

contested
space
and
urban
identities
in
beirut
cairo
tehran

PROGRAMME
12. — 14. 12.
2013



OIB ORIENT
INSTITUT
BEIRUT
مركز الأبحاث في الأعمار والشؤون

GOETHE
INSTITUT
Sprache Kultur Deutschland

DiverCities aims to look at urban governance, its agents, agendas and options, through contested space and conflicting urban concepts, identity claims and social environments. Situated at the core of social and political fractions, contested spaces reveal insights into the dynamics of diverse societies and urban identities. The focus will be on the three cities of Beirut, Cairo and Tehran, each highlighting different types of fragmentations, political, cultural and social. Different social layers coexisting in close proximity to each other, in combination with competing economic interests over the already densely populated urban space, make Beirut host to many areas of contestation. In Tehran cultural fragmentations impact on urban life, cultural here referring to norms, values and practices, what is considered right and wrong by different sections of society and the multi-layered ruling establishment. Cairo has to constantly deal with the challenges rapid urban expansion brings with it, in addition to social struggles that have only been reinvigorated since 2011. How are contested spaces governed on a local level? The aim of the conference is to gain insights into experiences of urban governance as it is perceived and practiced by different social agents in view of the ambivalence of public space in diverse societies.



[BEIRUT]



[CAIRO]



[TEHRAN]

Thursday

12

December

Location

Warehouse



Panel I: **Claims and Agency**

This panel will focus on the legal, moral, economic, and political claims that conflicting urban actors in the three cities of Beirut, Cairo and Tehran advance to control ownership, access, and uses of urban spaces. Agency plays a central role, in particular in terms of the opportunities, resources and strategies used by different actors to realize or renegotiate these claims. The panel addresses questions related to factors fuelling antagonism between different claims over the use of urban space, such as needs and means, economic interests, cultural diversity. What are the power dynamics over contested spaces? What are the legal frameworks, political constraints, options and loyalties of different actors in governing contested spaces? What modes of symbolic appropriation of urban space do we observe?

Discussants **OMAR ABDULAZIZ HALLAJ** (Urban planner)
and **MONA FAWAZ** (American University Beirut)



ROMAN STADNICKI / CEDEJ

The Emergence of Urban Activism in Cairo since the 2011 Revolution

Since the 2011 revolution we are witnessing a powerful growth of urban activism in Egypt, especially in Cairo. This paper will examine conditions for the emergence of this particular form of activism at the political, social and territorial levels. These conditions include the opening of the scope of activism, the diversification and "pluralisation" of civil society, and the urban roots of the revolutionary moment. A typology will be established according to the interests pursued by the stakeholders, that can be divided into three main categories: general organizations for human rights working towards improving the city's living conditions; individuals and/or organizations whose actions relate to a long-term struggle for the "right to the city"; individuals and/or organizations whose actions aim to protect the living environment and the common good. This paper will show that Egyptian urban activists are the **AUTHORS OF CHANGES** that are already visible on the urban scene.

ROMAN STADNICKI holds a PhD in Geography. He is a Research Fellow and Head of the Urban Studies Department at CEDEJ (Centre d'études et de documentation économiques, juridiques et sociales) in Cairo.



OMAR NAGATI / CLUSTER

A Coup or a New Revolution?

Competing narratives inscribed on Cairo's urban landscape

Since January 2011, Cairo's streets and squares have been the site of emerging initiatives and new modes of urban practices. Empowered citizens took advantage of the fluid political condition and a relative absence of enforcement agencies, challenging an already vulnerable state and increasing their claims to the city and public space. With the ousting of the elected president last summer and the gradual return of state institutions, Cairo has been witnessing a spiral of violence and counter violence, often followed by a period of relative calm and damage reparation. Streets are repaved, traffic signs fixed, burnt buildings reconstructed, graffiti painted over, and "beautification projects" implemented. Such restoration often primes the canvas for yet another cycle of violence and vandalism, within a broader context of **COMPETING NARRATIVES** over the city and the public space. This paper presents examples of the above claims as inscribed on the rapidly shifting urban landscape of Cairo. It reflects on the attempts by both narratives to reconstitute the meaning of the city and public space during the current pivotal moment.

OMAR NAGATI is co-founder of CLUSTER, a platform for urban research and design initiatives in Cairo. He adopts an interdisciplinary approach to questions of urban history and design, and engages in a comparative analysis of urbanisation processes in developing countries.

10.30-12.45



HIBA BOU AKAR / HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE

Beirut's Geographies of the "War Yet to Come"

This paper discusses how Beirut's post civil war **PERIPHERIES**, previously conceived as poor and informal, have been transformed through contested planning exercises by religious political organizations into frontiers of violence and growth. The paper focuses on two contested southern peripheries of Beirut, Sahra Chouifat and Doha Aramoun, that provide possibilities for those who cannot afford living in the city, while being simultaneously spaces where the contours of the futures of violent engagements, militarization, and displacements are being drawn and redrawn every day. The paper shows how the spatial practices of religious political organizations have transformed Beirut's southern peripheries into frontiers of sectarian conflict through these actors' territorial battles governed by their anticipated roles in local and regional wars that are "yet to come". Reflecting on how sectarianism is constructed, lived and reproduced in contemporary Beirut, the aim is to understand how the everyday spatiality of the sectarian order is produced and negotiated. Within the spatial logics of the "war yet to come", the paper illustrates how the articulation of sectarianism, capitalism, urbanization, geo-political interests, and violence produces and reproduces Beirut's geographies of the sectarian order.

HIBA BOU AKAR is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Urban Planning at Hampshire College. She holds a PhD in City and Regional Planning with an emphasis in Global Metropolitan Studies from the University of California at Berkeley.

14.00–15.30



MARYAM AMIRI AND ESMAEIL IZADI /
UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN

Tehran Urban Space Under the Rationale of Sales Price

We explore the interrelations between law and space, focusing on urban space generated in Tehran under the Urban Density Sales Law. Endorsed by Tehran Municipality in 1990, the law overturned construction density restrictions put in place by ratified urban plans for the city of Tehran, thus making the **MARKET MECHANISM** the only determinant in all future developments. The rationale of sales price took over the rationale of planning. The sudden change, apparent everywhere around the city and affecting the lives of its populace in every walk of life was so dramatic that it divided the post-revolution era into "before" and "after" the Density Law. The revolutionary ideals of equality and justice that had previously led to a drive to nationalise land and control the real estate market gave way to a new paradigm of justification of selling off hitherto undeveloped urban space, changing the fabric of built-up areas and delivering huge chunks of land outside the city zone for hasty urban development. It will be shown how by selling density Tehran Municipality created an "abstract space" (Lefebvre), in which citizens are deprived of their say in how their habitat is developed, while urban planning as a civil rationality is side-tracked, the consequence of which is that the citizenry loses its fundamental "Right to the City".

MARYAM AMIRI graduated with an MA in urban planning from the University of Tehran. She is a journalist at Shargh newspaper and works as an urban planner at rehabilitation projects in urban vulnerable areas.

ESMAEIL IZADI is an MA student in economics at the University of Tehran.



NADA MOUMTAZ / THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Practices of Commoning: Public utility and religious interest in the *waqfs* of contemporary Beirut

One key debate during the reconstruction of Beirut's city centre after the civil war revolved around the "privatization" of this process and the contradictions emerging from the expropriation of private lands, in the name of **PUBLIC UTILITY**, by a private real-estate company, *Solidere*. While the bulk of the critical commentary echoes common warnings about the consequences of the privatization of public space under neoliberal regimes for citizenship and the democratic process, this formulation leaves unexplored the possibilities of contestations around the notion of the public, particularly as based on religious affiliation. Indeed, among the very few who could escape systematic expropriation was the Directorate General of Islamic *Waqfs* [DGIW]. In a nation-state where **PUBLIC UTILITY** forms the only constitutional limit to the right of property, how was the DGIW able to negotiate such an exception? This talk analyses how, when, and by whom the concept of public utility was marshalled, and the concepts forwarded in counter-arguments for these expropriations, namely "the interest of the waqf". How did public interest and **RELIGIOUS INTEREST** intersect? What types of spatial possibilities did appeals to religious interest create and foreclose? In this case of urban reconstruction, while religious interest allowed the various religious communities not to be dispossessed, this paper argues that it subjected **RELIGIOUS INTEREST** to the law of capital.

NADA MOUMTAZ is Assistant Professor in the department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the Ohio State University, having completed a PhD in Cultural Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, with a dissertation entitled "Modernizing Charity: Remaking Islamic Law".

16.00–17.30



WHAT DOES BEIRUT'S URBAN FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

Panel discussion with Beirut Municipality

BILAL HAMAD/Mayor of Beirut

AMIRA SOLH/Senior Urban Planner, Solidere

OMAR ABI AZAR/Zoukak Theatre Company

RAMI G. KHOURI/Issam Fares Institute (Moderator)

In parallel

DICTAPHONE GROUP



Bus Cemetery

The lack of public transport in Lebanon and its "death" in our city is seen as an extension to the lack of public spaces such as beaches, parks and pavements. This is why our project **BUS CEMETERY** came about. Bus Cemetery is a sound-based intervention that was performed inside one of the derelict buses in the former train station in Mar Mkhael (Beirut), popularly known as the "bus cemetery". The site is where the dysfunctional buses are dumped, and the workplace for the employees of the Lebanese public transportation authority. This project will take the audience on an imagined tour inside an abandoned bus. The audience will be ushered into the bus by a female driver, to embark on a short trip in the city.

The Map (see next page) is the transportation network in Beirut from the year 1923 merged with our imagined bus route that tours in the city passing through existing locations like gardens and cemeteries.

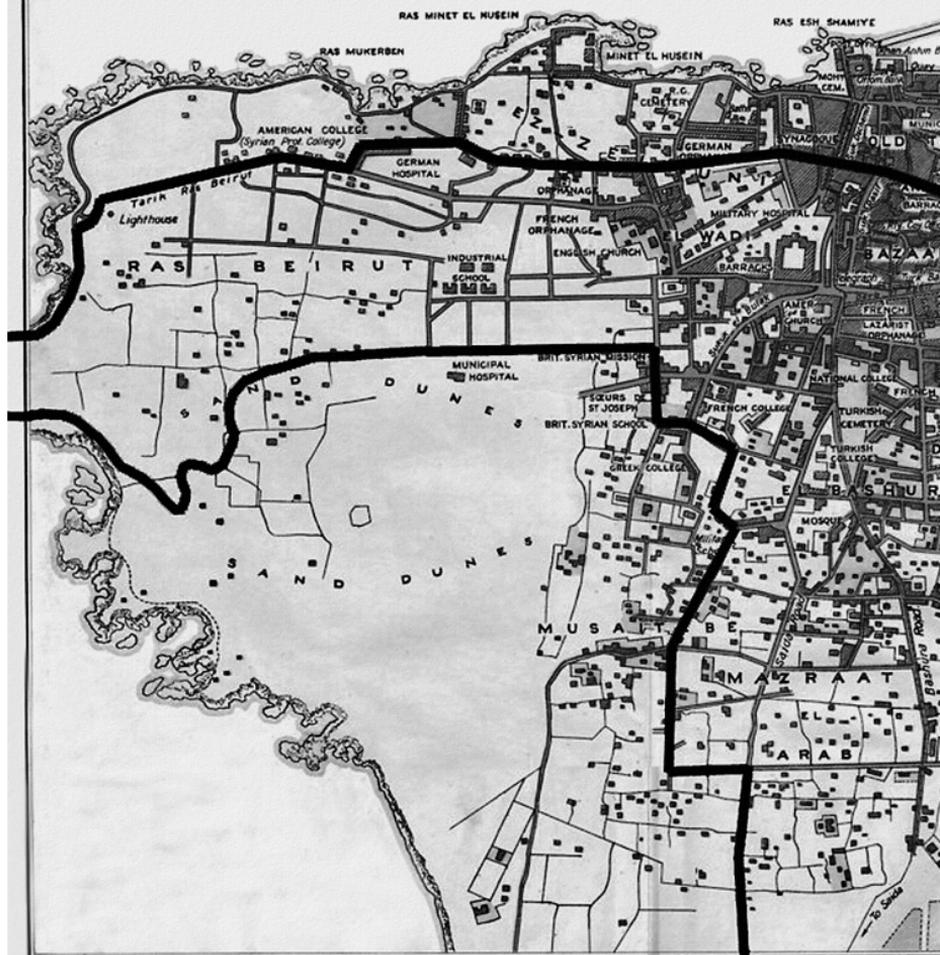
PETRA SERHAL (Performer)

TANIA EL KHOURY (Writer)

RAMZI MADI (Sound Design)

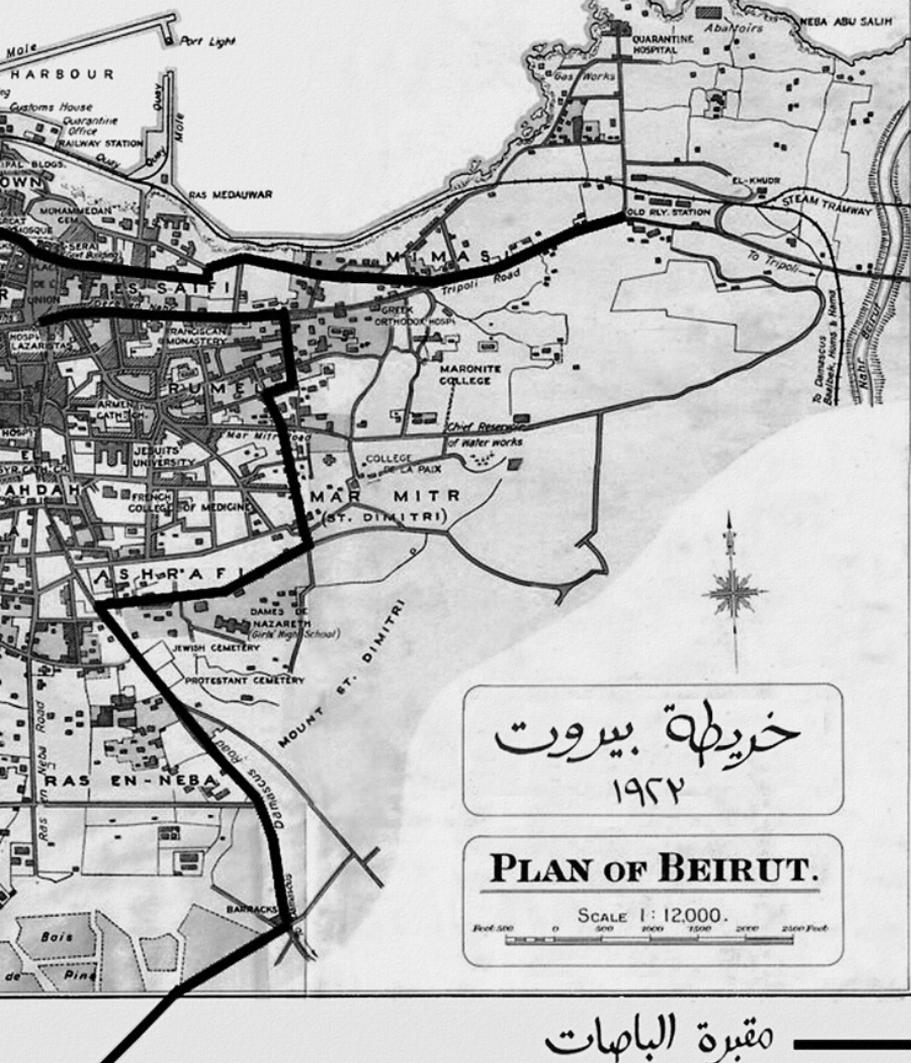
This project was originally funded by AFAC 2011

M E D I T E R R A N E A N



مسار الباص داخل المدينة

S E A



خريطة بيروت
١٩٢٢

PLAN OF BEIRUT.
SCALE 1:12,000.
0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500 Feet

مقبرة الباشات



LABAN LIVE LACTIC CULTURE

Masar Theatre

Masar Theatre is a participatory, improvisation-based, socio-political theatre format invented by **LABAN**. It was invented to meet the need of having a theatre-based tool for interventions in communities that are not known enough to intervening artists. In Masar Theatre, the audience share stories about a certain issue. The actors then come up with a short play that depicts the essence of the stories shared. Afterward the audiences build this story along with the actors or advise about directions the story can take or endings they may want to try out.

LABAN is an improvisational theatre-based organization started in 2009. It works on spreading improvisational theatre in Lebanon and the region through trainings and performances. These performances include improvised acting, creating, directing, lighting, music, and other performance requirements and are of different formats, some of which are invented by Laban. It also works on utilizing the skills and techniques of improvisational theatre in civil society activism. Through rigorous ongoing training and experience, Laban has become the reference for improvisational theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed (Forum Theatre, Image Theatre), and Playback Theatre in Lebanon. Laban places a lot of weight on partnerships with other organizations in order to create the desired change. In approaching organizations, Laban brings the theatre component and different kinds of theatre-based interventions to projects, whether they are starting up, ongoing, or in planning phase.



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[CLAIMS AND AGENCY]

Friday

13

December

Location

Zico House



Panel II: **Between Public and Private**

Despite its historical contingency, the concept of a public space remains a powerful utopia that is strongly connected to the idea of a political space and to individual citizenship. As empty signifier a dichotomy of *public* and *private* continues to be the frame of reference for politicians, urban planners, and city dwellers. Every concrete meaning and manifestation of this dichotomy has an immediate impact on the *lived, built, and imagined* city, which is necessarily contentious and a dystopia for many of the individuals affected. How do moral norms (whether imposed by society or the state) affect the delineation of public and private space, and how do diverse concepts coexist or clash? How do (changing) gender relations define public and private space and how are they formed by the structural design of urban space? How do alternative public spaces influence cultural production and how do manners of cultural production alter space? What influence does virtual public space have on real space?

Discussant **ROBERT SALIBA** (American University Beirut)

10.00-12.00 / 12.00-14.00



Tour I / Tour II

DICTAPHONE GROUP

This Sea is Mine

THIS SEA IS MINE is a site-specific live performance that explores the concepts of access to the sea and public space in the city through Beirut's seafront. The audience is invited to take part in a journey on a fishing boat. Going from the Ain el-Mreisse port to Ramlet el-Baida beach, the project explores land ownership of Beirut's seafront, the laws that govern it, and the practices of its users. The performance has recently been turned into a sound piece that will be made available with fishermen to give to anyone who wants to embark on a similar trip. It will also be available online for anyone to download.

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TANIA EL KHOURY

(Writer and Performer)

ADNAN AL OUD

(Fisherman/Performer)

ABIR SAKSOUK

(Researcher/Booklet Writing)

PETRA SERHAL

(Producer)

This project was originally funded by AFAC 2011

Meeting point:

Ain el-Mreisse port
15 min before the tour.
Limited audience capacity.
Advanced reservation required on a first come first served basis at sek@orient-institut.org.

15.00–18.30



NAZANIN SHAHROKNI / HARVARD UNIVERSITY

A Gender-Divided City?

An inquiry into the spatial politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran

This study examines the spatial dynamics of **GENDER-SEGREGATED SPACES** and what these dynamics register about the transformations of state power in post-revolutionary Iran. In doing so, this work links everyday practices of traversing the city with macro-level dynamics of power and politics. It addresses the following questions: What can shifting gender segregation practices show us about the Iranian state and its shifting strategies of governing and maintaining legitimacy? How do local and global politics condition the production of gender-segregated spaces? I examine three illustrative cases of gender segregation in Tehran – women-only parks, gender-segregated buses, and men-only sports stadiums – in an effort to better theorise gender segregation as a state policy, in its multiple incarnations across time and space. First, I offer a "progressive sense" of gender-segregated spaces by treating them not as enclosed and static entities but as the products of social processes. These spaces and the meanings associated with them are never set. Second, adopting a Foucauldian approach to power as productive and not merely prohibitive, and building on Lefebvre's notion of space as a political product, I explore the ways in which gender-segregated spaces are interwoven with politics and relations of power. Finally, I argue that it is necessary to situate the Iranian state within the web of state-society relations and the larger context of interstate relations.

NAZANIN SHAHROKNI is a Postdoctoral Academy Scholar at Harvard University, Weatherhead Center for International and Area Studies. She holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley.

15.00–18.30



MATHEW GAGNÉ / UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

**Expanding Queer Spaces in Beirut:
Mobile communications technologies and contestations
to heteronormative space**

Recent histories of neo-liberal governance and reconstruction in Beirut have created new types of public, commercial, and virtual spaces that have opened up to new forms of queer sexualities. Emergent forms of queer practices and socialities enabled through new Internet technologies render public spaces semi-private **QUEER SPACES**, including commercial bars, restaurants, and clubs, as well as queered public areas. Appropriations and contestations of public spaces are expanding due to the growing popularity of mobile communications technologies. Smartphone applications, like Grindr and Scruff, disrupt the binaries of private and public, virtual and real by enabling men to connect, flirt, and enjoy intimacies woven between stratified urban spaces and virtual and physical worlds. This paper explores this process by looking at how these technologies imbue public space with private queer intimacies as well as new modes of recognition of queer others in the movements between online and offline social worlds. The suturing of ordinary activities and these technologies produces an expansion of queer spaces and visibilities that mounts contestations to heteronormative space while producing new types of politicized queer subjects. The conditions of heteronormative public space in Beirut are disrupted as these semi-private intimacies and forms of queer recognition take hold in spaces around the city.

MATHEW GAGNÉ is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. His work focuses on the ways queer dating technologies impact the formation of queer subjectivities and socialities in Beirut.

15.00–18.30



NAHID SIAMDOUST / UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Tehran's Soundscape and the Public Sphere

Tehran's **SOUNDSCAPE** is a highly contested element of the public sphere that the Islamic Republic officially controls. I will show through a discussion of music how this space serves to mitigate any stark demarcations of the public or the private as people use various tactics to insert their presence into the official sphere via the city's soundscapes. In this way, producers and consumers of music challenge officially imposed norms and values. The fragmentation of state authority through critiques of imposed gender roles, official corruption and religious hypocrisy happens in the semi-public sphere that each individual within the larger public sphere possesses; these range from a business-owner's shop to a taxi driver's car to the personal space that each individual can affect, through such things as speech, clothing, behaviour or humming a tune. I examine discourses in several musical subcultures and how the text as well as the performativity that it enables produce what Asef Bayat has called "quiet encroachment" in the public sphere. By declaring the "private" in the public, these musics enable a much larger sphere of dialogue and contestation of norms and values than state authority allows. I will also be discussing the role of the Internet and satellite television within the musical field in greatly expanding the "traditional" public sphere.

NAHID SIAMDOUST teaches history and politics of the Middle East and Modern Iran at the University of Oxford, where she recently obtained her PhD in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St Antony's College. Her work focuses on the interstices between politics and media.

15.00–18.30



MAZEN HAIDAR /ALBA AND AKRAM RAYESS /AMAR

Public Sounds, Private Spaces:

Towards a Fairouz Museum in Zoukak el-Blat

The idea of dedicating a **MUSEUM TO FAIROUZ**, the singer and leading figure of musical theatre in Lebanon, in her childhood home in Beirut has been circulating in the local media in recent years. The persistent media campaign came to fruition with the declaration that the endangered nineteenth-century mansion in Zoukak el-Blat was a building of public interest. Taking an anthropological approach, this paper will focus upon Fairouz's House as a contested urban space. It will highlight multiple and diverse readings and interpretations of Beirut's architectural heritage in this contentious context. After illustrating the dialectical conception of the "space of sound" in relation to physical references of what was originally a private space, our presentation will focus on two issues: the legacy and memory and the connection between the museum's function as a shrine dedicated to an artist who progressively became a public figure closely related to the history of modern Lebanon; and the transformation of a modest nineteenth-century private house on the periphery into a key cultural and public centre. As the museum will witness the transition of Fairouz's childhood house into a public space, the paper will also follow the biographical trajectory of a personality switching from *private* to *public*, from a young timid girl to both an established artistic landmark and national icon.

MAZEN HAIDAR is a conservation architect, currently involved in several projects in Lebanon. He is the assistant director of the Architecture School at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA).

AKRAM RAYESS is an ethnomusicologist, a management consultant and a trainer. He is a founding member of the Foundation for Arab Music Archiving and Research (AMAR) and Core Committee member of the Zaki Nassif Music Program at AUB.

19.00–20.00



DICTAPHONE GROUP

Why the Sea is Mine?

WHY THE SEA IS MINE? is a lecture performance by Dictaphone Group in which we share some of the findings from our research as well as our artistic work process from three projects that took place in Lebanon: "Bit Téléférique", "Bus Cemetery" and "This Sea Is Mine".

DICTAPHONE GROUP creates live art performances based on findings and stories produced through multi-disciplinary research on space and oral history. It is a collaborative project initiated by live artist Tania El Khoury and architect/urbanist Abir Saksouk. Together with performer and producer Petra Serhal, they have been creating site specific performances informed by research in a variety of places such as cable car, a fisherman's boat, and a discontinued bus. The aim of these projects is to question, as citizens, our relationship to the city, with a focus on public space, and the goal of its redefinition.

Saturday

14

December

Location

Mansion



Panel III: **Open Air Spaces of Gathering: Norms and Practices**

Open air spaces, whether designed for leisure purposes or as busy city squares, often serve as public meeting places that can acquire a more specific significance for the assertion of citizen rights and contesting political power. The aim of this panel is to discuss to what extent the spaces are used the way they were designed, who determines their use and whether and how this use is culturally and politically contested. Questions revolve around the symbolic, normative and practical frameworks of collectively used open air spaces. How and under what circumstance do spontaneous popular practices create public open air space or alter its character? In how far is the use of open air space culturally and politically encoded and contested? What are the public order policies applied to such spaces and who is responsible for them? The panel also proposes alternative readings of public space.

Discussants **ANTON ESCHER** (University of Mainz) and **MONA HARB**
(American University Beirut)

10.30–12.00



LUCIE RYZOVA / UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Strolling in Enemy Territory:

Contested spaces and spatial practices in Downtown Cairo, a historical analysis

Downtown Cairo means many things to many people. To some, its large avenues lined with neoclassical buildings stand as symbols of colonial domination; to others, they represent a bygone era of a cosmopolitan **PARADISE LOST**, a Belle Époque that has long disappeared under the heavy hand of authoritarian nationalism and religious parochialism. To many brought up in a succession of new neighbourhoods, Downtown is a dirty and dangerous place. The sense of danger is epitomized in the phenomenon of Eid harassment, as well as through urban battles following the January Revolution, of which especially the battle of Muhammad Mahmoud stands as an example of how competing claims on social order play out in public space. Most recently, Downtown Cairo has been the object of interest from two important power actors: government agencies' efforts to "heritize" the area, and private developers keen on gentrifying it. This paper will present a historical analysis of the many diverse functions, usages, and meanings of Downtown Cairo through the 20th century. It will also focus on one particular spatial practice most associated with the area: loitering, formerly known as "strolling". It will present Downtown Cairo as a heterogenous space predicated on drawing in audiences from all over the city, a zone of contingent autonomy where the boundaries of both class and gender are porous and elastic.

LUCIE RYZOVA is a social and cultural historian of modern Egypt, based at the Faculty of History at the University of Oxford. Her current research includes the social history of photography and visual practices in modern Egypt.



SORAYA BATMANGHELICHI /

BROOKLYN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Red-lights in Parks: A social history of Park-e Razi

This paper investigates the spatial transformations of a **RED-LIGHT** district in southern Tehran, which was once a societal landmark called the "citadel" of *Shahr-e No*. During the Pahlavi years (1925–1979) it operated quite openly as a government-regulated brothel district. In 1979, it was demolished and later developed into a large family **PARK**, Park-e Razi. Before its transformation, the vibrant activities inside *Shahr-e No* were verified. When the area was under threat of fire, a popular Shi'a cleric even came to its defence, insisting that prostitution played a necessary role in society – similar to that of a toilet in a house. This comment was prescient in that it intimated what would necessarily transpire following the sex district's destruction and despite its cosmetic conversion. The movement from brothel district to Islamic family-themed park is treated not as a moment of rupture but one of transition. For prostitution is still an ongoing problem, where transactions for paid sex are arranged on the park's premises. By tracing the social realities of this space over a period of forty years this discussion engages in a multivalent theoretical debate over the role of prostitution and the expectation of female sexuality in the Islamic Republic of Iran through the ideal rehabilitation of a public space.

SORAYA BATMANGHELICHI is a women's activist and feminist scholar, conducting research on gender, sexuality and body politics in the Middle East. She holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies from Columbia University.

12.15-12.45



RANA ELNEMR /ARTIST AND IMAGE RESEARCHER

Olympic Garden 2009-2011

Located behind "The Egyptian Olympic Centre", on the amorphous line separating the upper middle class neighbourhood of New Maadi and the Arab Al-Basateen informal area, the **OLYMPIC CENTRE GARDEN** has come to replace "Al-Ahram Coop Complex", which burned down completely in May 2007. The circumstances surrounding the fire were described then in Al-Gumhureya newspaper as "mysterious". Less mysterious accounts of the story still circulate amongst the residents of the surrounding area who are fathoming the nature of the new space in transience... a front-yard, a backyard, grass to grow, image to conserve... This work consists of a 3-channel still-image loop with sound and text. The slow paced loops follow 3 different logics and aspects of the space, its physical appearance, its actual use, its location and historic context, the power dynamics that happen within such a fragile space, and the projections, aims and dreams of people who use the space. The 3 projections are placed and designed in a way so that the viewer could decide on their own ways of following the 3 channels. The different lengths of the loops allow the viewer to constantly see a different combination of image, sound and text.

RANA ELNEMR is an artist whose work is photo-based but often includes text, sound and other media. Rana is involved in researching the visual culture and prospect of images, and is one of the co-founders of the independent artspace "Contemporary Image Collective" (CIC) in Cairo.

14.00–16.15



MAÏA SINNO /SORBONNE UNIVERSITY AND CEDEJ

The "Gulfization" of the Cairo Downtown "Corniche" Behind Differentiating Social Practices?

This study focuses on the case of Cairo's downtown **CORNICHE**, which was originally designed as an urban showcase of Cairo, influenced by the perception of the Gulf countries' way of life. Over the last decades the Cairo downtown **CORNICHE** gradually became one of the favourite gathering places of the popular social layers. Taking an evening walk on the **CORNICHE** constitutes a way to take ownership of a space which was originally designed for upper social classes, contributing in having the latter live in selected private spaces in order to avoid social mixing. The accelerated building programmes of luxury hotels that started under Sadat's presidency attest to public policies willing to make a prestigious urban focal point out of the **CORNICHE** through the urban transcription of the master plan of Gulf cities. While well-off people commonly gather in new-built towers, the avenue is invaded every evening by families, young people and itinerant vendors from lower social classes. During the social claiming in early 2013, the **CORNICHE** was blocked, leading frustrated groups of teenagers to overrun the Semiramis hotel. However, these events stopped neither the upper nor the lower classes to return once the situation calmed down. How much does the "gulfization" of the **CORNICHE** influence its attraction? Does the Gulf way of life today symbolize social achievement for Egyptians of all social classes?

MAÏA SINNO is a PhD Student in economic and political geography at Sorbonne University (Paris) in partnership with the CEDEJ in Cairo where she spent the last two years. Her research focuses on the influence of Gulf countries' investments in Egypt.

14.00–16.15



ABIR SAKSOUK-SASSO /
ARCHITECT AND URBANIST

Contesting National Authority in the Construction of Public Space: The making of communal spaces in Beirut

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war, Beirut has been undergoing new forms of "controlling" public space. It has witnessed the gradual disappearance of coastal lands accessed by the public, as well as the closure of its largest public park. The control of public space in Beirut has gradually taken over the remaining social places in the city, in which an *abstract* public is consistently being served. Nevertheless, Beirut dwellers lay claim today to a number of open areas in the city, the uses of which are akin to "public" spaces – in the sense that they are accessed freely and allow for an unconfined range of social activities. Access to these spaces is secured through social and communal agreements through which their uses are organized, rather than laws and institutions of a central state. This paper advocates learning from the public by observing several **LEFT-OVER SPACES** in the city, in order to understand them as public, multicultural, just, and socially open. These spaces, such as Dalieh (Rawche) and Ard Jalloul (Sabra), are shaped by the users' various spatial practices. By spatializing everyday social practices, the paper attempts to abandon the modern accepted notion of public space that is tied to the state through the attribution of designated spaces in the city as "park", "garden", or other named ascriptions. It opens new possibilities for understanding public space in Beirut.

ABIR is an architect and urbanist, and co-founder of Dictaphone Group. Her interests include multi-disciplinary research on space, exploring tools of social and political change, as well as blogging.



KONSTANTIN KASTRISSIANAKIS /
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

**Rethinking Public Space in Beirut since the Ta'if Agreement:
From the reconstruction-reconciliation discourse to "sphere-building"**

Following the signing of the Ta'if Agreement in 1989, the lack of official memorialisation, the absence of criminal tribunals and the 1991 general war amnesty gave prominence to Beirut's **RECONSTRUCTION** as a key tool for **RECONCILIATION**. Public space was at the heart of debates animated by the controversial rehabilitation of the city-centre and the Demarcation Line that divided the city. Prominent Lebanese architects, urbanists, historians and geographers saw the site of division as offering an opportunity to create shared spaces that would restore the fractured society's ties of trust and association. However, apart from the challenges that the reconstruction process encountered, this paper will argue that the notion of public space that informed the reconstruction-reconciliation debate holds misplaced expectations. Drawing upon a historical and theoretical analysis of public space in Beirut, this paper will assess the reconstruction-reconciliation approach to public space and consider a relational approach to public space that acknowledges Beirut's fragmented urban structure, shifting spatial practices and territorial delineations. Taking the notion of territory not as antithetical but constitutive of public space, this paper will propose to re-think public space in light of Isaac Joseph's work on public space as the "world-at-hand", Ibn Khaldun's notion of *asabiyya* and Peter Sloterdijk's concept of "immunological spheres", highlighting how the study of public spaces in Beirut could benefit from a new definition of public space.

KONSTANTIN KASTRISSIANAKIS holds a PhD in architecture from the University of Cambridge, where he is currently affiliated to the Centre for Urban Conflict Research. In January he will join the YouCitizen project at the Department of Geography, Durham University.

16.30

ANTON ESCHER / UNIVERSITY OF MAINZ

Wrap up

ANTON ESCHER is Professor of Geography at the University of Mainz. His main research interests revolve around the social and architectural development of historic cities of the Mediterranean region, the perception and construction of space(s) through the medium of feature films and documentaries, and the mediatisation of cultural phenomena in the context of migration and tourism.



VENUES

WAREHOUSE (SEE MAP)

Philka Building

→ Sea Side Road, one block

next to Vanlian Gallery

Karantina

phone: 01 250 022

www.thewarehouse.me

ORIENT-INSTITUT BEIRUT (OIB)

Rue Hussein Beyhum

→ Next to City International

School (CIS)

Zokak El Blat

phone: 01 359 423

www.orient-institut.org

ZICO HOUSE

Yammout Building

Spears Street

phone: 01 746 769

www.zicohouse.org

MANSION

Abdul Kader Street

→ Take your right at the traffic light

end of Spears Street,

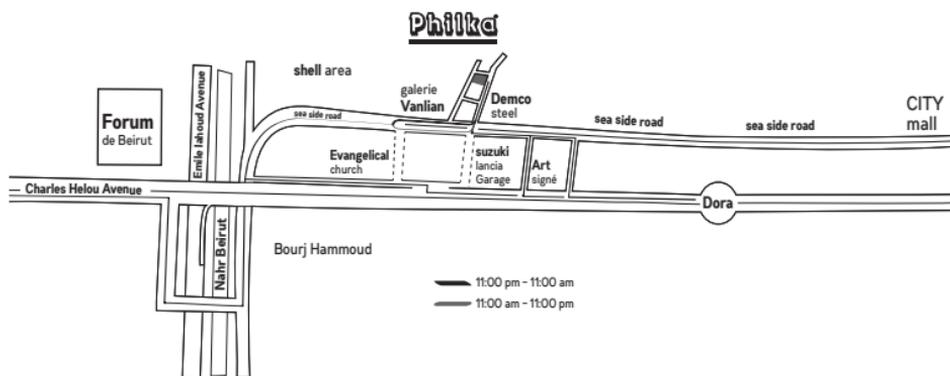
Mansion is the yellow villa ca. 50 m

on your right

Zokak El Blat

phone: 03 412 659

mansion-blatt.blogspot.com



Jointly organized by:

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Thursday, 12 December / Location: Warehouse

Panel I: Claims and Agency

- In parallel
10.15-10.30 **Dictaphone Group** Bus Cemetery
10.30-12.45 **Monique Bellan and Nadia von Maltzahn** Introduction
Roman Stadnicki The Emergence of Urban Activism in Cairo since the 2011 Revolution 12.45 Lunch
Omar Nagati A Coup or a New Revolution?
Competing narratives inscribed on Cairo's urban landscape
Hiba Bou Akar Beirut's Geographies of the "War Yet to Come"
Discussant **Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj**
14.00-15.30 **Maryam Amiri / Esmail Izadi** Tehran Urban Space, Under the Rationale of Sales Price 15.30 Coffee Break
Nada Moutaz Practices of Commoning: Public utility and religious interest in the *waqfs* of contemporary Beirut
Discussant **Mona Fawaz**
16.00-17.30 **What does Beirut's urban future look like?** Panel Discussion
Bilal Hamad / Mayor of Beirut, **Amira Solh** / Senior Urban Planner, Solidere, **Omar Abi Azar** / Zoukak Theatre Company
Rami G. Khouri / Issam Fares Institute (Moderator) Transfer to OIB
19.00 **Location: Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB)**
LABAN Improvisational Theatre

Friday, 13 December / Location: Zico House

Panel II: Between Public and Private

- 10.00-12.00 **Corniche / Dictaphone Group** This Sea is Mine
Tour I / Pre-registration required
12.00-14.00 **Corniche / Dictaphone Group** This Sea is Mine
Tour II / Pre-registration required
15.00-18.30 **Nazanin Shahrokni** A Gender-Divided City? An inquiry into the spatial politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran 16.30 Coffee Break
Mathew Gagné Expanding Queer Spaces in Beirut:
Mobile communications technologies and contestations to heteronormative space
Nahid Siamdoust Between Public and Private –
On Tehran's soundscape and the public sphere
Mazen Haidar / Akram Rayess Public Sounds, Private Spaces:
Towards a Fairouz museum in Zoukak el-Blat
Discussant **Robert Saliba** 18.30 Break
19.00-20.00 **Dictaphone Group** Why the Sea is Mine

Saturday, 14 December / Location: Mansion

Panel III: Open Air Spaces of Gathering:

Norms and Practices

- 10.00-10.30 **Ghassan Maasri** Introduction to Mansion
10.30-12.00 **Lucie Ryzova** Strolling in Enemy Territory: Contested spaces and spatial practices in downtown Cairo, a historical analysis 12.00 Break
Soraya Batmanghelichi Red-lights in Parks:
A social history of Park-e Razi
Discussant **Anton Escher** 12.45 Lunch
12.15-12.45 **Rana EINemr** Olympic Garden I + II + III
14.00-16.15 **Maïa Sinno** The "Gulfization" of the Cairo Downtown "Corniche"
Abir Saksouk-Sasso Contesting National Authority in the Construction of Public Space: The making of communal spaces in Beirut
Konstantin Kastrissianakis Rethinking Public Space in Beirut since the Taif Agreement
Discussant **Mona Harb**
16.30 **Anton Escher** Wrap up