

Urban Space and the Common Good

22-23 November 2018 - Nederland institute in Morocco – Rabat

The languages of the conference: English and French

Timeline:

- Call for papers/invitation: Abstract **300 words maximum** – by the **15th of August**
- Selection /curating of papers and drafting of program: **The end of August;**
- Conference schedules: **22 and 23 November 2018**, at the Nederland Institute in Morocco: **Nimar** - Rabat

Concept:

In recent decades, unprecedented rates of urbanization on a global level have led to profound changes in existing social, economic, religious and cultural structures and institutions, broadly understood. No topic has been, however, as exhaustively researched and written about in this context of current hyper-urbanization, as the problems associated with urban expansion. Popularized by books like Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums*, the images associated with this global condition are colored by such terms as poverty, inequality, religious radicalization, social anomie, insecurity, and lack of basic infrastructures.

This conference proposes to balance the record by giving equal space to the consideration of how ideas, practices, norms, and material forms found in urban settings engage with (or omit at times), define and produce the 'common good', broadly conceived. We are interested in examples from North Africa but also links with and dynamics between the region and its neighbors, as well as diasporic linkages and connections.

The scholarly literature on urban spaces and dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has historically focused on a limited number of themes, some of them, like the trope of the 'Islamic city', in need of contemporary re-visiting and updating. Emerging social dynamics and urban policies across the region, specifically in the aftermath of events like the Arab Spring, also demand a new approach towards city life in the region.

Significant work conducted from multidisciplinary perspectives has enriched the historiography of the North African city. The techno-politics of colonial urbanism, critiques of poverty eradication programs, and the cultural and political ideas embedded in heritage approaches to 'traditional' cities have done much to advance our knowledge of urbanity in these locales. There is however a growing need for novel approaches to the Middle Eastern and North African city which seeks to move beyond these established tropes of exceptionalism, monolithic conceptions of the Islamic nature of urban space, or the more recent focus on "Dubaiization" of urban centers in the region.

By bringing together multidisciplinary, ethnographic, historical, cultural, religious, and critical studies, this conference will explore how ideas, discourses, and practices about collective living, ‘the good life’, morality, urban diversity, and the ‘commons’ are expressed in urban settings in the region.

We invite scholars to submit proposals that critically engage with the following topics.

Topics we are interested in exploring, but are not limited to:

- Historical and theoretical approaches to legal, religious, social, and cultural definitions of the ‘common good’ in regional (North Africa) and trans-national perspectives;
- Religious organizations, charity, and the transformation and shaping of urban infrastructures for the provision of philanthropic care;
- The ‘common good’ as imagined by and implemented through political and economic discourses, and forms of policing and governing urban space;
- Methodological approaches towards new critical urban studies as well as teaching pedagogies related to urban change;
- Material and immaterial heritage practices as examples of the production of ‘common’ or collective histories of co-habitation with ‘others’, broadly defined;
- Engagement with the ‘good life’ or dwelling together in literature, film, music, or art from and about the region;
- Nurturing the urban collective through cultivating land and feeding the city, peri-urban agriculture and cuisines of urban mixing;
- Marginality and the common good, slum-resettlement programs, high-end mega-city projects.

Please submit your abstract (**300 words maximum** – English or French) **before the 15th of August** by sending an e-mail to the following address : c.strava@hum.leidenuniv.nl
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