

# Middle of Where, East of What? New Geographies of Conflict

**Veranstalter** Forum Transregionale Studien

**Veranstaltungsort** Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin (ICI)

**Termin** 14.07.2016 14:00 Uhr - 19:00 Uhr

## Fellow Workshop at the ICI Berlin

It can be argued that the Middle East, as a geo-political region, has been defined in relation to the so-called West throughout much of modern history. Western involvement has had considerable impact in both carving national boundaries and shaping new political realities on the ground. Focusing on the years between WW2 and the present, the symposium examines this history through the current political moment, and asks how new geographies have been created through transregional movements, upheavals, migrations, and conflicts.

The symposium discusses the strategic importance that the Middle East has held as a zone of 'otherness' or as an 'elsewhere', a place thought to be defined by never-ending conflicts. While the region has been marked by international interests, the complexities of the greater Middle East aren't just generated from the outside; it is a vast and relatively undefined collection of countries undergoing rapid changes, ranging from social movements related to labour, religion, waste, and right-to-the-city campaigns, to struggles with economic disparity, civil war, and unstable governing structures. By sketching a relatively loose geography, the discussion will bring the actions of 'there' in contact with those of 'here' by addressing the various transnational forces that spur movement and conflict. The geographies of the "West" and "East" remain implicated in each other and become visible in cities and peripheries of significance today: from Gafsa, Tunisia to Doha, Qatar and Deir ez-Zor, Syria to Istanbul, Turkey, these places constitute an urban network that has been affected by socio-economic and political movements in a globalizing world - and their transformations are instrumental to tracing the changing boundaries of the Middle East and its relation to a broader geographical context.

The symposium follows a lecture by architectural historian Nasser Rabbat on the evening of 13th July, in which he will explore questions about modernity and

tradition in Arab cities.

Organized by Saima Akhtar (Irmgard Coninx Fellow 2015/16) and Walid El Hourri (EUME Fellow 2013/14) and co-organized by Claire Nioche-Sibony.

Further information and program

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