

Research:

To Strengthen the
Culture of Knowledge
Programme's 7th Edition
Researchers' Summary 2020

Research: To Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge

Seventh Edition Research Abstracts 2020

The ideas and opinions presented in the research summaries contained within this booklet do not necessarily reflect Ettijahat - Independent Culture's point of view.

Table of Contents

About Ettijahat – Independent Culture 04

About Research: To Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge 05

Donors 06

Scientific Committee 07

Mentors 09

Researchers 12

Research Abstracts

 The Tunnel, Shelter, and Cellar as an Alternative Theatre Space in Damascus ... 13

 Danger as an aesthetic agent in Documentary Filmmaking 15

 Social Rituals as a Means for Coexistence 18

 From the Crisis of the Place to the Place of the Crisis 21

 Manifestations of Fear in Syrian Blogs 24

 Post-War Trauma in the Literature of Syrian Exile 27

 Palestinian Embroidery in Damascus and Damascus Countryside Following
 the Siege and Destruction of the Yarmouk Camp..... 29

 Cultural Impact of Urban and Architectural Transformations on the Image
 of the City 32

 The Kitchen: An Architectural Space and its Social Relations..... 35

About Ettijahat – Independent Culture

Founded in 2011, Ettijahat is a cultural institution active in the field of independent culture in Syria and the Arab region. We work to activate the role of independent culture and arts to enable them play a positive role in the process of cultural, political and social change. We also seek to contribute to building an authentic relationship between the cultural and artistic act on the one hand and the Syrian society with its diversity and plurality on the other. We achieve this by supporting artists and cultural entrepreneurs, empowering young researchers, building consensus and alliances between individuals and cultural institutions, promoting arts and artists through regional and international platforms, as well as working to bring culture and art closer to Syrian communities wherever they are.

Ettijahat operates in four areas of work:

Supporting Art Production and Promotion

Contributing to the activation of the art movement and enabling artistic production in all creative fields and at all stages of production through cooperating with artists and supporting them to produce and present their art projects through regional and international platforms so as the audience can exercise its right to enjoy the arts.

Supporting Cultural Research and Knowledge Production

Contributing to the development of cultural, field and academic studies and research papers by building the capacity of individual researchers and practitioners in cultural practices and by building partnerships with universities, academies and cultural institutions; hence, contributing to the creation of different cultural narratives about Syria and the promotion of democratic knowledge.

Empowering Art in Exile and Promoting Social Change

Empowering and legally supporting artists in exile under the contexts of social and cultural change and the potential roles that arts can play in promoting the coping of the audience and communities through the creation of support frameworks related to arts and change.

Empowering Arts Education and Capacity Building

Contributing to developing the art education sector, linking the arts to labor market and building artistic capabilities that enhance the professionalism and image of the arts sector in relation to neighboring sectors by supporting art education academically and professionally and supporting the development of artists at the level of skills and knowledge.

About Research: To Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge

A knowledge capacity-building programme on the topics of cultural research in Syria and the Arab Region, the Research programme annually supports building the capacities of ten junior and mid-level researchers, through grants, training, and research mentorship across different disciplines and methodological schools. It targets researchers in the field of cultural studies, along with those who take interest in the relationship between arts and other fields.

The programme contributes to developing and publishing research, studies, and cultural guides, and provides platforms for exchange and communication between researchers and art producers and scholars. The programme also seeks to publish the results in dedicated publications, audio/visual materials, and seminars organized in partnership with the most prominent universities and cultural foundations in the Arab Region.

Programme's Annual Objectives

- Building the capacity of ten young Syrians and Syrian-Palestinians aged between 22 and 40 years old, residing in Syria, the Arab region or Europe, who are interested in different areas of cultural research.
- Grant at least 1000 artists, art scholars, and cultural practitioners in Syria and the Arab Region the opportunity to expand their knowledge and provide them with serious research content that links art and cultural work with their respective production contexts.
- Build a network of at least ten cultural foundations and academies from the Arab Region and Europe, to foster knowledge exchange between art students, producers, and critics, and to develop new narratives on the role of arts and the mechanisms of research production in Arabic.

Donors

This programme was accomplished with the support of:

MIMETA - CENTRE FOR CULTURE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ARTS COOPERATION

Mimeta focuses on supporting the service providers of the arts and creative sectors in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Mimeta aims at strengthening structures through organization, information and advocacy, through platforms and mobility, and through the development of creative economies.

Mimeta strongly believes in securing and fostering the moral and material interests of a country's cultural production and expressions. These interests constitute a significant part of every nation's assets and may represent a major contribution to development, to human rights, to democracy, and to the eradication of poverty.

Mimeta's main priorities are:

- Democratization: Foster improvement in structures and the organizing of the arts sector.
- Mobility: Foster intercultural cooperating of the arts sector.
- Creativity and Economy: Foster cooperating between culture and the business sector.

Scientific Committee



Fadi Al Abdullah

Born in Tripoli, Lebanon, in 1976, Fadi Al Abdullah holds a doctorate in law from the University of Paris II. Since 2008, he has worked at the International Criminal Court as its spokesperson and Head of the Public Affairs Unit. As a writer, human rights activist, music critic and honorary editor for the website Ma3azef, Al Abdullah has had many articles published in newspapers, magazines and Lebanese and Arab websites (including An-Nahar, Al-Safir, Al-Hayat, Al-Awan, Moudon, Kalman, Bedayyat, Al-Masry Al-Youm, Akhbar Al-Adab, and others). He has participated in a number of contemporary art events and seminars in Lebanon, the Sharjah Biennale, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Netherlands. He has also published several poetry collections, titled *Weird* and *with a Camera*, *Hand of Intimacy*, *Infatuation Composes Us*, *Signatures*, and *I Share the Pain for a Moment and Kindness for a Long Time*.



Jad Alkarim Al Jebae

Jad Alkarim Al Jebae is a Syrian writer and researcher born in Al-Suwayda 1945. He majored in Arabic Language and Literature at Damascus University, 1958-1959. He has worked as a teacher of Arabic language at secondary schools in Lattakia, Al-Suwayda and Damascus, and then as an editor and linguistic auditor at the Arab Encyclopaedia in Damascus, where he edited the Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Arab Thought. Interested in civil philosophy and human sciences, particularly issues of civil society, democracy and human rights, he has published fifteen books and written several others jointly with other colleagues, in addition to a number of research paper, studies and articles in Arab magazines and newspapers. He has also contributed to a number of scientific and intellectual seminars and conferences. Alkarim Al Jebae is currently residing in Germany and is devoted to reading, writing and research. His works include: *Controversy of Knowledge and Politics (Dialogue with Elias Morcos)*, *Civil Society: Identity of Difference*, *Renaissance Issues*, *Spectra of Arab Ideology*, *A Road to Democracy*, *A Rose in the Cross of the Present (Towards a New Social Contract and a Democratic Arabism)*, *From Pastoralism to Citizenship*, and *The Trap of Equality (The Feminisation of Men and the Masculinisation of Women)*.



Hanane Kassab Hassan

Hanane Kassab Hassan has experience in academic research and cultural work spanning more than thirty years. Since receiving her PhD in Theatre from Paris-Sorbonne University, she has worked as a lecturer and faculty member at Damascus University and the Institute of Theatre and Audiovisual Studies at Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Between 2007 and 2009, she served as the Dean of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, Damascus, and as the General Secretary of Activities for Damascus - Capital of Arab Culture. She then took on the post of Director of the Opera House in Damascus between 2009 and 2011. She has also served as an external evaluator of cultural projects submitted to UNESCO's International Fund for the Advancement of Culture and is also a board member of the Roberto Cimetta Fund. Between 2009 and 2011, she served as a member of the Strategic Committee of the Conseil Culturel de l'Union pour la Méditerranée in France. Kassab Hassan has directed a number of plays and conducted workshops on dramaturgy and writing; she has also written several articles and papers on these subjects. She is a prolific translator of theatrical texts, from Arabic into French and vice versa, and has contributed to the writing of a French-English-Arabic dictionary, specialising in terms and concepts used in drama and the performing arts; the text is now one of the major works of reference in the field of theatre in the Arab world.

Mentors



Iyas Shahin

Iyas Shahin is an architect and artist. He holds a PhD in architecture, with an emphasis on housing. He is a member of the Faculty of Architecture in both Damascus University and Al-Rasheed University, as well as the founding partner and technical director of IWLab.

Shahin has several research papers published, along with professional works tackling housing policies, art and the city, and cultural work in the city. He takes interest in the role of architecture during crises (in the Middle East and specifically in Syria). Shahin also takes interest in art as a medium for expressing ideas, and in the importance of being aware of one's cultural and architectural heritage. His projects include: *City Incarnation*, a project that showcases Damascus as a human body, studying its flaws and illnesses, as part of an interactive activity with his students. He has also produced a series of works on the cognitive map of Damascus and Al-Suwayda. Shahin recently won the first prize for his work on the cognitive map of his hometown, the occupied Golan Heights (as part of the Untold Stories – Forgotten Maps competition).

Jad Alkarim Al Jebae

His biography is available in the section on the Scientific Committee.



Jamal Chehayed

Chehayed has a PhD in comparative literature from Université de La Nouvelle Sorbonne, Paris III, France in 1974. He worked as a professor at the Damascus University. Currently, he is a researcher at the French Institute for Middle Eastern Studies and a visiting professor at the College de France. He has written five books in Arabic and French, and translated 17 books, to and from French. Among his books: *Memory in Contemporary Arab Novels* (2011), and *Rhetoric of Modernity in Literature* (2004). His translations included two parts of Proust's seven volumes' work, Lamartine's *Journey to the Orient*, two volumes of *The Book of Method* by Edgar Morin, and *Dictionary of Epistemology*. He focuses on narration and modern criticism.



Hassan Abbas

Born in Syria – Masyaf (1955), he obtained his PhD in Literary Criticism from the New Sorbonne University – Paris 3, France.

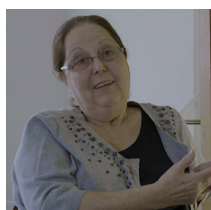
From 1992 until the beginning of 2017, he worked as a professor and researcher at the Institut Français du Proche Orient (IFPO) in Damascus and then Beirut, where he was responsible for the Institute's cultural activities, in parallel with his position as lecturing professor at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus (2000 until 2009). Abbas is currently a research associate and programme manager for the "Culture of Resistance" programme at the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, at the American University of Beirut. He is the founder and chair of the Syrian League for Citizenship (SL4C). He is also the co-founder and co-director of numerous associations working in the field of culture, human rights, and citizenship, and has established several cinema and literary clubs.

Abbas has published numerous studies and books on culture, citizenship, and civil society. These include: *Guide to Citizenship*, in collaboration with artist Ahmad Maala, *The Cultural Map of Wadi Al-Nassara, Syria - An Aerial View* book, in collaboration with photographer Hisham Zaawet, *A Trip with the Haiku*, and *Don't Close Your Eyes!*

He has also translated several books from French, including: *La Machine de Vision* and *Les nouveaux penseurs de l'islam*.

Hanane Kassab Hassan

Her biography is available in the section on the Scientific Committee.



Sarab Atassi

Sarab Atassi is a research associate at the Institut Français du Proche Orient (IFPO), and an expert on the UNESCO program launched in 2014 from Beirut. She holds a diploma from the Lumière University in Lyon, France, Department of History and Islamic Civilization, on the crafts and markets of Damascus City during the Mamluk period (1979). Atassi also holds a PhD in the Historic Topography of Damascus at the End of the Mamluk Period (1983). She has worked in the field of scientific cultural research in 1974, focusing on the urban and social history of Damascus, with special emphasis on preserving, maintaining, and rehabilitating the Old City. Since 2003, Atassi has taken interest in researching the relationship between the memory of the place and that of its residents in Damascus City.

She held the position of Head of the Research Unit at the International Centre for Childhood Research and Atelier du Vieux, Damas. She has also worked as a researcher in AVD since 1979, which is a programme for urban studies on the rehabilitation and maintenance of the historic and traditional city of Damascus.

She also held the position of Scientific Secretary at the IFPO in Damascus (1983 – 2014).



Marie Elias

Marie Elias holds a PhD in Theatre from France. She was a professor of French Language and Literature at the Faculty of Literature in Damascus University. She previously chaired the faculty and was a lecturer and graduation thesis advisor at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus. She has taken part in developing and updating the Institute's curricula. Marie Elias is also a lecturer at the Saint Joseph University in Beirut (USJ). She was a member of the editorial board at the Theatre Life Journal in Syria's Ministry of Culture until 2005, and at the Damascus University Journal (2002 - 2007).

Elias was a member of the international jury for the International Youth Theatre Festival at the Italian Ministry of Culture, and chair of the Jury at the Carthage Theatre Days Festival (JTC) in 2001. Elias holds the Ordre des Palmes académiques (Knight and Officer degrees) for her works in fostering cultural and interactive relations in the fields of culture and theatre (including scientific works, translations and cultural project management). She has also taken part in a number of seminars, conferences, and festivals, where she lectured in both Arabic and French. Her repository includes numerous studies and research papers on theatre, literature, human sciences published in specialized journals and periodicals.



Marianne Noujeim

Marianne Noujeim is a researcher and university lecturer. She currently holds the position of associate professor at the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences and the Faculty of Arts at the Lebanese University. Noujeim holds a master's degree in General Philosophy from the LU, and a master's degree in French Language and Literature from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. She received a diploma of advanced studies and later on a PhD in Theatre Studies from the New Sorbonne University, Paris 3. Noujeim has participated in several jury panels and trainings, both in academic circles and as part of programmes launched by art and culture foundations in Lebanon and the region. Her research mainly focuses on the poetry of contemporary theatre scripts and the subject of memory in Lebanese literature and theatre.

Researchers

Almahdi Shbat | The Tunnel, Shelter, and Cellar as an Alternative Theatre in Damascus

Ammar Almamoun | Danger as an aesthetic agent in Documentary Filmmaking

Hammoud Emjedel | Social Rituals as a Means of Coexistence

Mai Atrache | From the Crisis of the Place to the Place of the Crisis

Noor Flihan | Manifestations of Fear in Syrian Blogs

Noor Shalghen | Post-War Trauma in the Literature of Syrian Exile

Nour Chantout | Palestinian Embroidery in Damascus and Damascus Countryside
Following the Siege and Destruction of Yarmouk Camp

Wafaa Sharafeddine Abofakher | Cultural Impact of Urban and Architectural
Transformations on the Image of the City

Yara Moussa | The Kitchen: An Architectural Space and its Social Relations

The Tunnel, Shelter, and Cellar as an Alternative Theatre Space in Damascus

Almahdi Shbat



Almahdi Shbat is a Syrian artist born in 1991. He graduated from the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus, but currently resides in Beirut. He is a theatre scriptwriter and composer and has worked as an actor in both theatre and television. Shbat co-organized the Baroque Music Festival in its first and second editions, held at the Damascus Opera House. He was a former administrative member of the Damascus Baroque Soloists Band. Shbat took some documentary photos of Dr. Abdel Rahman Mounif, which were showcased in Stuttgart, Germany, in support of a research entitled “*When the Library was Stolen*”. He worked as a dramaturge at the first visual art performance in Syria, which was entitled *Transformation*, in addition to other artistic contributions.

His repository includes several scripts for cinema and theatre, including “*Knot*”, a script for a contemporary performance and dance show at the Hammana Artist House, as part of “Amarre” Residency Programme at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus. Shbat also has experience in writing press articles in news dailies and periodicals. He is currently working on developing his performance skills in clowning, under the supervision of Clown Me In.

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Abstract

Damascus has borne witness to numerous theatre shows in alternative spaces, rather than traditional theatres. Some were presented in tunnels and shelters, others in cellars. As a matter of fact, these spaces were specifically refurbished to become performance spaces. In this context, the research tackles the topic of alternative theatre as a show-space, in order to understand the underlying reasons for choosing this spatial alternative and monitor the changes in such shows, in terms of reception and the dramaturgical process. The research attempts to answer the following questions: How have these shows changed? Why are the directors resorting to alternative spaces? Could the latter be the answer to the absence of theatres?

The researcher adopted a descriptive analytical methodology, as well as interviews, and chose to address theatre shows presented in alternative spaces in Damascus for his research. A random sample of three theatre shows was selected, in an attempt to answer the abovementioned questions. These are: *Corpse on the Sidewalk* – directed by: Ossama Halal (2007), *The Emigrants* – directed by: Samer Omran (2008), and *No Exit* – directed by Alaa Eddine Al-Aalem (2015). This sample was selected due to the fact that these shows were presented in Damascus City, in tunnels, cellars, or shelters, in the third millennium A.D. Moreover, the researcher was able to obtain recordings of these shows and to contact the directors. The shows also attempt to establish a different relationship with the audience, as the directors try to find a connection between the themes chosen and the spaces where the shows were presented.

The analysis of these performances was based on several references in theatre history, as well as references related to the early emergence of alternative theatre in the United States and its connection with liberation movements worldwide. These references include: *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* (Martin Banham), *Alternative Theatre in Poland 1954 – 1989* (Kathleen M. Cioffi), *American Alternative Theatre* (Theodore Shank), in addition to the book *Postdramatic Theatre* (Hans-Thies Lehmann), and a set of references discussing the concept of theatrical reception. These references helped study the new relationship that these performances sought to establish with the audience. The researcher also conducted some interviews with men and women working in theatre, in order to grasp the prevailing form of theatre in Damascus, while using this knowledge to understand the possible alternatives and look into what prompted directors to choose or resort to alternative spaces. The researcher also conducted interviews with the directors of the selected performances to discuss why they chose to present them in alternative spaces. As for the sources, they consist of the performance scripts and video recordings, to examine and analyse the disparities between the script and the show and understand the dramaturgical process.

It was not easy to carry on with the research in light of the prevailing circumstances worldwide, and particularly in Beirut. The COVID-19 pandemic was a particular hindrance to conducting interviews and securing the needed references. The research was also halted for several months due to the Beirut Port blast. The research also faced several other difficulties, including access to information on the performances that took place in alternative spaces during the third millennium, given the lack of accurate documentation, the lack of references or previous research with accurate information on the prevailing form of theatre in Syria and detailed descriptions of its elements. This, in turn, gave rise to other difficulties in understanding the alternative and differentiating between alternative culture and counterculture in Syria. There was also a lack of Arabic references that explain the key terms in the research and apply them to the Syrian reality.

Danger as an Aesthetic Agent in Documentary Filmmaking

The impact of political danger on artistic expression and representation policies in Syrian documentary filmmaking
The *Still Recording* tape as an example

Ammar Almamoun



Ammar Almamoun is a Syrian researcher and Journalist. He studied Journalism in Damascus University and Theatre Studies at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus. He received a master's degree in Cultural Studies from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, and is currently preparing a PhD in Cultural Studies at the same university. Almamoun has several articles published in Arab and international newspapers and websites, along with a number of reviewed and non-reviewed research papers. Almamoun takes great interest in culture and art.

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Abstract

Since the onset of the Syrian revolution, a looming danger has been threatening the Syrian body, whether within Syria's geography or elsewhere. Unfortunately, this danger has turned into a prevailing natural phenomenon, imposed on the body, in the literal sense of the term, as flesh and blood, and on the body as a political and cultural being. This lurking danger poses a threat to Syrians, as they go about their daily lives, or as they engage in protests against the Syrian regime, or even long after they have left the country.

This threat of harm prevails due to the political circumstances which rule over the Syrian body. In this context, the documentary art practice, which adopts the story of the "Syrian Revolution", emerges as an aesthetic effort that seeks to convey a certain truth. As in the case of all cultural works opposing the ruling regime in Syria, the filmmaker and those who appear on the screen are under threat, as creators of prohibited and illicit stories, which differ from the official narratives that are allowed to come out to the public.

This multi-faceted danger is the fruit of a political and cultural structure that imposes a set of geographical and political classifications and divisions. While these classifications and divisions existed prior to the revolution, the latter significantly highlighted them. These policies are manifested in the official discourse by dividing the Syrian soil into a space for enemies and another for obedient citizens. This can be seen in expressions such as "terrorist incubator", "liberated area", and "controlled by terrorists". Even the act of filming within the Syrian geography is dangerous. In fact, the Regime threatens Syrian journalists and amateurs and prohibits them from filming in public places, without prior official approval. This danger also appears when filming under shelling and during clashes, and in unpredictable events such as arbitrary shelling, arrest, work accidents, etc. Thus, filming is transformed into an adventure with uncertain results.

The research attempts to look at Syrian documentary footage as an aesthetic effort to showcase reality, where "danger" appears as an agent that affects the form of the story, political representation, and cinematic elements. In other terms, several political, economic, and cultural factors pose a threat to the land and people. These factors appear in the cinematic form and play an essential role in outlining its aesthetic storytelling elements and how it represents reality and people.

The researcher chose the movie *Still Recording*, directed by Saeed Al-Batal and Ghiath Ayoub (2018), as a purposive sample for the research, as it contains cultural and aesthetic features capable of shifting the analysis towards aesthetic and political concepts the movie might share with other conflicting samples. Moreover, the danger in the movie manifests itself in two forms: The first form consists of the threat against the filmmakers as they operate in a besieged geographic area, where their lives and the lives of those working alongside them are in danger for political reasons. This region in question is Syria's besieged Ghouta under the shelling and clashes waged by the Syrian Regime. The second form of danger in the movie lies in the passage of the director and the cameraman into a safe area, Damascus, and coming under the threat of arrest for carrying a camera and moving around with film material criminalized by the Syrian regime.

The research uses a descriptive methodology to showcase and analyse the content of the movie, as a tool for monitoring external factors that govern the cinematic form and that manifest themselves during the movie. It is worth mentioning that the cultural product hides a political and cultural discourse that represent the prevailing political circumstances in which the movie takes place. The research is split into three chapters. The first chapter offers a theoretical overview of the concept of sovereignty in Syria and its relation to the regime, based on approaches from “Necropolitics”, which offers procedural definitions of danger. The second chapter tackles the movie itself, along with its cinematic components, to identify the topic and the way the stories flow within it. The research then attempts to monitor the impact of danger on some of the movie’s cinematic elements, and to compare roleplaying and narration. The third chapter of the research presents the movie as a medium for aesthetic political representation. In this sense, the movie offers a medium and a model through which people reject official labels, and it showcases new forms of self-expression, especially considering that the medium of motion picture in Syria is a source of conflict. This conflict arises between the truth, as presented in these pictures, and to what extent they match or differ from the official and accepted discourse.

The research came under numerous difficulties, including the inability to identify all the elements that threaten cinematic production in the danger zone, and the difficulty in organizing and dividing the cinematic and political elements in order to monitor their mutual impact. The main challenge, however, lied in the constant attempt to separate between the different cinematic, ethical, and political elements. However, this is closely related to the nature of opposition art production in Syria, and its relationship with arts in general, and arts in Syria specifically.

The research mainly concluded that danger as an art theme does not clearly appear in the filmmaking framework. It is rather a form of ontology, based on which the world is divided, without any clear features that showcase danger as an art subject and story driver. This is because the filmmakers see danger as an adventure, a journey of exploration with unpredictable outcomes. The research also finds that the constant threat of death is a catalyst for irony and roleplay within the cinematic framework, thus turning the latter into a space for questioning the relevance of motion picture and its ability to represent reality.

Social Rituals as a Means for Coexistence

Hammoud Emjedel



Hammoud Emjedel graduated from Damascus University with a B.A. in Sociology (2012) and a M.A. in the same major (2014). He received a diploma in learning difficulties from the American University of Beirut (2018). Emjedel is a social activist working with several social and cultural associations and institutes, including Basmeh & Zeitooneh (since 2016) and the Syrian Society for Social Development (2015). He previously worked as research associate in oral history at Sharq Organization (2016) and research associate at Carnegie Institute (2019).

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Abstract

This research studies the rituals of each lifecycle: Birth, circumcision, marriage, and death among Kurdish and Arab communities in Syria's Al-Hasakah province, and how these rituals help promote coexistence, through shared practices and the influence each culture has on the other. The research sheds light on the importance of social rituals in fostering coexistence among the members of the same group or between groups in the same region. In fact, social rituals gain a significant importance for the communities practicing them, as they provide a space for collective practice. The research documents these rituals and how they are practiced, along with the related actions and sayings, indicating that some of these practices have become extinct from society as a result of the social and cultural changes in the region. The research also reveals the underlying motive for practicing these rituals and the changes thereto.

The research's main question was the following: How do Arabs and Kurds in Al-Hasakah province experience shared social rituals? Could these rituals be considered cultural and social practices that could reveal similarities and disparities between both communities and the extent of their influence on one another? To what extent do these rituals affect the coexistence of the two groups in the same province?

The research adopted a descriptive analytical methodology, whereby the researcher collected information on the said rituals and how they are experienced by both Arabs and Kurds in Al-Hasakah province. He then analysed this information in an attempt to answer his research question. The sample was purposive and consisted of a group of towns and region in Al-Hasakah province, where Arabs and Kurds live. The said sample included a number of men and women from the Arab and Kurdish communities equally. The selected individuals were interviewed live or via telephone, in order to document their opinions and identify their values and orientations. The research was also based on certain references, which tackled the topic either directly or indirectly. These include: *The Arts of Verbal Folklore in Syria in Upper Mesopotamia* (Ahmad Al-Hussein), *Habits and Customs of Kurds* (Mahmoud Bayazidi), along with other published books and articles on social rituals and customs.

The research was divided into three chapters. The first chapter tackles social and lifecycle rituals (birth, circumcision, marriage, and death) in the Kurdish community, while second chapter tackles those of the Arab community. The chapters highlight the form of this ritualistic practice in both communities and determines their cultural and social identity. On the other hand, the third chapter showcases some rituals that could assume a crucial role in fostering coexistence between Arabs and Kurds.

The main difficulty lied in finding sufficient references that tackle social rituals in Al-Hasakah in detail, as well as the relationship between the Kurdish and Arab communities residing in the province. Other difficulties consisted of the inability to carry out live interviews with several individuals from the sample, and having to conduct interviews through the phone, as the interviewees resided in Syria, while the researcher was in Lebanon, in addition to the preventive and quarantine measures.

The key outcomes of the research are the following:

- The Kurdish and Arab communities' rituals are similar in several customs, including: The presence of *al-karif* (a second father figure in whose lap the baby is circumcised); sister exchange; circumcision celebrations, etc. However, the rituals differ in a number of other customs, including the hymns sung at birth; cutting the umbilical cord, a custom which determines the baby's future. As a matter of fact, Kurds believe that the nature of the tool used in cutting the umbilical cord is the criterion in this context, while Arabs believe the place where the umbilical cord is buried to be the determinant; the henna ritual, which is common in Kurdish but not Arab weddings; etc.

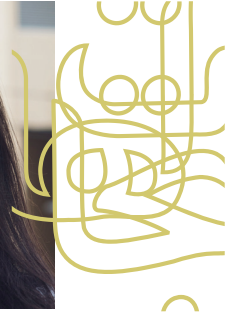
It is worth noting that both communities' rituals have influenced one another and left an impact on Al-Hasakah's society.

- The rituals have undergone changes in terms of practice, as a result of several social, cultural, and economic factors. The rituals have particularly transformed over the past few years due to several factors, including war, migration, and the resulting social, economic, and political changes.
- Some of these rituals play a significant role in fostering coexistence between both communities, e.g. circumcision and the relationship with the *karif* figure in both the Kurdish and Arab communities, which aims to bridge the gap between them.

From the Crisis of the Place to the Place of the Crisis

A study on the Syrian Theatre
Space

Mai Atrache



Mai Atrache is scenographer and fashion designer. She graduated from the Department of Design and Theatre Techniques – Scenography at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus. She worked in interior design and implementation, as well as in fashion and accessory design, and held the position of coordinator in the technical team of the Damascus: Arab Capital of Culture event (2008). She received a master's degree in Performance Arts and Theatre Studies from Lyon Lumière 2 University (2015).

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Abstract

The researcher starts by examining the theatre space, in light of the crisis in Syrian theatre, before studying the place element, in performances presented amid the political crisis in the country since 2011. The research tackles a question that has long been a topic of deliberation and discussion among theatre critics and researchers since the early seventies, and that has long been known as the Syrian theatre crisis. This crisis consisted of a rift and estrangement between theatre and a large part of the audience. Therefore, the research attempts to study this crisis from a scenographic perspective; to look into the relationship between the audience and the performance; to select the place; and to design spatial relationships and organize them into the performance space, i.e. the actor's space, and the spectating space, i.e. the spectator's space. The research gives special attention to the theatrical setting as part of the theatrical process, as a primary and decisive element in communicating with the audience.

It also raises two fundamental questions: What are the underlying causes for this crisis in Syrian theatre, at the level of the theatrical setting? Is the Syrian theatre crisis in any way related to the performance location? Could this location play a quantitative role in attracting and establishing a relationship with the audience, and in pulling Syrian theatre out of this crisis?

To answer the first question, the research adopted a historical description methodology, whereby she collected and cross-checked information, using different references, interviews, and document analysis, to highlight spatial relationships and their evolution, and to examine the impact of this evolution on the changing relationship between theatre and the audience in Syria, as a result of the transformation in the forms of spectating. To answer the second question from a scientific perspective, the researcher studied and analysed scenography and reception in: *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliette*, by Syrian director Nawar Bulbul.

The research consists of three chapters. The first and second chapters answer the first research question, as they both return to the early days of Syrian theatre, track places and the arising forms of spectating and study its evolution over different periods. The first chapter is entitled the *Italian Nationalist Box*, where the researcher tackles the place before and after the emergence of Theatrical Nationalism. Nationalist theatre adopted the Italian theatrical setting in its halls and most of its shows. Syrian spectators, whose collective memory carries unrestricted popular customs that have become part of their daily lives, found themselves trapped within the space of this Italian box and thus drifted away from theatre, as they could no longer identify with it. The second chapter was entitled *Manifesto on a New Arab Theatre, but...* In this chapter, the researcher studies the place, and uses author and director Saadallah Wannous' analysis of the Syrian theatre crisis. She uses Wannous' published statements, entitled *Manifesto on a new Arab Theatre*, which seek to establish a theatre movement that represents its audience and is able, according to Wannous, to save Arab theatre from this labyrinth and address its problems. The author also examines attempts by some to exit the Italian box since the early seventies.

The last chapter, *Manifesto for a New Spectating Form*, studied performances which emerged after 2011, i.e. after the political crisis. Some shows gave way for new spectating forms and relations, such as Nawar Bulbul's *Shakespeare in Za'atari* and *Romeo and Juliette*, which featured Syrian refugee children in Jordan. At a time when Syrian theatre is drifting away from its audience and is becoming estranged from people's reality, the "political crisis" inspired the production of some Syrian plays that shared the audience's daily life. Such plays have been attempting to break the fourth wall and address the audience.

The research experienced some difficulties, most notably the lack of studies or statistics on the Syrian audience or theatrical setting. Oftentimes, the references cited offer details on performances from the perspective of the technical team, script, and director, without mentioning the setting, nor the connection between the audience and the performance upon reception.

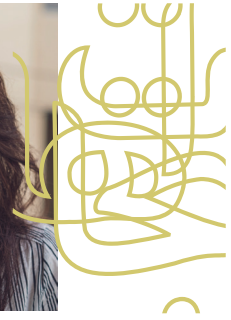
As a result of this research, it became clear that the place in Syrian theatre is one of the many aspects of the crisis, and that scenography and location choices play an effective role in undermining or consolidating the relationship with the Syrian audience. The estrangement between the theatrical setting and the audience became apparent through two observed impacts: The spatial relationship and the form of spectating within the show (the performance space in relation to the spectating space) on the one hand, and the selected locations for the performances in the city vis-à-vis the audience, i.e. the residents, on the other hand. The study noted that one theatrical setting and one form of spectating dominated Syrian shows since the sixties, i.e. the Italian box, which puts the audience in a confrontation with the performance. That is because the majority of theatre activities were restricted to halls and official theatres, founded in the sixties with the same architectural form.

The research also concluded that in order for a place to induce qualitative change in the communication and reception process, and in an attempt to bridge the gap between Syrian theatre and its audience, the former needs to target a more diverse audience. As is the case with the show's content, the search for the place must stem from the audience's culture, environment, and reality. In fact, the place and content, and their relation to one another on the one hand, and to the audience on the other hand, constitute the essence of the theatrical process, according to Wannous. Finally, the research presented several topics related to theatrical setting, which deserve a study of their own at a later stage. These include the relation between the place and the role of theatre in society on the one hand, and its relationship with the State and freedom of expression on the other.

Manifestations of Fear in Syrian Blogs

Analysis of Articles from Bloggers in the "Diaspora" between 2011 and 2019

Noor Flihan



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Abstract

This research tackles political fear, particularly the transformation of fear from a natural emotion into a direct or indirect daily experience. The research also examines how this transformation was reflected in articles by Syrian bloggers, written after the onset of the Syrian Revolution in 2011 and in the diaspora. The research therefore raises the following questions: How is political fear represented in literary texts by Syrian bloggers in the diaspora between 2011 and 2019? How was political fear artistically expressed in the diaspora and in what style?

Blogs were used as a medium for writing and publication, as they are a means to overcome and cope with fear. Some of the fears that the blogs are seeking to overcome are: fear of censorship and the censoring authority; fear of rejection that the emerging author experiences in a cultural sphere that recognises some but not others, thus monopolising the field of writing to the benefit of one group with certain features, with the exception of all others; the fear to tackle new and bold subjects regarding taboos and the numerous prohibitions rejected by society, but later consolidated in publishing laws.

To answer the research questions, five texts, representing a non-random purposive sample, were selected based on a set of criteria. Rather than focussing on famous or recognised authors, the blogs were chosen based on whether political fear was the fundamental issue discussed in them. The research adopted an analytical methodology, whereby these blogs were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, in attempt to monitor the recurrence of some terms and synonyms related to fear, both directly and indirectly. The blog contents were then examined, in order to identify the mechanism used in drafting them, irrespective of their literary genres (which include prose, poetry, and long prose poetry).

The research required examining a broad and diversified set of literature that tackles fear in general, and political fear in Syria in particular. It also examined the mechanism by which dictatorships emergence and become consolidated. These literary works include the following books: *Social Underdevelopment*, *Social Waste* (Dr. Mustapha Hijazi), and *Psychology of Crowds* (Gustave Le Bon), which analyses the emergence of the dictator, among other references. Some novels were also used as reference, given the convergence between literature and politics within the scope of this research. These literary works included *1984* (George Orwell), which discusses the emergence and continuity of dictatorship, and *I will Betray my Homeland* (Mohamad Al-Maghut).

The research was divided into two sections. The first section provides an overview of political fear and how it emerged and became consolidated in Syria during the seventies, while focusing on the tools employed by the Regime to establish its presence, spread fear, and turn the latter into a culture that marks society on all levels. The second section analyses the five texts in the purposive sample and discusses the artistic style through which political fear was described in the selected texts, at the level of language, diagrams, and the stylistic devices used.

The main difficulties consisted of the abundance of texts tackling the theme of fear in general and political fear in particular. The researcher therefore had to do some

extensive reading before settling on the purposive sample. There was also a difficulty in accessing some references in paper format. Likewise, the research was conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the psychological pressures it has led to in terms of work, time, and lifestyle as a whole.

Most notably, the research shed light on the convergence between blogs, as a writing platform, and the texts in the purposive sample, in terms of content and breaking the barrier of fear. In fact, the blogs overcame the fear of censorship, whether personal or otherwise, and fought literary monopoly. The research also highlights the boldness of the texts in the purposive sample in describing political fear in a direct and detailed manner, particularly in pinpointing its causes and drivers. This explicit description of fear is manifested through the use of explicit terminology on fear, rather than mere synonyms thereof. The research also sheds light on the strong presence of fear across the different life stages of Syrian men and women. This is showcased in arrest or the fear thereof, in fleeing or leaving, or even in searching for new life opportunities. The texts indicate how fear has become a mirror of oneself, and a gateway through which one can set off on the journey of re-establishing the concepts and principles of their life.

Post-War Trauma in the Literature of Syrian Exile

Analytical Study of the Novels
"Wadi Qandil" and "Death is
Hard Work"

Noor Shalghen



Noor Shalghen is an independent editor and journalist living in Paris since 2017. She graduated from the Faculty of Journalism at Damascus University in 2015, and kickstarted her career as an economic news editor at Haykal Media Group (Damascus, 2014). Shalghen later worked in public relations at Spacetoon, before moving to translated content management at Mostaqbal Observatory (2017). Shalghen worked as a linguistic and literary freelance editor with the Ninawa House for Studies, Publishing, and Distribution (from 2012 till 2017). She helped in publishing the book *Anthology of Syrian Poets*, which was translated and presented by Syrian-French poet Maram Al-Masri (published in two editions in Paris between 2016 and 2017). Shalghen was also a guest of honour, representing the book and Syria, at the Annual Festival for French Poetry *Présences à Frontenay* (2018). Shalghen is currently preparing a master's dissertation on Culture and Communication, with an emphasis on journalism, culture, and society at Paris University.

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Abstract

This research reviews the manifestation of post-traumatic stress disorder in the novels *Wadi Qandil* by Nisrine Khoury and *Death is Hard Work* by Khaled Khalifa. Both novels were written during the war, which a crucial element and main driver of the events and characters in both texts. The research sheds light on the psychological wounds left by the war on Syrians, and how literature, intentionally or unintentionally, reflected these wounds and disorders, by giving the massacre's survivors a voice, thus lifting them from the labyrinth of numbers in the news, in order for their voices to truly be heard. The main research question is: How did post-war traumas influence the description of characters, structure, and narrative of Syrian novels after 2011? What are the major psychological disorders that resulted from the trauma of war and that influenced Syrian literary works after 2011?

It is a qualitative research following a critical analysis methodology to dissect the novels *Death is Hard Work* and *Wadi Qandil*. It examines the symptoms of PTSD, as both novels tackle war as a trigger, while considering the deep-rooted dispositions and initial circumstances that laid the groundwork for trauma in many Syrian men and women. The choice of the two novels was made based on the stark presence of war in the novels' events and linguistic symbolism, and its impact on the course of the novels and the transformation of their characters on the psychological level. The research also sought to analyse literary works by the new Syrian storytelling generation. Thus, *Wadi Qandil* by Nisrine Khoury, which is her first experience in novel writing, and *Death is Hard Work* by Syrian author Khaled Khalifa, which is his fifth novel, were chosen.

The research is divided into three main axes. The first axis reviews the medical definitions and terminology related to psychological disorders, and a brief review of the presence of these disorders in global and Arab literature. The second axis tackles the selected novels, and the roots and enabling conditions of trauma in both texts, before and during the war. The third and last axis outlines the literary representation of PTSD in the selected novels, in terms of linguistic symbolism, the description of characters, the relationships between them, and the developments in their psychological state.

One of the major challenges faced was the scarcity of Arab literature tackling this subject, whether in psychology or literature. Therefore, researchers always tended to choose international works in English. The researcher sought to focus on the novels themselves, more so than on their authors, which made her task even harder. In fact, literary texts are but mirrors that reflect the hopes, suffering, and concerns of their authors. However, the research aimed from the start to examine the texts as dated objective testimonials of this gruesome war that has crippled the lives of Syrians for years.

It can be noted that both novels served as clear testimonials of PTSD symptoms, which have crippled the lives of most Syrian men and women over the past few years. In both novels, the characters detach from reality and from one another. Nightmares dominate the slumber of Syrian men and women, and fear dominates their perception of their environment, culminating in a deep-rooted existential crisis that ultimately longs for death and decay. While these psychological manifestations attempted, in *Death is Hard Work*, to keep the wound open and discuss the options of Syrians for overcoming this wound, *Wadi Qandil* attempted to keep the pre-war memory alive, as if wishing to keep everything that has crumbled in reality alive and stable in the text, reminding us of love's ability to mend our wounds and fight the bitterness of reality and the uncertainty of war.

**Palestinian Embroidery in
Damascus and Damascus
Countryside Following the Siege
and Destruction of the Yarmouk
Camp**

Nour Chantout



Nour Chantout is a visual artist born in Damascus in 1991. She holds a B.A. in Visual Arts and has received the Helen Khal Award from the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA), Beirut (2014). Chantout pursued her studies at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. She currently resides in Vienna, where she is specializing in Textual Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Chantout has organized several solo exhibitions and taken part in collective ones as well, including: a solo exhibition entitled *A Poem from the Future, literary texts, articles, and research papers*.

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Abstract

Palestinian Embroidery moved from Palestinian villages to other Arab countries, including Syria, after the 1948 Nakba. It was taught in UNRWA schools and several embroidery centres, which helped keep it alive and present in the lives of Palestinians. Unfortunately, the war in Syria destroyed several embroidery centres in Yarmouk camp, the largest concentration of Palestinians in Syria and a hub for Palestinian embroidery, and forced others to close down.

This research examines Palestinian embroidery in Damascus and Damascus Countryside following the siege and destruction of Yarmouk Camp by the Regime's army (2013), in light of the economic changes that have taken their toll on the availability of imported raw materials and the demographic change that has prompted women to search for employment. The research raises the following questions: Does the need for work motivate more women to take up embroidery? Will these female professional embroiderers continue to work in embroidery after the war? What is the impact of their new circumstances on the artistic aspect of production?

These questions aim to document the changes in Palestinian embroidery. To this end, the research adopted a descriptive analytical methodology. Moreover, the research focuses on counter-archiving, in its contemporary artistic sense, as a form of resistance. The research is divided into two sections: The first section monitors the changes taking place in Palestinian embroidery, through semi-organized, in-depth individual and collective interviews with members of the non-random and purposive sample. The interviewees were chosen from the target community, i.e. practitioners from the Palestinian embroidery community in Damascus and Damascus Countryside, following the siege of Yarmouk Camp in 2013. The research analyses these changes based on a number of references that document Palestinian embroidery and tackle the technical and theoretical aspects of it. These include: The book entitled *Palestinian Embroidery: Traditional "Fallahi" Cross-stitch*, by Widad Kamel Kawar and Tania Tamari Nasir.

The second section of the research sheds light on the importance of documenting the impact of the aforementioned changes, and resorts to archiving as a liberating work of art. The research starts by describing embroidery exhibitions organized by "Aaidoun" non-profit organization as part of the "Women Protection" project (2017). The project sought to teach women embroidery and tailoring to better their chances at finding employment. The research then analyses these exhibitions based on pictures from their archives, and through a semi-organized collective interview with three volunteers from the organization. The second section also showcases some projects that took interest in archiving in Palestine and abroad and uses these projects as an example to propose different alternatives for documenting Palestinian embroidery in Syria. It also includes a semi-organized individual interview with Rachel Dedman, curator of two exhibitions on Palestinian embroidery at the Palestinian Museum. These are: *At the Seams: a Political History of Palestinian Embroidery*, which was held at Dar El-Nimer centre for Arts and Culture (Beirut, 2016), and *Labour of Love: New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery*, held at the Palestinian Museum (Birzeit, 2018). The research also uses the books issued for these exhibitions, along with theoretical works on archiving. It also includes an individual interview with cultural researcher, lecturer and curator Dr. Jelena Petrović.

The main challenge faced during the research was the lack of references tackling Palestinian embroidery in Syria in particular, or any previous study on this topic which could serve this research. As a result, the research used different references that study Palestinian embroidery in other countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The constantly changing circumstances in Damascus and Damascus Countryside, where this phenomenon was studied, also posed a challenge to the research.

The research yielded numerous findings, most importantly that Palestinian embroidery was affected by the political, social, economic, and demographic changes in Syria, from an artistic perspective. This was prominent in the colours used in embroidery. The economic siege on Syria has made it increasingly difficult to secure some imported French yarn colours (DMC), particularly red. This was described by a member of the staff at the Palestinian Girls Club for Heritage Preservation as a “red colour crisis”, as red is the club’s most sought-after colour. The staff dealt with this crisis either by changing some embroidery colours used for dresses or by halting the referral of work to the embroiderers while waiting for red yarn to arrive from Beirut. Meanwhile, this crisis did not significantly impact the activities of the small embroidery project “Sanabel”, as its founder, Nadima Kreimid, selects colours more liberally and works with what is available. The interviews showed that there was a misconception about Palestinian embroidery, which is seen as rigid and resistant to change.

The research also outlined the impact of economic and demographic changes on the Palestinian embroidery labour market, prompting numerous women to learn embroidery and tailoring in training courses organized by “Aaidoun” non-profit organisation. Ultimately, these women opted for tailoring over embroidery, as the latter does not secure a stable income. The research also highlights a major discrepancy between the embroiderers’ income and the prices at which the items are sold on the market. It also showed that male and female embroiders from the sample did not stop embroidering following the Yarmouk Camp siege, but rather insisted on resisting the difficult circumstances of siege and displacement. The research also notes that the embroidery units or styles used have not changed following the siege of Yarmouk Camp. This could potentially be the fruit of the restrictions on embroidery by NGOs or by the market itself.

Cultural Impact of Urban and Architectural Transformations on the Image of the City

Wafaa Sharafeddine Abofakher



Wafaa Sharafeddine Abofakher is an architect who holds a B.A. in Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture (2017). She also pursued her postgraduate studies at the Department of Architectural Design. She worked in 2D and 3D Design for two years, before going into academia. She held the position of coordinator at the Faculty of Architecture, at Al-Rasheed International Private University, and teaching associate at Damascus University and Al-Rasheed University. She is finalizing her research on post-disaster housing, and takes interest in developing empty public spaces, adding them to the city's urban fabric. Abo Fakher also works as an editor pro-bono at Twenty-Two 22 Magazine for architecture.

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Abstract

Irrespective of their function and image, built structures continue to be the longest-lasting and most present cultural products throughout history. Fashion, literary texts, or music, which date back to a certain historical era, are all cultural components that only appear to whoever seeks them. On the other hand, several buildings from the same era are still present, in their original form, in cities and urban centres, and among their current inhabitants, across different countries. In fact, these buildings are independent entities, connecting cities' past with their present in a compelling, material way. This material connection carries a strong sentimental (rather than materialistic) value for the residents occupying the spaces of these cities. A city is a set of rituals, memories, and relationships formed between residents, within its material boundaries. However, the elements and structures of the city undergo constant transformations, as a result of changes in residents' lives or as a motive to drive their lives into a specific direction.

Damascus is currently witnessing accelerating transformations at the level of its image and identity. Such transformations affect the city's architectural layout, which, in turn, bears witness to its history and identity. In this light, the research focuses on a significant pillar of the city's architecture, Shukri al-Quwatli Street in Damascus and the adjacent buildings undergoing functional and physical transformations after they had been put up for financial investment, as the latter does not conform with the buildings' identity, history, and the collective memory they express. This will entail adverse cultural consequences, which this research monitors and studies.

The research showcases existing buildings as a cumulative cultural product and raises two main questions: How does a building, as an architectural structure, express society's culture? How do changes in buildings, due to planning and design policies, affect the cultural state of society? This aims to highlight the boundaries of the relation between the material (buildings) and the non-material (the city's image, memory of the place, and its identity as part of society's culture) aspects of the city, and to lay the general foundations for preserving the identity of the place, as a form of intangible cultural heritage.

The current question raised by the research lies in the threat to the identity and memory of the place, due to rapid urban and architectural transformations that turn a blind eye to the cultural repercussions that they will incur. They perceive the urban fabric as a set of physical structures with economic dimensions only, devoid of any other value. In this context, the researcher adopted two main research methodologies: The first methodology was evidence-based and helped examine fundamental concepts from a theoretical perspective, using references and examples from other countries. These concepts are: Urban and architectural transformation, the city's image, the cultural identity of the place, and the memory of the place. The second methodology employed in this research is descriptive and based on case studies. The research studied the locations within the Shukri al-Quwatli street axis from two perspectives: First, a historical perspective that studied the locations in terms of their connection to the residents' memory at different periods of time, and, second, a perspective that studied changes in buildings as a result of legal texts or organizational plans, or because they were opened for investment projects.

The research is based on a set of papers that examine urban changes and their impact on society. These mainly include Charles Corea's studies on spatial identity and Kevin Lynch's studies on the image of the city. The research monitored a set of events that took place during preparation, such as the transformation of the Hagia Sophia and the Beirut Port explosion and their consequences. On another note, the research used several narrative texts that have adopted the urban fabric as a setting for its characters. It is also worth noting that the research also uses several historical references, picturing the city at different times and noting the transformations it has undergone, in order to examine the current changes and their impact, as part of the city's historical context.

The research starts with an introduction on the concept of architecture as a cultural product, and the relationship between architectural transformations and society. The research then splits into two main sections. The first theoretical section lays out the definition, causes, and impact of urban and architectural transformations, before looking into the cultural impact in particular. The research also uses the example of urban transformations in the city of Isparta, Turkey. The research then presents findings that clarify several concepts, such as identity and memory, and their connection to the physical realm. In the second section, the research focuses on the case study on Shukri Al-Quwatli axis and some of its built elements, to examine transformations and monitor their cultural impact, in light of the findings of the first section. The research then concludes with outcomes related to the case study.

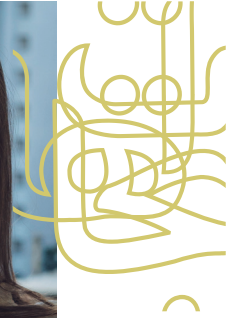
The research faced a number of difficulties, starting with the general situation at the researcher's place of residence (Syria), leading up to the quarantine measures during the survey. The major challenge, however, was the researcher suffering from COVID-19 and then recovering. These circumstances only drove the researcher to look for other ways to use the tools at her disposal. She conducted interviews with experts via Skype and designed a template on Google Drive to carry out the survey electronically.

Upon completing the literature review and collecting and analysing the required data, the research culminated in numerous findings, including paying attention to the urban fabrics in which we live, as they inspire and absorb the culture that future generations will inherit. This research specifically addresses life rituals within urban spaces, which have significantly changed over time due to major urban transformations. The research concluded by shedding light on the need to activate the role of local organizations in spreading awareness on tangible and intangible heritage. It also stressed the need for a set of plans to fund and support practitioners of rare handicrafts by cultural foundations, as these crafts occupy a significant part of Syrian heritage, which must be preserved. Likewise, it is necessary to maintain the material environment that these artisans work in, in an attempt to protect both them and the place itself.

The Kitchen: An Architectural Space and the Social Relations Related to it

Case Study: The Kitchen as Part of Newly Established Housing for Refugees from the Damascus Countryside to Damascus after 2011

Yara Moussa



Yara Moussa graduated from the Department of Architecture in Damascus University (2018). She has taken part in several art and architecture workshops and exhibitions at Damascus University, organized by independent foundations that work in the field of culture and urban planning. Moussa currently works as an architect at an engineering and architecture firm in Damascus.

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Abstract

Since 2011, violence escalated and left dire consequences on all aspects of life in Syria, including food, drink, and housing. Many Syrian men and women had to leave their homes and move abroad or to more stable and safer cities in the country. Until 2014, the number of IDPs had reached 5 million people, 600,000 of whom fled to the city of Damascus alone. This caused an exodus and significant changes the number of residents in the city. This wave of movement also affected the new home structure of IDPs. This change strongly appeared in the kitchen, as an essential functional space that affects social relationships within the household. In this context, the research examines the existing relationship between the kitchen and the social relations related thereto from an architectural perspective, and sheds light on the humanitarian and living conditions of some IDPs through the space of the kitchen.

The research raises two main questions: What is the nature of the relationship between the architectural space of the kitchen and the social relationships related thereto? Does this change in the kitchen affect the nature of social relationships?

The two main questions also ramify into several sub-questions: Do architectural spaces also carry a social dimension, aside from their functional dimension? Or is a space limited to its physical components (length, width, and height)? Is the kitchen considered a primary or secondary space within the house?

The research adopts a descriptive analytical methodology and uses case studies to describe and analyse the two research samples. The research is based on analytical processes derived from architecture, sociology, urban sociology, and history, in order to secure the theoretical material needed to build the analysis and reach the findings. The research also uses interviewing and direct observation as two main tools to secure primary sources information.

The research uses diverse literature given the intricacy of its title and the complexity of its topic. Readings primarily focused on architecture and sociology. The first section tackled architectural concepts like the “space” and its evolution. In this context, the researcher referred to the Book *The Production of Space* (Henri Lefebvre), along with other readings on the kitchen and its social role, such as *The Kitchen: Life World, Usage, Perspectives* (K. Spechtenhauser), and on the evolution of the kitchen in *The Evolution of the Domestic Kitchen*. The second and last section addresses the importance of food and the social role it assumes. The researcher’s readings included several anthropological and sociological books, including *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Power and Meaning* by author Carol Counihan. As for statistics, the researcher used reports by humanitarian organizations and institutions such as the UNHCR and UN-Habitat.

This research analyses two case studies for two groups of IDP families who moved from Damascus Countryside to Damascus City. The first research sample consists of 7 families, where 24 people live in a 25 m² space, i.e. 1.04 m² per resident. The second sample consists of three families, where 8 people live in a 30 m² space, i.e. 1.6 m² per resident.

The research is divided into two chapters. The first chapter outlines theoretical information on the concept of space and its evolution, as well as the kitchen, its function, dimensions, and the evolution it underwent over time. Lastly, the chapter

tackles the Syrian kitchen and the social relationships it fosters, along with their impact on the structure of the kitchen in Syria. This aimed at building a theoretical base for the case study in the second chapter. The second chapter starts off by introducing the research samples, before moving on to studying and analysing each sample individually.

The research faced a number of difficulties. These can be summarized in the lack of records on IDPs, their situation, place of residence, and their distribution and spread in the urban fabric of Damascus City, given the disparity between the conditions of IDPs from both samples. It was also difficult to repeat visits, in light of the new restrictions on movement as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After reviewing theoretical literature and analysing both samples, the research detected indicators of change at the level of society and architectural spaces. These changes appeared as people found themselves compelled to change their homes due to the armed conflict in Syria. These changes include: The massive ability to innovate, adapt and coexist with the prevailing conditions among members of both samples in their new homes. The research stressed the importance of the kitchen within the household, along with its social and community value.

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