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**Nature and Political Order(s): Exploring environmental politics, climate futures, and decarbonization in the Middle East**

Climate change and environmental politics became key issues in international politics due to pressure from various actors, such as social movements, civil society activists and indigenous people. It is, therefore, of little surprise that justice constitutes a central reference both in academic debates about climate politics and at different levels of global governance in which environmental and climate regimes are justified based on specific interpretations of justice. However, political dynamics highlight that neither ideal theories of justice based on Western scholarship nor claims to just solutions in global governance relate to the social realities of actors and communities severely affected by environmental damage and climate change. Two major problems that come to the fore can be summarized as “justice for whom” and “justice on which ontological and epistemological grounds”? Much of the relevant academic contributions remain within a state-centric ontology, which neglects diverse ways of knowing, and ignores competing perspectives by non-state actors. Further, a narrow focus on the popularity of climate and environmental activism in the global North has resulted in the sidelining of a longer lineage of Southern activism against environmental exploitation and ‘green colonialism’. Concurrently, dominant notions of justice, for example in global climate governance, are based on Western and capitalist ontologies and epistemologies, which assume human-nature binaries in ways that justify existing modes of production, resource extraction and authoritarian political orders. Hence, treating nature and climate change simply as further ‘policy fields’ and governance issues is highly problematic in analytical and normative terms.

Against this background, the Middle East and North Africa is not only a region that is highly affected by climate change and environmental damage, but also a crucial mobilization space in which assumptions about energy transition, resource exploitation and contesting notions of just futures shape political struggles. These dynamics shape interventions, imaginations, and political relations in and between the local, regional and global scale. This workshop seeks to advance theoretical debates in IR, IPE and environmental and climate research by focusing on the politics in the region. We seek to explore:

* How is nature related to the political economy in the region? How do international calls for decarbonization underpin authoritarian governance?
* How do notions of climate justice in global climate governance support or undermine local and regional activism for justice?
* How does knowledge production on climate and environmental issues reproduce colonial narratives, power structures and existing regional and global order(s)?
* Does environmental and climate activism constitute an opportunity to achieve alternative visions of order?
* How does energy transition in the region change existing conflicts and spark new struggles?

To this end, the workshop brings together scholars focusing on some of these diverse implications of nature, environmental politics and climate change in and for the Middle East. The aim is to discuss recent dynamics in the region, to critically reflect on existing assumptions and to better understand nature as a constitutive factor in regional and global politics.