



Universität
Basel

Departement
Gesellschaftswissenschaften

Orta Doğu Araştırmaları
NAHOSTSTUDIEN
MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
دراسات الشرق الأوسط

Urban Transformations and Cultural Practices Letters to the Governor; Death, Mobility, and Claims of the City

A Workshop with
Dr. Amal Abdrabo (Alexandria University)

Thursday, 7 December 2017, 12.15-15.00

Seminar für Nahoststudien, Universität Basel, Room E 008, Maiengasse 51, 4056 Basel

*People tend to write letters so it can be read by others, so what about writing letters to dead people?
Also, to convey a message, we need stillness to be able to read, which is something that cannot be done in
motion, so how to read the brief messages on the back of mobile cars?*

Based on Sayed Aweys's two books: *Cries of the Silents: the phenomenon of writing on vehicle structures in modern Egyptian society* & *One of the features of modern Egyptian society; the phenomenon of sending messages to the shrine of Imam Shafi'i*, the workshop will try to explore two field sites where people work on the creation of new participatory spaces. The first site is shrines where people go ask things to be done for them from dead people, writing letters to them that contain complaints against what is going on with them in life. The second space of participation is at the back of minibuses that are owned by citizens (bus drivers) and do not belong to the public transportation busses. Cars represent mobility, movement, and light, whereas Tombs and Shrines represent death, serenity, silence, and humbleness. These two different sites in the city of Alexandria gives new perspectives regarding uncanny ways people claim a space within their city, where they can participate actively or at least express their complaints without being punished or detained. This could generate new theoretical perspectives and construct knowledge derived from exploring the temporal versus the permanent in regard to urban spaces and of the type of participatory activities in modern Egypt within the context of recent political, cultural, and social transformations taking place.



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The workshop is organised by the Seminar of Middle Eastern Studies, the Department of Social Sciences and the Graduate School of Social Sciences (G3S), University of Basel, and funded by *the Inter-university Doctoral Cooperation in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (MUBIT) (Basel / Zurich)*. Active participation in the workshop (including obligatory reading) is a requirement to receive 1 ECTS credit point (credit points can be received through the learning contract, awarded by Selen Etingü). The workshop is open to BA students at an advanced level and to all MA and doctoral students. Please note that the places are limited. For (binding) registration and to receive the assigned readings, please contact Dr Selen Etingü at g.etingue@unibas.ch by 30 November 2017.