

New forms of political expressions: Mapping the approaches to the art of the protest in the Mena region

Giovedì 22 settembre / Thursday 22 September 14.00-16.30

CONVENOR: Laura TOCCO (University of Cagliari)

DISCUSSANT: Gennaro GERVASIO (Università Roma Tre)

ABSTRACT: The protests that have rapidly spread through the Mena region have brought new forms of political expressions that differ significantly from the traditional organizational forms of previous political movements. Over the last years, the claim for the appropriation of the public space through highly visual artifices has started to play an important role in terms of building a consciousness. According to Tripp, graffiti and street art's public presence "help to create a powerful mnemonic for collective memory". Also, "through graffiti and street art's public presence, "a common language, often a vernacular of solidarity and defiance will be established" (Tripp 2013).

This field opens up questions also for social sciences and humanities, as well history, anthropology, architecture, and economy. The stories and the identities of the protest art can be studied through several angles as multidisciplinary tools. There is a long, perhaps even ancient history of wall writing and what we would today call street art and graffiti used as means to express discontent and catch public attention. In the critical exploration, these expressions work as a source of memory and as an archive helping to understand the historical and current structure of the political movements and to read the phenomenon where they are embedded.

The panel has the aim to draw the narrative of the protest art by collecting critical research and textual methods in the reading of the political landscape via posters, graffiti, propaganda maps and various street art. The panel welcomes scholars with diverse interests and approaches to this subject, from a range of disciplines including art, architecture, geography, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, politics and economics and urban planning.

PAPERS:

Raffaella BIANCHI, *Dancing in line: Steps of Kurdish politics in Turkey since 2010*

ABSTRACT:

At the 2014 general elections, the electoral success of HDP (People's Democratic Party) in Turkey stopped President of the Republic Recept Tayyip Erdoğan's ambition of changing the Turkish Republic into a Presidential system. The advertisement for 2014 electoral campaign of HDP, the new Kurdish party in Turkey, portrayed an extremely diverse dancing community; along them, the co-leaders of the party Selhattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ Şenoğlu. This paper explores recent political developments of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey through the analysis of significant performances of *Halay* dance. This millenary dance is traditionally performed at weddings and it is popular within Turkic tribes in the Anatolian region, and in general in the Middle East.

The peculiarity of the Kurdish performance (*Govend*) is that it can be danced mixing genders; this gender mix can also be seen in the very structure of HDP. This is because party chairs and roles are shared by co-leaders, usually a man and a woman. In addition, the extreme consideration of the party agenda and legal struggle for LGBT+ rights is an interesting peculiarity of this new formation.

Mixing ethno-musicology and International Relations tools of analysis, this paper aims to deconstruct the significance of this performance for contemporary Kurdish and Turkish political cultures. By looking at most significant performances of the last five years, the analysis re-constructs some relevant recent political history which is central for an understanding of the current situation of Turkey and its political position concerning the Syrian war. In particular, three important steps will be considered: the development and failure of the Peace Process in 2010, the context of occupations of the Gezi Park social movement, and the more recent controversial struggle for peace in the climate of Syrian regional war on terror.

PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Dr **Raffaella Bianchi** is Visiting Lecturer in International Relations at the Department of Politics and IR of the University of Westminster (London). After writing her PhD on La Scala and Italian nationalism at the Department of PHIR of Loughborough University (UK), she further developed her research on music and IR in Turkey. She worked as Assistant Professor in Politics at Zirve University (Gaziantep) for two years and at Suleyman Sha University in Istanbul for three years. She published on opera and politics, gender and nationalism, as well as on migration narratives. She is in the process of publishing results of a three years fieldwork on music and the Gezi Park social movement.

Taoufik RACHED, *Le rap marocain : quand la jeunesse se rebelle*

ABSTRACT:

Les jeunes au Maroc représentent environ 38% de la population du pays. Cette jeunesse fait partie d'une société fortement hiérarchisée, où ils n'ont ni pouvoir social ni pouvoir politique décisionnel. Cette couche sociale essaye d'exprimer son existence et ses angoisses à travers des moyens et des méthodes différentes, la musique et l'une d'entre elles. La scène musicale marocaine est en pleine mutation, entre l'apparition de nouveau style, et la disparition d'autres. La musique du rap est un des nouveaux styles les plus convoité. Le Rap marocain exprime d'une part le mécontentement de la jeunesse marocaine de sa situation sociale et économique et en même temps reflète les clivages latents et manifestes au sein de la société marocaine. Ces rappeurs transmettent dans les textes qu'ils chantent, des messages de contestation, expriment leur espoir d'un Maroc meilleur et dénoncent régulièrement la corruption, le chômage et les inégalités. Ils parviennent dès lors à défier tout un système en usant des paroles qui dérangent. L'objectif de ce communiqué sera d'étudier dans quelle mesure le rap marocain est un vecteur de messages politiques. Dans ce but, on répondra aux questions suivantes :

- Quelle genèse a le rap marocain?
- Quelle revendication politique et sociale porte le rap marocain?
- Quels rapports déploient les rappeurs marocains avec le pouvoir politique?

Le travail présenté utilisera des études déjà faites sur le rap, sur les mouvements contestataires et sur l'exclusion sociale et politique au Maroc. Grâce à cette approche multidisciplinaire et transfrontalière, nous obtiendrons un regard plus profond sur le rôle du rap marocain comme un réflecteur du changement social, culturel et politique au Maroc.

PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Taoufik Rached est doctorants et chargés de projets au Centre d'études sur le Proche et Moyen Orient de l'université de Marburg, Allemagne.

Laura TOCCO, *The speaking silence of Cumartesi Anneleri in Turkish collective identity*

ABSTRACT:

In 1995 a group of mothers gathered at a central location in Istanbul, holding pictures of their disappeared children, *kayıplar*, and launching one of the most significant protest movements in Istanbul. The birth of *Cumartesi Anneleri*, "Saturday Mothers", dates back to military-coup era of 1980s and to the State of Emergency Legislation, which was launched in 1987 in Kurdish zones. In order to answer to the widespread political violence that marked the previous decade, the military junta initiated one of the most painful times of Turkish society: thousands of people were detained, tortured and most of them executed. Nowadays, thousands of people are still missing waiting for justice. In 1983, with the end of the military government, the Mothers turned into the target of the security forces. During this period, many activists disappeared, most of them, after being detained by the police, were declared "lost under custody". The protest of the mothers continued from May 27, 1995 to March 13, 1999, involving more and more participants. However, during the sittings, the mothers were subjected to recurring violence by the police, they were beaten and detained. Due to these violent governmental measures, in 1999 the mothers decided to stop their meetings. After ten years, they have come back to protest the disappearance of their children under police custody. They still gather every Saturday at 12:00 pm at Galatasaray Square in Istanbul's central Beyoğlu district. They reach the square in a silent and peaceful atmosphere, and, after few minutes of silence, one of them tells the crowd her memories. Understanding the Saturday Mothers sittings as a way to "exemplify a complicated series of deterritorializing and reterritorializing moments and elude a totalizing evaluation" (Baydar, İvegen, 2006), this paper, through the exam of pictures, maps and the speeches of the Mothers, aims at analysing the construction of the 'collective narrative' of the Mothers. In this sense, the movement has been considered a socio-territorial movement interrelated to the construction of a national identity. Then, it will be studied with a focus on 'identity' and 'spatiality', as motivating force to "deterritorialize" and challenge the monolithic Turkish identity, *türklük*, and as tool of shaping a new public space located in an area marked by its historical role in the political resistance.

PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Laura Tocco, a Specialist in Near Eastern contemporary history. She received her PhD from University of Cagliari (Italy) in 2015 with a thesis entitled "Civil Society in Turkey: A reading of Kadın Gazetesi (1947-1950)". Her current research deals with the Turkish debate around the concept of civil society, media and freedom of expression, the political use of the language and the language of the power, the position of minorities in Anatolia, from the past to the present, identities and social classes in modern Turkey. She has shared her work at international conferences, and has authored articles on these subjects.