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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Migration and Integration in the Middle East

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s: Gennaro Errichiello and Dalia Abdelhady

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

Research on the integration of immigrants has emphasised the limits of the integration discourse in countries of the Global North, whereby immigration and integration are integral to national narratives. Critical analyses of integration discourses draw attention to the ways they are implicated in power dynamics (Saharso 2019; Schinkel 2017) and produce various experiences of discipline and violence (Abdelhady et al. 2020). The panel intends to explore the analytical utility of integration as a concept and policy goal in the Middle East, a region that has largely been overlooked in integration debates. While the study of migration in the Middle East has flourished in recent decades, the focus is often on processes of displacement and dispossession, marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. The Middle East is now currently dealing with conflicts and humanitarian crisis in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Yemen. Instability and chaos seem to be pervasive in the whole region and local authorities seem to be disoriented on how to deal with the massive presence of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people.

This panel highlights integration alongside these processes, by drawing attention to the social, cultural, and political dynamics that inform immigrants' involvement in the daily life of many societies in the region. Illustrating the complex dynamics of immigrant experiences, the panel aims to expand the analysis and critique of integration debates and discourses by bringing in analyses of integration in the region.

Many countries in the Middle East are important hosts for large groups of migrants and refugees, almost all countries in the region do not provide avenues for acquiring citizenship to immigrants and promote policies that ensure exclusion, segregation and marginalisation. This has led much scholarship to focus on processes of temporariness, and precarity (Silvey and Parrenas 2020) or indifference. Colonial legacies play a significant role in shaping experiences of integration in the Middle East today, as they inform ethno-racial hierarchies, notions of belonging to the nation, and the national policies of exclusion themselves (see

for example AlShehabi 2021; Fernandez 2021). The analysis of state policies towards refugees and migrants, and the emphasis on inclusion, exclusion or “strategic indifference” (Norman 2020) has attracted much attention from scholars interested in analysing the role of the state in governing non-citizen populations. This research needs to be contextualized within and complemented by the analysis of the experiences of immigrants themselves. Notably, the reluctance of states in the Middle East to provide rights for the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees leads to temporariness and precarity playing important roles in the experiences of immigrants in the region. At the same time, however, many immigrants have established a sense of belonging to communities in the region, and have become an important aspect of the cultural diversity that enriches its daily life, despite their inability to access much social, economic or civic rights. Additionally, refugees and immigrants integrate to the economic and political lives of their host societies. This line of analysis highlights the role of informal processes of political and institutional incorporation as opposed to formal policies that characterise the integration literature emerging from the Global North.

Analyses of Asian migrants in the Arab Gulf countries (for example, Ali, 2010; Kanna, 2011; Longva, 1997; Gardner, 2010, Vora, 2013) have emphasised the need to move beyond singular analyses of migrant experiences (in this context as *homo oeconomicus*) and underlined the need to adopt a more integrative and comprehensive approach in order to emphasise the dynamism of migration in the Gulf countries (see the historical analysis in Errichiello 2012), and migrants’ agential capacity (Errichiello, 2021, Errichiello and Nyhagen 2021).

What then does integration mean in the Middle East? How do we understand immigrant wellbeing and rights in contexts where citizens have limited access to democratic institutions? How do we conceive of integration when examining the experiences of migrants in contexts where they regard their presence as temporary? The panel aims to expand the critical theorizing on integration and examine the ways immigrants narrate their experiences beyond policy categories and frameworks. By centring the experiences of immigrants themselves in the analysis of integration, the panel would push the academic discussion beyond the binaries of exclusion/inclusion, citizen/noncitizen, insider/outsider.

List of topics

We encourage submission of papers related to the Middle East that fit within one of the following areas:

- Theoretical and methodological discussions of integration;
- Political and legal aspects of integration (*kafāla*, citizenship, naturalisation, temporariness, etc.);
- Intersectional analyses of immigrant experiences (the role of class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, family, generation, nationality);
- Comparative and historical analyses of immigrant experiences;
- The role of racialisation and the construction of difference in shaping integration narratives.

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PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

Gennaro Errichiello is a Senior Teaching Fellow in International Migration and Diaspora Politics at SOAS in London. He also works at the Office for National Statistics (UK). He holds a PhD in Social Sciences from Loughborough University, an MA in Global Migration from Swansea University, and a degree in Political Science (focus on the Middle East) from the University of Naples “L-Orientale”. He carried out extensive ethnographic research on Muslims in Italy, the United Kingdom and the Gulf countries. He has published articles in peer-reviewed journals and presented the results of his research in many international conferences. His research interests revolve around migration studies and social theory, South-South migration, highly-skilled migrants, migrant associations, ethnicity, nationalism, belonging, (mis)recognition, class and gender.

Dalia Abdelhady is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology at Lund University (Sweden). Her work features the application of postcolonial analysis to the sociology of migration. Following a comparative perspective, her work focuses on the meeting point between individual immigrants (and their communities) and institutions in receiving countries (such as schools, labour markets, media and political policies). In addition to a number of journal articles and book chapters, she is the author of *The Lebanese Diaspora: The Arab Immigrant Experiences in Montreal, New York and Paris* (New York

University Press, 2011), and co-editor of *Refugees and the Violence of Welfare Bureaucracies in Northern Europe* (Manchester University Press, 2020).

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