

4^e

CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



Panel 72

Between Place and Affect: Global Perspectives

In recent years, the humanities and social sciences have been marked by an “affective turn,” which focuses on the encounter and the mutual experience between the body and the world (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Massumi, 2002) to markedly change whole disciplines like postcolonial studies, diaspora studies and gender studies, for example (Ahmed, 2000, 2004 and 2010; Bhabha, 2004; Berlant, 2014). In this light, and inspired by the increasing rates of migration over the past decades, an exploration of the relationship between people and the places they inhabit or cross is a timely endeavor. This panel, thus, proposes an exploration of bodies in spaces, with a particular focus on their affective attachments to place and the complex quasi-inseparable relationship between them. It thus looks at urban and natural landscapes, as expressed by artists in their creative works but also by ordinary people in their everyday life, and examines the nature of those connections through a micro- and macro-level of analysis and an emphasis on affect.

This panel brings together scholars with different research interests including American Studies, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Diaspora Studies, Urbanism and Architecture, Art and Material Culture, Comparative and Contemporary Literature to present papers that directly engage with representations and explorations of affective attachments to place.

Persons in charge : Lisa Marchi (University of Trento, Italie) and Amina ElHalawani (University of Alexandria, Egypt – ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Germany)

Discussant : Amina ElHalawani (University of Alexandria, Egypt – ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Germany)

Program

Amina ElHalawani (University of Alexandria, Egypt- ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Germany)

The House as Home for Affect and Memory in Salt of this Sea and Somewhere, Home

According to Arendt, there is both a reduction and a complexity in the word “house” which she describes as “shorthand” for “thinking about being housed, dwelling, having a home” (“Thinking and Moral Considerations” 172-173). But do houses just “home” people? This paper looks at how the structure of the house can bear affective relations and multi-layered narratives not only of the individual but of the whole family line, reflecting a dynamic form of family history and identity. Through a reading of the centrality of the protagonists’ ancestral house in Annemarie Jacir’s film *Salt of this Sea* and Nada Awar Jarrar’s *Somewhere, Home*, this paper looks at how houses are not fixed structures, but spaces that are constantly being produced (Lefebvre). It looks at how these spaces transform from dwelling places and into material loci of memory and affect, where the most mundane practices of everyday living are loaded with meaning and emotion.

Stefan Maneval (University Martin Luther Halle-Wittenberg, Allemagne)

Naturalizing Collective Identity: The Affective Architecture of Hizbullah's "Mleeta Tourist Landmark of the Resistance" in South Lebanon

Sitting on a hilltop close to the southern border of Lebanon, the "Mleeta Tourist Landmark of the Resistance" serves to commemorate Hizbullah's resistance against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon (1982–2000) and the war in 2006, Israel's last futile attempt to defeat Hizbullah.

Mleeta is an outdoor museum in the first place, combining monuments, weaponry and other military infrastructures, such as shelters and tunnels dug into the mountain, embedded in a scenery that is part landscaped, part natural. In Mleeta, Hizbullah created a memorial and an architecture that showcases the party's supposed connection with the land and rootedness like South Lebanon, thus underscoring its self-declared role as protectors of the region and the territory of the Lebanese nation – and, hence, of the assumed interests of all Lebanese.

The paper discusses how the Mleeta memorial site and museum relates to the notion of a Lebanese nation on the one hand, and Hizbullah's collective identity, which seems to challenge the sovereignty of the nation-state, on the other. Considering nations, religious communities and political parties as variant forms of social imaginaries, the paper explores how the capacity of architecture to affect human bodies is used, in Mleeta, to contribute to the manifestation, perpetuation and re-negotiation of such imaginary collective identities.

Lisa Marchi (University of Trento, Italie)

Etel Adnan's Paris, When It's Naked: Reflections on Gender, Urban Space, Affects, and Politics

Taking Etel Adnan's *Paris, When It's Naked* (1993) as a point of departure, the proposed paper engages with a set of issues relating to gender, urbanism, affects, and politics. In particular, the paper examines how points of connection are created in Adnan's work between people, places, and political insights, and how urban organization and the affective atmosphere produced by it are felt "through the skin" (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001).

Adnan's daily wanderings across the French capital, her dispassionate observations of everyday life, and her heartfelt recollections about cities and places within and outside the Middle East create an ambivalent textual site, where the local meets the global and the tensions traversing both the urban space and the planet at large become manifest.

By embracing a transnational approach and an interdisciplinary methodology, the paper hopes to propel a fruitful discussion on the political potential of creative practices that intersect gender issues with urbanism and politics.

Faten Morsy (University Ain Shams, Egypte)

Prison Talk: Syrian Women Narrate their Pain

This paper offers readings of some recent Syrian prison writings and documentary films. The selections offer a way to investigate the various affective responses to structures of oppression, humiliation and domination in present-day Syria.

By way of examples from the oral narratives of the young artists who themselves experienced incarceration in Syria in post-2011, "prison literature" is conceptualized anew through the recent social and political affect theory. In this sense, the prison is presented as more than just a place of confinement, "It becomes a thought, a feeling and a lived experience where the focus on the encounter and mutual experience between the body and the material world takes precedence" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). By retelling the insidious and individual traumas of their experiences, writing and telling become acts of witnessing whereby the personal pain is transformed into a collective experience with all the ensuing exigencies of a process of communal and national healing.