

**Archives and oral history in the past and present struggles:
Practices and Experiences from the Middle East and Southern Africa
Beirut: 10-13 January 2023
Venue: Ifpo and Institute for Palestine Studies**



Middle Eastern and South African scholars have for many years elaborated ideas and practices to recover, interpret and disseminate histories on their own terms. Cognisant of the problems with official archives, many scholars turned to oral history to produce new and counter-hegemonic histories, particularly by centering the experiences of subaltern and marginalised groups. This approach also engendered new practices of the co-production of histories with subaltern communities previously erased from dominant historiographies and excluded from the process of producing their own histories. Public history thus became a central focus of the work of scholars who sought to transcend the boundary between universities and communities/publics, and to bring community spaces more centrally into the making of histories. An equally significant dimension of this work has been the creation of new, independent archives that are integral to the co-production of histories and also draw on innumerable collections belonging to individuals, families, communities, movements and various emancipatory movements.

Over the past year scholars and practitioners in the inter-related fields of Public History, Oral History and Archives have convened to interrogate and reflect on their respective research and experiences in South Africa and the Middle East. Participants from Birzeit University, History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, Institute of Palestine Studies, IFAS, Ifpo (Beirut) and OMAM (Université libre de Bruxelles) have initiated a partnership that aims to share ideas and experiences from their varied contexts. At a very successful workshop held in Johannesburg in May 2022, it was agreed to strengthen the emerging partnership through further engagements, including a seminar series, workshops and joint research.

In our second workshop in Beirut from 10-13 January 2023, three activities acknowledge progress in building a scholar team around this important topic – politics of archiving. First, during two days, core group present paper dealing around two main issues. First, archiving implied institutions that through their regulations and positions, affected access, conservation, capacity to give voice or silence them. Also, a serie of papers will question the relation between archiving and set of institutions. Second, how researchers in a difficult environment, create an archive. Their positionality and ethical concerns affected how they kept, recorded, collected, offered or destroyed their material. These two broader issues show the three dimensions under consideration: documentation in the making, institutions and researchers. Apart from this important discussion,

the present meeting will help the core group expand their scope and interest. First, a group of PhD candidates will investigate how their fieldwork echoes these concerns, highlighting how research in the making is also a way to think about archiving. Second, scholars and activists will present archiving projects that put aside state institutions and focus on the local stage as a central place to develop a new polity. Egypt, Lebanon, Lesotho, Palestine, South Africa, Namibia, Iraq and Syria will consequently enter into dialogue.

This activity will not be possible without the support of the CNRS and its “Initiative for Africa” which aims to connect teams around the continent and allow scholars from the Global South to discuss and bring French and European institutions into the debate.

Program

Day one: 10 January 2023

Venue: Ifpo

Damascus Road

9h-9h30: Opening and introduction of the conference

9h30-11h30 : Panel 1

Chair: Kasonde Thomas Mukonde; **Discussant:** Candice Raymond

Panellists:

Abaher El-Sakka : The social uses of the Palestinian collective memory

Ali Hlongwane : Forced Removals in the South African Memory Landscape: the case of Mkhizeville in Mpumalanga

Matthieu Rey : Conditions for New Syrian History : When revolution creates opportunities and challenges.

Gabriele Mohale: Diverse and Inclusive Archives: Responsibilities & Potentials

11h30-11h45 : Coffee Break

11h45-13h45 : Panel 2

Chair : Rita Khalaf; **Discussant:** Hoda ElSadda

Panellists:

Tsepho Moloi : Documenting underground work in Alexandra and Tembisa Townships: strengths and limitations of oral history and liberation archives

Chaymaa Hassabo: Activists voices through the revolution: oral history, ethics and positionality

Perla Issa: Reflections on conducting fieldwork in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon

13h45-14h45: Lunch **Break**

14h45-16h45: Panel 3

Chair: Jonathan Hassine, **Discussant :** Abaher El-Sakka

Hoda ElSadda: Precarious Archives and the Ethics of Representation

Mina Ibrahim : “Archiving the Untold: Everyday Practices of Forgetting and Hiding”

Noor Nieftagodien and Ali Hlongwane : Soweto History & Archives Project

Day 2: 11 January 2023

Venue: Ifpo

Damascus Road

10h-12h : Panel 4

Chair : Matseliso Motsoane, **Discussant :** Gabriele Mohale

Panellists:

Omar Jabary Salamanca: Censorship and Solidarity. Anticolonial Archival Practices in Times of the IHRA

Candice Raymond : "The Weapon of Knowledge". The PLO Research Center and the Palestinian Revolution (1965-1983)

Noor Nieftagodien: Memories of Struggle, Struggling with Narratives of Liberation [Archiving in times of political turmoil: the historical production of COSAS in revolution and in power]

12h-13h : Lunch Break

13h-15h : Panel 5

Chair : Asher Gamedze; **Discussant :** Tshepo Moloi – Hanan Sabea

Mahmoud Zaydan “Nakba Archive”

Al-Jana cultural organization

Palestinian Oral History Archive (POHA)

Palestinian Cultural Club (Oral history)

Mohammed Ibrahim (Independent Archivist)

15h-15h30 : Coffee Break

15h30 - 17h30: Roundtable animated by Hoda ElSadda, Ali Hlongwane and Matthieu Rey

Day 3: 12 January 2023

Venue : Institute for Palestine Studies

Anis Nsoli Street, Verdun

Doctoral Workshop

9h30-11h30: Panel 1

Chair: Rola Sirhan ; **Discussant:** Perla Issa

Fanny Arnulf: The creation of archives in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon: ethical and methodological challenges

Kasonde Thomas Mukonde: Recovering Artistic Voices from the Struggle Against Apartheid: The Black Theatre Movement in South Africa, 1977 – 1997

11h30-11h45: Coffee Break

11h45-13h45: Panel 2

Chair : Yahia Hakoum ; **Discussant :** Mina Ibrahim

Rita Khalaf: Urban and Architectural inventory project in Mosul

Rola Sirhan: Nakba, Media and Memory: The Counter Narrative as a Prospective Realm

Matseliso Motsoane : Photographic Legacies, Archival Erasure and Reconfiguring History

13h45-14h45 : Lunch Break

14h45-16h45: Panel 3:

Chair: Fanny Arnulf; **Discussant:** Ali Hlongwane

Yahia Hakoum: Oral testimony against political erasure

Asher Gamedze: Minoritarian tendencies and living archives

Jonathan Hassine: “Who Did You See?” Oral Sources and the History of the Lebanese Military during the Civil War

16h45-17h: Coffee Break

17h-17h30: Closing session by Chaymaa Hassabo and Noor Nieftagodien

Day 4: 13 January 2023

Field visit to the Shatilla cemeteries and museum

Participants

Fanny Arnulf is a PhD student at the Université libre de Bruxelles. She is affiliated to OMAM and AmericaS. Trained at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art Dramatique de Montpellier(ENSAD), she participated in numerous artistic productions as an actor before starting a PhD in political science in 2019, attached to CEVIPOL. Her research focuses on the Middle East and Latin America and examines the link between art and resistance in violented and marginalized spaces. Fanny is currently writing a thesis on theatre as a tool of resistance in the favelas in Brazil and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Her research questions the capacity of theatre to act as a tool for politicization, militant engagement, and social emancipation in marginalized spaces.

Hoda Elsadda is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University, a feminist and an activist for women's rights. She co-founded in 1995 the Women and Memory Forum, a research organization that focuses on the production and dissemination of alternative knowledges on women and gender studies (www.wmf.org.eg). She previously held a Chair in the Study of the Contemporary Arab World at Manchester University and was Co-Director of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World in the UK. She is currently working on a project to establish a Gender Oral History Archive for the Arab World at the American University of Beirut in cooperation with the Arab Council for Social Sciences. Her research interests are in the areas of gender studies, comparative literature and oral history. She is author of *Gender, Nation and the Arabic Novel: Egypt: 1892-2008* (Edinburgh UP and Syracuse UP, 2012); and co-editor of *Oral History in Times of Change: Gender, Documentation and the Making of Archives* (Cairo Papers, 35:1, 2018).

Abaher ElSakka is an associate Professor, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Birzeit University, President, Palestinian Sociology Association. holder of a PhD in Sociology from the University of Nantes – France. He worked as a lecturer at the University of Nantes from 1998-2006, and a visiting professor at several French and Belgian universities from 2009-2022. He has authored many scientific studies and articles in the fields of socio-artistic expressions, social movements, identity, memory, nationalities, urban studies, social policies, social sciences and their history. He is currently working on writing the social history of Gaza City.

Asher Gamedze is a cultural worker currently based in Cape Town and am currently a fellow in the History Workshop at Wits University working on a PhD on the relationship between study and struggle in the history of the Yu Chi Chan Club and the National Liberation Front. I play music and am interested and involved in the production of culture more broadly, as well as histories and unfolding presents of revolutionary thought and practice, the potentialities and possible openings of the black radical tradition, and many other things.

Yahia Hakoum is a doctoral student at Césor (EHESS). He is conducting a PhD on “The self-organization of the Syrian Revolution in the Eastern Ghouta”.

Chaymaa Hassabo is a member of the ERC “The Subsequent Lives of Arab Revolutionaries” hosted by CEPED (IRD) and a research associate at the French Institute of the Near East (Lebanon). She holds her PhD in political science on the transformations of the Mubarak authoritarian regime during the 2002-2010 period. Her work focused on the trajectories of political activists, revolutionary processes, and transformations within authoritarian regimes. Currently, she is investigating the afterlives of Egyptian revolutionaries, emotional legacies and networks of friendships. Her publications include: « Les dénouements des situations révolutionnaires. Repenser ensemble les révolutions et les changements de régime à partir des cas de la Tunisie et de l’Egypte (2010-2014) », with Choukri Hmed, dans *Mondes arabes. Revues des sciences sociales du politique*, 2022, no.1, p.97-117; “Coalitions for Change: Bridging the ideological and generational divides in the Revolution », *Mediterranean Politics*, 2019, no.4, p.491-511; “Together, but divided: A Study of the Different Trajectories of a Generation of Egyptian Political Activists (from 2005 to the Revolution)”, in Mark Ayyash and Ratiba Hadj-Moussa (eds.), *Generations and Protests: Legacies and Emergences in MENA and the Mediterranean*, Leiden, Brill, 2017.

Jonathan Hassine is a PhD candidate in History at Sorbonne University. His thesis examines the role of the Lebanese army during the civil war (1975-1990), with a special focus on combat personnel and their trajectories.

Ali Hlongwane is currently a researcher in the History Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand. Hlongwane is the author of two biographies of PAC figures, namely *The Lion of Azania: a biography* and *We Are Going Home Armed or Unarmed: A Biography of John Nyati Pokela (1921 – 1985)* both by Skotaville Publishing, (2021). His earlier co-authored publication is *Public History and Culture in South Africa: Memorialisation and Liberation Heritage Sites in Johannesburg and the Township Space* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Hlongwane’s recent co-edited book is *Public History, Heritage and Culture in South Africa: The Struggle Continues*, (Skotaville Publishing, 2021).

Mina Ibrahim is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Marburg and an affiliate researcher at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin. He is also the founder of SARD for History and Social Research (Shubra’s Archive) and the project manager of the MENA Prison Forum (MPF). His first book *Identity, Marginalisation, Victimhood, and Activism in Egypt: Misfits in the Coptic Christian Community* has just been published with Palgrave Macmillan.

Perla Issa is a researcher at the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) in Beirut. She holds a PhD in Politics from Exeter University, an MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University, a second MA in Mechanical Engineering from MIT, and a Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering from McGill University. She is the author of “The Endurance of Palestinian Political Factions: An Everyday perspective from Nahr el-Bared camp” co-published by the University of California Press and the Institute for Palestine Studies in 2021. Perla Issa also runs research trainings and creative writing workshops in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon which culminated in the publication of two collections of short stories in the Arabic language, “11: Hikāyāt min al-lujū’ al-filastīnī” (11: Stories from the Palestinian Exile - currently being translated to English) published by IPS in 2017 and “*Hub fī al-mukhayyam*” (Love in the camp) published by IPS in 2019. Additionally, she co-Directed and co-Produced a six-part independent documentary film series “Chronicles of Refugee” that looks at the global Palestinian refugee experience since 1948.

Hicham Kayed is a Film Maker & Deputy General Coordinator at AL-JANA Center. Hicham works at the grass-roots level and has a wide experience in working with marginalized communities. Over the years, Hicham has built a strong experience in managing and coordinating development projects using non-traditional techniques.

Rita Khalaf is an Iraqi-French architect, graduated in 2020 from the *ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine*. Since 2021, she has held a doctoral contract from the French Ministry of Culture, at the EVCAU laboratory of the *ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine* and the *Université de Paris-Cité*. Her thesis relates to the city of Mosul and its "modern" urban and architectural heritage. She is also affiliated to the department of contemporary studies at the *Institut Français du Proche-Orient* in Iraq.

Gabriele Mohale is Acting Head, Historical Papers Research Archive & Wits Digitisation Centre, University of the Witwatersrand. Originally trained as a typesetter in Berlin, she later studying Printing Technologies in Leipzig, and subsequently worked in that field for several years. Coming to South Africa in 1991, she later completed a BA (Information Science) at the University of South Africa, and a MA (Heritage Studies) at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2009. Working at the Historical Papers Research Archive since 2007 as an archivist and since 2017 Acting Head, she was part of various archival and related digitisation projects. In recent years, she was also involved and became increasingly instrumental in accentuating the role and status of archives in civil society, in partnership with academic departments and civil society archives and organisations. Since 2020, she serves as a Bureau member of the Section on University and Research Institution Archives (SUV), of the International Council on Archives (ICA).

Tshepo Moloi is a senior lecturer in the department of History at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He obtained his MA and PhD in History from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Moloi is a member of the Wits History Workshop, the co-editor of *Guerrilla Radios in Southern Africa: Broadcasters, Technology, Propaganda Wars and the Armed Struggle* (2020), and the sole author of *Place of Thorns: Black Political Protest in Kroonstad since 1976* (2015). He has also contributed chapters in the various volumes of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, edited by the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET). Moloi is also the editor of the *New Contree* journal and president of the Southern African History Society. His research interests include histories of the liberation struggle in South Africa, with a particular focus on youth and student politics, and underground work. Moloi has worked on several public history projects, including *Entering Tembisa: An oral history and photographic exploration of the community* and *Orlando West Soweto: An Illustrated History*. His current public history project is on the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), together with Noor Nieftagodien.

Matseliso Motsoane is a doctoral candidate in history, at the Wits History Workshop. Her PhD research is on the life and archive of Mosotho photographer Mohloua Ramakatane. Her research interests include the history of photography in Africa, archives and how the lives of these collections and their authors converge with historical developments in the southern African region. She is interested in the ways photographic and other kinds of archives can be used in conjunction with oral history to write life histories and reconfigure collective memories. Matseliso also writes about post-coloniality, African modernity and the politics of archives in the context of both institutional and private custodianship.

Kasonde Mukonde is a Doctoral Candidate in History with the History Workshop and Department of History at Wits University. His Master's work that focused on the role of reading in the making of student political activists in Soweto during the 1970s, will be published as a journal article in 2023. Kasonde has also done research on guerrilla radio. His doctoral research focuses on Black Theatre as an aspect of popular culture in South African townships from the 1970s to the year 2000. Kasonde obtained his undergraduate degree in history from Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

Noor Nieftagodien is the South African Research Chair in Local Histories, Present Realities and is the Head of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he also lectures in the Department of History. He is the co-author, with Phil Bonner, of books on the history of Alexandra, Ekurhuleni and Kathorus, and has published books on the history of Orlando West and the Soweto uprising, as well as co-edited books on the history of the ANC and student movements. Nieftagodien has published journal articles and book chapters on aspects of popular insurgent struggles, public history, youth politics and local history. He is currently working with Tshepo Moloi on the history of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). With David Johnson and Lucien van der Walt he recently completed an edited book on the history of the Industrial and Commerical Workers Union (ICU).

Candice Raymond is currently a researcher at the Institut français du Proche-Orient (Ifpo, Beirut). She obtained her PhD in history with a dissertation on scholarly practices of history and historiographical debates in Lebanon from the late 1960s onwards. Her current research is concerned with knowledge institutions, actors and practices in civil war contexts, with a focus on the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). Her research topics cover the social and cultural history of contemporary civil wars, memory conflicts and postwar reconciliation, archival practices, periodicals and publication practices, the history of social sciences and knowledge production, the social history of the intellectuals and of intellectuals commitments, the transnational history of Beirut as a cultural capital. Her publications include: C. Raymond, M. Catusse, S. Hanafi (eds.), *Un Miroir libanais des sciences sociales. Acteurs, pratiques et disciplines* (Diacritiques ed., 2021); C. Jungen, C. Raymond (eds.), *Pratiques d'archives. Fabriques, modelages, manipulations*, thematic issue n°36, *Ateliers d'anthropologie* (2012), C. Raymond, "Committed Knowledge. Autonomy and Politicization of Research Centers and Researchers in Wartime Lebanon (1975-90)", in R. Jacquemond, F. Lang (dir.), *Culture and Crisis in the Arab World: Art, Practice and Production in Spaces of Conflict* (I.B. Tauris, 2019).

Matthieu Rey is the director of the contemporary studies department at the French institute for Near East (Beirut) and researcher associate at the Wits History Workers. He holds a PhD on political history of Iraq and Syria and conducted long fieldwork in the Middle East and Southern Africa. He published on parliamentary system in Iraq and Syria and modern history of the Middle East. He is currently pursuing research on archives, oral history and local communities in the Middle East.

Omar Jabary Salamanca is an FNRS Research Fellow and co-director of the Observatoire du Mondes Arabes et Musulmans at the Maison des Sciences Humaines, Université libre de Bruxelles.

Hanan Sabea's interests in anthropology started in Egypt, where she got my BA and MA at The American University in Cairo (AUC) working on issues related to development, resettlement of

populations, and political economy of developing countries. After nine years of working in research and development projects in Egypt, she shifted interest to Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily East and southern Africa where she conducted research in Tanzania on questions related to land, labor and the making of histories. She is currently associated professor at AUC and editor in chief of the Cairo Papers in Social Sciences.

Rola Sirhan is a PhD student at Birzeit University. She is a journalist and a poet. She co-founded in 2013 Al-Hadath Newspaper, an independent Palestinian paper (www.alhadath.ps) She is the editor-in-chief. Her interests revolve around the sociology of media, communication, and media policies and their impact on the formation of nationalism and memory, as well as their impact on identity and culture.

Mahmoud Zeidan is a Palestinian refugee born in Ein el Helweih camp- Lebanon. He studied English literature at the Lebanese university and got his MA in Human Rights and Democratization from the University of Malta. He is a specialist in education and human rights and has developed extensive experience in protection and oral history with Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Mahmoud has co-founded with Diana Allan the 'Nakba Archive', and 'Lens on Lebanon' grassroots documentary initiative formed during the Israeli war on Lebanon of 2006.

JANA Center is an ngo that works with refugee communities in Lebanon, engaging them in documenting their community history & culture. Its active memory , & active learning & creative expression programs engages youth & children in documenting & learning from community history & culture; & in producing pro-active learning resources & cultural manifestations . JANA has an active collaboration with District Six Museum in Cape Town , SA. JANA oral history archive : <https://libraries.aub.edu.lb/poha/>

