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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



Panel 11

Vive le Peuple ? Popular classes and domination in Morocco

As a heterogeneous socio-economic category, the working classes are the subject of numerous references in the Moroccan mobilizations and anxious attention from public policies. However, this centrality is not necessarily reflected in the interest of the social sciences of politics. Based on this twofold observation, this panel intends to look at the politics of the governed and the relationship of the people to different forms of domination. Based on Moroccan surveys of street artists, coffee waitresses, inheritance practices and protest movements, the interventions will examine the functioning of relations of domination based on the experience of popular categories.

We will first all look at the exercise of domination, whether it be the different power relations that make up the state (the popular classes as governed «populations») or other dominant social categories. This reflection will be complemented by the study of the popular as a constraint and as a resource for mobilization. The panel will then focus on the power relations, inequalities and asymmetries which are deployed within the working classes themselves. From these first three axes, we will finally explore how these different forms of domination contribute to shaping and transforming the meanings associated with the category of 'popular classes'.

Persons in charge : Berriane Yasmine (Centre Maurice Halbwachs, CNRS) and Vairel Frédéric (Ecole d'études politiques, Université d'Ottawa)

Discussant : Vairel Frédéric (Ecole d'études politiques, Université d'Ottawa)

Program

Aït Mous Fadma (Université Hassan II, LADSIS, Casablanca)

Telling one's social condition": how young street artists from Casablanca express their neighborhood identity

Socially speaking, the young people who practice street arts in Casablanca come from popular and disadvantaged neighborhoods. They use urban arts as a means of expression and a way out of their unfavorable "conditions». Using the example of a Casablanca theater troupe, the Théâtre de l'Opprimé (Al Masrah al Mahgour), we will describe the itineraries of artists, members of this company, how they define themselves, how they speak about their neighborhood of origin, how they claim a certain identity of «wled cha'ab» (son of the people) and how this is reflected in their artistic practices. By moving through several urban spaces, they navigate between various social worlds with different codes (the use of French for example) but return to their original neighborhoods (either because they still live there or to visit their families). They become attached to it and emancipate themselves from it at the same time. We will therefore explore how the practice of art, the spaces frequented, and their movement between several social worlds allows them to leave their neighborhood and a «momentary" evolution in terms of class.

Benbelli Sana (Université Hassan II, LADSI, Casablanca)

Cafés waitresses in Casablanca or how to occupy public space through an informal, subordinate and underpaid activity

This communication is based on empirical research carried out in Casablanca about cafés as new spaces for female sociability. Coffee shops in Morocco are a masculine space. Jobs related to these spaces have long remained dominated by men, except for a few invisible back-office activities. Recently, the service activity in cafés has experienced a significant feminization, especially in cafés in working-class and peripheral areas where the norm of masculinity dominates. Waitresses employed in cafés occupy a subordinate position because they are situated at the bottom of the hierarchical scale, and are subjected to both their bosses and the customers. The institutional and economic vulnerability of their activity (they are not declared and generally underpaid) reinforces their submission through the interweaving of various forms of domination. Despite this situation, waitresses manage to develop certain forms of resilience. They manage to occupy the space, to create relationships and links that are not based on seduction, and to feminize the space by facilitating the access of female clients.

El Kahlaoui Soraya (Ghent University, MENARG)

El Cha'ab Yourid! Back to the February 20 Movement and its establishment in Casablanca working-class neighborhoods

Calling for the democratization of the regime, the 20th February Movement (M20F) has emerged in an urban context marked by a very clear socio-spatial divide between fragmented marginalized populations and an oppositional political elite from the middle class that benefited from the “democratic” openings of the 2000s. The challenge of the M20F was to break down the barriers that limited the dissenting sphere to an institutionalized civil society to democratize politics. By taking to the streets, the M20F set itself the goal of rallying the popular masses to support the formulation of a collective project that would be democratic and social. It was not an easy bet to take, and for a good part, one would have thought in 2011 that this bet was lost.

In this presentation, we will explore the limits of the M20F through a study of the difficult penetration of the movement within the popular classes. In particular, we will focus our analysis on the tactics implemented by certain M20F activists to bring about the idea of going to demonstrate in Casablanca's working-class neighborhoods. Indeed, at the urban level, this movement has come to crystallize all the political contradictions of spatial borders by highlighting the many difficulties for a “democratic” political movement to make the strategic choice to take to the “streets of working-class neighborhoods”. Thus, through an analysis of the spatial segregation existing in Casablanca between middle-class neighborhoods and “working-class neighborhoods”, we will see how, in 2011, the creation of a space for the collective struggle was difficult to implement.

Milani Kholoud (LADSI, Université Hassan II, Casablanca)

Inheritance between religious norms and social practice: a study on the working-classes

Starting from the gap observed between the legal framework that regulates transmission rights in Morocco and actual inheritance practices, this presentation will focus on how inheritance laws resulting from “sharia” are bypassed to allow the offspring to inherit equal shares of the family patrimony, or to make arrangements to protect the daughters or the surviving spouse (especially the wife). Depending on their social background, actors develop specific strategies to circumvent laws that no longer meet their aspiration for equality between their children, girls and boys, especially in the case of ta'sib.

However, contrary to what certain studies have been able to show, circumvention does not only concern the wealthy social classes. Based on the results of a quantitative survey carried out at Casablanca Social court in 2017, we will show that within the working classes, specific circumvention strategies such as donation and “omra” donations are frequently used. Legal professionals such as the “adouls” play a central role in the design and implementation of these circumvention strategies, both when seeking advice and when registering deeds.