*Fii* uses across Arabic varieties

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The particle في *fii (and*  ب*bi*- its allomorph) is universally attested across Arabic varieties. Alternative uses of this element have been identified in single dialects. For instance in the Levantine dialects *fii* is used in existential constructions (Jarad, 2015) or as a modal (Cowell, 1964); whereas in the North African region *fii* is an ingredient of progressive constructions (Brahim, 2007).

The existing literature gives us a picture of the multifunctionality of *fii* in Arabic but it does not provide any indication about the geographical distribution of these usages, nor about the possible correlations among them. The research described in this talk fills this gap surveying 11 different uses of *fii* previously described in the literature, across 11 different Arabic varieties extending from Morocco to Iraq.

The resulting picture shows a leopard-spot distribution of certain functions of *fii* suggesting that other forces drive the emergence of *fii* usages across varieties beside the influence of geographically proximity. The talk will present a preliminary answer to the question: which are the factors that explain the distribution of *fii* function? The validity of the competing hypotheses, historical accident or grammar driven, are evaluated with mathematical methods run on the data gathered in the study.

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