

XVI Convegno SeSaMO

Università degli Studi di Cagliari
Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali

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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Rethinking authoritarianism: Transnational geographies between the region and the world

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s: PAOLA RIVETTI (DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY)

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

This panel discusses authoritarian politics as an epistemology for the present. As we witness the spreading and emboldening of authoritarian ideologues and political movements across the world, this panel calls on scholars to re-examine how we conceptualize and know authoritarianism as a theoretical concept as well as political praxis. In this inquiry, the Middle East and North Africa have a special place as a region where political strategies for exercising power in an authoritarian manner are refined and tested. This is done with the aid of the continuous security and human precarity in the region, due to widespread armed conflicts and neo-colonial interventions, as well as with the complicity of the so-called advanced democracies of the world, which support authoritarian and war-mongering rulers financially and politically in the name of market stability and halting immigration.

The panel seeks submissions that move away from understanding authoritarianism as a domestic issue, and instead interrogate it as a manifestation of transnational politics and a concept that we can use to learn how transnational politics works. This panel invites papers that examine the issues discussed above, including:

- the circulation of authoritarian, conservative and illiberal ideas and theories, from so-called anti-“gender ideology” and carceral ideas, to conspiracy, racist and “strong men” theories;
- the sharing and transfer of security technologies, from surveillance to detention, and the authoritarian political visions they come with;
- the commercialization of war technologies, the formation of transnational neoliberal military-industrial complexes, and the authoritarian political imaginary they engender and foster;
- the authoritarian strategies for the depletion of the right to dissent and to the manifestation of counter-hegemonic political opinions, through explicit means (legislation and criminalization of activism and movements) as well as means that implicitly discourage mobilisations and/or critical thinking (for example, through the privatization of public and urban spaces, the reform of employment law and workers’ rights, the privatization of the education and reforms of the education system, reforms of the communication system and the use of social media);

This is an incomplete list of topics that the papers may cover. Papers should have a geographical focus on the region, but should connect policies and strategies implemented by the governments in the region to transnational geographies of authoritarian politics, analysing how ideas, strategies and policies travel across borders. For example, papers could offer micro-, meso- and macro-level examinations of how intergovernmental organisations may be used as fora to exchange authoritarian ideas and practices; how nation states copy and transfer such ideas and practices, and how they localise them; how class politics facilitates such exchanges through elite mingling, from intra-elite marriages to friendship and other mundane activities; how colonial legacies have created visible and less visible transnational chains of transmission of classed, raced and gendered privileges and capital accumulation; how culture and cultural artifacts (whether works of fiction, fine arts artifacts, music and other popular culture produces) have aided the circulation of specific authoritarian ideas and practices – just to name some of the possible approaches. The panel also invites theoretical papers focusing on the conceptualization of authoritarianism and authoritarian politics, and papers that historicise authoritarian ideas and practices.

The panel aims to bring together papers that showcase new approaches and under-researched subjects, and that voice new interpretations, positionalities and methodologies. The papers will be considered for publication in an edited collection.

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

Paola Rivetti is Associate Professor in Politics and IR in the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University. She has been working on Iranian politics and social movements for almost two decades. She has widely published on these topics. More recently, she has examined the connections between Italy's far right and the Iranian state. On this topic, she published "The Reception of Iran's State Propaganda by the Italian Far Right: Recasting the Diffusion of Authoritarian Discourse and Narratives" (2023), "Anti-'Gender Ideology' and the Transnational Diffusion of Authoritarianism: Examining A Common Discursive Space Between Iran and Italy (2022, with R. Ghaffari) and participated in "A conversation with Monica Cornejo, Andrea Pető and Paola Rivetti on the book Religion, Gender, and Populism in the Mediterranean" (2024).

Paola Rivetti is author of *Political participation in Iran from Khatami to the Green Movement* (2020), numerous journal articles and edited volumes. She is Associate editor of the journals *Iranian Studies* and *Partecipazione e conflitto*. She is a member of the Council of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, the Mentorship Committee of the Iranian Studies Association, and the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Italian Society for Middle Eastern Studies SeSaMO.

Full profile: https://www.dcu.ie/researchsupport/research-profile?person_id=14060

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