

ACMES Research Convention, 20 January 2023

9-9:30 Coffee and short welcome (Farid Boussaid & Maaike Voorhoeve)

9:30-12:45 Morning programme (location: PCH)

9:30-11:00: Panel I and Panel II (parallel sessions)

Panel I (PCH 1.04, 9:30-11:00)

Memory without archives: collective narratives of political history in the Arab and Muslim world

Organiser: Amir Taha, discussant: Chiara de Cesari

Since the beginning of the Twenty-First century, many archives, libraries and museums have been destroyed in the MENA region during war or conflict, including the war on terror in Iraq and the conflicts that followed the Arab uprisings. The loss of countless institutions of memory are disastrous for the access to the documentation of historical events of the societies in question. In this context, we witness bottom-up initiatives as people across the region set out to record, curate and archive history. Such projects seek to prevent the loss of memory, by recording what otherwise is lost or erased. This panel discusses the question of how populations in the MENA region remember recent historical events and construct collective memories. We will situate this question within the context of political disillusion and trauma, as well as the contested nation state projects which have been marked by foreign intervention, state enforcement, war and neo-liberal privatization. The three papers in this panel reflect on the function, meaning or production of collective memories of recent political events from a bottom up perspective and address its challenges, problems, limitations and potentials.

Esther Schoorel, University of Amsterdam

For Your Sake We Continue: Memory and Mobilization in the Aftermath of the 2019 Lebanese Uprising

In the fall of 2019, hundreds of thousands of people across Lebanon and in the Lebanese diaspora took to the streets demanding the downfall of the sectarian regime that has been in power since the end of the Civil War in 1990. The uprising sent shockwaves through society, yet looking back seems to have failed to effect the hoped for political change. This has left protesters and academics alike to question how it should be interpreted: as a revolutionary moment, or as part of a long-term process of change. This paper aims to bring these two positions together, by offering a memory studies perspective. It examines how the October 17-movement, the social and political movement that emerged from the protests, uses the memory of the uprising to mobilize for action in the present. The paper focuses on the memorialization of violent deaths, demonstrating how their particular mobilizing potential has been invoked by activists after the uprising. Situating this within the context of a violently divided society and memory culture in Lebanon, I argue that the ways activists invoke memory of the dead at times reproduces and at other times challenges the sectarian order these activists challenge.

Misagh Javadpour, University of Amsterdam

Selective Amnesia and Collective Memory; Constructing Acts of Violence During the Iranian Revolution of 1979

In August of 1978, Cinema Rex in Abadan was set ablaze, causing more than 400 deaths. Considered the biggest terrorist attack in history up to its occurrence, it was a turning point and catalyzer of the revolutionary conditions in Iran. Another act of terror occurred on the night of the revolution, when a group of perpetrators to the Rasht's branch of Iran's intelligence service (SAVAK) publicly tortured and killed some members of the SAVAK and exposed their mutilated

bodies around the city. These two episodes of violence during the Iranian Revolution, although different in type and degree, have been continuously reconstructed and recalled among the perpetrators, witnesses, and Iranian society throughout the post-revolutionary era. This is while, up to today, an attempt to collect and categorize relevant documents has not been made by the ruling institutions so much so that such events are almost erased from the narratives of the establishment. Based on existing oral sources and interviews with a few officials, witnesses, and perpetrators of the event in Rasht, this paper investigates how such historical episodes are constructed from below and shaped collective memories through different periods. I further examine the political establishment's ways of reinforcing or neglecting relevant historical narratives according to its ideological and hegemonical interests to refashion national memory.

Amir Taha, University of Amsterdam

Iraqi nationalism and the memory of the 1991 uprising

The impact of the 1991 uprising in Iraq is global. The uprising followed the largest war in the Middle East: the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and preceded the still unfolding consequence of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. Yet so far, no official narrative has been agreed upon nor produced by the post-2003 order: in the context of a deteriorating and privatized educational system, violence and the struggle for legitimacy caused by the US occupation, a widely accepted narrative on the 1991 uprising never came to be. Nonetheless, many supporters of the 1991 uprising - especially in areas where the uprising took place - remember it as a justified attempt to depose a despised Saddam Hussain. However, this memory is complicated by the fact that the post-2003 *is* a world without Saddam, yet many of those same supporters feel disillusioned. These seemingly multiple paradoxes forced many Iraqis to revisit the meaning and significance of this uprising. Based on extensive fieldwork in the mid-Euphrates region and interviews in Iraq and among the Iraqi diaspora this paper will explore and reflect on the struggles surrounding the memory of the 1991 uprising, its memory constructing institutions and elaborate on how this uprising still shapes both politics and social relations.

Panel II (PCH 1.05, 9:30-11:00)

Exploring gender, activism and Islam: Iran, the Gulf, and the French digital world

Organisers: Annelies Moors and Sarah Bracke; Chair and comments: Annelies Moors (anthropology, University of Amsterdam and NIAS)

Panel co-sponsored with NWO Vici En/Gendering Europe's 'Muslim Question'

This panel engages with contemporary debates and forms of activism in different locations – Iran, the Gulf, and the French-speaking digital world – that in different ways relate to gender and Islam. The three presentations engage with how and to what extent Islam in its various manifestations matters for women's activism, with the intersections of public, political, and academic debate, and with the affordances and effects of the particular media used.

Ladan Rahbari (Sociology, University of Amsterdam)

The “Woman, Life, Freedom” Uprising in Iran: Women’s Activism and the Shifting Grounds of Religion

What is the relationship between political activism and the (shifting) attitudes of the new generations of Iranians to religion? This talk will address this question within the context of the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ uprising in Iran in 2022, by focusing on the presence and lack of religious symbolism and imagery in the uprising, and by focusing specifically on the uprising's imagery, songs, and slogans. I show that the state and its association and entanglement with clerical organizations have played a role in the generational shifts in Iran in the (re)definition of religion and its significance in Iranian people's lives in general and gender-based political activism in particular.

Lana Sirri (Sociology, University of Amsterdam)

Academic-Activism-Is That A Thing? Notes and Reflections from the GCC

Are Muslim women in the Gulf just interested in the right to drive cars? Or do they also want to sit in the driving seat politically and steer their societies toward gender equality and democratization? By looking beyond the clichés, this research examines women's life experiences in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to reveal the practical tools employed in the day-to-day struggles of people. By identifying 'home-grown' strategies used to combat patriarchy and religious extremism, this research has the potential to empower Muslim women everywhere.

Sarah Bracke (Sociology, University of Amsterdam)

Re-Visualize: Gender and Islam in the French-speaking Digital World

Oscillating between invisibility and hypervisibility (Zine 2002), representations of Muslim women have been structured by persistent tropes such as victims in need of saving (Abu-Lughod 2013) or threats to societal order (Mamdani 2002; Tayyen 2017). Muslim women have pushed back against such representations and have created a myriad of different images of themselves (*Gümüşay*, 2022), marked by the constraints of existing representations as well as the question of il/legibility. In a new research project entitled 'Re-visualize' (funded by Erasmus+), we investigate how a new generation of Muslim women influencers in the French-speaking Digital World navigates this complicated terrain of representation and we analyze what can be learnt from images produced and curated by themselves.

11-11:15 coffee break

11:15-12:45: Panel III

Panel III (PCH 1.04, 11:15-12:45)

Artistic expressions as sites for examining the political

Organiser: Lisa Schouten, chair: Veronica Zangl

Covering a wide geographical scope, the papers in this panel cover issues on the intersection of artistic outputs and (cultural) politics. Building on examples from cultural memories in leftist movements, films and novels documenting a trans-regional guerrilla movement and a contentious musical phenomenon, this panel discusses what it means to analyze 'the political' through and in various art forms. By not only asking what makes these outputs political, but also how the political is shown and what the implications are of this approach, the panelists seek to reflect on the benefits and drawbacks of treating these, at times seemingly a-political, mediums as sites of political engagement.

Judith Naeff, Leiden University

The politics and poetics of family histories on the Arab left

Cultural memories in the form of literary, video and installation art that recall leftist movements of the 1970s in Egypt and Lebanon often take the form of intimate family histories. This paper speculates on why that is and also discusses possible consequences. Over the past decades, the political left has been thoroughly marginalized. While the generation that lived the period in which a communist horizon still seemed reality are often melancholic, those who were born in the 1980s often developed a sense of belonging to the left - as past or as abstraction - despite its utter disconnection from the lived reality during the neoliberal 1990s and 2000s. The family histories narrated in their artistic productions explore what might still be recovered for the present and future. Rather than seeing the individual and intimate mode of narration as a depoliticization and sentimentalization of politics, I argue that the domestic realm is simply where the political lingers

after a near-total defeat in the face of a continuously hostile public sphere. Drawing upon Lauren Berlant's concept, I reconceptualize her "intimate public" beyond sentimentalism. Seemingly a-political, it is a site - neither public, nor counterpublic - for repositioning and redefining oneself in the aftermath of defeat.

Faisal Hamadah, Maastricht University

Liberation in the Context of Ecological Degradation

This paper will think about the challenges of environmental and ecological action in the Arabian Peninsula. It will present an overview of the many obstacles facing this environmentally precarious region by focussing on the lens of its economic reliance on oil. It will then turn to the example of the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), a trans-regional guerrilla movement which waged a protracted people's war against the Omani Sultanate and the British in the 1960s and 1970s. The experience of the PFLOAG will offer grounds to think through the overlap of ecological and political action. By focusing on the diverse ways that the PFLOAG's actions have been mediated in diverse artistic practices including documentary film and novel writing, this paper will attempt to unpack how political struggle is mediated artistically in the Gulf, and how this mediation allows political activity to live on.

Lisa Schouten, UvA

"Guilty until proven innocent": contesting power(s) through Egyptian Mahraganat

This paper is concerned with Mahraganat: a controversial musical genre that emerged from disenfranchised parts of Cairo in the first decade of the new millennium. At present and over ten years after the revolution, Egypt's capital is no longer the stage of open and visible power struggles between the state and its people. Direct confrontations in the streets have given way to creative outputs like Mahraganat becoming a proxy for these persistent tensions. The standoff between both sides remains but has become much less apparent since becoming ingrained in this homegrown music phenomenon in particular. Giving voice, and as I argue, social capital and thus power to the marginalized communities of the city, Mahraganat's place in Egyptian society is highly contested. Using Bourdieu's theory of capital and class distinction, along with Althusser's Notes on Ideology, I attempt to show the ways in which hegemonic notions of culture and identity are disputed through the music.

13-13:45 Lunch (canteen PCH, for panelists)

14:00 - 17:45 Afternoon Programme (location: OMHP)

14:00-15:30 OMHP D 1.09

Boycott (Julia Bacha, Just Vision, 2021, 70 min.)

Introduction: Anne de Jong

15:30-15:45 coffee break

15:45-17:45 Panel IV & V (parallel sessions)

Panel IV (OMHP C2.17)

Current Empirical Studies on Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands: Three research projects

Organizer and chair: Gerard Wiegers

In the present panel three ongoing PhD research projects carried out at UvA into the relationship between text and practices are presented and discussed. In the first the preaching practices around Ibn Ashir's primer are studied, the second turns to Muslims and palliative decision making and the third examined Islamic law concerning inter-religious coexistence; between formal legal authority and lived practice. To what extent are practices informed by the written normative Islamic text corpus and Islamic as a textual tradition? How can we study that relationship. How are notions of Islamic authority affected by the religiously plural context?

Amine Oulad Lmaroudia, *Primers, Preachers and Perception: Ibn 'Āshir and the Transmission of Religious Didactical Texts*

This paper is an exploration into the attitudes displayed by Dutch Moroccan preachers towards a religious didactical primer in the form of a poem called *al-Murshid al-Mu'īn* written by the seventeenth-century religious scholar from Fez 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn 'Āshir (d. 1631). Part I of this paper begins with an exploration of Ibn 'Āshir's intellectual profile and then places him in a wider religio-historical context. In part II of this paper, the Dutch Moroccan preacher takes centre stage. Research into the attitudes of Dutch Moroccan preachers towards their understanding of the Islamic religious tradition in the broadest sense is insubstantial. Part II of this paper will therefore not only render their views on Ibn 'Āshir's *Murshid*, but also try to synthesize their views on the aforementioned topics.

George Muishout, *Muslims and Palliative Decision Making*

Religious beliefs of Muslim minorities in the West are important in making sense of disease and the medical decisions that result from this when they must professionally deal with medical decision making in palliative care. Researching the structure of the religious thinking of Muslim professionals involved in decision making in palliative care may therefore contribute to understanding how religiosity shapes their attitudes in medical decision-making in palliative care. In my research I have therefore chosen to explore the perspectives of Turkish doctors and Muslim doctors working and residing in the Netherlands who are professionally involved in palliative care. In this presentation I will summarize the main results of my field research into the perspective of ten Turkish imams with which in-depth interviews were conducted. The resulting data have been analyzed using a Direct Content Analysis through a typology of imam roles which was complemented by Narrative Analysis to explore their motives. It appeared that they urged patient's relatives not to consent to withholding or terminating treatment but to search for a cure, since this might be rewarded with miraculous healing. When giving consent seemed unavoidable, the fear of being held responsible by God for wrongful death was mostly managed by requesting fatwa from committees of religious experts. The conclusion is that the imams urge patients' relatives to show faith in God's omnipotence by seeking maximum treatment. This attitude is motivated by the fear that all Muslims involved in medical decision-making will be held accountable by God in the afterlife for questioning His omnipotence to heal by agreeing to a proposal to withhold or terminate treatment.

Rafik Dahman, *Islamic law concerning inter-religious coexistence; between formal legal authority and lived practice*

In my research I focus on the way in which and the extent to which Islamic law concerning social ethics determines the inter-religious interaction of Muslims in the Netherlands vis-à-vis non-Muslims. The research approaches the question from the perspective of Muslim interviewees by means of interlocutions.

The research consists out of an empirical part and a literature part. The empirical part is a qualitative research. I analyse the 75 interlocutions as to understand -rather than to know- how

Islamic law concerning inter-religious co-existence is observed and conceptualised by my interlocutions and, consequently, how it affects the interlocutor's social interaction with non-Muslims and the way the former conceive the latter.

The three main themes discussed in it are the following:

- 1) residence in non-Muslim territory;
- 2) gender and (homo)sexuality;
- 3) defining non-Muslims and inter-religious social interaction.

Panel V (OMHP C1.23)

Researching and Teaching Entanglements: the Middle East in Europe- and Europe in the Middle East

Organiser: Anne de Jong

This panel introduces two new book publications to the public: *Knowledge production in higher education: Between Europe and the Middle East* (2023 Manchester University Press) edited by Michelle Pace and Jan Claudius Völkel and the *Routledge Handbook of EU-Middle East Relations*. (2022 Routledge) edited by Dimitris Bouris, Daniela Huber and Michelle Pace. Both books critically engage with the myriad of ways of which knowledge production about and between the Middle East and Europe comes about. The respective editors will present about the scope and intend of the books whereas the two contributing authors provide an example of the chapters included.

Jan Völkel, DAAD Seconded Professor, University of Ottawa, School of Political Studies & Michelle Pace (TBC), Professor in Global Studies, Roskilde University, Department of Social Sciences and Business

Book presentation: *Knowledge production in higher education: Between Europe and the Middle East* (Manchester University Press, 2023).

Mindful of divisive labels in constructions of the 'Middle East and North Africa' (MENA) and of 'Europe', the editors and contributors of *Knowledge production in higher education* reflexively immerse themselves into an investigation of how knowledge about these regions is produced at higher educational establishments. Thus, zooming in on mutual scholarship about 'Europe' and/or 'the MENA' opens up a wide range of possibilities for supplanting visions of so-called traditional Orientalists, to abandon the sets of magnifying glasses through which the Other is studied. For those interested in the decolonisation of academia and issues of positionality this is a must read.

Dimitris Bouris, Senior Lecturer Political Science Jean Monnet Chair "The EU as a Global Actor" (ATHENA), University of Amsterdam

Book presentation: *Routledge Handbook of EU-Middle East Relations: Entanglements in EU-Middle East relations* (2021)

EU-Middle East relations are multifaceted, varied and complex, shaped by historical, political, economic, migratory, social and cultural dynamics. Covering these relations from a broad perspective that captures continuities, ruptures and entanglements, this handbook provides a clearer understanding of trends, thus contributing to a range of different turns in international relations. The interdisciplinary and diverse assessments through which readers may grasp a more nuanced comprehension of the intricate entanglements in EU-Middle East relations are carefully provided in these pages by leading experts in the various (sub)fields, including academics, think-tankers, as well as policymakers. The volume offers original reflections on historical constructions; theoretical approaches; multilateralism and geopolitical perspectives; contemporary issues; peace, security and conflict; and development, economics, trade and society. This handbook provides an

entry point for an informed exploration of the multiple themes, actors, structures, policies and processes that mould EU–Middle East relations.

Virginie Mamadouh, AISSR, Political and Economic Geographies, University of Amsterdam

In the Shadow of the European Neighbourhood: Political geographies of EU–Middle East relations

Focusing on the spatiality of EU-Middle East relations, political geography, critical geopolitics and critical border studies provide tools to explore EU-Middle East relations and their impact on EU politics. The chapter first introduces the EU and the Middle East as contested notions representing a fuzzy actor in a fuzzy region. It then turns to two main perspectives on the spatialities of EU engagement with the Middle East. First it discusses geographical imaginations and geopolitical representations of the Middle East at the EU level and in its Member States. Second it focuses on region, region building, regionalism and regionalization, and more specifically on the EU bordering in the Middle East and on the involvement of the EU in region building in the Middle East.

Anne de Jong, Associate Professor Anthropology of Conflict & Resistance, University of Amsterdam

Teaching the enlightened student: Political polarisation and the ongoing quest for critical thinking

Teaching the Middle East in Europe cannot ignore its politicised nature: Where we typically acknowledge the power-knowledge nexus in research, all too often similar dynamics in teaching are left unexplored. This chapter provides a personal account of how teaching ‘the Middle East’ in Europe has developed in a direct and inevitable interaction with the political context: local events have shaped the Dutch political and by extension academic context so much that they influence almost every aspect of ‘doing the Middle East’ in the Netherlands today. On the one hand, it is shown how, in this politicised context, public naming and shaming of perceived ‘left’ or ‘anti-Semitic’ university professors, as well as fierce accusations of bias, via lawfare or otherwise, can lead to self-censorship and a sense of isolation in teaching, especially for early career scholars. On the other hand, it is shown how students in a classroom environment changed as well and it will be argued that, in our teaching, we need to apply that critical, ethical and ongoing reflexivity that we normally reserve for our research activities and create the in-depth learning experience that does not deny but embraces the political contestation that is academic knowledge and the transfer thereof.

17:45-18:30 Drinks (Central hall OMHP)

