

Call for workshop participation

In the framework of the programme *'Meet the expert'* of *Ugent doctoral school*, the [Centre for Arabic, Islamic and Middle East Studies](#) at Ugent invites doctoral and postdocotal students to the wokshop:

Academic research and artistic creation in Arab contexts: Reflecting on means of knowledge production in postcolonial settings

Friday 18 September – 9:30-11:30 am

Hybrid : Ghent University and Online

Responding to calls for further interdisciplinarity and cooperation within and beyond academic research, this workshop proposes to discuss the modes of collaboration between social-science scholars and artists. When conducting research on artists, or on artistic production, how do academics engage with artists as knowledge producers? More precisely, how can social scientists analytically engage with art works without reducing them to their socio-anthropological or historical context, and, on the other hand, how can artists appropriate social-sciences discourses without erasing the disciplinary and methodological constraints at their basis? Accordingly, what are the limits of such collaborations, and the opportunities they offer? These questions take a pressing tone in the Arab contexts, and in postcolonial settings more generally, where questions of imperialism, decolonial practices and power dynamics regarding knowledge production are strongly felt among arts and cultural actors, who also often engage with academic publications and in dialogue with researchers to approach these topics.

The workshop proposes to investigate the artists' role as knowledge producers and the imbrication of their work with academic research. It will tackle the following questions : What kind of knowledge are artists producing? How does this differ from academic knowledge, activist knowledge, or other forms of reflexive practice? Where should the analytical boundary be drawn? The focus will be on Arab contexts, in which the debates has been particularly vivid in light of recent debates about decolonisation. The discussion will be open to inputs by PhD-students studying in other contexts, yet, provided they work at the crossroad of academic and artistic research or actively engage in collaborations across the divide.

The workshop will be facilitated by Dr. Samuli Schielke and Dr. Leyla Dakhli, two renown researchers who have been engaging with these questions.

Speakers

Dr. Leyla Dakhli. In the framework of her ERC project DREAM (DRafting and Enacting the Revolutions in the Arab Mediterranean), Leyla Dakhli in collaboration with a team of researchers and artists has developed the 'maps of the dignity'. Starting from the observation that the revolutions of dignity were practical, sensory and emotional experiences rooted in a conception of what a dignified life is, Dakhli and her team proposed a way of representing these emotions and feelings by mapping them. The team curated an exhibition that uses various media to showcase different experiences and historical moments related to the 2011 revolutionary events and their aftermath. Based on research and documentation, the project provides sensitive maps enriched with sounds, images, objects, and projections that reflect life trajectories,

historical situations, or specific moments of the uprisings. Dakhli therefore reflects on how social scientists can resort to sensory mapping to make sense of the empirical data gathered through their research. She will elaborate on the ethical and methodological questions raised by this practice and how it can help us developing new tracks of academic and artistic knowledge production.

Dr. Samuli Schielke has developed strong expertise on anthropological methods to research and analyse creative practices. He has done so, together with Mokhtar Shehata, through an ethnography of writers and their milieus in Alexandria (Egypt). Schielke and Shehata offer a compelling research on the complex entanglement of writers' life in relation to structuring power relations, social habits, existential motivations, the circulation of texts and genres, class habitus, gender, and individual idiosyncrasies. Besides, with the filmmaker and curator Daniela Swarowsky, he set up the project In Search of Europe documenting in close collaboration with artists expectations related to migration in Senegal, Morocco and Egypt. These project have at their core a reflection about the imbrication of creative practice, the social positioning of artists and the power dynamics within the arts and cultural field. It is these methodological considerations that Samuli Schielke will offer in the organised roundtable.

Scientific committee

- Prof. Dr. Aymon Kreil, Department of Languages and Cultures, UGent;
- Prof. Dr. Elisabetta Costa, Department of Communication Studies, UAntwerpen;
- Dr. Catherine Willems, Design Anthropologist; Coordinator of the Research Cluster "Body Plural", KASK & Conservatorium / HOGENT; Research Associate, University of Liverpool Gait Analysis Laboratory.
- Prof. Dr. Sara Mondini, Department of Languages and Cultures, UGent;
- Dr. Sofie Verclyte, post-doctoral researcher at KASK & Conservatorium, the school of arts/HOGENT and the Human Rights Centre, UGent;
- Dr. Mina Ibrahim, Research Associate, Zentrum für Konfliktforschung, Philips-Universität Marburg;
- Ophélie Mercier, doctoral student, Department of Languages and Cultures, UGent.

Structure of the workshop

Following a brief introductory presentation by the two speakers, the participants will have the opportunity to share their own project and their ethical and theoretical considerations. They will have ten minutes to present their research focusing on how they engage with the questions raised above and will then receive feedback and comments by the two speakers.

Location

The workshop will be held with a hybrid format. It will be online and in Ghent.

On site, it will take place at Ghent University, Campus Boekentoren, , Room 3.30 (Camelot), Blandijnberg 2.

Interested in participating ?

We invite PhD and postdoctoral students who are engaging with these questions to send their propositions (title, abstract of no more than 300 words, and a short biographical note) by 4 September 2026 to the following addresses: aymon.kreil@ugent.be and ophelie.mercier@ugent.be

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.