

Proposition de numéro thématique

« Situations de travail et mobilisations ouvrières en Méditerranée »

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Argumentaire

The 2011 Arab revolutions briefly brought back to the fore the « social issue » revealing – at the same time – the increasing job insecurity in the Arab countries. Such a « discovery » of an « Arab world moving again » gave the impression, to some observers, that everything came up from the mobilisations of the winter 2010-2011. Well-informed people will yet recall that the 2000s were years of important labour mobilisations in Tunisia, Morocco, as well as in Egypt¹. Although Lebanon and Jordan were much less affected by the wave of popular uprisings, they still witnessed large mobilisations in different sectors². Apart from Tunisia³, these mobilisations shared a common feature: the official labour federations were not part of it. One finds the same phenomenon of union weakening across the Mediterranean, from Spain to Turkey, to Greece⁴ and Italy⁵. The renewal of forms of protest, more or less directly related to labour, is now a trans Mediterranean observation.

In recent decades, the wage labour nexus prevailing throughout the 20th century has everywhere been weakened, and so have the social and legal protections it entailed. On the one hand, the share of large industry has been reduced to the benefit of the service sector, including personal services, on the other hand, the individualisation of tasks and the development of outsourcing processes under various forms, going as far as an extreme personalisation of the employment relationships, have made it possible to circumvent the constraints associated with the norm of wage labour⁶. The financialization of the world economy has thus led to a double movement of accelerated commodification of human relations, and of increased pressure on a workforce more and more confined to service functions (transport and distribution of consumer goods, intellectual and cultural activities, social and charitable volunteerism, services of all kinds), and to increasingly fragmented tasks⁷. As such, the so-called “atypical” forms of labour can no longer be understood as perverse and derogatory effects of capitalist development, for in the “South” as well as in the “North” the wage earner gradually leaves room for its contemporary anathema: the *homo instabilis*⁸. Thus, the analysis of work situations and conflicts, whether open or discreet, that can be observed around the Mediterranean, allow us to question the overall contemporary transformations witnessed by labour⁹.

Of course, these developments take different forms, more or less brutal, depending on the context. The importance of migrant labour (especially in agriculture and construction), of women and child labour¹⁰, the absence of legal regulation, the weight of patron-client relations, are more common in the South¹¹. However, widening the horizon to the Mediterranean area shows that the same dynamics exist across countries and sectors. Linkages seem to emerge among the marginalisation of agriculture and small-scale farmers and the increasing fragmentation and precariousness of employment in the modern sectors of production of goods and services.

Parallel to these changes in work situations, we can observe a reshaping of the forms of resistance and protest, turned not only against working conditions¹² but also against indirect forms of submission to speculative and financial logic (as it is the case for mobilisations on housing crisis in Spain)¹³. Although unions continue to play a role in certain protests, especially in the public sector or in some large corporations, a new type of *ad hoc* or sectorial movements, sometimes violent or desperate, has emerged, but also new forms of cooperation or mutual assistance, allowing workers to organize or to deal with harsh situations¹⁴.

This issue of *Confluences Méditerranée* will be devoted to this topic, which is too rarely addressed, both in scientific literature and in the more generalist publications, namely work and labour mobilizations in the Mediterranean countries. In particular, it aims at analysing the intertwined relations among labour transformations and emerging forms of resistance at work. Hence, papers should focus on identifying the organic relationships that link work situations and labour protests, understanding the articulations between relations of dependency, submission and loyalty, and forms of resistance, whether spectacular or more discreet, durable or transitory, committed to radical change or rather aiming at the renegotiation of power relations. Papers will either favour one of these two dimensions (work situations or mobilizations), or on the contrary, through a particular case, highlight their articulation. The emphasis will be put on case studies, avoiding too long theoretical developments, while relying on a solid framework based on clearly identified references.

Proposals are expected from researchers as well as from actors, union or NGOs activists involved in social movements, and will address case studies from Northern as well as Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. The confrontation of national situations, from Italy to Tunisia, to Egypt, Greece, or Turkey, should allow to highlight both the dynamics at stake governing labour-capital relations, in the North as in the South, and the originality of the forms of resistance here and there.

Calendar

Proposals (in French, English, Italian or Arabic) should be sent before Jan 31, 2019 to elonguensee@yahoo.fr, amin.allal@gmail.com, scala.miche@gmail.com.

The first version of the paper will be expected before the end of June, and the final version (after expertise), with an abstract in French and English, at the end of august, for a publication in late September.

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- ²Bou Khater Léa (2015), « Public Sector Mobilization in Lebanon: Structures and Strategies of Success », *The Legal Agenda*, Beirut. On line: <http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=3075>. Fioroni C. (2015), « From the Everyday to Contentious Collective Actions: The Protests of the Employees of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in 2011 », *Workers of the World. International Journal on Strikes and Social Conflict*, Vol. 7, n. 1.
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- ⁹Scala M. (2018), « Aux marges du salariat ? Travailler et contester en situation de dépendance : du travail migrant à la grande distribution (Liban) », Note conceptuelle de présentation du séminaire de l'Ifpo, 2017-18 (<http://www.ifporient.org/aux-marges-du-salariat/>).
- ¹⁰Agosta S., Scala M. (2018), « Migrazione forzata, servitù per debito, lavoro minorile : fragole libanesi, famiglie siriane », *Lavoro libero e non libero, Seminario annuale della società italiana di storia del lavoro*, Turin, 20-22 Septembre.
- ¹¹Scala M., (2015), « Clientélisme et contestation : l'exemple de la mobilisation des travailleurs de Spinneys au Liban », *Confluences Méditerranée*, n. 92.
- ¹²Allal A., Catusse M., Emperador Badimon M. (2018), *Quand l'industrie proteste. Fondements moraux des (in)soumissions ouvrières*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes.
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