'Foreign Policy-Middle East Channel' and 'Jadaliyya'. She co-edited 'Continuity and change before and after the Arab uprisings in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt?' (forthcoming for Routledge) and 'Civil Society Effect. Practice and rhetoric in Iran, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco?' (2010, in Italian). Email: paola.rivetti(at)dcu.ie