

## **Fifth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES), Seville, 16-22 July 2018**

Call for Papers

Pre-organized panel

### **Neoliberal and Postmodern Urban Re-Configurations in the Middle East and North Africa**

Organisers: Christian Steiner (Katholische Universität Eichstätt) and Steffen Wippel (Philipps-Universität Marburg)

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Urban development in the MENA region has been complex and multifaceted in the last decade. Following the Dubai model of urban development, fast-track urban growth has greatly reshaped many cities in Arab Gulf countries despite severe temporary setbacks following the global financial crisis. Investments in cultural, sports, educational and business districts, hyperreal shopping and leisure facilities, huge waterfront developments and iconic mega-projects have aimed at broadening the economic basis for the post-oil era in these countries. Concurrently, they are intended as tools for city branding in a globalized competition of places and as signs to demonstrate progress and modernization to the members of the Gulf societies themselves. In consequence, these urban development projects function as a nucleus to (re-)develop urban and national identity, but also serve to legitimate the existing political system. However, comparatively unrecognized urban development in North Africa and the Levant has been turbulent and dynamic, too, and has been partly influenced by the upheavals of the “Arab Spring”.

What all these developmental paths seem to have in common is not only a postmodern, but also a neoliberal foundation: the privatization of urban functions, the erosion of public spaces, a strict consumption and business orientation and the securitization of urban spaces meet opaque planning processes.

Although the outcomes of these urban policies set a bright, clean and fascinating stage for development, they simultaneously imply typical “side effects”: increasing socio-economic fragmentation, displacement of populations, rising ethnical and cultural segregation, unequal access to urban infrastructure, incidents of political unrest and social counter-movements and increasing surveillance and political suppression.

Against this background, the panel intends to bring together presentations that critically tackle these complex current urban re-configurations and disparate developmental paths and that are based on conceptually well-informed, field-based research from a broad array of disciplines. Besides widely present “global cities”, this also includes less-investigated “secondary cities” that nevertheless undergo much the same experiences.

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Authors are asked to submit a title, a short abstract (150 words maximum) and information about their institutional affiliation and contact. Please clearly indicate the research question and the concepts and empirical material your research will be based on. Papers will be accepted in English only.

**The deadline for abstract submissions is 15 October 2017.**

Depending on the number of accepted papers, we will propose either a single panel (with four participants) or a series of panels with several sessions. We ask all accepted participants to **register with the conference organizers** (and reconfirm this to the panel organizers) **by late November 2017**. Please note that all participants must be registered before we can proceed to officially submit the panel including individual abstracts.

Please consult the WOCMES websites <http://www.tresculturas.org/wocmes18/> and <http://wocmes2018seville.org> for further information about the conference and registration procedures.

Proposals should be sent simultaneously to: **Christian.steiner@ku.de** and **steffen.wippel@uni-marburg.de**.