Panel 16: **Time of conflicts / time of migration: Reflections on the categories and genealogy of migration in the Middle East**

Thursday 17, 16.30-18.45, Aula 254

Convenors: **Luigi Achilli** (European University Institute), **Norig Neveu** (Ifpo)

Discussant: **Luigi Achilli** (European University Institute)

The contemporary Middle East witnesses a paradoxical phenomenon. While borders afford the state nation with the opportunity to assert their sovereignty, they are also daily transgressed by a considerable number of migrants. The settlement of migrants has in past decades led to deep changes in the region in terms of demographic balance and subsequent socioeconomic and political equilibrium at local and national levels. Traditionally known as emigration countries, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey – among others – have more recently become again settlement and transit spaces for economic and forced migrants. Against this framework, we believe that contemporary economic migrations and refugee movements can be understood in the light of two correlated contexts: the dynamics of high mobility processes involving cross-border migration, and the existence of well-established transnational networks crystallized around more or less structured Diasporas. The aim of this panel is to analyse the consequences of mass migrations triggered by conflict (wars and crisis in Syria and Iraq) on host countries, taking into account previous migration waves. Indeed massive refugee inflows restructure the economic, social and political systems of the host countries, affecting both host and former migrant communities. As such, this panel wants to analyse the current migration flows in its historical dimension to understand their structure on the long term from different disciplinary perspective. The multi-generational dimension will be analysed from biographical narratives to understand the identity constructions in the long term and their evolution in different contexts (religious, ethnic or national dimensions). Kinship, ethnic, confessional and/or tribal networks play a significant role in the recent mass refugee movements in the region. Their role will be examined and put into perspective in a long-term analysis approach. Based on case studies, this panel will contribute to de-essentializing the different forms of belonging of migrants, something that is often oversimplified.

Paper givers:

1) **Kamel Doraï** (Ifpo), **David Lagarde** (Université Toulouse 2), *Host state policies and the changing role of social networks for Syrian refugees in Jordan*

   This paper will analyse the role played by social networks on Syrian refugees' border crossings and coping strategies to/in Jordan since 2011. It will focus on the evolution of ties Syrian refugees relied on to leave Syria, enter in Jordan and leave refugee camps to settle in local communities. After an "open-door" policy towards Syrians, the growing flow of refugees has lead the Jordanian government to implement restrictions to the entry and stay of this population in the country. While transnational networks were playing a key role at the beginning of their arrival in Jordan, refugees now rely on weaker ties and became more dependent on professional actors of migration management as well as informal ones (e.g.

smugglers), which has deep impact both in terms of coping strategies and migratory itineraries. Understanding the dynamics of these circulations should also help to understand the ongoing flows from Middle East to Europe.

2) **Are John Knudsen** (Chr.Michelsen Institute CMI), *The Great Escape? Refugees, Residents, and Re-settlement in Tyre, Lebanon*

This paper analyses the genealogy of two refugee crises, Palestine (1948-present) and Syria (2012-present), having brought old and new refugees into close, and increasingly, conflictual contact. While the former settled and gradually integrated with a view to return to Palestine, the new wave of self-settled refugees from Syria seek to migrate and resettle in Europe, having the means and opportunity to do so. Both staying and leaving involve processes of identity change from refugee to resident non-citizen and displaced (nazihin). Drawing on field material from Tyre (South Lebanon), the paper compares the plight of Palestinian old-timers with the newly arrived refugees from Syria settling in and among Tyre's refugee camps and gatherings, and analyses where their trajectories intersect. For both groups, the only way to escape poverty, destitution and discrimination is by emigrating, thus contrasting escape and belonging as key features of refugee mobility and asylum migration. The paper is based on intermittent field visits and interviews in Tyre (2007–present).

3) **Luigi Achilli** (European University Institute), *Where to go? Syrian refugees in Jordan*

Over the past two years, Jordan has adopted harsher polices towards Syrian refugees by periodically closing its borders and limiting access to employment opportunities as well as health and educational facilities. Against the backdrop of their deteriorating situation in Jordan, large numbers of Syrian refugees have expressed a desire to leave this host country. However, do Syrian refugees perceive migration to the wealthier EU member states as the only solution to their predicament? A major problem in the contemporary mainstream narrative on Syrian refugees is its over-reliance on self-interest or cost–benefit analyses to explain refugees' mobility patterns. This paper intends to contribute to moves towards nuancing the picture of '"the Syrian refugee" by unpicking some of the different influences in play. What will be argued here is that the refugees' decision to travel cannot be reduced to a mere self-interest or cost–benefit analysis. Seeking refuge has to be understood as the outcome of a complex process of decision-making motivated by a range of factors, not least the refugees' affective relationship with their country.

4) **Myriam Ababsa** (Ifpo), *Islamic charity to Syrian refugees in Jordan : Gulf assistance, coordination and the question of the universality of its principles*

The Syrian refugee crisis has been a turning point in the history of humanitarian enterprise in terms of the increasing role assumed by Arab donors. Not only did Arab funding increase considerably, but the Gulf States have taken a leading role in organising fundraising events for the response. Most of the Gulf NGOs provide assistance through Jordanian NGOs that are well established in the country such as: the Islamic Centre Charity Society (60 branches

in Jordan's 12 governorates); and Al Kitab wa Al Sunna (20 branches in Northern Jordan), as well as through more recently established NGOs, such as Solidarity Association Charity (Takaful) based in Ramtha, near the Syrian border. Islamic charity plays a major role in Jordan. It became even more considerable with the support granted by Gulf donors since 2011. The first assistance provided to Syrian refugees in 2011 and 2012 was channelled through local Islamic charities present in every village. This assistance was provided through the zaqat committees controlled by the mosques. Based on field work conducted in Spring 2014, our paper will present the content of the assistance, the coordination between Islamic NGOs and the debate concerning the universality of Islamic humanitarian principles (taking the case of the orphans).

5) **Norig Neveu** (Ifpo), *Policies of Christian charitable associations vis-à-vis refugees in Jordan*

This presentation investigates the confessional aspect of the policies that have been developed by charitable Christian organizations, particularly by the different departments of the Middle East Council for Churches and CARITAS, in response to recent years' mass influx of refugees in Jordan. The presentation aims to put in context the historical dimensions of this confessional aspect (Palestinian, Iraqi, Syrian refugees). Mainly, the presentation focuses on the influence the nature of these organizations have on the forms of categorization and treatment of refugees based on their belonging (real or alleged) to a particular group. A particular emphasis is placed on the existence and the development of confessional criteria in the distribution or the organization of humanitarian assistance. How does the use of these criteria constitute an essentialization of migrants' identity in a context in which the religious reference can be the source of persecution and the cause of migration? Moreover, how can the organization of regional solidarity through faith-based networks generate identity restructuration and promote sectarianism?

6) **John Baden** (Case Western Reserve University), *Afghan Migration to the United States, 1945 to Present: An historical/Anthropological Perspective*

This paper argues that Afghan immigrants have been more successful in the United States than media portrayals of migrants from the Islamic World might suggest, there has been a diversity of experiences with differing outcomes. In order to account for this diversity, and reconstruct an inclusive history of the U.S. Afghan community, we will use the "ethnohistorical" method of anthropological research. This will allow us to weave together the archival materials, oral accounts, memoirs, and diaspora publications by intellectuals and activists in order to develop a historical account of the various causes of the resettlement, assimilation, challenges, and changes in sociocultural values. The ethnohistorical mode of inquiry also allows us to examine how developments in Afghanistan since 1979 (Soviet occupation, the Taliban, U.S. intervention, etc.) have affected the U.S. Afghan communities experiences and led to different reasons for migrating to the United States, depending on time and circumstance. Lastly, this methodology will allow us to examine how these differing circumstances have led to contested memories of both the U.S. and Afghanistan.