THE POLITICS AND PRACTICES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

POSITIONING THE MATERIAL PAST IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

EDITED BY
RAMI DAHER AND IRENE MAFFI

I.B.TAURIS

THE POLITICS AND PRACTICES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Positioning the Material Past in Contemporary Societies

EDITED BY
RAMI DAHER AND IRENE MAFFI

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2014 by I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada
Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

Library of Modern Middle East Studies 101

ISBN: 978 1 84885 535 9

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress catalog card: available
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

This book is dedicated in memory of our beloved friend
'Ali Maher, the Sheikh of Amman

CONTENTS

List of Contributors ix
List of Illustrations xii
List of Tables xiii
List of Abbreviations xiv
Note on Transliteration xv
Acknowledgements xvi

Introduction 1
Rami Daher and Irene Maffi

Part I. Historical premises

1. Heritage as cultural capital in the Late Ottoman Empire 55
Wendy M.K. Shaw
2. The intricate life of cultural heritage: colonial and postcolonial processes of patrimonialisation in Jordan 66
Irene Maffi
3. The 'Belle Epoque' in Egypt: registers, rhetorics and mechanisms of heritage invention 104
Mercedes Volait
4. Challenging museum spaces: dancing with ethnic and cultural diversity in Lebanon 135
Lina Tahan

Part II. Case Studies: local actors and international fluxes in the heritage domain

5. Families and urban activists as emergent local actors in urban rehabilitation in the Mashreq: re-defining heritage/re-writing the city 151
Rami Daher

6. 'Al-Madina al-Qadima' of Damascus: preservation of the cultural heritage, representations of the past, and the production of a valuable space 178
Domenico Copertino

7. The domestic heritage: public or private heritage? The case of Aleppo 221
Jean-Claude David

8. Is rural heritage relevant in an urbanising Mashreq? Exploring the discourse of landscape heritage in Lebanon 233
Jala Makhzoumi

9. Moroccan-Jewish heritage re-visited 252
Sophie Wagenhofer

10. 'Hidden treasures'? Museum collections of modern art from the Arab World (1891–2010) 270
Silvia Naef

Conclusion: The destiny of a Western paradigm in the Arab World

11. History and heritage studies: passing interest or epistemological turn? Western historical agenda or anthropological perspective? 293
Dominique Poulot

Index 327

5

FAMILIES AND URBAN ACTIVISTS AS EMERGING LOCAL ACTORS IN URBAN REHABILITATION IN THE MASHREQ: RE-DEFINING HERITAGE/ RE-WRITING THE CITY

Rami Daher

Defining and choosing a geographical area for research and comparative analysis can sometimes be a difficult and growing task, due to continually shifting geographical and geopolitical categories, along with their associated meanings and perceptions (Daher, 2007a, 3). As critical political geographers have shown, it is important to move beyond the acceptance of geopolitics as a reality of world politics and to examine critically the ways in which geopolitical terms are defined and the significant social meanings they hold (Marston and Rouhani, 2001, 101–2). Nevertheless, the three geopolitical and geo-cultural categories of the *Bilad al-Sham*,[1] the Mashreq[2] and the Levant – though they differ in meaning, genealogy and connotations, according to the privileged standpoint and discursive practices that facilitated the founding of such categories – refer to generally the same geographical region, encompassing the countries of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (the geographical focus of this paper). While all these geopolitical and geo-cultural categories have been constructed, and can thus be

contested and become subject to scrutiny, some emerged from within the region (such as the *Bilad al-Sham* or *al-Mashreq al-'Arabi*), while others – such as the Middle East or even the Levant – were part of colonial or neo-imperial 'imagineering' of the region (Daher, 2007a, 3). The Middle East as a geographical term, according to Dalby (2003), suggests the historical legacy of imperial specifications of the region. The term comes from 'earlier British designations of the world, which have been maintained on the maps and in the geopolitical imaginations of policy makers' (ibid, 7–10).

This chapter hopes to shed light on the role played by local actors, agents, families, foundations and urban activists who are emerging as patrons of art, heritage, urban rehabilitation and cultural production, with serious public and civic agendas that attempt to re-think the cities of the Mashreq in general, and Amman in particular. What is significant about this research is that it examines the practices and processes of 'patrimonialisation' on the part of these emerging groups of actors and agents, with significant consequences for urban spaces within these cities. Researching and theorising on the engagement of such groups becomes crucially important in a time of state and public-sector withdrawal.

In the midst of both the dominant official discourses in the Arab world and the current neo-liberal withdrawal of the state from several previously active social and cultural agendas (involving diverse issues pertaining to social housing, the creation of public spaces and amenities and the patronage of culture and art, to mention only a few), such emerging actors and agents represent a local voice that is attempting to re-define heritage and to re-write the city, and to provide an alternative 'space' for self-expression and collectives in art and culture in cities today. Even though the chapter will focus on Amman, the diverse case studies cover a wide range of cities in the Mashreq, such as Damascus and Aleppo in Syria; Beirut, Sidon (Saida) and Tripoli (Trablus) in Lebanon; Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah in Palestine; and Amman, Salt and Irbid in Jordan. There is thus a good opportunity for regional comparisons.

Neoliberal[3] urban restructuring and the crucial need for an alternative urban vision: the emerging role of the 'creative urban class'

Prior to venturing into a discussion of how these various actors and agents engage in the cities of the Mashreq, it is important to shed light on current urban conditions and on the details of contemporary urban transformations. If the first oil boom of the 1970s in the Gulf facilitated the flow of petro-dollars to banks in places like Beirut and Amman and led then to a construction

boom; more recently (towards the 1990s), and with the flow of a new wave of oil surplus capital from the Gulf; we have witnessed an obvious trend in the form of neoliberal urban restructuring and real-estate investments that led to more exclusive spaces in these cities. In Amman, urban dwellers have been noticing the proliferation of a new visual urban landscape, manifested in numerous enormous billboards promoting exclusive urban environments, in the form of gated communities and high-end business towers in different parts of the city, leading to more spatial and socio-economic divisions in the city. A stretch of billboard about the Abdali investment project is the only source of information for the community at large on this major neo-liberal urban restructuring project in the city. The slogans on these billboards (e.g. 'Let's start the pleasure of shopping') seek to change society by introducing consumerism, where property is par excellence the new consumer good (Daher, 2011).

It is interesting to understand the effects of circulating global capital (surplus oil revenues) – huge reserves of money in search of high-yielding and secure investments), of excessive privatisation and of urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, all the Arab Gulf States, and indeed throughout the Arab world, transforming urban reality, property values, speculation and the very nature of public life in the cities. It has been estimated that over the period 2005–20 the Gulf States are likely to have invested some $3000 billion in the Middle East and North Africa (Elsheshtawy 2008).

Citizens all over the Middle East are bombarded on a daily basis by the boom in real-estate development. Local newspapers, newly emerging property magazines, television advertisements and billboards all promote such development, in the form of exclusive business towers and high-end gated residential communities. It is very obvious that property is most notably the new consumer good in the Middle East, and real-estate development the region's new religion. Middle Eastern cities are now competing to attract international investment, business and tourism. Currently, developments in Dubai in the UAE, such as the world's two largest man-made islands (Palm Jumeirah and Palm Jebel Ali) and major skyscrapers and luxurious resorts in Sheikh Zayed Street, are becoming the precedents and models to follow in other cities of the region. This reality stands in sharp contrast to a previous time – around the 1960s – where cities like Cairo or Beirut represented cutting-edge urbanism for the rest of the Arab world.

New emerging urban islands of excessive consumption for the chosen elite, together with the internationalisation of commercial real-estate companies and construction consultancies capable of providing high-quality services, signify this neo-liberal urban restructuring in places such as downtown Beirut, Abdali in Amman (Summer, 2005; Daher, 2007a; 2008a), Dreamland in Cairo (Adham, 2004), the financial district of Manama in

Bahrain, the development of the Abu Ruqraiq river in Rabat,[4] the Pearl Island reclamation project in Doha, and even in the heart of the Holy City of Mecca, through the Jabal Omar project.[5] Cities are obliged to create the right milieu, a competitive business climate and first-class tourism attractions in order to lure people to come and live, invest and entertain there. Developments in Dubai and the current urban reconstruction of downtown Beirut (known as the Solidere Project) are becoming the models to follow in such developments. Adham (2004, 134–68) has noted that circulating images of such neo-liberal urban restructuring mimics developments in the West, and as such represents an 'Oriental vision of the Occident'.

There is a crucial need to understand contemporary urban transformations in cities of the Middle East, and elsewhere in the Arab world. Elsheshtawy (2004, 6) has elaborated on how the literature is filled with work examining the colonial impact on the urban spatial structure of Middle Eastern cities, yet there is a gap when it comes to studying the influence of contemporary global trends – namely globalisation. Amman represents a clear example of neoliberal urban restructuring and of emerging forms of spatial ordering and engineering, such as high-end and isolated urban development and regeneration (Abdali),[6] upper-end residential gated communities all over the city (Green Land,[7] Andalusia[8]), business towers that offer an exclusive concept of refuge and consumption; and even low-income residential cities (in Jizza[9] and al-Zarqa[10]) that work to push the poorer segments of society to the outskirts of the city in newly zoned heterotopias. One prominent objective of this discursive mapping in Amman is to unpack and expose the rhetoric and to deconstruct the emancipatory discourse of these emerging landscapes of neoliberalism (Daher, 2008a).

These endeavours all reflect the dominant political and ideological practices of power, regulated by neoliberal tropes, camouflaged in the legitimacy of the local (through promises of 'job provision', 'new lifestyles' and other emancipatory rhetoric), and manifested through spatially-engineered realities. In reality, several of these emerging neoliberal projects in cities are thought to be leading towards urban geographies of inequality and exclusion and of spatial/social displacement. The projects are operating in the midst of newly-emergent governing bodies in cities, such as MAWARED in Amman,[11] which are replacing, manipulating, silencing or even replacing traditional governing bodies such as municipalities and governorates (Daher, 2011, 273–96).

Furthermore, and in a global arena, neoliberalism has led to excessive privatisation, the withdrawal of the state from welfare programmes,[12] the dominance of multi-national corporation politics and, as far as the Third World is concerned, changes in international aid, in the form of structural

adjustments and policy prescriptions rather than project-oriented aid. This was coupled with the surfacing of several discursive tactics to accompany the neoliberal transformation, such as the dominance of the World Trade Organization (WTO), international gatherings such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), free-trade agreements with the USA, NAFTA and several other similar economic restructurings at the global level (Daher 2007b, 270).

Needless to say, this transformation has a substantial impact not only on cities as a whole, but also on how and for whom urban investment projects are developed. In many cases, the outcome has intensified issues of social equity, inclusion-exclusion, and accountability. Rosemann (2009, 3) describes how one major shift in globalisation is the increasing competition between cities and regions, on both national and international levels. To facilitate economic development, cities are more or less forced to make themselves attractive to investors and enterprises by investing in infrastructure, facilities and the development of attractive sites for new business development.

The withdrawal of the state from its previous engagement in public projects and infrastructure within the cities of the region, together with the scarcity of public-sector projects in the cities, make the different initiatives launched by various actors and agents which will be discussed throughout this chapter of utmost significance to the cities and their associated public life.

The city is a complicated organism involving different power mechanisms and contested narratives; in the midst of major urban-restructuring projects, leading to a more exclusive urban life, there arise diverse alternative endeavours championed by creative agents and actors such as urban designers and architects, local community groups, urban activists, families, foundations and philanthropists, all with a genuine social agenda that attempts to counteract neoliberal urban policies and strives instead to create a more inclusive urban landscape. More recently, literature and research has addressed the rise of a creative class in cities which focuses on diversity and creativity as basic drivers of innovation and of regional and national growth (Florida, 2003). Amman is one place in the region where there has been a noticeable rise of such a class, which is attempting to make a difference in a socially, economically and spatially divided city.[13]

Emerging urban families, actors and agents

This section of the chapter will attempt to identify these actors in more detail, together with new forms of public groupings and agents, all of whom

present an alternative urban vision of the cities of the Mashreq, and will strive to understand their different discourses and levels of attachment to and engagement with their respective cities in terms of urban rehabilitation and activism.

Notable families and foundations

The role played by families, local actors who are re-emerging as patrons of art, heritage or culture, or as philanthropists with serious public and civic agendas in the Arab East (*al-Mashreq al-'Arabi*) – involving countries like Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Jordan – is very significant. In the midst of dominant 'official' discourses in the Arab world that work to define heritage and to write history from the top down, these emerging families represent a local voice that is attempting to re-write history, re-define heritage and re-position itself within current socio-economic and territorial transformations in the cities of the region. This voice is embodied in local families either who are politically or economically influential, or whose notable nineteenth-century ancestors acted during the Ottoman period as mediators between the central government in Istanbul and local regional authorities within one of the Ottoman provinces (Manna', 1992, 70–1), but whose role markedly decreased during the mandate period in the first half of the twentieth century, and especially after the creation of nation states in the region during the second half (Daher, 2007b, 297–303).

The culture ministries of many states all over the world are aware of the emergence of several private actors heavily involved in the creation of museums and the rehabilitation of urban heritage. Schuster (1998, 58) has described how, despite the historical tendency to create state museums and to treat heritage properties as the property of the state, the organisational restructuring of museums and the built heritage under the banner of privatisation is now quite common, and it has become incumbent on those who are connected with these state cultural policies to examine the institutional arrangements through which those policies are realised.

Furthermore, and based on numerous examples in many Third World countries, it is evident that the work of emerging non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or even of private philanthropic initiatives, are achieving a widely-recognised impact on community development in certain urban and rural areas, and are even competing strongly with formal and conventional public-sector interventions.

Whether in Hariri, Debbaneh or Audi in Lebanon, Shoman, Tell or Bisharat in Jordan, Toukan, Khouri, Qattan or Husseini in Palestine, or Ayidi, Jabry or Azem in Syria, many of the *Bilad al-Sham's* notable families

and elites are re-emerging into public life, reintroducing themselves as patrons of art, heritage and culture. Family estates, historic mansions and heritage sites are being conserved, rehabilitated and adapted into centres of culture, history/heritage museums, art galleries and themed restaurants, appreciated by a wider spectrum of society – particularly by young people and by adults aged 35–45 – who share a sense of belonging and an appreciation of these historic urban sites (Daher, 2004). The 'patrons of heritage' are reclaiming their position as public personae in various areas of the region, through their appropriation of heritage and their appeal to culture, art and the intelligentsia.

Sidon (Saida) in Lebanon represents a perfect example of local families involved in the local cultural scene. While the Debbaneh family are restoring their old residence – it will be the new Debbaneh Palace and Saida History Museum – another notable family in Saida, the Audis, have also adapted their old residence, as a Soap Museum, and have been involved heavily through the Audi Foundation in urban regeneration in the city. The Debbaneh Palace was built in 1721 by the Hammoud family, and acquired by the Debbanehs in 1800. It has since undergone several periods of restoration, particularly after the war in 1999 when the descendants of Raphael Youssef Debbaneh set up the Debbaneh Foundation, which established the Palace and museum. The function of the latter is to represent and shed light on the city's urban, socio-economic and political past, and with the aim of constantly renewing the visitor's interest in those aspects of its history the project will not only include artifacts from the past but also focus heavily on the societies which produced them. This will involve explanations and descriptions of people's daily lives, family social structures and political circumstances, not to mention construction, architecture and town planning.[14]

Meanwhile, the Audi family in Saida, through their foundation, have transformed the old family residence (once a soap factory) into the headquarters of the foundation and a thematic museum of hand-made soap. The museum seeks to show the history of soap in the region at large, stretching between Tripoli (in Lebanon), Aleppo (in Syria), Nablus (in Palestine) and Salt (in Jordan), and to show the various stages of its manufacture and the diversity of products. Furthermore, the family's involvement in the city includes the renovation of building facades in a historic street nearby, Al-Shakriyya, and the rehabilitation of various traditional housing units in the same neighbourhood.[15] The work of both families (Audis and Debbanehs) adds to their prestige and their sense of identity, in addition to strengthening their relationship with their home town. The Soap Museum marks one of the early examples of such projects, of which several have started to appear in

Lebanon, such as the Bsous Museum, which narrates and displays the heritage of the silk industry in the country (Dahdah, 2004).

Another type of family patronage which is more political in nature, taking the form of major charitable work, is undertaken by the Hariri Foundation, founded by the late Lebanese leader and Prime Minister Rafiq al Hariri. The Hariri family, for whom Saida is their home town, has concentrated on the restoration of major heritage monuments within the city, such as the Omari Mosque (an important twelfth-century building, which was shelled by Israeli aircraft in 1982) and *Khan al-Franj*, a historic urban hotel and inn which has supported business and trade since the seventeenth century. Bonne (1995, 103–4) sketches the Hariri Foundation's contribution to the reconstruction and urban rehabilitation of the city of Saida. This also includes conducting studies and research on the City;[16] urban restoration and rehabilitation projects, such as the restoration of historic houses in the Old City after the Israeli invasion; and the restoration of historic monuments in the same area, including *Hammam al-Ward*, *Hammam al-Shaykh*, the Sea Mosque and Khan al-Franj. Saida's urban heritage has captured the interest of such members of the political elite as the Hariris; the reasons for their patronage could be multiple, but are all linked to creating legitimacy for a powerful family and to strengthening its elite networks and political power. Their foundation has also supported the upgrading of major streets through infrastructure development (e.g. water and sewage systems) in the Old City, in addition to the construction of several new public buildings – schools, municipal buildings and other public facilities, such as libraries and hospitals.[17]

On a regional scale, one very early example of notable family patronage in the field of heritage and culture comes from Jordan. Kan Zaman, dating from the late 1980s, is one of the very earliest examples of the heritage industry in the Middle East, coupling entertainment with heritage and tradition to promote a new heritage tourism product in the region (Daher, 2007a). It was set up to represent and display the image of a traditional Jordan in terms of setting, cuisine, arts and crafts, costumes and architecture (Maffi, 2004, 212). It represents the adaptation, in the Yadoudeh area outside Amman, of a *khirbet* ('estate', 'farm'), belonging to a landowning family (the Abu Jabers), into a traditional restaurant and coffee-shop. The old stables, where the restaurant is located, and the landowners' estate have become a popular tourist attraction for local and foreign visitors alike, where in addition to eating and drinking they can enjoy niche shopping at the different local craft and souvenir shops within the same premises. The project, financed in 1989 by Jordan Tourism Investment, became a model for similar adaptations all over the country and elsewhere in the Middle

East as well, to the extent where similar places adopted the same name, such as Salt Zaman and Madaba Zaman in Jordan. (*Zaman* can be loosely translated into English as 'bygone days', and *kan* is the past tense of the verb meaning 'be', so *Kan Zaman* can be rendered as 'existing in bygone days'.)

The Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, established by the Arab Bank in Jordan in 1978, is another example of family/corporate philanthropy in the region; it has supported the transformational changes in contemporary Arab cultural discourses. The Shoman Foundation, through its different cultural activities (such as the Shoman Forum, a series of public lectures by local Arab social critics and critical thinkers) has provided an alternative voice to enter into dialogue at a time of crises. The Foundation had been extensively involved in the conservation and protection of Amman's architectural heritage through the *Darat al-Funun* project: an old, once deserted complex built on ancient ruins and converted into a nexus of art and culture accessible to all strata of Jordanian society, and thus serving the public (Daher, 1999). In 1993, the complex was adapted in a way that allowed a panoply of cultural events and of periods in history (ancient Roman, Byzantine, early twentieth century) to coexist. The project seeks to connect with the community both physically, through its architecture and overall layout within the neighbourhood, and in other ways, through its transparency and accessibility (Daher, 1999, 35–6). In a meeting with Suha Shoman, she elaborated how *Darat al-Funun* 'is a place where you can see art in progress, a place that hosts public events and lectures on art and on the city'. Rejecting expressions like 'patron' and 'cultural centre', she feels they have created a house of the arts, a place that facilitates dialogue and offers a chance to view art in progress, a refuge for Arab artists and an art library dedicated to the public (which was the first in Amman when it was created in the early 1990s). She added that 'artists need a place to work, to discuss and to hold a dialogue: Al-Dara is a house on the hill surrounded by trees'.[18]

In Irbid, the family of the Jordanian poet Arar, the Tells, have been a continuous supporter of local art and of a rich cultural life in northern Jordan. They were the patrons of several heritage conservation and cultural projects in the city, such as the rehabilitation of their old *madafa* (a communal place for hosting family gatherings and events, and for receiving guests and travellers). The family also adapted Arar's old house into a cultural centre, which they then offered as a gift to the city.[19]

Shami (1989, 451–77) emphasises the importance of such buildings as *madafa*s, with their associated memories, since they document a significant part of the region's history. Maffi (2004, 319–24) considers the Tell *madafa* in particular to be a 'site of memory', which not only has the potential to negotiate political space with respect to the state but is also a place that

reaffirms the social status of this particular family in the context – both local and national – of other tribes and families.

In Damascus, one of the families interested in the protection of cultural heritage who have supported several public projects related to the arts, heritage and culture is that of Ayidis. Othman Ayidi established the Ayidi Foundation in 1977, and since then it has not only sponsored several cultural initiatives in Damascus and elsewhere in Syria, but also financed archaeological excavations and architectural restoration work in places like Aphamia and the Citadel of Aleppo, in addition to several heritage conservation-projects in Damascus itself. Local families in Damascus share a keen interest and a strong sense of belonging and pride in their city.

Bayt Jabry ('Jabry house') in Damascus is one of the places within the historic Hamrawi neighbourhood that is becoming very popular among the café society of Damascus. In *Bayt Jabry* a local Damascene individual has transformed his grandfather's old house, which was being used for storage, into a coffee house and cultural centre. The house was originally built in the seventeenth century for the Jabry family, but by 1975 was deserted, as the family could no longer afford to keep it except as a storage space; in this it was typical of many historic courtyard houses in the Old City. In 1988, however, one of the Jabry grandsons had the idea of changing it into a restaurant, and now it is the haunt of politicians, artists, poets and tourists alike, and there are also plans to use it as an art gallery and a second-hand bookshop.[20] What is interesting about this rehabilitation and adaptive re-use project is that it had succeeded in attracting a diverse audience of local Damascene families, from different social strata and age-groups, in addition to being a place very popular amongst expatriates who live in or are visiting Damascus (Daher, 2007a, 38–9).

In the midst of such large-scale tourism developments and excessive commercialisation of visitors' experiences there emerges a genuine and very authentic partnership between tourism and heritage in the *Bilad al-Sham* region, represented in small hotels, owned and run by a family, in Damascus, Aleppo, Amman and Beirut, offering an alternative alternative to grand luxurious hotels. Whether it is the historic *al-Rabi'a* hotel located in an old Damascene courtyard house, or the early twentieth-century *Le Baron* hotel in Aleppo, such establishments not only help to ensure that revenue from tourism remains in Syria rather than being repatriated abroad, but also provides a different experience for the tourist or traveller who is willing to explore the city, with all its wonders and all the realities of its everyday social life, as opposed to a rapid and iconographic experience restricted to certain chosen buildings and places on a pre-planned itinerary (Daher, 2007a, 44–6). The families who run these old hotels and enterprises, which

are becoming very popular amongst tourists, are very active in the definition and shaping of heritage, and provide their own different levels of connections to the city and its historic public places.

In Palestine, and even with the severe conditions under the current occupation, philanthropists of different Palestinian families, such as the Qattans, Aqqads, Shomans, Sabbaghs and Khouris, have established the Jerusalem-based Welfare Association,[21] a perfect example of family philanthropy aiming at supporting local Palestinian institutions and the general public. One of the Association's main goals is the restoration of Jerusalem's Old Town, and within this programme it has been able to complete some 22 projects, the most significant of which are the *Dar al-Aytam al-Islamia*, *Al Madrasa Menjakiyya* and *Suq al-Qattanin*. Since its establishment in 1984, the Association has in total accomplished some 400 projects in the conservation of historic monuments, construction, health, education and the rehabilitation of damaged buildings and infrastructure. These projects have provided 320,000 days of work for thousands of workers in the West Bank and Gaza (Daher, 2007b).

It is of course almost impossible to study the social world and realities of urban activism, particularly in countries like the ones addressed in this article (such as Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) which show decreasing levels of state-funded intervention, without a full understanding of donor agencies' policies, such as those of the Welfare Association, and the aid they make available. This is true simply because in many cases such sources of funding become the only possible way of accessing financial support for such urban activism. The patronage of families for heritage and urban rehabilitation projects works first to redefine heritage by concentrating on those marginalised local and regional realities that have previously been subject to and disguised by the formal state discourse on heritage and history. Second, such projects tend to concentrate on issues related to everyday life, such as soap production, silk, commerce, *madafa*s (the architecture of hospitality), and urban social history; they provide a clear opportunity for a different and alternative reading of cities in the Mashreq.

In the Mashreq, as in most of the developing world, local public-financing mechanisms are minimal. Furthermore, state funding of urban rehabilitation, heritage conservation or site management is at low levels. Hence the work of the families in question becomes of crucial importance, as in some cases it represents the only alternative to a different reading of history, of heritage and of place. The various examples so far presented are a testimonial to how such notable, elite families in the *Bilad al-Sham* are attempting to rewrite themselves into history and into contemporary society, at a time of different emerging public and counter-public groupings active in civil

society. These families clearly represent an old/new group of 'publics' that is reintroducing itself into the region, not only through the patronage of heritage projects, the arts and culture, but also through socio-economic and political public life.

Urry (1990, 84–5) has discussed the notion, when addressing cultural changes and the restructuring of cultural activities (such as cultural tourism) in a shift from modernity to post-modernity, of the former as involved in structural differentiation, and the latter, by contrast, in 'de-differentiation' where the borders between high and low culture, between scholarly or auratic art and popular pleasures, and between elite and mass forms of consumption are dissolved. Now we see the celebration of the ordinary and of everyday culture. One can easily situate the phenomenon in the region of notable families' emerging patronage of the art, culture and heritage of everyday life (e.g. the museums of soap or silk production in Lebanon, or the house celebrating the life of a local poet in Jordan), within a post-modernism which is anti-hierarchical and opposed to vertical differentiation.

In many of these 'sites of memory', the notion of place is central (memory as connected to places, hence this notion of urban social memory as opposed to national abstract history, which is mainly connected to grand narratives and events). Several participators in these processes of patrimonialisation have felt a social responsibility to document the various sites and their different interconnections in social and urban memory, especially given the absence of national heritage projects in such countries. During a meeting with Mrs Suha Shoman (who became director of the Khaled Shoman Foundation after her husband's death), she explained how – being a Palestinian with strong feelings of loss – she considers that the need to document the site and memories of it, in addition to the experiences of different Arab artists, is a significant responsibility and a priority for her foundation.[22]

Yet, and most important of all, these local-family heritage projects have led to new accessibility and thus an important opportunity for a re-reading of the history and memories of the region's recent past. This is part of a recent paradigm shift in scholarly Arab historiography, characterised by a change from focusing on the grand narratives of national/formal history to re-focusing on the local, and granting a voice to social and urban history, the ordinary and everyday life. These projects offer an ethnographic approach to the understanding of local history and the role of different families and foundations, and provide an opportunity to investigate and research intersections and mediations between contemporary state and society. Finally, the projects not only represent a form of assertion of such families' (and their foundations') role in the public sphere, but also give a voice to re-articulated memories at the regional level, i.e. in the *Bilad al-Sham* as a whole, looking

at patterns, interconnections, regional mobility, and moments of change and transformation.

Urban activists

Significant groups surfacing in many cities of the Mashreq are formed by urban activists seeking to critique contemporary urban transformations. One particular group in Amman is *Hamzet Wasel* (HW) which attempts to research, and to react against, the discrepancies between east and (affluent) west Amman. HW, a diverse community of Ammanis engaged in social activism and the building of public space and of authentic relationships across the city, work with individuals and communities to design and participate in activities and programmes that tackle the city's complex challenges and explore its unique opportunities;[23] on their website, HW define themselves as a platform for diversity, activism and inclusion. They envision inclusive Arab cities where diverse, active, engaged and responsible citizens work together to address the problems of their respective localities. Furthermore, they build authentic relationships with members of urban communities and work with them to create joint solutions that preserve and build on the human values of neighbourhoods and cities.[24]

One of HW's most inspiring urban activities is entitled 7-Jar ('7th neighbour'). It is an annual public event, a city exploration with various themes and focal points, examining communities and the specific challenges they face throughout the city. Such challenges are met by promoting community development and interaction between members of different neighbourhoods throughout Amman. In an interview, Raghda Butros added that:

> One issue facing the city is the lack of social contact between people of different neighbourhoods in Amman. 7-Jar, which includes participants from all areas of Amman, is designed to tackle this problem by encouraging teamwork and the use of collective problem-solving skills. The name 7-Jar refers to the 'seven mountains' of Amman and makes reference to the Prophet Mohammad's call for people to ask after their seventh neighbour.[25]

Hamzet Wassel had been closely involved with the community of Jabal al Qala'a, a middle-class quarter of historic Amman; this began when the Greater Amman Municipality, together with the USAID-funded project SIYAHA, started a 'cultural site-management' project in the ancient Citadel (*Al-Qala'a*). The plan called for the walling-off of the area to prevent the children of the neighbourhood using part of the archaeological site as

a park for leisure pursuits, including kite-flying. HW negotiated with the Greater Amman Municipality to make the site more inclusive and accessible to all, and also held several kite-flying events with participants from different parts of the city. Furthermore, HW also lobbied against an exclusive, neo-liberal real-estate project that was to be launched in the district and that would have caused the displacement of residents – and a severe case of gentrification – along with the demolition of several historic buildings.[26]

Other urban activists include the anthropologist Ahmad Abu Khalil, Editor-in-Chief of *Mastour*, a local magazine that addresses the conditions of the poor in the city and researches how they are affected by current master-planning and neo-liberal urban transformations in Amman. Through the magazine and the contribution of several other writers, urban activists and anthropologists, attempts are being made, for example, to expose planning schemes that would lead to the displacement of major transportation hubs to the city's outskirts, and to analyse the consequences of this on users of public transport.

In Beirut, once thought of as the intellectual capital of the Arab world, the area of Hamra in Ras Beirut could today be considered – together with its small and medium-sized businesses, such as shops, restaurants, hotels and alternative cafés (like *ta-marbouta*, Ziko House, Café Younis), a mild yet important form of urban and social resistance to global/local urban transformations that might privilege a more neo-liberal, capitalist approach to investment and development. In the mid-1960s, Hamra Street was a vibrant and avant-garde quarter of the city, where not only cinemas, banks, newspapers, shops and eating outlets were numerous, but was also a hub for a critical society of poets, politicians, educators, novelists, artists, journalists and many others belonging to the *muthaqqafin* ('intellectual') strata of society, who populated Hamra's different cafés and theatres and debated issues of public and social concern. Hamra, for Beirutis, was the centre of an active public sphere, and in the politically turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s pavement café-bars, notably Horse Shoe and the Café de Paris, became places of such active public consciousness in the city, for both Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world.

Today Hamra is effectively in danger, as global capital, emanating from the Gulf, is gradually targeting the area, where empty buildings with absentee owners are being sold off one after another. Yet there remain many owners still resisting sale, and the area retains at least part of its competitive edge, enough for major hotels to stay and even to multiply. Hamra has also witnessed during the past decade some genuine interventions within its public space, such as the creation in 2005 of *Masrah al-Madina*, an adaptive re-use of an old cinema house as a public theatre, championed by a famous

local actress, Nidal al-Ashkar, and by other urban activists.[27] Several of the theatre's activities and programmes address major cultural and socio-economic transformations in Beirut. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006, *Masrah al-Madina* offered a refuge for many of the displaced families in the city and organised programmes of relief and disaster mitigation.

Research centres with a focus on the city and on heritage

Amman is also witnessing the emergence of several urban research centres and architectural offices – for instance the Centre for the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE), and Metropolis: Cities Research Council, the research arm of *Turath*: Architecture and Urban Design Consultants – which attempt to engage in research and projects more integrated into urban life. The CBSE, established by Mohammad al Asad, is a non-profit, private study and research institution that aims to address challenges for the built environment, in Jordan and beyond. 'The built environment' is defined in a comprehensive manner to include all physical components of human settlements, such as buildings, streets, open spaces and infrastructure. CSBE is thus an interdisciplinary centre, covering environmental studies, urban design and planning, conservation, architecture, landscape architecture and construction technologies.

One of CSBE's projects, entitled Diwan al-Mimar, is a forum for architects, who invite speakers and researchers to lecture on issues related to transformations currently taking place in the city; many of the sessions have already been documented on the Centre's website and are thus accessible to the general public. CSBE is also involved in a wide range of activities, including landscaping to conserve water, 'grey' water reuse projects, and energy-efficient design and construction.

Turath/Metropolis has worked on several projects that seek to give a voice to the city, such as a comprehensive study on the identification, management and protection of the city's architectural and urban heritage. The projects cater for the creation of inclusive public space in the city; Rainbow Street urban regeneration project is one example. The project's objectives were to create more inclusive and more pedestrian-friendly public spaces in the area, while enhancing, protecting and conserving Amman's distinctive urban heritage. Furthermore, the project works to sustain the current social mix in the area, thus counteracting the effects of current neo-liberal transformations and urban restructuring. The project was based on a careful design of eight urban nodes along the street, each with a distinctive character that emerges from existing realities and dynamics. Conserving,

enhancing and complementing the qualities of place while maintaining diversity, and enhancing a sense of place by minimal intervention, were the principal objectives of the project, hence contributing to the creation of inclusive public spaces in the city, encouraging the formation of an active public life and hopefully a public sphere (Daher, 2008b, 14–21).

In the adaptive reuse of a historic electricity shed from the 1930s, the main objective was to transform the building into a contemporary public space hosting public events, art exhibitions and other endeavours of a like nature. The project sought to critique and re-define urban heritage by acknowledging Amman's heritage of modernity (of which this shed is an important example), and to showcase and narrate the story of the city's electrification. This rehabilitation and adaptation of Amman's rare industrial heritage is highly innovative, and falls within the broader attempts that *Turath* is undertaking to protect and conserve the city's social and urban heritage.

In Palestine, one significant research body active on the urban rehabilitation scene is *Riwaq*. Established in 1991, and with headquarters in Ramallah, the organisation is active all over Palestine in documenting and protecting the cultural heritage of the country, through several innovative projects centred on urban rehabilitation, the adaptive re-use of historic buildings, the regeneration of historic villages and city cores, and the researching and documentation of Palestine's urban and cultural heritage. Harnessing the energy and skills of students, architects, archaeologists and historians, *Riwaq* took on the important work of compiling the National Register of Historic Buildings: a 13-year project (1994–2007) which resulted in the publication of three impressive volumes; these contain detailed information, including maps and photographs, on some 420 villages in 16 districts of the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The successes of *Riwaq* are attributed to its active and enthusiastic staff, and specifically to one particular urban and political activist and leader, Suad al-Amiry. Suad strives to shift the concept of conservation from an expensive and elitist activity to a meaningful skill that sustains livelihoods. *Riwaq*'s 'job creation through conservation' has successfully transformed cultural heritage into an important economic tool, notwithstanding a very challenging context of scarce human and financial resources, and the many obstacles resulting from Israel's alarming destruction of Palestine's cultural heritage.

Urban artists

The last two decades have witnessed the rise of a critical and avant-garde art movement in the Arab world ranging from plastic arts, to performance,

to urban art. The challenging question was how art could contribute to addressing social concerns and political issues at regional and global scales, and also social inequalities in cities and villages on a local scale. Baydoun (2003, 22–31) states that art should not exist outside culture and the political; he believes that:

> The transformation of art, itself, to a technical subject means taking it practically out of culture and causing it to exist without justification other than its own rules. In brief, it means a great schism between art and the outside. This is what an art that does not renew its protest and does not connect to a movement of protest ends like; and it lives in a time when culture becomes a secondary issue and perhaps, an additional credit for the politicians and the bureaucrats and even the priests and the mullahs.

In Lebanon, and during and towards the end of the Civil War, performance and urban art assumed a political manifestation and purpose. The so called 'post-war generation' of Lebanese artists – like Ziad Abillama, Walid Sadeq, Akram Za'atari, Toni Chakar, Rabih Mroue and many others – expressed feelings of loss and historical displacement in the face of contemporary Lebanon; the aspirations towards modernisation and emancipation in the middle of the twentieth century had failed in Lebanon, and in the Arab world generally, leaving Arab culture as not quite of the present (Rogers 2007, 5–22). Meanwhile, each of these artists managed to provide a platform for experimental and philosophically engaged artistic practices.

One prominent example of Lebanon's art activism following the Civil War was its engagement with the city. In terms of creating a stage for critique and dialogue, the Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts (*Ashkal Alwan*), which was founded in 1994 by Christine Tohme as a platform for the creation and exchange of artistic practices, has made a notable contribution. *Ashkal Alwan* is committed to education, and to the production, support and circulation of creative and intellectual endeavours rooted in an engagement with civil society. Within the context of post-war Lebanon, *Ashkal Alwan* has introduced and promoted the work of artists engaged in critical art practices.

In an interview with curator Christine Tohme, she explained how *Ashkal Alwan* is grounded in the exploration of public-space politics through urban art and public interventions that provoke critical thinking about the realities of cities today. It has recently moved to its new headquarters, appropriately an adaptive re-use of a pre-industrial workshop building in *Jirs al-Wati*, a rundown industrial area on the outskirts of the city. This new location will

provide an opportunity to engage with parts of the city beyond its historic core, and will certainly pose more questions for artists on the function and meaning of public space, and hence of the public sphere.

One significant activity for *Ashkal Alwan* is their bi-annual workshop, Home Works Forum, which started in 2002 and has evolved into one of the most vibrant platforms in the region and beyond for research and exchange on cultural practices. Artists, cultural practitioners, writers and thinkers gather for ten days in order to share their work; this takes the form of exhibitions, performances, lectures, video presentations, talks by artists, workshops and publications. What links the forum's participants together is their approach to a common set of urgent, timely questions, and their work endeavours to create methods of critical inquiry into cultural and territorial transformation.

In Jordan, one small yet significant manifestation of urban public art that engages with the city of Amman at different levels is Makan. Ola al Khalidi, its founder in 2003, described how she had felt that Amman was deprived of an alternative space for artists, and had therefore opened Makan as a space for expression, as an association to encourage all forms of art and as a place for people who had something to say in the areas of plastic arts, music, cinema, theatre and urban art (Ababsa, 2007, 214). Many of Makan's projects and endeavours engage with the city at various levels, seeking to explore the realities of its heritage, its public spaces and places where inclusion or exclusion is the norm. Makan's events focus on social issues which take art into the public sphere. It is located in one of Amman's historic but inclusive neighbourhoods (Jabal al-Weibdeh) which Khalidi sees as an interesting vantage point from which to consider the city and the contemporary art scene that is taking root there.

In a more recent (December 2010) urban art manifestation, organised by Makan and curated by a resident artist (Juliana Smith), a group of artists and urban activists were asked to come together and to pose individual questions on current urban transformations in Amman. Entitled 'The Utopian Airport Lounge', the initiative took place in different areas, in non-places and places in transition. One particular artist (Dina Haddadin) who participated in this event created a platform for critiquing the displacement of Amman'stransportation hubs to the outskirts of the city, caused by neo-liberal investments and with consequences for the ordinary citizens who use such transportation hubs and for the socio-economic realities – the creation of geographies of inequality.

In the several examples discussed above, of urban activists, research centres and urban artists, it is very clear that many of the projects attempt to address the socio-economic disparities in cities of the Mashreq like Beirut,

Ramallah and Amman. Such initiatives are also involved in urban rehabilitation in the broader sense of the word – they are involved not only in the rehabilitation of the historic cores of these cities; but also in questioning and resisting contemporary neo-liberal urban restructuring and those emergent spaces which foster exclusion. Furthermore, they strive to address the absence or reduction of public space and even attempt to forge a non-physical space for self-expression and self-realisation. Furthermore, many of these activists warn that cities in the region are gradually developing patches of isolated, exclusive urban spaces, thus widening the gaps that already exist and leading to geographies of social inequality and exclusion.

In conclusion: the city in the age of disengagement

At a time of the state's withdrawal from public works and high-minded social agendas, it becomes crucial to research and understand the diversity of actors in the city. One of the main objectives the research project the present author conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria between 2001 and 2011 was to understand the nature and dynamics of the various types of publics, actors and agents (e.g. individuals, families, urban activists, research bodies, urban artists and others) involved in reshaping the contemporary discourse in cities with respect to the politics of defining heritage, to the production and consumption of public space within the city, and to the structuring of a critical debate on current urban transformations.

In studying urban culture, we are also interested in finding out the nature and level of civic engagement in today's cities. 'Drawing on evidence from both Europe and the United States, and without down-playing the importance of the issues of race and poverty', Putnan (2007, 120–1) asked urban leaders and members of the urban middle class to confront the evident social reality that people are no longer as connected to the basic institutions of their communities – neighbourhood groups, fraternal organisations, even political parties – as they once were.

Putnan attributes the growing lack of community participation – what he calls the decline in 'social capital' – and the consequent loss of civic engagement, to many factors: the movement of women into the work-force, increased social and geographical mobility, and 'the technological transformation of leisure'. Another explanation might be that contemporary urban society is deeply divided and every major city has now become culturally contested terrain. 'Whereas cities once held out the promise of a wider, higher form of human community', Putnam argues that contemporary city dwellers now follow a path of less, not more, civic engagement and that our creative stock of 'social capital' – the meaningful human contacts of all

kinds that characterise true communities – is so dangerously eroded that is verges on depletion. Urban dwellers are not connected to one another through collective action as they once were.

One very important question to be asked here is that even in the light of the above review of the work of families and activists in the cities of the Mashreq, is the public sufficiently engaged? In the Arab world, issues of place, urban development and change, and heritage definition have predominantly remained outside the domains of politics and public consciousness. In the Arab world in general, politics – and other matters which ought to be subject to public debate and open to public scrutiny – are confined to the established view – matters concerned with Sharia, the Palestinian issue, Iraq and Afghanistan (in other words, politics with a capital P). Meanwhile, questions of the politics of place, issues of inclusion and exclusion in the city, contested pasts and appropriate models of development (politics with a lower-case p) have predominantly remained outside the domain of politics and critical, rational debate (Daher, 2008a). The present author strongly believes that regardless of the significance and importance of the work, and the dedicated enthusiasm of the actors, urban activists and family foundations in the city today, all this still does not culminate in collective action on the ground. With that said, the work is extremely important and must continue to go forward, especially at a time of general public disengagement and apathy where the city is concerned.

Are we witnessing the end of the concept of collective public action in the city, and instead witnessing the increasingly significant role of agents and actors, especially in the absence of national social agendas on public space, infrastructure provision and heritage projects during this neoliberal era we are all living through? This question is left for further contemplation by the reader; yet the author feels that it is being validated on a daily basis in the Mashreq.

The work of family foundations, urban activists and other actors in the region generates different city imaginaries and various possibilities for the understanding of 'the public interest'. Furthermore, and based on these possibilities, research conducted on and beyond the different actors and agents helps to understand why and how these diverse publics, as social, spatial and ideological realities and entities, emerge from discursive practices, and how they continue to change with respect to local, national and global interconnections and transformations. The researcher cannot avoid noticing that urban rehabilitation in the broader meaning of the term – that is, understanding the city's diverse pasts and memories, engaging in a critical definition of its urban heritage, counteracting current neo-liberal structural and urban transformations, and instead calling for more inclusive public space – is becoming the terrain in

which these actors and agents engage while they try to establish a platform for critical debate. Here, urban cultural heritage becomes a crucial space, forming a critical alternative and thus a more inclusive urban vision of the city.

One significant point which should be alluded to is the importance of the human dimension in these various engagements in urban rehabilitation across the cities of the Mashreq. By this is meant the passion, dedication, vision and perseverance shown by the individuals concerned. To explain, let us briefly review the various urban rehabilitation projects mentioned in this chapter, such as *Darat al-Funun*, *Makan*, and Hamzet Wasel's work in Jabal al Qala'a, all taking place in Amman; or the Soap Museum in Saida, the work of *Ashkal Alwan* in Beirut, or *Riwaq* in Palestine. It is very clear that behind the success of any of these projects lie the enthusiasm, vision and diligence of dedicated individuals who take pride in their work and are deeply committed to their project. In other words, if it was not for the dedication and perseverance of Suha Shouman in *Darat al-Funun*, or of Ola al Khalidi in Makan, or of Raghda Butros behind the work of Hamzet Wassel, or Christine Tohme behind that of *Ashkal Alwan*, or Suad al-Amiry in *Riwaq*, to mention a few examples, then the sustainability of such projects in the city would have been questionable. With this said, one should of course not underestimate the contributions of other actors and agents to these endeavours in the cities.

In October 2009, at a public meeting held by the Greater Amman Municipality regarding the proposals for developing the historic area of Jabal Amman put forward by a major real-estate corporate developer – who had already purchased dozens of historic houses with the aim adapting and rehabilitating them into tourist and cultural destinations – the author of this chapter publically questioned the future sustainability of such projects, orchestrated as they were by corporate investment in urban heritage, simply because of the lack of dedicated individuals (the human dimension) behind each such project; not only would such people have made sure that it would be carried out with passion but they would also be willing to dedicate their time, and in certain cases their whole lives, to the work.

While corporate organisations and the transnational capitalist class describe the city as an abstract space, and criticise it for its failure to provide urban infrastructure to support their large-scale investments, urban activists on the other hand view the city as a heterogeneous reality where different publics and counter-publics dwell, and civic culture and society operate. They in turn criticise the city's failure (through its organising bodies) to provide social equity and social services, and to identify and recognise marginalised realities and groups.

Resistance and activism, even at the individual level, is crucial in addressing the challenges of the city. Successful actors and agents strive to induce

institutional and societal change through active networking, which operates by always taking up new positions. This new generation of activists refuses to create unbreakable relationships of dependency with local communities, and pragmatically recognise the fact that in a heterogeneous society dividing lines will always exist.

Furthermore, the local voice of these diverse actors repositions itself within current socio-economic and territorial transformations in the city, which today is undergoing key socio-economic and spatial transformation. In addition, these local initiatives are in certain cases providing a forum for a critical social debate, one that addresses change and transformation in contemporary Arab cultural discourse. Such forums provide a different venue for dialogue at times of crisis.

Yet, and most important of all, these local initiatives and projects (whether they centre on the urban and social heritage of the city, qualify and grant voice to marginalised urban realities, or even provide an alternative space for self-expression and critical debate in and on the city) offer an important opportunity and a new accessibility for the re-defining of urban heritage and for the re-reading of local history and urban memory in these various cities of the Mashreq.

Notes

1. '*Bilad al-Sham*' is a very old (and now archaic) local geographical term denoting the land to the east of the Mediterranean, and has been in use for more than a thousand years. The concept of *Bilad al-Sham* introduced in this chapter is very different from the politically grounded concept of 'Greater Syria', which is linked to the ideology of pan-Arabism promoted by individuals like Antoun Saadeh or Nuri al Sai'd in the middle of the twentieth century. This chapter promotes a historical/cultural and popular/local concept of *Bilad al-Sham* from the bottom up, grounded in the ethnographic, cultural and regional realities of the area. As a concept/reality present in both popular and scholarly discourses, *Bilad al-Sham* exists beyond the limitations of national boundaries or discourses. Also, regardless of how contested this notion is in official historiographies, *Bilad al-Sham* is still a living and functioning reality.
2. Al-Mashreq-al Arabi is another local concept that has recently emerged during attempts at establishing unity within the Arab world, with its formally different cultural regions: first, al-Mashreq al-Arabi (the 'Arab East'), which encompasses the current nation states of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine; second, Wadi al Neel (the Nile valley), which includes Egypt and Sudan; third, Al-Maghreb al-Arabi (the 'Arab West'), which contains Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco; and fourth, the Arabian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Yemen.

3. The eminent Marxist geographer David Harvey, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), elaborates on the theory of neoliberalism and adds that neoliberal economic thought emerged in the 1970s from a critique of and backlash against the welfare state, and from a push towards a new political economic order, giving rise to the political implementation of neoliberal thought (ibid, 1–5). Politicians of the late 1970s (e.g. Margaret Thatcher) established the basis of a new doctrine that went under the name of 'neoliberalism' and transformed it into the central guiding principle of economic thought and management. According to Harvey: 'Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and stems within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices' (ibid, 2). As a consequence of neoliberal socio-economics, and in countries like Jordan or Lebanon, the state finds itself gradually pulling out of its responsibilities to more fragile sectors, such as education, healthcare, social security and social housing, and instead becomes more involved as a facilitator of real-estate development, a provider of indirect subsidies and a regulator for multi-national corporations.
4. During a recent visit to Rabat (October 2009), the author was astonished by the similarities – in terms of investors, developers and even the rhetoric and discourses of development – between neoliberal investors in Beirut, Amman and elsewhere in the Mashreq and those in Rabat. Thus global capital is definitely circulating not only surplus oil wealth but also images and models of neoliberal development.
5. See at <www.jabalomar.com>, accessed 23 April 2005.
6. Abdali is the major neoliberal real-estate development project currently under way in Amman. The project is promoted as 'a new downtown' for Amman, and is anticipated to include high-end office and residential space in addition to retail, commercial and other tourist activities. The remodelled area, previously the site of the General Jordan Armed Forces Headquarters, consist of 350,000 m^2 in the heart of Amman and will contain a built-up area of approximately a million m^2.
7. Green Land is a gated community development outside Amman, in an area called Marj al Hamam, near the Airport Highway. The main investors in the project are Jordan's Kurdi Group. The properties are mostly villas, but apartments are also included; the cost per m^2 reaches some 750 dinars for villas and 800 for apartments.
8. Andalusia is another high-end gated community being developed outside Amman, near the Airport Highway and on the road to the city of Madaba. The main developers are called TAAMEER Jordan, or the Jordan Company for Real-Estate Development; the primary source of funding is the United Arab Emirates. The cost per m^2 is around 700 dinars for the villas, which include

centralised under-floor heating, a maid's room with a laundry, and interior customisation, with 24-hour security and maintenance, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spa and health club.

9. Jizza is the name of an area that has recently been added to and incorporated within the Greater Amman Municipality; there are general plans for low-income housing projects there. Critics assume that several of these projects, which are sometimes financed by the same developers and investors responsible for high-end gated communities, are meant to cater for the poor and for lower-middle-class residents forced out of inner-city neighbourhoods in Amman.
10. Zarqa is a city in north-easten Jordan, the second-largest city in the country and, by comparison with the capital Amman, generally considered an industrial area lacking in green open spaces. Several parcels of land that used to belong to the army have now been incorporated into new housing projects all around the city.
11. Jordan's MAWARED is the state-owned National Resources Investment and Development Cooperation. Established in 2000, the company's original mandate was to redevelop several inner-city military plots and turn them into income-generating mixed-use sites, as well as to relocate the military out of densely populated areas that offered potential for investment in new facilities. Just five years after its inception, MAWARED has become the country's leading urban-regeneration entity and its largest real-estate developer; it is the agency responsible for the Abadali project, and many others. It has several affiliates, including the Development and Investment Projects (DIP) fund, essentially the investment arm of the military; the Urban Workshop, a not-for-profit independent urban-studies centre; and the newly-established Amman Real-Estate Management & Services (AREMS), specialising in real-estate consultancy and management.
12. The boundary between the state and the public good is becoming very blurred, with major consequences where the former is pulling out of support for vital sectors (e.g. education, agriculture, health and others), and coming to resemble another corporation or institution amongst many, making issues such as accountability very problematic.
13. Al Asad, Mohammad, 'The city's creative energies', at <http://www.csbe.org/urban_crossroads82/city_creative_energies.htm>, accessed 21 July 2008.
14. Meeting with Ms. Monique Aggiouri, Debbaneh Palace, Mutran Street, Saida, 18 February 2002.
15. Meeting with George Audi and other Soap Museum staff, Audi Foundation, Saida, 18 February 2002.
16. Examples of studies conducted by the Hariri Foundation include developing master-plans for the city and producing measured drawings for the sea-front façade, in addition to the historic monuments in the Old City.

17. At <http://www.rhariri.com/youthzone7.aspx>, accessed 30 October 2005.
18. Meeting with Suha Shouman, 6 June 2006.
19. Meeting with Mustafa Wahbeh al Tell (grandson), May 2004.
20. This information is based on several field visits to *Bayt Jabry* in the years 2002–05, and on an interview with the owner, Raed Jabry, in February 2002.
21. The Welfare Association is a privately funded, non-profit organisation established in 1983 by a group of prominent Palestinian business and intellectual figures; it is registered in Switzerland (Hanafi and Tabar, 2005, 61).
22. Meeting with Mrs Suha Shoman, on Tuesday 6 June 2006, at Darat al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, Amman.
23. Based on several interviews with HW's founder, Raghda Butros, between 2008 and 2011.
24. At <http://hamzetwasel.com>, accessed 19 October 2011.
25. See note 24 above.
26. Seeley, Nicholas (2009), 'Whose neighborhood is it?' *JO Magazine*, 24 August, at<http://www.jo.jo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=670:whose-neighborhood-is-it&catid=39:land&Itemid=150>.
27. The information on Masrah al Madina is based on site visits and on interviews with Randa al Asmar, 27 June 2006.

Bibliography

Ababsa, Myriam (2007), *Amman, de pierre et de paix*. Paris: Autrement.

Adham, Khaled (2004), 'Cairo's urban déjà vu: globalization and urban fantasies'. In Elsheshtawy, Yasser (ed.), *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope in a Globalizing World*, pp. 134–68. New York: Routledge.

Bassil, Karl and Zaatari, Akram (2007), *Hashem El Madani Promenades: An Ongoing Project by Akram Zaatari*. Beirut: Arab Image Foundation/Mind the Gap.

Baydoun, Abbas (2003), 'Culture and arts: re the actual'. In Tohme, Christine and Abu Rayyan, Mona (eds), *Home Works: A Forum on Cultural Practices in the Region*, pp. 22–31. Beirut: Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts/Ashkal Alwan.

Bonne, Emmanuel (1995), *Vie publique, patronage et clientèle: Rafic Hariri à Saida*. Beirut: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain.

Dahdah, Linda (2004), 'Bsous museum offers journey into Lebanon's silk heritage'. *Daily Star*, 28 May 2004.

Daher, Rami (1999), 'Gentrification and the politics of power, capital, and culture in an emerging Jordanian heritage industry'. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlement Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 33–47.

——— (2004), 'Notable families of Bilad al Sham as patrons of art, heritage, and culture'. *Daily Star of the Herald Tribune*, 3 July.

——— (2005), 'Urban regeneration/heritage tourism endeavours: the case of Salt, Jordan: local actors, international donors, and the state'. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 289–308.

——— (2007a), 'Re-conceptualizing tourism in the Middle East: place, heritage, mobility and competitiveness'. In Daher (ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity,*

Change and Transformation, pp. 1–69. Clevedon, England Channel View, pp. 1–69.

——— (2007b), 'Tourism: heritage and urban transformations in Jordan and Lebanon: emerging actors and global-local juxtapositions'. In Daher (ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East*, Clevedon, England: Channel View, pp. 263–307.

——— (2008a), 'Amman: disguised genealogy and recent urban restructuring and neoliberal threats.' In Elsheshtawy, Yasser (ed.), *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development*, pp. 37–68. London: Routledge.

——— (2008b), 'The Rainbow Street urban regeneration project'. *Jordan Property Magazine*, June 2008, pp. 14–21.

——— (2009a), 'Overview and synthesis for the regional workshop: rehabilitation of historic towns and villages.' Euromed Heritage Workshop (programme funded by the European Union), Rabat, 8–9 December, pp 29–38.

——— (2009b), 'Global capital, urban regeneration, and heritage conservation in the Levant'. In Calabrese, John (ed.), *The Middle East Institute Viewpoints: Architecture and Urbanization in the Middle East*, at <www.medeasti.org>, pp. 22–6, accessed 5/5/2011.

——— (2010), 'Urban landscapes of neoliberalism: cranes, craters and an exclusive urbanity'. *Jordan Business*, October 2010, pp. 55–8.

——— (2011), 'Discourses of neoliberalism and disparities in the city landscape: cranes, craters and an exclusive urbanity'. In Ababsa, Myriam and Daher (eds), *Cities, Urban Practices, and Nation Building in Jordan*, pp. 273–96. Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient.

Dalby, Simon (2003), 'Geopolitics, the Bush doctrine, and war on Iraq'. *Arab world Geographer*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 7–18

David, Catherine (2003), 'Learning from Beirut: contemporary aesthetic practices in Lebanon'. In Tohme and Abu Rayyan (eds), *Home Works*, pp. 32–9.

Elsheshtawy, Yasser (2004), 'The Middle East city: moving beyond the narrative of loss'. In Elsheshtawy (ed.), *Planning Middle Eastern Cities*, pp. 1–21.

——— (2008), 'The great divide: struggling and emerging cities in the Arab world'. In Elsheshtawy (ed.), *The Evolving Arab City*, pp. 1–26.

Feldman, Hana and Zaatari, Akram (2007), 'Mining war: fragments from a conversation already passed'. *Art Journal*, Summer, pp. 49–68.

Florida, Richard (2003), 'Cities and the creative class'. *City and Community*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March), pp. 3–19.

Hanafi, Sari and Tabar, Linda (2005), *The Emergence of a Palestinian Globalized Elite: Donors, International Organizations and Local NGOs*. Jerusalem: Institute of Palestinian Studies.

Harvey, David, (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maffi, Irene (2000), 'Le statut des objects dans la mise en scène muséographique du passé en Jordanie: le discours historique, la narration mythique et la tradition'. In Maffi and Daher, Rami (eds), *Patrimony and Heritage Conservation in Jordan*, pp. 3–16. Les Documents du CERMOC, No. 10. Beirut and Amman: Centre d'Etudes et de Reserches sur le Moyen Orient Contemporain, pp. 3–16

———(2002), 'New museographic trends in Jordan: the strengthening of the nation'. In Joffe, George (ed.), *Jordan in Transition 1990–2000*, pp. 208–24. London: Hurst.

———(2004), *Pratiques du Patrimoine et Politiques de la Mémoire en Jordanie: entre histoire dynastique et récits communautaires*. Lausanne: Payot.

Manna', Adel (1992), 'Continuity and change in the socio-political elite in Palestine during the late Ottoman period'. In Philip, Thomas (ed.), *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century: The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience*, pp. 69–90. Stuttgart: Steiner.

Marston, S. and Rouhani, F. (2001), 'Teaching and learning the lesson of complexity'. *Arab World Geographer*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 100–2.

Putnam, Robert (2007), 'Bowling alone: America's declining social capital'. In LeGates, Richard and Stout, Frederic (eds), *The City Reader*, pp. 105–113. London and New York: Routledge.

Rodenbeck, Judith (2007), 'In this issue: crossing memory's green lane – contemporary art in Beirut'. *Art Journal*, Summer, pp. 5–7.

Rogers, Sara (2007), 'Out of history: postwar art in Beirut'. *Art Journal*, Summer, pp. 5–22.

Rosemann, Jurgen, (2009), *The New Urban Question: Urbanism beyond Neo-Liberalism*. Rotterdam: International Forum on Urbanism.

Said, E.W. (1979), *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Schuster, J. Mark (1998), 'Beyond privatization: the hybridization of museums and the built heritage'. In Boosma, Peter, Van Hemel, Annemoon and Van der Wielen, Niki (eds), *Privatization and Culture: Experiences in the Arts, Heritage, and Cultural Industries in Europe*, pp. 58–81. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic, pp. 58–81.

Shami, Seteney (1989), 'Settlement and resettlement in Umm Qais: spatial organization of a Jordanian village'. In Bourdieu, Jean-Paul and Al Sayyad, Nezar (eds), *Dwellings, Settlement, and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, pp. 451–76. Boston, MA: University Press of America, pp. 451–76.

——— (1996), 'Re-searching the city: urban space and its complexities'. In Hannoyer, Jean, and Shami (eds), pp. 37–54. *Amman: The City and Its Society*. Beirut: CERMOC,

Summer, Doris (2005), *Neo-Liberalizing the City: Transitional Investment Networks and the Circulation of Urban Images in Beirut and Amman*. Unpublished Master's thesis in Urban Planning, American University of Beirut.

Urry, John (1990), *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage.

Walid, Sadek (2007), 'Place at last'. *Art Journal*, Summer, pp. 35–48.