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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: A Time and a Place for Gramsci: Sources, Contexts and Analytical Inspirations in MENA countries

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s: Andrea Teti, Alessandra Marchi

LINGUE/LANGUAGES: Italian – English - French

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

Antonio Gramsci is increasingly frequently cited in Anglophone scholarship on the Middle East (e.g. Achcar, 2013; De Smet, 2014, 2016; Chalcraft, 2014). These borrowings tend to coalesce around a disciplinary doxa which is sometimes only loosely related to its original source material, as the fate of the idea of 'hegemony' in the field of International Relations demonstrates (Cox, 1983; cf. Budd, 2013). The current revival in North African and Middle Eastern/South-West Asian Studies (MENA/SWANA) raises similar questions about the relationship between primary sources, historical and contemporary political contexts, and analytical innovation and adaptation.

The task facing Gramscian-inspired analysis in MENA/SWANA 'area-focused' scholarship is to flourish both in intellectual development and concrete analysis while navigating safely to avoid the two extremes of a purely philological focus and of decontextualised analysis. To do this requires a nimble weaving between historical contexts, careful textual analysis, and contemporary political realities.

At least two types of factors provide the current generation of scholarship with the opportunity to move beyond its predecessors, drawing upon two key advantages. First, the Arab Uprisings in 2010-11 and since 2019 mark a unique watershed and a new context in regional politics which invites re-examination not only of established truisms for the region itself (e.g. the authoritarian resilience vs. democratization debate) – but have been source of both theoretical inspiration and political mobilisation well beyond 'the region'. Both within this 'region' and beyond it, the Uprisings provide a challenge for scholarship, for policy and for political organisation and action.

Second, Gramscian scholarship has flourished both in Italy and beyond the 'Anglosphere' building upon a recent growth in the publication of Gramsci's original writings in Italian as well as translations in several languages, including English. These studies provide philological, historical-contextual and theoretical tools developed by Italoophone scholars on/of Gramsci. In combination with new English-language translations of Gramsci's work, these studies can become crucial sources of inspiration for Anglophone scholarship (e.g. Manduchi and Gervasio, 2021; Marchi and Chalcraft, 2021).

This wealth of analysis offers MENA/SWANA scholarship an opportunity to draw more richly on – but also speak to – original source material and theorisation both to better understand those sources, and to more robustly engage in the task of developing and adapting Gramscian analysis. Such scholarship, while finding inspiration in Gramsci's original conceptual toolkit and in the method or strategy behind his analysis, reflects upon and adapts those starting points on the basis of the specific characteristics of contemporary contexts (e.g. El-Sherif, 2015; Gherib, 2017).

In this vein, the panel invites contributions combining an engagement with primary sources, contextual analysis and analytical engagement with aspects pertinent to the Arab Uprisings, their preceding mobilisations, their concrete praxis, and/or their ongoing implications.

Panel contributors will explore key concepts and themes in Gramsci's thought by drawing on a combination of primary sources and contemporary contexts. Each contribution should focus on a concept or thematic-analytical aspect of Gramsci's thought, and while paying attention to conceptual and philological-semantic dimensions, reflect upon how these might inspire analytical strategies to make sense of concrete contemporary issues.

Contributions drawing on secondary literatures in languages other than English, developing cross-regional and cross-disciplinary comparative outlooks, and/or on themes *beyond* already established 'canonical' aspects of Gramscian thought (e.g. hegemony, civil society, historical bloc or war of movement/position) are particularly welcome.

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

Andrea Teti is Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Aberdeen and Associate Editor of *Middle East Critique*. Previously Visiting Professor at the universities of Bologna (2020), Cagliari (2018), Ghent (2017/18) and Amsterdam (2015), he was Principal Investigator for the EU-funded Arab Transformations Project consortium (2015-16). He was co-editor with Gennaro Gervasio and Luca Anceschi of *Informal Power in the Greater Middle East* (2014) as well as lead author of *The Arab Uprisings in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia* (2018) and of *Democratization Against Democracy: How EU Policy Fails the Middle East* (2020). He has also published several articles on EU policy in the Middle East, on conceptions of democracy, on Michel Foucault, and on the production of knowledge about the Middle East in Social Science.

Alessandra Marchi, PhD in Social Anthropology at the EHESS in Paris. She is research fellow at the University of Cagliari, where she works at the GramsciLab – Center of International Gramscian Studies, Dept. of Political and Social Sciences, on a project on the Gramscian readings of MENA countries. She recently co-edited with John Chalcraft the Special Issue "Gramsci in the Arab World", *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 30, n.1, where she published the article "Molecular Transformations: Reading the Arab Uprisings with and beyond Gramsci", pp.76-85. Among her publications: A. Marchi, P. Manduchi (eds), *A lezione da Gramsci. Democrazia, partecipazione politica, società civile in Tunisia* (Carocci 2019); A. Marchi, P. Manduchi, G. Vacca (eds), *Gramsci nel mondo arabo* (Il Mulino 2017).

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