



Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren e.V.
ZMO Kirchweg 33 D-14129 Berlin

Call for Papers

Appropriations, Representations, Productions: Engagements with 'Nature' in the MENA region from the 19th century till today

Zentrum Moderner Orient, 25 – 26 January, 2018

Juliane Schumacher, Universität Potsdam
Katharina Lange, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin

In the MENA region, human engagements with and appropriations of 'nature' date back millennia. More recently, fundamental socio-environmental transformations under the auspices of capitalism and increasing economic entanglements since the 19th century, and successive waves of neoliberal reform since the 1980s have profoundly restructured rural and urban environments in the region (cf. Mikhail 2012; Davis/Burke 2011; see also Mitchell 2003; Gertel/Sippel 2014; Bush/Ayeb 2012; Elyachar 2007). But research on environmental transformations and their repercussions in the MENA is still scarce compared to other regions of the Global South. Although the ways in which social and economic activity, new technologies and forms of commodification are changing human relations to 'nature' have lately received considerable scholarly attention (cf. Bakker 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012; Castree 2003, 2008 a and b, 2010; Heynen et al. 2007; Swyngedouw 2004; 2015), general discussions on the conceptualisation of 'nature' and 'culture' only rarely give due attention to the MENA; a region which, as it is sometimes considered deeply 'cultural', could challenge notions of 'pristine nature' (cf. Almusa 2005).

This conference seeks to address this lacuna by investigating the ways in which appropriations of 'nature' in the MENA have evolved over the last two centuries. How have shifts in legal, political and economic regimes, technological innovations, but also new conceptual frameworks such as environmentalism, affected the ways in which 'nature' has been produced, represented, appropriated and used? Do we see a continuous development towards increasing enclosure, control, and commodification – or are there marked ruptures, resistant practices and antidromic tendencies as well? Is it justified to analytically separate the era of 'neoliberalist' productions of nature from earlier periods which are usually defined in terms of political history, or do we need new periodizations? And finally, how have 'nature', 'culture' and 'humans' been conceptualized by local and translocal actors in these processes?

We invite empirical studies on these questions from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, geography, history, area and Islamic studies. Please send a one-page abstract, including your professional details and contact address, to:

Katharina.lange@zmo.de

until December 15, 2016. Accepted speakers will be notified until January 31, 2017. Limited funding is available to support conference participation; please indicate in your abstract whether you will need financial support.