Cities and societies in the Middle East

Syllabus for a special paper in the M. Phil. Modern Middle Eastern Studies

Hillary Term 2010

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Outline

The Middle East has a long urban tradition: Some of the world's oldest cities –Istanbul, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo- are located here.

These cities, however, have experienced very different trajectories of modernization: Some have been reshaped during the late Ottoman modernization in the 19th and 20th centuries, some were expanded under colonial and mandate rule and others as a result of nationalist development projects.

The cities of the region have undergone profound changes over the twentieth century as they grew massively through the pressure of rural to urban migration and an increasingly dynamic demographic shift. As a result, the majority of the region's citizens now live in cities: Middle Eastern societies have become, in only a few decades, urban societies. Urban environments are features shared throughout the region. It is this world of cities and urban societies which are now entering, if at different speeds and with different levels of infrastructural capacity and levels of internal conflict, the global world economy.

On the backdrop of a thorough discussion of the conceptual debates on the city in the Middle East –Islamic Cities, Oriental Cities, Arab Cities, Global Cities-, this special paper aims at exploring the current processes of globalization, commodification and fragmentation, as well as the phenomena of exclusion, forced migration and ethnic and religious conflict the region's major cities are facing today.

The perspective of the paper is conceptual and comparative, i.e. the tutorials will explore themes like urbanization, migration, informality etc., and focus on the larger global trends as well as cultural specificities. Students will have a chance to explore the cities in the region comparatively, why discussing these larger themes.

While the focus will be on cities in Turkey, Egypt, the Levant, and the Gulf region, we will try to introduce comparative perspectives including Iran, the Maghreb and Israel wherever possible.

Tutorial themes and reading lists

Introductory reading

Background reading

Daniels, P.W., "Urban challenges: the formal and informal economies in mega-cities", in *Cities*, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 501–511, 2004.

Elsheshtawy, Yasser (ed.), "The evolving Arab city: tradition, modernity and urban development", London, Routledge, 2008.

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Chapter 4, Urban History

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Tabutin, Dominique, Schoumaker, Bruno, Rogers, Godfrey, Mandelbaum, Jonathan, Dutreuilh, Catriona, "The Demography of the Arab World and the Middle East from the 1950s to the 2000s. A Survey of Changes and a Statistical Assessment", in *Population*, Vol. 60, No. 5/6, 2005, pp. 505-591+593 -615.
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Key cities

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Chapters 14, 16 and 16 (Contemporary Cairo (1798-1992)

Keyder, Çaglar, Istanbul: Between the global and the local, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Pacione, Michael, 'Dubai', *Cities,* Vol. 22, Nr. 3, 2005.

Week 1 (Kerem Oktem)

The Islamic city

This tutorial aims at exploring the key debates that have shaped the academic field of the study of cities and urban societies in the Middle East. Particularly influential was Max Weber's description of the Islamic city in contradistinction to the city in the West and as a largely static social and historical phenomenon. Terms such as the Islamic city, the Oriental city, the Arab city and the Ottoman city are used widely in the literature, and this tutorial aims at providing an overview of these different concepts and the epistemological traditions they represent.

Essay questions

1. 'Historically, cities in the Muslim world lack the communal institutions of European cities in the Middle Ages and hence cannot really be defined as cities in functional terms'. Please discuss with reference to the case of cities in the Ottoman empire.

2. Contrast the academic discourse of the 'Islamic city' with the Arab and Ottoman cities literature.

3. Are there essentially unchangeable features of the 'Islamic city'?

Reading List

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Behar, Cem, *A Neighbourhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit vendors and civil servants in the Kasap Ilyas Mahallesi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003

Eickelman, Dale F., 'Is There an Islamic City? The Making of a Quarter in a Moroccan Town', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Jun., 1974), pp. 274-294

Eldem, Edhem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Alan Masters, eds., *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999

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Reimer, Michael J., Ottoman Alexandria: The Paradox of Decline and the Reconfiguration of Power in Eighteenth-Century Arab Provinces, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1994), pp. 107-146

Zubaida, Sami, 'Max Weber's The City and the Islamic City', *Max Weber Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1. (January 2006), pp. 111-118

Week 2 (Leila Vignal)

The 19ᵗʰ and 20th century cities: Modernization and colonization

Which were the forces and processes of modernization that have shaped cities in the Middle East since the 19ᵗʰ century? How have different countries and cities in the region been affected differentially? What is the legacy of these different trajectories?

Essay questions

1. How would you differentiate urban changes in the French colonial Empire and in the Ottoman Empire?
2. Is there such a thing as the emergence of a 'dual city' in the Ottoman/Arab 19ᵗʰ and 20th centuries?
3. Which urban legacy is characteristic of the Ottoman and colonial rules in the Arab world? How has it played upon the following independent nation-building?

Reading List

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Çelik, Zeynep, 2008, *Empire, architecture, and the city: French-Ottoman encounters, 1830-1914*, University of Washington Press, Seattle.

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Hamadeh, Shirine, 1992, "Creating the traditional city: a French project", in *Forms of dominance : on the architecture and urbanism of the colonial enterprise*, ElSayyad, Nezar (ed.), Avebury, Aldershot, pp 241-259.

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Hudson, Leila, *Transforming Damascus. Space and Modernity in an Islamic City*, I.B. Tauris, London/New-York, 2008.

Khoury, Philip, 1984, "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus during the French Mandate", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Nov., 1984), pp. 507-540 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/163156).

Korsholm Nielsen, Hans Christian and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, eds., *Middle Eastern Cities, 1900-1950: Public Places and Public Spheres in Transformation*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2001

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Chapter Three: "Morocco: modernization and preservation, pp. 85-160.

Week 3 (Leila Vignal)

Urbanization, informality and poverty

Many cities in the Middle East struggle with the challenge of poverty and the substandard houses that were built during periods of heavy rural to urban migration, and that are still built due to the urban demographic growth. Cities face a shortage of housing for its residents, an issue that governments have not been able to handle in the last decades. As a consequence, the informal/illegal production of accommodation has become central to housing the poor and the lower middle classes. Contrary to preconceived notions, these informal (or semi-formal) settlements are often highly integrated into the fabric of the city in terms of social mobility, labour markets, industrial and services output – even though they are also sites of urban poverty and tend to be perceived by some of the authoritarian regimes in the region as threat to security and order.

Essay questions

1. In which sense are the informal neighbourhoods a central feature of Middle Eastern cities?
2. Are the informal neighbourhoods only a poverty issue?
3. "Regulating the informal settlements" has become a new governmental credo across the Middle East: what does it mean and imply? What alternatives are put in place? Which vision of the city does it carry?

Reading List

Bayat Asef, Denis E., 2000, "Who is afraid of ashwaiyyat? Urban change and politics in Egypt", in *Environment & Urbanization*, vol.12, n°2, pages 185-199.

____, 1996, "Cairo's Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity", in *Middle East Report* n° 202, Cairo, pp. 2-6+12 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/3013030)

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Zebardast, Esfandiar, 2003, "Marginalization of the urban poor and the expansion of the spontaneous settlements on theTehran metropolitan fringe", in *Cities,* Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 439–454, 2006

Week 4 (Leila Vignal)

The new urban territories of liberalisation and globalisation

Urban development and political economy are closely linked: Ever since the liberalisation of markets and the opening of trade borders in the region, cities have changed at breakneck speed, witnessing the emergence of new spaces and development areas, sustained by new investments of all kind. New categories of actors have asserted their role and new modes of social differentiation have emerged. Globalisation in terms of economic dependencies, but also in terms of lifestyles and consumption patters has arrived in the region late with a slight delay, but is now in full force.

This tutorial, as well as the following one, will deal with the production of new territories, in linkage with economic opening and insertion into global networks.. In Week 4, we will draw on the economic side of these changes.

Essay questions

1. Compare the recent development trajectories of Cairo and Dubai with reference to globalisation.
2. What are the main effects of globalisation and economic liberalisation on the economic territories of the city?
3. Informal, marginal, poor, minority: How are these substantives also part of the globalised urban fabric?

Reading List

Dedeoglu, Saniye, 2008, *Women workers in Turkey: global industrial production in Istanbul*, Tauris Academic Studies, London.

Denis E., Vignal L., 2006, "Cairo as Regional/Global Economic Capital?", in *Cairo Hegemonic: State, Justice, and Urban Social Control in the New Middle East,* Singerman D. and Amar P. (eds.), Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, pp. 151.[1]

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Ghannam, F., 2006, "Keeping Him Connected : Globalization and the Production of Locality in Urban Egypt", in *Cairo Hegemonic: State, Justice, and Urban Social Control in the New Middle East,* SINGERMAN D. and AMAR P. (eds), American University of Cairo Press, Cairo, pages 221-245.

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[1]   Very bad translation: the original version in French is available on the web (DENIS E., VIGNAL L., 2003, « Dimensions nouvelles de la métropolisation dans le Monde arabe : le cas du Caire. Les échelles de la métropolisation en Egypte, entre sur-polarisation et redistribution », in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 64, 36 pages.)

Henry C.M., Springborg R., 2001, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, Cambridge University Press.

Hvidt, Martin, 2009, "The Dubai Model: An Outline of Key Development-Process Elements in Dubai", in *IJMES*, vol. 41,3 (2009), 397-418.

Marchal, Roland, 2005, "Dubai: global city and transnational hub", in *Transnational connections and the Arab Gulf*, Al-Rasheed, Madawi (ed.), Routledge, London.

Meyer, Gunter, 1987, "Employment in Small-Scale Manufacturing in Cairo: A Socio-Economic Survey", in Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 136-146 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/194379)

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Week 5 (Leila Vignal)

Consumption and the commodification of urban space

Building on the discussion in Week 4, this tutorial will explore how neo-liberal economic policies under mostly authoritarian governments have produced new residential, commercial and leisure-dedicated spaces in the cities in the Middle East, in the context of the rise of a mass-consumption society. New types of social relations engineered by new geographies of consumption emerge, as well as increased spatial and social fragmentation.

Essay questions

1. In which sense can we talk of a "fragmentation" of the urban space in contemporary Middle East cities? You will draw your reflection on the previous tutorial as well.

2. Is there a "McdDonaldization" effect in the Middle East urban societies?

3. Discuss the regional and local economic roots of the new consumption and of new residential and commercial patterns, in the wider context of globalisation.

Reading List

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Denis, Eric, 2006, "Cairo as Neoliberal Capital? From Walled City to Gated communities", in *Cairo Hegemonic: State, Justice, and Urban Social Control in the New Middle East*, SINGERMAN D., AMAR P. (eds.), American University of Cairo Press, Cairo, pp 47-71.

Durakbasa, Ayse and Dilek Cindoglu, 'Encounters at the Counter: Gender and the Shopping Experience', In: *Fragments of culture. The Everyday of Modern Turkey,* Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayse Saktanber (eds.), I.B. Tauris, London, New York.

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Vignal, Leïla, 2006, "The emergence of a Consumer Society in the Middle East: Evidence from Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut", in *Cities, Citizenship and Globalization*, Editions Saqi, Beyrouth, pp. 68-81.

Week 6 (Kerem Oktem)

New urbanism in the Gulf

The newly emerging cities in the Gulf seem to unite all the characteristics discussed in the previous tutorials, from globalisation, labour migration to commodification of the urban space. The cities in the Gulf are 'Hyper-Global cities' built on sand. They also develop at an unprecedented pace. Investments in real estate and commercial buildings generated in the Gulf have also spread around the Middle East and are rapidly transforming the urban geographies.

Essay questions

1. 'The Gulf cities are more mirage than reality. Sooner or later, the property bubble will burst.' Discuss with reference to the development of the Gulf states in the last two decades.

2. Do the emerging new Gulf cities constitute a model for urban and economic development in the Middle East?

3. Which challenges does Dubai face as a global city?

Reading list

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Chapter 4: Dubai. Global city and transnational hub

Bagaeen, Samer, Brand Dubai: The Instant City; or the Instantly Recognizable City, *International Planning Studies,* Vol. 12, No. 2, 173 – 197, May 2007

Elsheshtawy, Yasser, *The evolving Arab city: tradition, modernity and urban development*, Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon, 2008
Chapter 10: Cities of Sand and Fog: Abu Dhabi's Global Ambitions

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Yigitcanlar, Tan, *Creative Urban regions,* Information Science Reference, London, 2008
Chapter IV: Emerging Middle Eastern Knowledge Cities, Ali A. Alraouf

Week 7 (Kerem Oktem)

War, displacement and urban change

Many countries in the Middle East suffer from unresolved political, ethnic or religious conflicts that have led to displacement, forced eviction, the destruction of cities and the emergence of refugees. While cities in the region have been forced to absorb the massive influx of refugees, competition over scarce resources has often created resentment between different ethnic groups, as well as between marginalised groups and the state. The successive wars in Palestine have been accompanied by heavily securitised urban topographies both in the occupied territories and in Israel.

Essay questions

1. How would you describe the spatial strategies, the Israeli state has employed in dealing with Palestinians both in Israel proper and in the occupied territories? Discuss with reference to the concepts of 'Urbicide' and 'Urban Ethnocracy'.

2. Compare two trajectories of ethnic cleansing, forced migration and marginalisation in Turkey/Kurdistan, Israel/Palestine and/ors Lebanon.

3. To what extent can cities in the Middle East be described as cities marked by the consequences of ethnic, religious and political conflict?

Reading list

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Çelik, Ayse Betül, "I miss my village!": Forced Kurdish migrants in Istanbul and their representation in associations, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 32, 2005

Cooke, Miriam, 'Beirut Reborn: The Political Aesthetics of Auto-Destruction', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* Vol. 15, Nr. 2, 2002

Dumper, Michael, Israeli Settlement in the Old City of Jerusalem, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Summer, 1992

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Öktem, Kerem, 'Return of the Turkish "State of Exception', *Middle East Report Online*, June, 2006
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Sacco, Joe, *Palestine,* Jonathan Cape, London, 2003

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Yacobi, Haim, 'Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment', *Israel Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2008

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http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/119088513/PDFSTART

Zureik, Elia, Constructing Palestine through Surveillance Practices, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No., 2001

Week 8 (Kerem Oktem)

Opposition and resistance

While all countries in the region now follow some sort of neo-liberal economic policy, coupled with authoritarian policies, resistance is articulated through various political movements that are not limited to political Islam. This final tutorial will hence discuss to what extent these new social movements might create successful alternatives to the current neo-liberal and authoritarian consensus in the region and what kind of strategies of resistance they follow.

Essay questions

1. Which groups are at the focus of oppositional urban politics in Istanbul?
2. Is the label 'Street Politics' an accurate term to describe political movements in the Arab world?
3. How Islamic are urban movements in Turkey today?

Reading list

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