

XVI Convegno SeSaMO

Università degli Studi di Cagliari  
Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali

3-5 ottobre 2024



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITOLO/TITLE: Artivism for a transnational history from below in the SWANA region**

**PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S: Sara Borrillo, University of Naples L'Orientale**

**ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):**

This panel aims to historically investigate, map and analyse experiences of Artivism (i.e. activism through art) in the SWANA region, by conceiving artivism as a transnational phenomenon, which not only confronts different national contexts but also crosses cultural and political boundaries by influencing the construction of new “geographies of liberation”. At the same time, this panel will frame artivism as a useful field composed by living primary sources which can be explored in order to contribute in writing a transnational history from below of the SWANA region.

In this perspective, the panel aims to empirically observe the political revolutionary potential of apparently non-political forms of artistic activism and to understand if and to what extent artivism could be understood as a “counter public”, a space of resistance and proactive citizenry which can construct a new hegemonic culture.

Here artivism will be conceived as artistic and cultural practices with a political aim which include independent artistic festivals, comics, web series and audio-visuals, performing arts, music, street art, digital activism, which are produced both by artists who explicitly politicize their work and by activists who use art as a political tool.

The panel will welcome historically informed case-oriented researches in order to identify variables and patterns through a comparative qualitative analysis which takes into account local specificities but uses a transnational approach in order to produce an explanation of the complexity of phenomena investigated. The panel will welcome researches which are grounded in an inductive methodology, which is based on participant observation and hence, after the collection and elaboration of the data, allows to produce knowledge on wider historical, socio-political and artistic phenomena.

The panel will particularly welcome contributions that:

- use interdisciplinary approaches where history and social sciences of the middle east encounter gender studies, visual and performing arts, digital humanities and where qualitative research combines the textual and oral sources analysis with the visual and performing arts' ones;
- use an intersectional and decolonial perspective;
- focus on specific revolutionary momentums of the post-colonial phase or on the post 2010-2011 uprisings phase;
- look at new forms of activism through art and cultural production, by focusing on the experiences of political activists who deliberately chose art as a strategic tool for their struggle;
- observe art as a language of protest and focus on how art becomes, often informally and out of official circuits, a political contested space;

- investigate to what extent creative practices contribute in reconfiguring methods of contention within social movements, produce mobilizing projects, and impact social change by re-appropriating public spaces, also in a transnational perspective;
- explore the historically informed political economy of activism;
- analyse the interaction between cultural politics and cultural spaces in the light of the dynamics of conflict/resistance or cooperation/cooptation between the state, cultural institutions and the activists, by looking at the activists' political aim of appropriating the cultural domain;
- look at individual biographies and collective trajectories;
- focus on gender and LGBTQ+ activism;
- focus on digital and media activism.

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

**Sara Borrillo** is Associate Professor of History of Islamic Countries at “L’Orientale” University in Naples, where she is also PI of the ERC Starting Grant project *MEGAMAPS – Mapping Emerging Gender Activism in the Mediterranean Arab Public Space*. In 2022-2023 she has served as Assistant Professor in History of Islamic countries at Tor Vergata University in Rome. In 2021 she has been the laureate of the Gender Chair of the French GIS-Institute du Genre at University Sorbonne Paris 1-Pantheon. In 2014 she obtained a PhD in Middle Eastern studies at University of Naples “L’Orientale”, where she also has served as post-doctoral fellow researcher (2015-2019).

Her research interests are mainly focused on women’s movements, gender politics and Islam, secular and Islamic feminisms, new female religious authorities, art, activism and contemporary socio-political transformations in the MENA region. She has conducted ethnographic research in the West Bank (TPO), in Morocco, where she has been a research associate to the Centre Jacques Berque pour les Sciences Humaines et Sociales (CNRS) in Rabat (2012-2014) and in Tunis, where she has been visiting scholar at IRMC (Institute de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain) in 2016.

She has authored the book *Feminisms and Islam in Morocco: Women Secular Activists, Theologians and Preachers* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2017, in Italian) and scientific articles and book chapters, such as ‘Women’s Movements and the Recognition of Gender Equality in the Constitution-Making Process in Morocco and Tunisia (2011-2014)’ in: *Women as Constitution Makers: Case Studies from the New Democratic Era*, ed. by H. Irving, R. Rubio Marin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), ‘Islamic female religious authority between agency and governmentality: from the Moroccan model to “multicultural” Europe’, in J.J. De Ruiter - M. Hashas - N. V. Vinding (eds.), *Imams in Western Europe. Developments, Transformations, and Institutional Challenges*, Amsterdam University Press, 2018 (205-229), and ‘Islamic Feminism in Morocco: the discourse and the experience of Asma Lamrabet’ in: *Moroccan Feminisms. New Perspectives*, ed. by M. Ennaji, F. Sadiqi, and K. Vintge, (Trenton: Africa World Press and Red Sea Press, 2016).

**INDIRIZZO/I EMAIL/EMAIL ADDRESSES:**

[sara.borrillo@unior.it](mailto:sara.borrillo@unior.it)