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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Istanbul "capital of the Arab world"? Interactions and dynamics within a transnational space.

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S: COSIMO PICA - Gülçin Erdi

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

Turkey, whose role and regional power has been growing since the 2000s, is at the crossroads of several regional tensions and crises. Following the 2011 uprisings, relations between Turkey and the Arab world were renewed and complexified. They have been analyzed by various works concerning in particular the geopolitical and migratory dimension. (Al Ghazzi, Kraidy 2013; Burdy, Marcou 2013; Daniş 2018). The city of Istanbul is at the center of this regional effervescence, moreover with an important role played by Turkish foreign policy in the migratory process.

Media and academic attention is mainly focused on Syrian migration, which counts more than 3.5 million refugees in Turkey¹. But a growing share of migration to Turkey also comes from other Arab countries, including Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Palestine, Maghreb and Gulf countries; they are refugees, regular or irregular migrants, students, businessmen or tourists. Istanbul as the primary destination for these various Arab communities has begun to take center stage, with the issue of Syrian refugees still at the forefront (Biehl 2015; Fisher-Onar, Pearce, Keyman 2018; Kaya 2017; Pérouse 2016).

Following the example of recent works that want to give an overview of the different communities and attempt to study more globally the question of the "Arabness" of the city of Istanbul (Mermier, 2021), it's a matter of this panel to deepen the understanding of the place of Arab presences in this transnational space that is Istanbul. This reasoning is made by integrating the political, social and cultural dimensions of the Arab presence in Istanbul, while relying on works on the transnationalism of migrations which study the processes of constitution, by migrants, of the social fields that connect their country of origin and their country of establishment. Migrants develop multiple relationships that cross borders, combining two or more societies simultaneously (Basch, Schiller, Blanc 1993; Bauböck, Faist 2010; Bruneau, 2004; Cohen, 2008; Kastoryano 2000, 2006; Lacroix, 2014; Van Hear, Cohen 2017, 2020). In this sense, it also seems necessary to deepen the important role of urban space in social and identity interactions and transformations (Bontemps, Makarami, Mazouz 2018; Flamant, Lacroix 2021; Schiller, Çağlar 2011).

Within this transnational migratory space, many political and intellectual networks have been formed or reconstituted in each Arab community, making Istanbul a reference center for the Arab diasporas since 2011. The exponential growth of the Arab presence is not notable only from a demographic and urban point of view, but also from a cultural, economic and political one. There are now so many Arab television stations broadcasting from Istanbul and other media headquartered there, as well as countless bookstores, associations, cultural centers, and even fairs dedicated to Arabic publishing. Added to this there are businesses of all kinds, which makes the megalopolis a tourist and commercial center that attracts traders, visitors, and investors from all over the MENA region. Istanbul then represents for many nationals from Arab countries not only a refuge, but also an opportunity for a better life, in a freer social space, despite the country's authoritarian turn. Arab communities have increased their presence and their anchoring in the city, moving from a transit perspective to a settlement perspective, allowing us to question the city of Istanbul as a new "Arab capital".

Our panel would like to contribute to the current discussions on these themes while taking into consideration the context of the regional crisis. Through the prism of a transnationalist perspective of migrations, we must question the relational and social dynamics of the last ten years. In this transnational space, what are the relations between the different Arab communities and Turkish society? What dynamics of social and political change have they generated in the context of regional crisis? What influence and pressure can countries of origin still exert on these exiled communities? How are they influenced by Turkish foreign policy? Each of the presentations will provide elements on the political, social and anthropological dimensions of the Arab presence

¹ UNHCR statistics.

in Istanbul, verifying the interactions that have crossed intra-community borders and that give life to a process of construction of a new transnational space of relations between different communities in exile, their countries of origin and the host society.

Chair: Cosimo Pica (University of Tours)

Discussants : Gülçin Erdi (CNRS - University of Tours; IFEA Istanbul) - Philippe Bourmaud (University Jean Moulin – Lyon 3; IFEA Istanbul)

Participants:

Jean-Francois Pérouse (Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès - IFEA Istanbul), "On the striking diversity of the "Arab presence" in Istanbul today: beyond outside's common beliefs, there is no community".

Nouran Gad (Sciences Po Aix en Provence - IFEA Istanbul), "Political exile in Istanbul: the example of the Egyptian community".

Maissam Nimer (Istanbul University - IFEA Istanbul), "Education and Language Policies towards Syrians in the Turkish State: Incorporation of Former Imperial Subjects into the Neo-Ottomanist Political Regime".

Solène Poyraz (EHESS Paris - IFEA Istanbul), "From the 'Syrianization' discourse to the 'dilution' plan: what reception for the Syrian population in the districts of Istanbul?"

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

Cosimo Pica

PhD candidate at the University of Tours, UMR Citeres laboratory, EMAM - Arab World and Mediterranean research group. Title of the research project: "The role of migrations in the (re)construction of Turkish national identity and the promotion of neo-Ottomanism on the international stage". I obtained a Master's Degree in Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Turkish and Arabic) at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", and a II level master's degree in "Economics and Institutions of Islamic Countries" at the LUISS University "Guido Carli". Following a research internship at the ISMed - CNR in Naples, I had the opportunity to publish a chapter within the volume "Mediterranean Economies 2020", edited by the Institute and published by Il Mulino, from title "Syrian refugees in Turkey: from welcome to return".

Gülçin Erdi

CNRS researcher attached to the COST (Social and political construction of spaces, norms and trajectories) and EMAM research groups of the UMR Citeres, University of Tours. She holds courses in sociology of collective action, political sociology of Turkey, spatial foundations of identity, urban transformations, political expressions in the city, politicization and engagement. Her research topics are the city and the forms of resistance within it, the political economy of the making of the city and the models of urbanization, urban social movements, urban citizenship, urbanity, the right to the city, the Symbolic construction of urban space and socio-spatial marginality.

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