



## Urban Studies Seminar 2018–2019

### Annual Theme: The Urban Spatialities of Religion in the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia

Monday, 13 May 2019, 6 pm

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### Changing Confessional Boundaries in Contemporary Beirut

Lecture by **Nora Cherfan** (ENSA, Strasbourg)

#### Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient  
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#### In cooperation with:



In Hadath in Beirut during the sixties, Maronite Christians owned most of the landed properties. During the Lebanese Civil War which began in 1975, a dividing line, now materialized by the Old Saïda Road, went through the city. The western side was inhabited mainly by Muslims, while the eastern was considered a Christian area. The end of the war in 1990 heated up the land market and enabled large numbers of Shiite contractors to buy land throughout the city. Christian inhabitants were concerned about the phenomenon and set up several procedures to counter what they called a "Shiite Invasion". Since 2010, the Christian Municipality indeed prohibits the sale of Christian lands to Shiites. At the same time, it organizes the buyback of parcels in the east side of the Old Saïda Road that had been sold to Shiite contractors.

In her talk, Nora Cherfan analyzes how formal and informal actions of Christian and Shiite influencers, namely political parties and religious public figures, renew confessional boundaries. She investigates several land parcels in Hadath which justify or discredit these actions by drawing on theories of urban morphology and the mapping of political and religious images in the public space. Besides, Nora's study is based on field observations, analyses of real estate contracts, archival research and interviews with several political and religious leaders as well as members of both communities.

**Nora Cherfan** is a Franco-Lebanese Master student at L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure D'Architecture de Strasbourg. As part of her master's thesis, she studied the impact of Christian political parties and religious men on urban planning in Lebanon with reference to the Hadath Municipality, a suburb in South Beirut.