



European
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ROBERT
SCHUMAN
CENTRE FOR
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STUDIES

DEPARTMENT
OF POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES

MAX WEBER
PROGRAMME
FOR
POSTDOCTORAL
STUDIES



Middle
East
Directions

MAX WEBER / SPS MULTI-DISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP

Rethinking Methodological Approaches to Islamic Movements

29-30 April 2019, European University Institute (Badia, Emeroteca Room)

The Arab revolutions of 2011 have strikingly reconfigured Islamic movements' mobilisations. Their electoral successes in some countries, their renewed participation in institutional politics, their deployment as social movements in other contexts, and finally the resurgent state repression in Egypt and elsewhere, have all reshaped the organisational and ideological identities of these movements. Islamism has undergone both (out-ward) pluralisation and (in-ward) fragmentation, with new lines of division arising between competing factions. Internal debates have grown in intensity, over issues of political programs, social outreach and self-labelling strategies ("Muslim democrat", "Islamist", "Salafi", etc.). Tactical choices have been vividly discussed both at the grassroots and leadership levels of the movements, and new, unexpected behaviours have been adopted in the face of disrupted states. Considering these transformations, this workshop aims at updating the paradigms, method designs and data collection procedures used for investigating Islamic movements and capturing their evolving role in the politics of North Africa and the Middle East. Such endeavour will be carried out in the course of three panels, each of them tackling a core methodological challenge.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Monday 29th April

9:00 – 9:30 **Registration**, welcome coffee and biscuits (Emeroteca Room)

9.30 – 9:40 **Introductory Remarks**

9:40 – 10:30 **Keynote Speech** by **Stéphane Lacroix** (Sciences Po Paris) Followed by Q&A

10:30 – 12:30 **Researching Islamic Activism Through the Charity Sector**

This panel questions the party-focus bias of existing studies on Islamist movements and attempts to broaden the scope of analysis to non-(directly) partisan forms of activism, i.e. charities. What role do charities play as alternative forms of mobilisation? How can the study of Islamic charities shed a new light on Islamism? What are the methodological challenges of integrating non-party actors into the study Islamism? Beyond Islamic movements, this panel investigates the shifting contours of what counts – or not – as “political”.

- **Ester Sigillò** (SNS/IRMC): Studying Islamic Charities in Post-Authoritarian Tunisia: Methodological Challenges and Ethical concerns
- **Benoit Challand** (SNS/NEVV): ‘Chilling Effect’ on Islamic Charities. Reflections on Palestine and the Gulf Region

Discussant: **Mathilde Zederman** (EUI, Max Weber Fellow, RSCAS)

12:30 – 14:30 **Lunch** (for speakers only) - Sala Rossa

14:30 – 17:00 **Reflecting on Methodological and Ethical challenges in Salafi and Jihadi Studies**

This panel sheds light on Salafism and Jihadism as categories of scientific analysis. To what extent are they operationalisable concepts? Which criteria should be used for their empirical delimitation? What contemporary challenges complicate their identification? Beyond Islamic movements, this panel interrogates the epistemological underpinnings of any research navigating contested and ‘securitised’ categories.

- **Tore Hamming** (EUI, SPS): Too Much Information? New Challenges in Studying Jihadism
- **Théo Blanc** (EUI, SPS): Salafism, Label or Concept?
- **Fabio Merone** (Ghent University, MENARG): Islamic Political Theology

Discussant: **Olivier Roy** (EUI, RSCAS)



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Tuesday 30th April

9:30 – 10:00 Welcome coffee and biscuits (Emeroteca Room)

10:00 – 12:00 **Locating Islamic Activism Beyond Organised Movements**

This panel examines Islamism through a relational and contextual approach by introducing the role of the state and society. To what extent are Islamists embedded in a larger religious and societal context? How do Islamists relate to the state, or the absence of state? What behaviours do Islamists adopt in different institutional and (conducive vs. hostile) societal environments? Beyond Islamic movements, this panel delves into the methodological challenges of studying the non-organised forms of activism and grasping these mobilisations in interaction with state institutions and societal forces.

- **Youssef El-Chazly** (CNRS/CMB): Religion Beyond Religious Movements in the Egyptian Revolution
- **Virginie Collombier** (EUI, RSCAS): Libyan Salafis After 2011: The Politics of Obedience in the Absence of Authority

Discussant: **Margot Dazey** (EUI, Max Weber Fellow, SPS)

12:00 – 14:00 **Lunch** (for speakers only) - Sala Rossa

Credit Policy for Ph.D Researchers

To receive 10 credits for this workshop, Ph.D students are required to attend the two days of the workshop (29-30th April) and to write one response paper (500 words) tackling one or several methodological issues raised during the workshop. The response paper shall be sent to Olivier Roy (olivier.roy@eui.eu) and Maureen Lechleitner (maureen.lechleitner@eui.eu) by **6 May 2019**. Researchers who do not need credits or only wish to audit are also welcome to attend the workshop. All participants are invited to take part in the discussions following the presentations.

Expected Goals

Ph.D students will familiarize themselves with methodological challenges arising from fieldwork research with a special focus on the MENA region. They will also learn about contemporary evolutions of Islamic movements and the way scholars go about conceptualizing these changes.

The workshop is organised by Alaa Badr (SPS), Théo Blanc (SPS), Inès Bolaños (SPS), Margot Dazey (SPS), Mathilde Zederman (RSCAS) and Olivier Roy (RSCAS), with the support of the *Max Weber Programme*, the *Middle East Directions Programme* and the *Department of Political and Social Sciences* of the European University Institute.