



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

# **Crossings and contaminations. Practices, languages and politics in transit in the Middle East and North Africa**

Department of Political and Social Sciences  
University of Cagliari  
Cagliari, 3-5 October 2024

## **Call for panels**

The real and the imagined borders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have always been crossed by ideas, stories, narratives, practices, and lives. From the arts to language, from ideologies to forms of religious expression, the dynamic circulation of practices and knowledge from, towards, and through the region has produced important contaminations that deserve to be studied in their complexity.

The formation of ideas and practices ‘in transit’, i.e. the transmission and circulation of distinct visions of the world, ways of acting upon it and their concomitant impact on the receiving societies, have long been at the centre of specific studies and part of broader analysis which, in recent decades, had the merit of questioning the Eurocentrism and North-South diffusionism global cultural, political and economic relations have been mostly conceived with. At the same time, the study of the region from a global and/or transnational perspective made possible to begin contesting the exceptionalism and insularity the Middle East and North Africa have been approached with for long time, i.e. the idea of a self-centred, immutable and intrinsically ‘other’ region. On the other hand, the recent acceleration of migratory phenomena and the relocation of large Arab and Muslim communities outside regional borders are contributing to the reconsideration of these same borders and the very same conceptualization of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

In order to investigate such spaces of hybridization and contamination, the multiple itineraries and practices (social, civil, political, and cultural) overriding state borders and cultural frontiers, it is therefore necessary to start from the deconstruction of some interpretive categories relating to the concept of ‘mobility’ and ‘exceptionality’ and, specifically, to overcome notions of nationality, belonging, ethnicity, culture, and language understood as autonomous, rigidly immutable and opposing entities.

More generally, historicizing such dynamics and processes of contamination, with the help of subaltern, vernacular or everyday analytical perspectives from the social sciences and humanities, will allow us to trace the fruitful seeds that crossings have left in the Middle East and North Africa. In a similar vein, it will allow us to identify the internal dynamism that has been often underestimated, belittled, or even simply misunderstood, to highlight the generative impact of experiences of transfer and transmission as well as to investigate their forms and manifestations in the current contexts.

Starting from these assumptions and calling for the deployment of multiple theoretical approaches and cross or interdisciplinary perspectives, including the linguistic and religious, the XVI SeSaMO Conference intends to reflect on the various temporal and present dimensions of processes of mobility, crossing, and contamination in and from the Middle East and North Africa involving communities or individuals and their repercussions in all spheres of life - on a political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental level. These assumptions respond to the attempt to 'overturn' and 'decolonize' a hegemonic diffusionist narrative of mobility which looks at 'development' as a unidirectional North- South movement.

We highly encourage panels that:

- analyse from a theoretical point of view the multiple facets that contamination processes produce at the macro, micro and meso level;
- study from an empirical perspective and through specific case studies the impact of crossings on the regional and international as well as local reality;
- focus on transnational dynamics and the flows of things, ideas and people that trigger social, political, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic and environmental changes;
- explore the complexity of the different methodologies (theoretical and empirical) that have focused on crossings and contaminations in and from the region, and on how these have reverberated outside of it, for example on diasporic movements.

**The deadline for panels' submissions is March 6 2024**

**Please submit panel proposals of no more than 1500 words including references using the FORMAT provided.**

**The call for papers for accepted panels will be issued in March 2024 and the deadline for the paper submission will be the 7 of May 2024.**

**Main working languages of the conference are Italian, English and French**

Submissions should be sent to: [convegnoesesamo@gmail.com](mailto:convegnoesesamo@gmail.com)