



Sudanese protesters on the train to Khartoum, 2019 - Photo by Osama ElFaki CC BY-SA 4.0

Call for Papers

SWANA from below: living, enduring, and remembering its revolutions

November 30 - December 2, 2022 —Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

Revolts, revolutions and uprisings have long been part of the modern history of the Southwest Asian and North African region (SWANA), from the emancipatory and independence movements against colonial rule in north African countries (Egypt 1919 and 1954, Algeria 1956, Tunisia 1956, and the Sahrawi Intifada 2005), to the Iranian revolution in 1978, the Palestinian first and second Intidafa in 1987 and 2000 respectively, up to the first wave of the Arab uprisings that commenced in 2010 with Tunisia, and Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen in 2011, Gezi park protests in 2013, and then the second wave of the Arab uprisings that followed in 2019 in Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan. Scholars of revolutions and social movements have studied these uprisings, revolutionary movements and struggles prioritizing the macro-level power structure reconfigurations they produced and their political, socioeconomic, and cultural implications on world, regional and local politics. As authoritarian rule was re-established in some countries, some of them experienced democratic backsliding, and others plunged into civil wars, many scholars deemed these uprisings as failed attempts to democratize.

Moving attention from macro level transformations and focusing instead on “politics more below”, this conference seeks to interrogate these revolutions and uprisings from the perspective of their makers. It aims to look closely at how revolutionary dynamics unfold at the micro-level and in their everyday lives, analyzing the trajectories of politicization of activists and participants and the ways in which these revolutionary uprisings affected their lives. In this direction, the conference seeks to address questions that have been left on the margins of social movements and revolutionary scholarship in the SWANA region. How were/have been/are revolutionary situations lived through from the perspective of their makers? What transformations have these groundbreaking times brought to their lives and in

their intimate settings? What happened to their subjectivities, identities, relationships during and after the eventful protests? How do they remember, memorialize or forget these moments?

While the personal, subjective and affective dimensions of these eventful moments is sporadically addressed in social movements analysis, in this conference we bring them to the fore. We invite scholars, researchers and/or activists studying revolutions and social movements to reflect on revolutionary situations as living phenomena that continue to exist in memories, bodies, practices, emotions, intimate and affective ties, creating new meanings of the past and reimagining the politics of our present. We particularly welcome panels, papers and submissions that employ participatory, ethnographic and historically sensitive methodologies and examine different revolutionary temporalities and diverse spaces of the SWANA region's past and ongoing revolutions to offer more granulated and nuanced analyses at the micro-level. We will especially welcome contributions by young scholars and early-career researchers.

The Faculty of of Political and Social Sciences and its Center for Social Movements Studies (COSMOS) at the Scuola Normale Superiore, invite submissions for - but not limited to - the following general themes of:

- Knowledge practices in social movements (movements as a space of learning and production of new practices and political imaginations)
- Critical and revolutionary subjectivities during and after revolutionary timescapes
- Affects and emotions in collective action, social movements and activism (interrogating affects such as melancholia, despair, defeat, fatigue, and hope in mobilisatory, revolutionary and post-revolutionary situations)
- Artistic expression in revolutionary and post-revolutionary moments (encompassing art, music, literature and film)
- Space and spatiality of revolutions (from bodies to places of collective action)
- Transnational activist networks and cross-national learning
- Memory, remembering and forgetting in revolutionary and post-revolutionary contexts

We welcome submissions that go beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries and methodological approaches in addressing the realities and changes the SWANA region has been undergoing. Outstanding submissions - in all formats - will later be selected for publication in special issues of journals and/or edited volumes.



Graffiti in downtown Beirut, 2022 - Photo by Simone Spera

Conference Workshops

Whereas the conference is intended to be a space for scholarly discussion and learning, it will also provide opportunities for reflection, at the intersection of activism and academia, on how scholars studying activism, social movements and revolutions can research and navigate these topics on the field alone, along with their interlocutors, and in their own personal lives.

As such, in cooperation with the Marc Bloch Zentrum at Humboldt University in Berlin and the DRafting and Enacting the Revolutions in the Arab Mediterranean Project (DREAM) and Center for Social Movements Studies (COSMOS) at the Scuola Normale Superiore, the conference will feature workshops that address some of the main research conundrums that researchers encounter: including a) questioning research practices, ethics and researchers' positionalities in emotionally dense contexts (such as authoritarian, militarized and highly securitized contexts), b) exploring unconventional research tools, and c) navigating researchers' own political convictions and commitments and their research interests and agendas.

Applicants are kindly asked to state their interest in participating in one or more of these workshops in their application in the provided Google form.



Graffiti from Mohammed Mahmoud Street in Downtown Cairo, 2012 - Photo by Sarah ElMasry

How to apply?

Participants can apply as *a panel or individually* and are invited to submit applications that consists of:

- 1) One of the following options:
 - a) Applying as a panel: A panel abstract of **maximum 300 words** along with **a 300 word individual paper abstract**. Each panel can consist of **three** participants. Please submit all abstracts in ONE PDF with participants names, affiliation and contact information.
 - b) Applying individually: **A 300 individual paper abstract**. Please submit all abstracts in ONE PDF with participants names, affiliation and contact information.
 - c) An alternative to panel or individual paper abstracts, applicants can submit **a film-clip (3-4 minutes), a poster, a photographic series (15 photos), or a piece of creative writing**
- 2) Filling in this [Google form](#) stating your interest in the conference's workshops.

All applications should be submitted via e-mail to the following address: swana@sns.it with “SWANA Conference Application” in the subject field along with the applicant's last name.

Timeline

- Application deadline: **May 31, 2022**
 - Notification of applicants: **July 15, 2022**
 - Final submissions: **November 15, 2022**
- Whether papers or alternative formats, submission will be shared among conference participants and discussants in a special secure online portal before the conference convenes.

The conference requires no registration fees. Upon selection, applicants should seek funding to cover travel and accommodation costs. Only a limited number of scholarships covering travel and accommodation will be available, for successful applicants from the SWANA region. Details on funding will be provided after selection.