

Call for Papers
Ecologies of Fragile Landscapes:
Water, Waste and Toxicity in the Middle East
Friday 24 February 2023 | London School of Economics

This interdisciplinary workshop will address the contemporary proliferation of ‘fragile landscapes’ – the escalation of infrastructural and ecological ruinations, the multiplying forms of ‘dispossession’, and the changing dynamics of ‘collective struggles’ – in the Middle East and beyond, including the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea Region, and the Caucasus. It aims to explore research dealing with the expansion of dispossession under the advance of anthropogenic stresses, waste, contaminations, degradation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and the exploitation of human and non-human species across diverse industries, territories and ecologies.

The Middle East is characterised by an extractivist geography, most notably as a global heartland for the supply and waste of fossil fuels, but it also contains landscapes and populations scarred by unrestrained mining, the trafficking of waste and radioactive materials, and the contamination of land and water resources. The exploitation and trafficking of indentured workers, debt-bonded sex workers, and the displacement of war-made refugees in the Middle East are becoming more intertwined with climate stresses, waste, pollution, and resource depletion as a general form of ‘dispossession’ of both landscapes and bodies. To analyse these diverse but inter-related processes of devaluation and degradation, the workshop invites scholars to advance a relational understanding of ‘dispossession’ and ‘diminishing capacities of human and non-human existence’ as unfolding and experienced in the Middle East.

Rethinking different forms of dispossession is compelling as it allows accounts of marginalized lives – whether eliminated in the past or struggling today in the face of serious, often existential, threats – to challenge mainstream narratives of economic growth and development in the Middle East. This rethinking also encourages us to transcend socio-political borders and boundaries in an era of anthropogenic stresses and mounting uncertainty, yet also to grasp their differentiated impact. In this pursuit, workshop participants will explore the spatialities, temporalities and ecologies of dispossession, as shaped by violent forms of human social organization, such as, extractive capitalism, conflict and de-development, authoritarian governance, and neo-colonialism.

The workshop responds to a call for an ethnographically rooted, critical materialist engagement with the contemporary production of fragile landscapes under the relationality of resource extraction, multiple pathways of waste and toxicity, coercive logics of economic growth and state-making, and ecological degradation. In what ways do ecological loss and capitalist accumulation coexist in (extra)territorial landscapes shaped by violent forms of social organisations? What are the forms of ‘separation,’ ‘dispossession,’ and ‘insurgent politics’ that are woven in the midst of anthropogenic stresses? What worldviews and ideologies animate individuals and groups in the face of environmental pollution? How are state and ‘statelessness’, regulation and deregulation, legality and illegality dialectically articulated with the loss of biological resources, economic growth, corporatocracy, and the retreat of democratic decision-making in the Middle East?

Submission Guidelines:

Please send your tentative original paper title, a 500-word abstract and updated bio by **Wednesday 30 November 2022** to Nadine Almanasfi n.almanasfi@lse.ac.uk. Please use the title of the workshop as the subject line of the email.

Authors of accepted papers will be notified by **Thursday 15 December 2022**. For those accepted, draft papers (max 6,000 words) have to be submitted no later than **Wednesday 15 February 2023**. Papers should not be previously published.

Proposed publication outlets (e.g. journal special issue) for the papers will be discussed with participants at the workshop.

If you require any further information or additional assistance, please contact Umut Kuruüzüm at u.kuruuzum@lse.ac.uk.

This workshop has been organised by Dr. Michael Mason, Director of the LSE Middle East Centre and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environment at LSE, and Dr. Umut Kuruüzüm, Visiting Researcher at the LSE Middle East Centre and Assistant Professor at Istanbul Technical University.