



## Urban Studies Seminar 2018–2019

### Annual Theme:

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

Monday, 8 April 2019, 5 pm

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### Destructive Ideologies:

### Spatializing the Destruction of Religious and Cultural Heritage in Syria (2011-2017)

Lecture by **Abdal-Razzaq Moaz** (Gerda Henkel Foundation)

#### Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient  
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The aim of this presentation is to synthesize the documentation and research conducted about the destruction of religious and cultural heritage in Syria (2011-2017). The conflict started in March 2011, when the uprising (the so called "Arab Spring") sweeping the Middle East reached Syria. After a peaceful period of demonstrations, the country witnessed destructive fights between, on the one side the regime supported by Russia and Iran as well as by Shi'i militias (Lebanese, Iranian, Iraqi, and Afghan groups such as 'Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq, Al-Fatimiyyun, or Al-Nujaba'), and military opposition groups on other side, certain of these anti-regime groups representing radical sunni forces such as Jabhat Al-Nusra for example. Later, the appearance of the so called Da'ech - ISIS "Islamic State" resulted in the destruction of large parts of the country, including its religious and cultural heritage. The reported damage to historic cities as well as to religious and archeological sites takes multiple forms: besides direct and indirect shelling damage, other sites have been hit by gunfire and explosions, particularly through the aviation bombing and the use of 'barrel bombs'. In addition, religious and archeological sites witnessed looting and illegal excavations, sometimes by bulldozers. World Heritage listed cities like Aleppo, as well as World Heritage archaeological sites such as Palmyra, suffered extensive damage from the war. Within the areas controlled by Da'ech - ISIS - many monuments as well as ancient statues and sculptures were destroyed as symbol of "shirk" (heretic-polytheism- idolatry), and their loss can be viewed as the result of a form of Islamic iconoclasm. The aim of the presentation is to spatialize such destructions and to reflect on their effect on the historical relationship between religion and space. It shows how political and religious ideologies reflected on the space, and the monuments of historical cities as well as the sites in this country.

**Abdalrazzaq Moaz**, a former Director General of Antiquities and Museum of Syria and former Deputy Minister of Culture in Syria, is currently a Senior Fellow with the Gerda Henkel Foundation. [He previously was a senior fellow at the Institut d'études avancées in Paris and at the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg in Bonn] also he was co-Director then Senior Advisor of ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives- USA [www.asor-syrianheritage.org](http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org); He was Visting Professor at Harvard and Indiana University in Bloomington; Among his publications: (co-edit) Residences, Castles, Settlements; Transformation Processes from Late Antiquity to Early Islam in Bilad Al-Sham, Ed. with Karin Batl, German Archaeological Institute in Damascus (DAI), 2009 and co-edit: The Ayyubid Era, Art and Architecture in Medieval Syria, in Museum without Frontiers, Vienna, 2015.