

The Fourth Annual Social Science Conference

The Environment and Social Transformation

Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco

May 19, 20 and 21, 2017

With this fourth annual social science conference organized by Al Akhawayn University, we aim to expand on concerns of the Social Sciences in Morocco and elsewhere regarding economic development, equity and the rights and obligations of citizens, by including environmental issues. The role of life-sustaining biological processes and of natural resources in the economy is an increasingly important field of study, and this conference aims at exploring these issues.

Given the importance of natural resources to the livelihood of millions of people and the sensitivity of the environment to human activities, the topic has increasingly taken a social and political dimension. On the one hand, a number of local and small scale social movements started to appear as a consequence of diminishing and unequal access to natural resources. On the other hand, several environmental non-governmental organizations and government agencies now dedicate themselves to regulating access to and use of environmental resources.

While, concomitantly, there is a growing body of research which attempts to integrate the environment into social science theory in such fields as history, anthropology and geography, there is as yet no scientific consensus, meaning that the environment remains a fruitful field of inquiry with many progressive research agendas possible and indeed desirable.

Morocco and other African and Middle Eastern states have been vulnerable to vagaries of the climate for millennia, with droughts historically capable of causing famine and wet periods altering the balance of power between regions. Thus far, there have been studies on the role of the environment in the construction of social realities and power hierarchies. In the Fourth annual Social Science conference on the environment and social transformation, we would like to invite scholars to debate these pertinent issues as they relate to Morocco, the Middle East and Africa. The conference is interdisciplinary in perspective and we therefore extend the invitation to scholars from all social science disciplines to present on social, economic and political issues that take the interaction of the environment, societies and states as the focal point of their research agenda.

We encourage participants to propose innovative and understudied topics. New research on issues of gender and the environment is needed. For instance, women shoulder a disproportional responsibility for domestic resources and perform much of the farm work, and although these issues have been addressed by gender scholars, the environmental aspect of gender remains understudied. Also, one of the main objectives of this conference is to encourage narratives sensitive to the African contexts and that use more sophisticated methodologies to advance our understanding of the topic.

Suggested topics for the conference include but are not limited to:

- What role can governments play in securing the wellbeing of citizens within local environmental constraints and in the face of changing climates?
- How can state and society work together and deal with the negative aspects of climate change?
- What relationships exist between local social movements and constrained access to resources?
- To what extent does the management of the environment contribute to further social inequality and marginalization?
- How do neoliberal economic policies affect the environment? In particular, what lessons can we learn from the recent free trade negotiations (TPP, TTIP)?
- Is the sustainable management of the environment and resources compatible with current models of economic growth?
- What is the responsibility of corporations in creating and solving environmental problems?
- What are the challenges of implementing international environmental agreements like the 2015 Paris Agreement and the more recent developments in Marrakech in 2016?
- How do national and international policies address the relationship between gender and environmental degradation?
- How do architects and planners respond to environmental challenges?

Conference presentations can be delivered in Arabic, French or English.

We encourage scholars to present either panels or papers. Panels should tackle the same issue from different disciplinary perspectives, whereas papers will be placed in multi-disciplinary panels. Doctoral and other graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit proposals. Abstracts should indicate the topic, the research question, the hypothesis and the methodology the paper plans to engage in, and should not be more than 350 words long. Although co-authored papers will be accepted, the number of co-authors will be limited to two and only one presenter will be entitled to present the paper at the conference.

On Friday May 19, one day before the conference proper, Al Akhawayn University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences will offer a series of workshops on research methods and publication strategies aimed at graduate students. The registration fee for a single one-day workshop is 300 MAD.

Abstracts should be sent to the scientific Committee for review by February 1st, 2017. Acceptance notices will be sent by March 1st, 2017. The all-inclusive (shared room and meals) registration fee for the conference is: 500 MAD per person, 300 MAD for students, for two nights. To submit an abstract or register for the graduate workshops, please access our website at (<http://www.aui.ma/en/ssri/upcoming-events.html>) and fill out the form which you can then send to ssc2017@ui.ma

Limited funds for international travel will be available.