

Sorbonne - CEFREPA Diwan Online Session
March 16, 2021 / 6pm Abu Dhabi
(10am US Eastern time, 5pm Kuwait time, 3pm Paris time)

A Discussion of Kanna, Le Renard & Vora's
Beyond Exception: New Interpretations of the Arabian Peninsula
with Amélie Le Renard, Neha Vora
and discussants Hélène Thiollet and Bader Al Saif



Ahmed Kanna, Amélie Le Renard and Neha Vora published in 2020 their three-voice volume *Beyond Exception*, arguing that over the nearly two decades that they have each been conducting fieldwork in the Arabian Peninsula, they have regularly encountered exoticizing and exceptionalist discourses about the region and its people, political systems, and prevalent cultural practices. These persistent encounters became the springboard for their book, a reflection on conducting fieldwork within a "field" that is marked by such representations. The three authors focus on deconstructing the exceptionalist representations that circulate about the Arabian Peninsula. They analyze what exceptionalism does, how it is used by various people, and

how it helps shape power relations in the societies they study. They propose ways that this analysis of exceptionalism provides tools for rethinking the concepts that have become commonplace, structuring narratives and analytical frameworks within fieldwork in and on the Arabian Peninsula. They ask: What would not only Middle East studies, but studies of postcolonial societies and global capitalism in other parts of the world look like if the Arabian Peninsula was central rather than peripheral or exceptional to ongoing sociohistorical processes and representational practices? The authors explore how the exceptionalizing discourses that permeate Arabian Peninsula studies spring from colonialist discourses still operative in anthropology and sociology more generally, and suggest that de-exceptionalizing the region within their disciplines can offer opportunities for decolonized knowledge production.

Dr. Amélie Le Renard is chargée de recherches (permanent researcher) at CNRS Paris in sociology, associated with EHESS.

Dr. Neha Vora is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Lafayette College, PA.

Dr. Hélène Thiollet (discussant) is chargée de recherches (permanent researcher) at CNRS Paris affiliated with Sciences-Po Paris.

Dr. Bader Al Saif (discussant) is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Gulf History at University of Kuwait.

registration link for the webinar

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RFR_pOIPRZ-WH1cR2zB