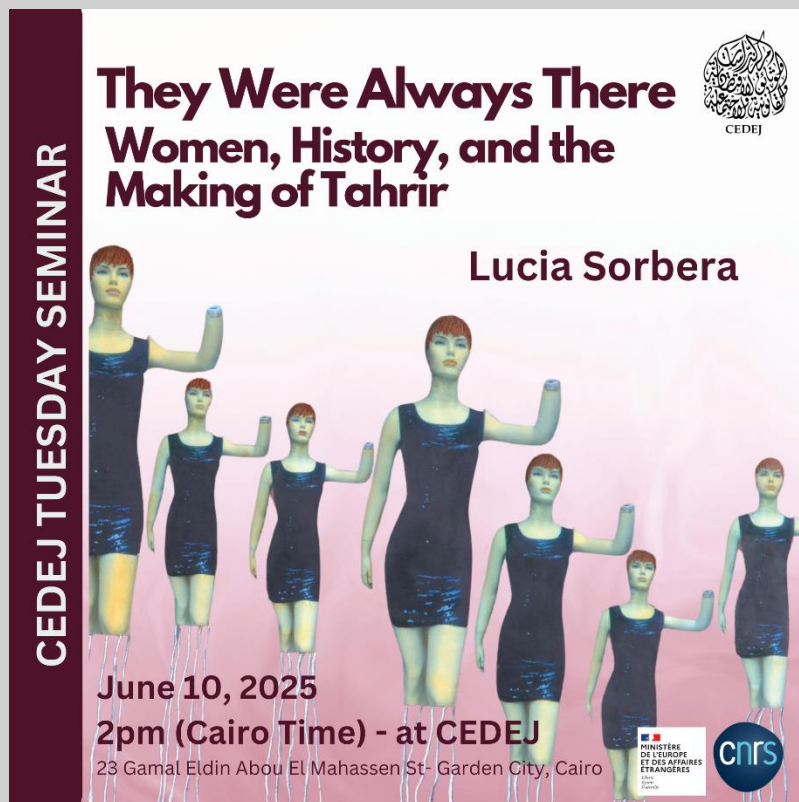


**CEDEJ Tuesday Seminar**  
**They Were Always There: Women, History, and the Making of  
Tahrir**

On June 10, 2025, at 2pm  
at CEDEJ

23 Gamal Eldin Abou ElMahassen St., Garden City - Cairo



Since the late 1960s, feminist historiography has become one of the most innovative and transformative fields within Middle East Studies. Its contributions go beyond recovering women's voices from historical silence; by introducing gender as a critical category of analysis, it has reshaped understandings of power and generated a paradigm shift in the discipline. In the Egyptian context, the growth of feminist historical inquiry has sparked vital debates on the politics of knowledge production, including questions of researcher positionality, access to sources, and the creation of archives that document women's political and intellectual contributions.

This paper draws on over two decades of research into the history of feminism in Egypt, engaging with women's intellectual production, archival material, and oral histories. My book, *Biography of a Revolution*, situates the 2011 Egyptian Revolution within a *longue durée* perspective, placing women's activism at the center of the analysis. Rather than viewing the revolution and Tahrir Square as spaces that enabled women's participation, I argue they are the outcomes of sustained feminist labor across generations.

By reframing categories such as temporality, memory, and subjectivity through a feminist lens, I propose an alternative historiographical approach—one in which

women are not peripheral actors but central subjects of revolutionary history. Drawing on Italian, Egyptian, and Aboriginal Australian feminist traditions, I challenge linear notions of time and individual-centered narratives, reimagining the history of feminism in Egypt as both revolutionary and collective biography.

**Lucia Sorbera** is Associate Professor and Chair of Discipline of Arabic Language and Cultures at the University of Sydney. She studies the colonial and post-colonial history of the Arab World and Africa, decolonial and Indigenous epistemologies, with a focus on women and gender. She is the author of *Biography of a Revolution. The Feminist Roots of Human Rights in Egypt*, published by University of California Press. She has been awarded numerous competitive and prestigious fellowships for her research, including the Visiting Professorship at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Bologna University (2023); Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the CUNY Graduate Center (2022); the Fernand Braudel Senior Research Fellowship at the European University Institute, Florence (2021), and the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Visiting Fellow in the Laureate Program in International History at the University of Sydney (2017).

Dr. Sorbera combines her academic activity with public engagement, especially with the publishing industry, where she serves on several editorial boards, such as the book series on Women and Gender History published by the Italian Society of Women Historians and Viella, the *Journal of Middle East Women Studies*, *ArabLit*, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, and the *Journal Protest*. She regularly participates as an invited speaker at literary and film festivals, and from 2016 to 2023 she served in the editorial committee of the Torino Book Fair, where she co-curated the section Arab Souls, on Arabic Literature and Cultures.