SeSaMO

SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Imagination, representation and (be)longing to Palestine – Deconstructing notions of Crisis and Chaos

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s: Abdullah Bayyari, Hanna AlTaher, Aya Musmar, Khaled Al-Bashir

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

This panel proposes an analytical deconstruction of the notions of Crisis and Chaos and their representations in the Mediterranean east shores (Palestine) as an act of resisting dominant narratives of state formation and belonging. By decoding and counteracting the colonial gaze on Palestine, this panel proposes an interdisciplinarity analysis of imaginations and realties of Palestine with the purpose of a deeper understanding of representation, exceptionalism, power relations and the right to belong. This will be explored through representations of the maritime in modern art since 1850, and the urban fabric as discursive power relations controlled by hegemonic dualities. Film as a mode of storytelling that raises questions around art and culture as liberatory source or an accumulation of acceptance. Modern conceptualizations of the state's border (Jordan Valley) are examined as a liminal social product. And buildings are analyzed as events. What are the differences and commonalties of national borders, art, and representations and what do they stand for regarding identity politics, mobility and imagination as acts of knowledge creation? What is the meaning and analytical value of looking at Palestine through the lens of crisis and chaos, when the so called "normal" is indistinguishable from it?

Key words: Chaos, Crisis, Culture, Art, Film, Representation, Power, Palestine, Jordan, Borders, Architecture

Chair: Farah Z. Aridi

<u>Individual Abstracts</u>

Maps of the Mediterranean: a decolonial interdisciplinary approach decoding maritime representations in Palestinian arts since 1850
Abdullah Bayyari

In an attempt to trace the socio-political history of the Mediterranean region since the mid-19th century, and its major political powers and conflicts that have shaped cities and societieseast of the Mediterranean by solid and soft powers, this intervention proposes an analytical approach to representations of the sea in Palestinian fine arts since the year 1850. It aims to adopt a decolonial and interdisciplinary approach to draw contextual relations and examine their visual expressions as if the Mediterranean shores are Power

Discourse needs to be decoded and analyzed in collective memory and its imagination regarding resistance and liberation.

This intervention decodes the semiotic relations between visual elements of the maritime scene in arts (Sea and Shores) through the modifications of some of Modernity's main dualities: Sea and Mountain; Citizens and Noncitizens; Urban and Nomadic; and Village and City. The aim is to investigate these dualities' correlations with Mediterranean societies as a main arena for modernity in order to analyze the multilayered visual expressions and theirtransformations in relation to sociopolitical changes.

Key Words: Mediterranean, Palestine, Imagination, Nomad, Body, City, Village, Biopolitics,Space Production

Un-forming: Approaching buildings as 'events' to map out settler colonial networks and operations
Khaled Bashir

Buildings are often treated as forms in space. While this gives way to necessary formal critique, this often also means that they are studied as isolated and finite establishments, limited to operations and functionality within only their own positions. What does this conceal? In the context of the Arab World, I will be exploring the potentials inherent in understanding buildings as events; mediums that drive, and are driven by sets off flows, actors and processes.

What can such a lens reveal about the transformations of our places? And what possibilities does it outline in the process of reclaiming our rights and positions in such narratives? What can such a lens reveal about the relations of power in our cities? In specific, I will be focusing on Settler-Colonial Architecture in Palestine, whilst also offering potential reflectionsand comparative notes with other urban environments in the Arab world

Key Words: Architecture, Palestine, City, Colonial, Space, Village, Occupation, Event

Cartographies of Belonging in Jordan Valley: Contesting the hyphen in Jordanian-Palestinian
Aya Musmar

The Jordan Valley is more than a geographical border for the Jordanians and their state; it is a geopolitical site. For the nationalist narrative, Jordan Valley bore witness to war, and mediates so-called peace treaties with Israel. For the people, it is a site of traumatic loss yet also of future crossing to Palestine. With the absence of corporeal encounters with Jordan Valley, knowledge produced around Jordan Valley remains bound to binaries nested betweenthe two narratives.

Situated in the Jordan valley area, this contribution offers an epistemological shift in the ways by which Jordanian-Palestinian borders may be theorised, and so, constructed in national andpopular discourses. It looks at the ways by which spatial practices performed by farms' migrant labour have shaped their belonging(s) to the land otherwise. I explore Pakistani and Syrian farms' workers' multiple belongings by mapping their spatial practices

and how they are translated through the spatio-temporalities of their Informal Tents Settlements (ITS).

Following a posthumanist approach, this intervention is interested in thinking the assemblageof human-nonhuman relations spread across the Jordan Valley area (Braidotti 2013). It answers the question: how does the cartography of relations, histories, and geographies performed by the farms' migrant labour challenge the ways by which Jordan Valley isrepresented in a modern discourse; as a border line between (postcolonial) Jordan and (colonised) Palestine?

Key Words: Borders, Jordan, Palestine, Agriculture, Land, State, Belonging, Mobility

Claiming the right to narrate – Palestinian film as resistance?
Hanna Al Taher

Imagination is often associated with hopes and longings for a better future or nostalgic returns to romanticized pasts. However, imagining and re-imagining is not just about other times, imagining otherwise is also anchored in the present. Reimagining is thus simultaneously about what exists and what does not (yet) exist, as it troubles and explores the border between the two. In this paper I investigate this relation through Palestinian film.What does it mean to tell a story? What does it mean to claim the right to narrate in the context of Palestine? It might not liberate territory, but it might liberate the imagination. In that, it can be a foundational step in rethinking and re-acting all that is possible. Maybe this is how art, by challenging the dominant narrative, opens spaces, providing for alternatives togeographic and social realities, surpassing not only national myths instead of reinforcing them, but also rewriting, re-envisioning and reclaiming history and by that the memories of the future. However, while imaginations and memories can be material and intangible tools to inform change and a desire for liberation, calcifying stories can also mark the acceptance of defeat.

Key words: imagination, hope, storytelling, defeat, resistance, borders

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