



The project leading to this application has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101027040.

DIPARTIMENTO DI
STORIA, ANTROPOLOGIA, RELIGIONI,
ARTE, SPETTACOLO



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



Sapienza University of Rome – SARAS Department, UIR MEdiNA Studies Program and UIR Center for Global Studies organize an international conference on

ImagiNation.s: Reconfigurations of National Imaginaries in the Cultural Production of Contemporary Maghreb

May 18th, 2023

Université Internationale de Rabat

Conference Concept Note

In the past few decades, local, national frameworks have been deemed obsolete in cultural studies and not apt to explain a world characterised by global networks of transiting people, goods, knowledge, arts and cultures across geographies. Stuart Hall, Jürgen Habermas, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Arjun Appadurai, and Homi Bhabha – among many other scholars – have argued the trending end of the idea of the nation-state as a hermeneutical framework capable of containing and refashioning the factual existence of an evolving post-national world.

Globalization fundamentally challenges the relevance of the nation-state as a continued political model. Attempting a summary of Appadurai's position, Partha Chatterjee argues that "the combination of electronic mediation and mass migration has created new diasporic public spheres that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state" (Chatterjee 1997). Such views on post-nationalism, however, have been widely



The project leading to this application has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101027040.

criticised for their unreasonable faith in the purportedly imminent end of the nation and for overlooking the downsides of globalization (Rockefeller 2013).

The nation as a paradigm of a new archaeology of knowledge is still useful to understand the conditions in which culture is produced and circulated. Margins, borders, and subaltern subjectivities do still exist, and institutions have never stopped attempting to promote peculiar policies and identities, even when working on a non-territorial basis. Moreover, producers and consumers of culture contribute to re-shape collective identities at large, though by means of individualized effort and taste. This happens unceasingly in culture, regardless of whether it is official or grassroots, mainstream or alternative. National imaginaries are constantly exchanged, shared, criticized, and consumed, and international, transnational, and national levels of production and consumption overlap without erasing each other.

Drawing inspiration from Friedrich Hegel, Slavoj Žižek, and Fredric Jameson, Ian Biddle (2007) argues that the nation can be seen as a *vanishing mediator*; namely, a nation-as-a-process which seems to be disappearing although it is still productive in mediating between old and newly emerged paradigms. Relying on the idea of the modern nation as a constructed narrative, Homi Bhabha advocates a "beyond position", according to which the world lives in an "age of unpreparedness" and therefore viewing the nation as an unexpected process of un/becoming, whose ultimate delivery comes into being through the imaginary (Bhabha 1991).

Far from Appadurai's claims about the "incapacity of the nation-state to tolerate diversity" (Appadurai 1996), the idea of what a nation is (or should be) has deeply changed through time, proving itself to be elastic and adaptive. The concepts of identification and recognition (Habermas 1991, Honneth 1992, Hall 1996) have increasingly worked their way into a renewed concept of the nation, thanks to social and political struggles aiming to obtain the recognition of minoritized subjectivities and collectivities within broader "imagined communities". As Stuart Hall (1996) writes, "identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common



The project leading to this application has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101027040.

origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal [...] identification is in the end, conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured, it does not obliterate difference”.

Discussing the post-colonial conditions of the rebirth of the nation in formerly colonised societies and cultures, Abdelkebir Khatibi argues that the newly instructed *Maghreb Pluriel* (Khatibi 1983) is based on the construction of a hybrid cultural space mediated through a *bilangue*: a “third tongue” (*une langue tierce*) that eventually helps build/reconstruct one's own cultural space as a hybrid position, imparted by the perspective of the Other.

What is the Maghreb today? How does it brand and “sell” itself in global cultural marketplaces? How are national identities and imaginaries dealt with in today's North Africa? Which image(s) of themselves do North African countries explicitly sponsor or implicitly convey through cultural and artistic productions? How has the idea of the nation in the Maghreb changed through time and by which mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, reconciliation, minoritization, racialization, etc.?

Here are but a few lines of thought to help potential participants in this conference to locate areas of discursivities, define dialogic configurations, and urge theoretical debate on the idea of the nation-on-trial, prescribing a re-imagined nation building as a process, tracking the conditions that help fabricate a patchwork design of everyday actions, street performances, visual representations, literature, and other artistic practices that constitute cultural production ingredients of the final act of the narrative of a nation.

- Deadline for submissions:

Chapter title and abstract: **January 30th, 2023**

Full chapters: **July 30th, 2023**



The project leading to this application has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101027040.

- Contributions should be submitted as a Word document to the two conference coordinators and future proceedings editors: Dr. Fernanda Fischione (fernanda.fischione@uniroma1.it) and Dr. Najib Mokhtari (najib.mokhtari@uir.ac.ma).

Chapter Submission Guidelines

- Authors are requested to submit their manuscript chapters with their personal details (title, full name, address, contact number, institutional affiliation, email ID, etc.) to Dr. Fernanda Fischione (fernanda.fischione@uniroma1.it) and Dr. Najib Mokhtari (najib.mokhtari@uir.ac.ma).
- Manuscripts must be original and unpublished, either as a whole or partially. Manuscript details should be provided in following order:
 - Title
 - Author/s' Name/s, affiliation, contact number and Email ID
 - Abstract (between 200-300 words)
 - A list of 10 keywords
 - Main text
 - References
 - Title, headings, sub-headings, and keywords should be concise and apt
- The length of manuscript should range between 5000-8000 words.
- Authors are requested to provide a short biography (max 150 words).
- Manuscripts should be typed in single MS Word file, Times New Roman font, 12 font size, in 1.5-line spaced paragraphs, following MLA/APA style.
- All the tables, maps and figures must be embedded in the manuscript. No separate files are accepted.
- Authors who are not native English speakers are requested to send proof-red manuscripts only.