

Urban Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Deconstructing Visions, Politics, and Identities

Christian Steiner, Steffen Wippel

Battlefields, visions, and construction sites: the urban as an arena of contest. This is how urban development¹ in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is presenting itself at the end of this decade. Urbanity and identity are still violently transformed into ruins in long-lasting civil, and in fact international, wars. They destroy the homes and livelihoods of millions of people and eradicate not only national but also world heritage in some of the culturally richest and longest-urbanized areas on earth. In contrast, other urban landscapes in the region seem to fascinatingly prosper and are being massively pushed upward to the global scene.

Research Opportunities

In the region under scrutiny, sensational and iconic urban development mega-projects, such as the Palm Islands in Dubai, have caught the attention of a global public. Accordingly, the majority of existing studies have concentrated on cities in the Gulf region, first of all Dubai and subsequently places such as Doha and Abu Dhabi. Academic research has paid much less attention to other issues. Even though there has been a boom in urban studies of the region from various disciplines in recent years, the existing body of knowledge still seems to be very incomprehensive, fragmented, and developable. This is

quite astonishing, given the dramatic increase of the urbanization rate in the region, rising from 35% in 1960 to 65% in 2017 (The World Bank).²

Notably, there are large research gaps to be noticed in countries affected by war. Cities such as Aleppo and Kobanê in Syria, Sinjar and Mosul in Iraq, Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya, and Ta'izz and Al Hudaydah in Yemen have been bombed and destroyed by various conflicting parties. Thousands of people have lost their lives, and the urban heritage has been seriously damaged or even lost forever. Other people found refuge, over decades, in huge, rapidly emerging camp cities, conceived as temporary, yet consolidating in the long run, like the Near Eastern Palestinian refugee sites Tindouf, Algeria and Zaatari, Jordan. The destruction of cities can not only be interpreted as the ultimate outcome of a struggle about space and place, it also reflects the intrinsic logics of rule, conflict, political economy, and development opportunities, which are highly under-researched, perhaps aside from the cases of Beirut (e.g. Schmid, "Reconstruction"; Hourani) and Erbil (Ibrahim et al.).

Overall, the already difficult environment for critical and independent research has

worsened in several MENA countries in the last few years. This is not only due to security concerns in areas under conditions of war and conflict; in countries under more or less authoritarian rule such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and increasingly Turkey, it is hardly feasible to conduct research safely and freely on politically sensitive topics such as marginality, labor migration, political decision-making, and economic interests. Inside the countries, the rigidity of the neo-traditional authoritarian structures in the Arabian Gulf states (Gray) and of neo-patrimonial authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Levant (Cavatorta) strictly limits public debate about controversial ideas for the future of these societies. In contrast, the urban sphere often functions as an arena where conceptions for the future of those in power are expressed. Because of this tension, the urban visions of the ruling elite are (sometimes timidly, sometimes eruptively) socially and politically contested.

However, political systems and research opportunities in the MENA region are quite diverse. Recent evolutions have opened up new perspectives, allowed for new independent research, and generated new questions about urban development in countries that transformed into more democratic societies, such as Tunisia,

or which more or less reformed their political regimes, e.g. Jordan and Morocco (Stadnicki et al.). Nevertheless, the list of insufficiently investigated topics in the region seems to be endless: from livelihoods and survival strategies in the destroyed cities, reconstruction plans for the old city centers and their gentrification, and the emergence of central business districts and large residential areas to the political economy of urban planning and the role of new actors such as China in mega-projects. The strengthened attempts at place branding, which means transforming cities' characters from a socio-political arena into an easily readable object of investment and consumption, have not gained as much academic attention as could be expected; the same is true of the simulation and staging of heritage and the heritage preservation policies behind them.

There is a general lack of studies about urban models on the move, their local adoption and adaptation, and the integration of cities in global and regional urban, production, and transport networks. Additionally, "secondary cities" that are not at the forefront of public attention, are infrequently studied (Wippel). However, in the last decade, comparatively unrecognized urban development in the Maghreb

and the Mashreq has been turbulent and dynamic, too, and has been partly influenced by the upheavals in the course of the “*Arab Spring*” and protests in Turkey and Iran. For instance, Tunis is trying hard to democratize its urban governance structures and to introduce participatory elements (Beier), Tangier has profited from a huge redevelopment of its port facilities to become a global hub (Haller et al.), and Erbil endeavors to become an appropriate, occasionally Dubai-style, capital under conditions of emerging statehood (Sama). Finally, perspectives from below (especially with reference to marginalized groups), gender issues, and the question of how individuals and groups enact, contribute to, and deal with current urban transformations are neglected, too.

Notwithstanding important colonial research, the academic struggle to systematically understand urban development in the MENA region was initially largely met by English, French, and German scholars from the 1950s on (Raymond). In this issue, Anton Escher shows that, within this debate, German geographers, especially Eugen Wirth and the large number of succeeding professors from his academic school, played a central role. Dealing not solely with urban develop-

ment in, but also about urban research on (and from) the MENA region, one has therefore to ask what is left of (and still relevant in) this early research and what we can learn today by looking at these first pieces of urban studies in the region. This question is even more important, considering that the early approaches imply predominantly a structuralist thinking, aiming at model-building, which was later accused of producing essentialist and Orientalist stereotypes of an eternal “Islamic”, “Arab”, or “Oriental” city. In contrast, recent urban studies of the MENA region are more process- and actor-oriented, investigating questions of power, influence, and resource allocation in urban development processes within the context of specific socio-cultural dynamics and developments. As Heeg puts it in her meta-conceptual article (in this issue), instead of identifying general structures of urban development, current research should predominantly aim at place- and time-sensitive analyses that regard urban landscapes as socially produced and continuously reproduced spaces.

Hence, this book *Middle East – Topics and Arguments* (META) tries to shed light on complex and multifaceted dimensions of urban transformations in the MENA region in recent years from a critical, de-essential-

izing perspective.³ We do not consider urban development in the MENA region to be exceptional, but rather linked to ongoing processes in other parts of the world, while proceeding on sometimes quite diverse individual trajectories. Even though local circumstances seem to be crucial to understand what is going on in the region, we argue that urban change in this part of the world is largely influenced by four – overlapping and interpenetrating – regional and transregional megatrends: first, the *Dubaiification* of the idea and the shape of the urban, where Dubai functions as a model for urban development elsewhere, in the region and beyond; second, the ambitions of states and cities to present themselves on the world stage in order to gain recognition, an endeavor called *worlding*; third, the *neoliberalization* of urban development and urban planning, where the role of the state is reoriented to provide private and notably foreign investors an attractive environment and promising opportunities for creating wealth; and fourth, the use of *place branding* to perform a double task, one outward-oriented to create and disseminate politically, economically, and culturally appealing images, but another directed toward the local population to (re)shape urban and national identities and legitimate political action.

The edited META volume at hand is composed around these four mega-trends, which are investigated in a number of theoretical and empirical papers, aiming at contributing to a deeper understanding of recent processes of urban reconfiguration in the MENA region and of cities, which are still heavily “under construction” (Bromber et al. 2014).

Dubaiification

The first of these trends, the *Dubaiification*⁴ of cities, is based on the realization of large-scale projects. In this respect, Dubai functions as a role model in the wider region for its seemingly successful and attention-drawing kind of urban development. These projects are accompanied by a boom of so-called “visions”, embedded in the political economy of the region and driven by the political struggle to foster societal cohesion and to create new national and urban identities. The materialized vision of the ruler fascinates people and provides him legitimacy in a non-democratic state (Steiner). Thereby, fascination not only has a political impact, but is becoming an economic resource in its own right (Schmid, *Economy of Fascination*). Consequently, the Dubai model has been adapted elsewhere (Wippel et al.; Elsheshtawy 249-279). This global and regional movement and local

adaptation and circulation of planning ideas and strategies deserve more attention than ever from academia. Accordingly, we encounter Dubai as a model and mega-projects as an essential element of urban development in most of the papers – from Qom to Istanbul – in this issue of META.⁵ However, insights from the Cairo (Loewert and Steiner) and Rabat cases (Amarouche and Bogaert) also show that cooperation with Gulf investors and hence immediate transfer of models and modalities can finally fail.

In this context, it seems as if, currently, the whole region has become extremely visionary. In the Saudi Vision 2030, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz stated, for instance: “All success stories start with a vision.” (6) Cairo Vision 2050, Qatar National Vision 2030, Visions for Oman’s Economy 2020 and 2040, Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, Amman 2025 and Istanbul 2023, to name just a few prominent examples, all formulate prospects for a bright future of their nation states and cities (cf. also Hvidt). A German reader is reminded of the famous quotation from Germany’s former chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1980): “Whoever has visions should go to a doctor.” Nevertheless, such visions are very influential when it comes to their realization,

even though they are purely a matter of the ruling elite and may be interpreted as a symptom of an undemocratic form of urban planning.

This phenomenon of visions is remarkable in at least three ways: first, in recent years, the rhetoric of long-term but rather vague visions seems to have increasingly replaced the barren technocratic medium-term “development plans”. Second, these visions for a distant future always imply a quasi-transcendental core that is difficult to contest, because they are often not published by bureaucratic state institutions, but announced by the unassailable autocratic ruler himself. And third, this rhetoric gets its power by applying the visionary discourse of big enterprises (Den Hartog and Verburg) to the management and the marketing of the state and cities. Visions are notably behind cities’ aspirations to gain worldwide recognition (Beier, this issue). Impressive examples of attempts to realize such visions are the construction of the New Administrative Capital in Egypt, presented by Patrick Loewert and Christian Steiner, and the new city project of NEOM in Saudi Arabia, analyzed by Hend Aly, both in this issue, too. In the latter case, however, it is even less the project than its royal mastermind behind it who *is* the vision itself.

Emphasizing visions of urban futures goes hand in hand with a de facto lack of consistent urban planning. In consequence, more or less vague master plans for individual projects and construction zones are leading urban development, overriding local planning and building competencies and generating a fragmented development of urban spaces, typical of postmodern cities as ideally incarnated by Los Angeles (Soja). Looking like a bingo game board (Brorman Jensen), urbanism is occurring on a quasi-random field of opportunities. Capital touches down as if by chance on a parcel of land, ignoring the opportunities on intervening lots, thus sparking the development process. The relationship between development of one parcel and non-development of another is a disjointed, seemingly unrelated affair. Thus, it is evident that the traditional, center-driven agglomeration economies that have guided urban development in the past no longer apply.

In such postmodern cities, the urban structure resembles the patchwork of a “splintering urbanism” (Graham and Marvin) of extreme social, economic, and cultural polarization and segregation, which are materialized in the form of edge cities, technoburbs, corporate “citadels”, gated communities, theme parks, ethnic

enclaves and fantasy-made hyperreal spaces (Dear and Flusty). However, more and more urban areas are being transformed into interdictory spaces of consumption and surveillance (Dear 32), where minorities and poor groups of the population are hardly tolerated and systematically kept at bay. Therefore, these places are usually negatively connoted. Nevertheless, they may be Janus-faced: Stefan Maneval, in this issue, debates how even spaces of fragmentation such as residential compounds, beach resorts, and shopping malls imply the potential to establish some kind of counter-publics in Saudi Arabia and therefore contribute to opening up space for individual freedom, deviating body practices, and more liberal interaction between the sexes.

Worlding

Besides a postmodern reading of contemporary urban developments, the globalization approach has gained much prominence. Current urban research experienced a general upswing particularly with the turn to “world” (Friedmann) and “global cities” (Sassen). These cities closely integrate world-spanning material and human flows and notably constitute command centers of the global economy, especially in fields such as finance, insurance, and real estate. Yet, this approach

has drawn much criticism, as it focuses too much on certain economic dimensions and considers only a very exclusive number of cities, concentrating on the global North. Since then, the range of cities considered has been considerably enlarged, but remains limited.⁶ Instead, scholars are asked to turn attention also to the huge number of “ordinary” (Robinson) and “secondary cities” (Roberts), which are also “*globalizing*” and in many cases achieve substantial hub positions in specific far-reaching (e.g. cultural, political, institutional, and transport) networks, often based on current infrastructural megaprojects. In the Middle East, this includes religious centers like Jerusalem, Mecca, and Qom, with annual flows of millions of pilgrims.

Moreover, there is an urgent demand for “disoccidentalizing” urban research (Choplin). Hence, in this issue, Raffael Beier advocates an alternative reading of the processes of globalization and Dubaization, from a “Southern” perspective. He argues that cities that seem to copy the Dubai model do not so much intend to build up a “Dubai elsewhere” as to try to present themselves on a world stage in order to gain recognition and to build up what is perceived as “world-class”. The underlying strategy may be named

“worlding” (Roy and Ong), offering an alternative reading of current trends in Middle Eastern and Arab urbanism. Consequently, the aspiration to become excellent is undoubtedly a major motivation behind various urban development strategies, even if it has not gained much academic attention yet.

In fact, it is empirically hard to say if a city is simply copying the Dubai model, especially as there have been a multitude of urban role models – from Paris to New York and Singapore – in the past and present. The previous explanations of the postmodernization, globalization, and worlding of cities have shown that urban development in the MENA region is subject to diverse global and regional trends (cf. Verdeil and Nasr; Barthel 254). As Beier emphasizes in his article (this issue), too, Gulf countries have an important role, but are not the only references. Hence, planning experiences in Maghreb countries are still strongly reminiscent of French practices. Contemporary waterfront revitalization, another popular urban feature, originated in North America, from where it spread all over the world (Hoyle) and crossed the Mediterranean from North to South (with Barcelona being another role model). Even though often mediated via Dubai, many urban development trends

stem originally from postmodern American models of urbanism, as becomes evident in Duaei's case study of Qom in this issue. According to other articles in this issue, developers in Rabat even pronounced themselves in principle against too-cocky Dubai-style architecture (Amarouche and Bogaert); and finally, the promoters of NEOM portray it as an exceptional place giving birth to a new “post-Dubaiification” era (Aly).

Neoliberalisation

The third mega-trend, neoliberalizing Arab and Middle Eastern cities, is strongly interwoven with Dubaization, postmodernization, and worlding processes. Urban change in the region has become strongly connected to the worldwide spread of neoliberal policies in recent decades: here, likewise, the privatization of urban planning, the erosion and fragmentation of public spaces, and a strict orientation toward consumption- and business-oriented development concepts meet the securitization of urban spaces and opaque, undemocratic decision-making processes (Al-Hamarneh et al.). According to this neoliberal logic, cities are being regarded primarily as economic projects. The strong presence of international actors (investors, developers, donor organizations, operators, etc.) in such entrepre-

neurial cities goes hand in hand with a downward scalar shift of governance, i.e., increasing responsibilities and competencies on the local level. Hence, various individual and institutional actors, with their respective interests, ideas, and strategies, intervene in the implementation and use of the diverse locally implanted projects from different spatial scales, as Loewert's and Steiner's case study on Cairo (this issue) demonstrates. While these shifts multiply the number of options available, they nevertheless increase the competitive pressure among the cities. Therefore, in her theoretical contribution, Susanne Heeg tries to clarify what neoliberalism might mean in regard to urban policies and urban development in the MENA region, including all its local variegations. In their conceptual explanations and respective case studies, other authors in this special issue also explicitly refer to neoliberal inspirations for urban transformations.

Concurrently, neoliberalisation in the MENA region accompanies increasing socio-economic and spatial fragmentation. Therefore, cities become arenas of societal struggles about economic and political participation and power. Exploitation, the displacement of established populations, rising socio-economic

and cultural segregation, unequal access to urban infrastructure, growing crime rates, incidents of political unrest, protests and social counter-movements, and an increasing level of surveillance and political suppression by local governments are typical “side effects” of neoliberal, authoritarian urban development policies.

In line with this diagnosis, the contribution of Maryame Amarouche and Koenraad Bogaert in this issue asks whether the market dictates urban planning and how globalization, dispossession, and the transformation of authoritarian government are connected in the Bouregreg Valley project in the Rabat-Salé metropolitan area. Part of the upcoming urban governance in the neoliberal context is the outsourcing of responsibilities to even less-accountable special agencies (*agencification*), established by the central state. They have the exclusive planning, execution, and management rights over important areas, to the detriment of local competencies and, similar to the Cairo case, thwart endeavors for more decentralized and participative procedures. Yet, these urban development strategies imposed from above and ignoring local social constraints, interests, needs, and desires have also repeatedly triggered civil society counter-engagement and social, occasionally peaceful,

occasionally violent protests against neoliberal policies and state oppression, not least leading to the 2010/11 *Arabellions*, but often enough did not result in much but individualized complaint and resignation.

In contrast to this politico-ethnographic analysis of the Moroccan capital area, Kamaluddin Duaeï demonstrates that these kinds of policies even influence less well-investigated secondary cities such as Qom and shows that neoliberal policies and religion need not be seen as opponents at all. Especially in the Iranian context, his paper convincingly exhibits that, besides the widely discussed Dubaiification, the *Tehranization* of urban development, i.e., a growing similarity to the national primary city, is apparent.

Branding

Investments in cultural, sports, educational and business districts, hyperreal shopping and leisure facilities, huge waterfront developments, iconic mega-projects, and the redevelopment of religious heritage sites not only aim at broadening the economic basis to cope with demographic growth in the region, to conform with economic liberalization for some countries while preparing the post-oil era for others. Concurrently, they are

intended as tools for city branding in the globalized competition among places, which we currently identify as the fourth mega-trend of urban development in the region. In the contexts of globalization and worlding strategies, neoliberal policies and postmodern urban development, they constitute signs to create widespread, broadly-based positive images of progress and modernization, as well as of long-lasting tradition and cultural profoundness for international investors, clients, tourists, and potential residents. Dubai and other Gulf cities have become role models in this respect, too (Govers and Go). But urban development projects also function as a means to help identity politics to (re)shape the urban and national identities of cities’ and states’ citizens.

In consequence, fierce communication strategies have sometimes become more important than the erection of real buildings and infrastructure (Firat et al.). Even more, urban development frequently has become subordinate to simulations as exemplified by the computer game *SimCity* (Soja). In line with Baudrillard (10), such simulations (including maps, models, and 3-D animations) precede, predetermine, and sometimes even replace material development on the ground. Soja also

Christian Steiner

is Chair for Human Geography at the University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Prior, he was Visiting Professor for Economic Geography at the Universities of Frankfurt, Osnabrück and Innsbruck and visiting research fellow at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin. He published extensively on the nexus of the political economy, tourism and urban development in the Arab world. Aside from that, his current research interests are to be found in the fields of human-environment relations and pragmatism inspired economic geography. His habilitation on 'Pragmatism, Environment and Space' was granted with the Hans-Bobek-Prize of the Austrian Geographical Society.

email: Christian.Steiner@ku.de

pointed out that, in postmodern times, entire settlement complexes are conceived in accordance with mottos and themes.

Thus, place branding has a pronounced political nature. Annegret Roelcke's paper about the Eyüp quarter in Istanbul in this issue demonstrates how the *genius loci* of urban areas itself has increasingly become an intentionally created product. In her example, it is the connection of Islamism, advocated by the ruling AKP party in Turkey, with urban development that leads to the production, staging, and museumization of a local neo-Ottoman heritage for varying ends and addressees, but which ultimately is a strategy to legitimate the rule of the current regime. However, the AKP is not solely aiming at re-inventing the history of Turkey in line with its conservative-Islamist ideology; it also instrumentalizes the means of urban development and branding in conjunction with changing orientations toward the EU, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. In line with this case, if Aly is right, also the branding of NEOM has served not just to position the to-be-built city within the global competition of places and attract the desired creative "dreamers", but also to brand the Crown Prince and reaffirm his power. Therefore, she asks if the aforementioned

visions are giving birth to a new kind of "PowerPoint cities", existing solely digitally, and even wonders if the object of such presentations is actually a city, or rather a start-up, a country, or a person's idea. And as much as in Istanbul, in Qom, too, according to Duaei (this issue), rebranding the religiosity of the city is intended to appeal to the growing consumerist middle-class and to modernize the place's historical identity.

Outlook

The current reconfigurations of the urban in the Middle East and North Africa have to be understood as outcomes of recent economic and societal disruptions and upheavals. In these processes of social and urban change, cities function as central laboratories for their societies' futures and as arenas of contest - not only on the battlefields of devastation, but also in all those areas in which they aim at becoming world-class or in which elites produce new interpretations of the identity of places in order to back their ideological perspectives and to sustain their autocratic rule. The experience of rapid, spectacular development, based mainly on big urban projects, has not only impacted important local transformations, but also shows wider effects and is part of larger reconfigurations, both on several spatial scales.

Against this background, this themed META issue brings together various papers that critically tackle and deconstruct the visions, politics, identities, complex transformations, and disparate development paths of contemporary urban dynamics in the region. Besides widely noticed global cities, this also endeavors to include some less-investigated secondary cities that nevertheless undergo much the same experiences.

In the future, it will be interesting to see how responsible authorities will proceed further in the balancing act between worlding strategies and social responsibility (Beier). Whereas all urban policies described here imply a more or less reacting logic, the Arab Spring - despite its many setbacks - and slowly changing global settings have raised the timid hope for a new future mega-trend of urban advancement. The debate about pathways for a *sustainable* economic and urban development is increasingly pushed forward from two sides in the region.

On the one hand, the oil-rich countries are beginning to arrange for the post-oil era and trying to explore new technological ways of urban development. The transformation of urban transport models, for instance, is a central element in this regard.

Steffen Wippel

He studied economics and partly followed Islamic studies at the Universities of Freiburg i.Br. and Aix-en-Provence. He holds a PhD from Freie Universität Berlin and a habilitation degree (awarded the habilitation prize of the Academic Society Erlangen) from Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen. He also worked with research institutions in Berlin and Leipzig (Germany), Rennes (France) and Odense (Denmark). His research focuses on regionalisation processes and urban development in MENA countries.

email: steffen.wippel@t-online.de

In this issue, Maike Didero, Aysha Farooq, Sonja Nebel, and Carmella Pfaffenbach demonstrate how, in the Muscat capital area, grass-roots actors have the ability to contribute to the incipient emergence of postmodern, technologically innovative, and ecologically more sustainable urban transport patterns, even if many questions of equal access, data privacy, and gender equality still remain unanswered. But except for the expanding establishment of more advanced public transport schemes across the region from Casablanca to Dubai (cp. Nolte and Özdemir), positive role models from within the region are not yet well developed, beyond the disappointing advancement of a few model cities like Masdar that promote ecological progress and innovation.

On the other hand, sustainability is starting to be more comprehensively debated in terms of social participation, ecological balance, and economic prosperity. In this respect, notably Eric Verdeil's contribution to the anti/thesis section allows us to anticipate possible directions of future urban development. At the moment, Arab cities still focus on *global* ecological issues, and existing discourses on cities as "*green*" and "*smart*" are part of worlding and branding strategies catering mainly to the expectations of international institutions

and neoliberal rhetoric. These cities seem reluctant to stay the course of sustainability more ambitiously, due to the short-term prioritization of social and political stability. Instead, responsible actors need to consider more closely *local* shortfalls in sustainability, in ecological but also broader socio-economic terms, and approaches from below are required for more inclusive and participatory development. Both would also contribute to (if they are not in fact an essential precondition for) more solidity and progress in the long term.

Another pressing issue that will bind much intellectual, financial and practical capacities in the near future, besides general issues of urban habitat and architecture preservation, is the reconstruction of destroyed and devastated urban sites or of entire cities (Niva). This issue is coming up after the end or extensive containment of wars and even under continued conflict, e.g. in Iraq and Syria (Agarwala; Sengupta), but it risks playing into the hands of still-reigning dictators and consolidating brutal regimes. Hence, efforts, notably with international aid, should not come too early, have to be scrupulously scrutinized, also academically, in all their inherent aspects and should be carefully prepared to accommodate the harm to

and hardship of the civil population and to support civil democratic participation, too. This also opens up the chance to plan more sustainable cities that cater for economic, social, political, and cultural progress. Having raised these final points for further investigation, we hope that this themed issue provides fresh ideas about the manifold development processes in MENA cities.

Notes

¹ As in most social and cultural disciplines today, the editors understand “urban development” as an open, non-linear, and non-teleological process of recurrent transformation, reconfiguration, and change covering a broad range of aspects and going far beyond urban planning and architecture alone. However, the term “development” is not neutral and should itself be attentively scrutinized.

² Compared with an increase of worldwide urbanization from 34% to 55%. However, the portion of urban in total population varies largely, from 25% in Afghanistan to 99% in Qatar (2017).

³ This thematic issue is an outcome of a series of scientific events co-organized by the two guest editors in recent years, among them the symposium “Neoliberal and Postmodern Urban Re-Configurations in the Middle East and North Africa” at the Fifth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) in Seville in July 2018 and the panel discussion “Contemporary Urban Transformations in the Middle East and North Africa” at the 25th International Congress of the German Middle East Studies Association (DAVO) in Frankfurt am Main in October 2018.

⁴ Terms vary. Among them, we also find “Dubaization” and, in a broader understanding, “Gulfication”, Gulfization” and “Gulfanization”. In fact, Dubaization can be understood in manifold ways, using several transmission channels: the copying of urban planning practices, economic development policies, and architectural attention strategies, or an invasive presence of Gulf investors and developers and the transplantation of home and architectural style models by working migrants.

⁵ Wirth already studied Dubai’s ascension as a regional and global platform for trade.

⁶ From the MENA region, the GaWC has continuously listed Dubai, Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut at the top of global rankings, on which also regional urban research has essentially concentrated. In the latest 2018 listing, only Dubai, Istanbul, and Riyadh rank among global “alpha” cities.

Works Cited

Agarwala, Anant. “Aleppo: ‘Wenn es so weit ist’. Während die Bomben auf Aleppo fallen, plant ein syrischer Geograf in Gießen schon den Wiederaufbau der Stadt.” *DIE ZEIT*, 47, 10 Nov. 2016. <https://www.zeit.de/2016/47/aleppo-syrien-wiederaufbau-geograf-giessen/komplettansicht> Accessed 5 Febr 2019.

Al-Hamarneh, Ala, Jonas Margraff, and Nadine Scharfenort, editors. *Neoliberale Urbanisierung: Stadtentwicklungsprozesse in der arabischen Welt*. Transcript, 2019 (forthcoming).

Barthel, Pierre-Arnaud. “Global Waterfronts in the Maghreb: A Mere Replication of Dubai? Case Studies from Morocco and Tunisia.” *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections*, edited by Birgit Krawietz, and Florian Riedler. De Gruyter, 2019, pp.247-258.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacres et simulation*. Galilée, 1981.

Beier, Raffael. *Shifting Urban Policies in North Africa after the “Arab Spring”*: Urgent Reaction or Real Changes? Klaus Schwarz, 2016.

Bromber, Katrin, Birgit Krawietz, Christian Steiner, and Steffen Wippel. “The Arab Gulf: Urban Development in the Making.” Wippel, Steffen, Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz, and Christian Steiner, editors. *Under Construction: Logics of Urbanism in the Gulf Region*. Ashgate, 2014., pp. 1-14.

Broman Jensen, Boris. *Dubai – Dynamics of Bingo Urbanism*. The Architectural Publisher, 2007.

Cavatorta, Francesco. “No Democratic Change and Yet No Authoritarian Continuity: The Inter-paradigm Debate and North Africa After the Uprisings.” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42, no.1, 2015, pp. 135-145.

Choplin, Armelle. “Désoccidentaliser la pensée urbaine.” *Métropolitiques*, 2 Nov. 2012. <http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Desoccidentaliser-la-pensee.html>. Accessed 10 Oct 2013.

→

- Dear, Michael. "Die Los Angeles School of Urbanism." *Geographische Rundschau*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2005, pp. 30-36.
- Dear, Michael, and Steven Flusty. "The Postmodern Urbanism." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 88, no. 1, 1998, pp. 50-72.
- Den Hartog, Deanne N., and Robert M. Verburg. "Charisma and Rhetoric: Communicative Techniques of International Business Leaders." *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1997, pp. 355-391.
- Elsheshtawy, Yasser. *Dubai: Behind an Urban Spectacle*. Routledge, 2010.
- Firat, A. Fuat, Nikhilesh Dholakia, and Alladi Venkatesh. "Marketing in a Postmodern World." *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1995, pp. 40-56.
- Friedmann, John. "The World City Hypothesis." *Development and Change*, vol. 17, 1986, pp. 69-83.
- GaWC. The World According to GaWC. Globalization and World Cities Research Network, Loughborough University. <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html>. Accessed 01 Feb 2019.
- Govers, Robert, and Frank Go. *Place Branding: Glocal, Virtual and Physical Identities, Constructed, Imagined and Experienced*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Graham, Stephen, and Simon Marvin. *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. Reprint, Routledge, 2009.
- Gray, Matthew "Theorising politics, patronage, and corruption in the Arab monarchies of the Gulf." *Clientelism and Patronage in the Middle East and North Africa. Networks of Dependency*, edited by Laura Ruiz de Elvira, Christoph H. Schwarz and Irene Weipert-Fenner. Routledge, 2018.
- Haller, Dieter, Steffen Wippel, and Helmut Reifeld, editors. *Focus sur Tanger: Là où l'Afrique et l'Europe se rencontrent*. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bureau de Rabat, 2016.
- Hourani, Najib B. "Post-conflict Reconstruction and Citizenship Agendas: Lessons from Beirut." *Citizenship Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, pp. 184-199.
- Hoyle, Brian. "Global and Local Change on the Port-City Waterfront." *Geographical Review*, vol. 90, no. 3, 2000, pp. 395-417.
- Hvidt, Martin. *Development Plans and Visions in the Arab Gulf Countries. What is the Likelihood that they will be Implemented?* Center for Melleløststudier, Syddansk Universitet, 2019. <https://static.sdu.dk/Flexpaper/aspnet/pdf/Hvidt%20article%20January%202019.pdf>. Accessed 4 March 2019.
- Ibrahim, Rebwar, Sabah Mushatat, and Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem. "Authenticity, Identity and Sustainability in Post-war Iraq: Reshaping the Urban Form of Erbil City." *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 58-68.
- Niva, Steve, editor. *Cities Lost & Remade*. Thematic issue, *Middle East Report*, vol. 287, 2018.
- Nolte, Amina, and Ezgican Özdemir, editors. "Infrastructure." Thematic issue. *Middle East - Topics & Arguments*, vol. 10, 2018. <https://meta-journal.net/issue/view/192/PDF>. Accessed 14 June 2018.
- Raymond, André. "Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1994, pp. 3-18.
- Roberts, Brian H. *Managing Systems of Secondary Cities: Policy Responses in International Development*. Cities Alliance, 2014.
- Robinson, Jennifer. "Global and World Cities: A View from off the Map." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2002, pp. 531-554.
- Roy, Ananya, and Aihwa Ong, editors. *Worlding cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Sama, Schluwa. "A Periphery Becomes a Center: Shopping Malls as Symbols of Modernity in Iraqi Kurdistan." *Middle East - Topics & Arguments*, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 89-98. <https://meta-journal.net/article/view/3642/3663>. Accessed 6 Febr 2019.
- Sassen, Saskia. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton UP, 1991.
- Schmid, Heiko. *Economy of Fascination: Dubai and Las Vegas as Themed Urban Landscapes*. Borntreager, 2009.
- . "The Reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in the Context of Political Geography." *The Arab World Geographer*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2002, pp. 232-248.
- Sengupta, Somini. "Help Assad or Leave Cities in Ruins? The Politics of Rebuilding Syria." *The New York Times*, 3 Dec. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/03/world/middleeast/syria-war-rebuilding-homs.html>. Accessed 5 Febr 2019.
-

- Soja, Edward W. "Los Angeles 1965-1992: The Six Geographies of Urban Restructuring." *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Allen John Scott, and Edward W. Soja. U of California Press, 1996, pp. 426-462.
- Stadnicki, Roman, Leïla Vignal, and Pierre-Arnaud Barthel. "Assessing Urban Development after the 'Arab Spring': Illusions and Evidence of Change." *Built Environment*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2014, pp. 5-13.
- Steiner, Christian. "Iconic Spaces, Symbolic Capital and the Political Economy of Urban Development in the Arab Gulf." *Wippel, Steffen, Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz, and Christian Steiner, editors. Under Construction: Logics of Urbanism in the Gulf Region. Ashgate, 2014.*, pp. 17-30.
- The World Bank. *World Development Indicators: Urban population (% of total)*. Last Updated 30.01.2019. <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?downloadformat=excel>. Accessed 1 Febr 2019.
- Verdeil, Éric, and Joe Nasr, Joe. "Planning Histories in the Arab World." *The Routledge Handbook of Planning History*, edited by Carola Hein. Taylor and Francis, 2017, pp. 273-287.
- "Vision 2030." Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. N.d. [2016]. <https://vision2030.gov.sa/download/file/fid/417>. Accessed 1 Febr. 2019.
- Wippel, Steffen. "Edirne as a Secondary City: Global Reconfigurations of the Urban." *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections*, edited by Birgit Krawietz, and Florian Riedler. De Gruyter, 2019 (forthcoming).
- Wippel, Steffen, Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz, and Christian Steiner, editors. *Under Construction: Logics of Urbanism in the Gulf Region*. Ashgate, 2014.
- Wirth, Eugen. *Dubai: Ein modernes städtisches Handels- und Dienstleistungszentrum am Arabisch-Persischen Golf*. Fränkische Geographische Gesellschaft/Palm und Enke, 1988.