

A6797X FALL SEMINAR 2014

ECHOING BORDERS: THE SHELTER, THE CAMP, THE CITY, AND THE STATE

The Production of Space within new Paradigms of Citizenship

Wednesday 9-11am, Buell 300S

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Description

This seminar aims to investigate the shifting notions of borders and citizenship and the spatial manifestations of migration and mobility within contemporary politics in Jordan and Turkey. The seminar focuses on both spatial political theory and conceptual visualization strategies, and is part of a long-term research initiative titled “Echoing Borders: The Shelter, The Camp, The City and the State” developed by Nora Akawi and Nina Kolowratnik through the Studio-X Global Network.

For the first time since WWII, the number of refugees in the world surpasses 50 million. Since the outbreak of civil war in Syria in March 2011, an estimated 9 million Syrians have fled their homes taking refuge in neighboring countries or within Syria itself, leaving more than 40% of the Syrian population uprooted. So far 600,000 Syrian refugees fled to Jordan and 800,000 to Turkey. Addressing issues of mobility, fluidity, and transformation in contemporary politics, especially in relation to the place of the refugee in migration politics in the Middle East, requires a challenging of visualization tools: moving beyond the static representation of borders, territories and topographies of legal and authoritarian mechanisms into depicting their mobile reality.

With the intensifying density and rate of forced migration in the region, borders are multiplying, fluctuating and dissolving, challenging static forms of representation of boundaries as mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. In particular, the figure of the refugee calls forth a discussion on what it means to be a citizen, a foreigner, a guest and how the State is to provide for 'its' peoples. Many host country issues concerning the status and care of refugees are governed by the United Nations, an organization without specific territorial control that is, increasingly in the Middle East, taking on what might be conceived as responsibilities of the State. Both the refugee camp and increasingly informal urban refugee settlements are spatial manifestations of a state of exception, and highlight problematics of state organization in relation to questions of mobility, citizenship, sovereignty and temporariness.

The preceding Echoing Borders summer workshop 2014, which traveled with GSAPP students to Studio-X Amman and Studio-X Istanbul, aimed at providing the necessary platform for understanding and analyzing spatial patterns within refugee flight trajectories and temporary settlement in response to war and conflict in relationship to changing migration policies in Jordan and Turkey. Through a series of conceptual spatial mappings and visualization exercises, student participants investigated the many valences of contemporary spatial politics in the region, by looking at the particular intricacies of refugee status and migration policy, tracing the trajectory of the refugee from the border to the camp or to the city, and identifying/visualizing the condition of waiting and suspension as well as sequences of conflict and insecurity. The Echoing Borders fall seminar is focusing on Jordan's and Turkey's fluctuating borders and transnational systems. We will attempt to identify the specific (legal/physical/social) factors and topographies which inform the radical mutation of spatial practices within Jordan's and Turkey's border regions to Syrian and Iraq and - as a consequence - of the shifting notion of citizenship. As a strategy to activate architectural tools within the socio-political and human rights field, the seminar proposes the agenda of an architectural representational language that is not only directed toward examining the terms of conflict, or giving it a new articulation, but also attempts to dislodge the terms, assumptions, histories, social and legal codes around which the conflict is formed and narrated.

The semester will be structured through roundtable discussions and visual representation exercises that translate the research into a series of mappings on the changing notions of borders and citizenship in Jordan and Turkey,

including research on state and state-like institutions, means and methods of movement and restriction, as well as communications and logistics infrastructure. In addition to critical research and writing, this seminar will use visualization methods to ask how architectural and spatial formulations can affect, register, and make legible the state, the subject, and conflicts between the two. To conduct field research the seminar will travel to the Jordanian and Turkish border regions to Syria for 7 days in October 2014.

The sessions will be supplemented by film screenings and guest lecturers from GSAPP and the Middle East, South Asia, and African Studies (MESAAS) department at Columbia University as well as a GIS workshop organized with the Spatial Information Design Lab. Results of both the summer workshop and fall seminar will be included as a local contribution to the Studio-X Istanbul instalment of *Volume* magazine's traveling exhibition "The Good Cause: Architecture of Peace." The exhibition will later travel to Studio-X Amman.

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