



Annual Theme: Refugees in the City

EUMEEuropa im Nahen Osten
Der Nahe Osten in Europa**Urban Studies Seminar
2015 - 2016****Chaired by Prof Ulrike Freitag and Dr Nora Lafi
Monday, 20 June 2016, 5 pm**

Afghan Refugees in Peshawar: Making the City (1978-2015)

Lecture by Sanaa Alimia (ZMO)

In the context of the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1970s and 1980s millions of Afghans migrated to Pakistan in what was internationally recognised as a humanitarian crisis and emergency exodus. Afghans were also encouraged to settle in Pakistan as cities such as Peshawar (and Quetta) were used as a base for the mujahideen resistance against the Afghan communist government and Soviet Union – an effort supported by the USA, Western Europe, including West Germany, and other allied states. However, the story of Afghan refugees in Pakistan – as is the case with other migrant groups – goes beyond refugee camps, exile, and geopolitics. Indeed it is also important to understand how, where, and with what impact refugees and undocumented migrants become a part of local labour markets and social structures of the so-called host state. This is particularly the case for protracted refugee situations, such as the position of Afghans in Pakistan.

Focusing on Peshawar and using the oral histories of daily wage labourers, this paper explores the ways in which Afghans have been a part of 'making the city'. First, it shows how Afghan migrant labour has been essential to the development of various suburban housing schemes in the city, reflecting the darker side of 'development'. Second, it explores the ways in which Afghan refugee camps and/or 'informal' housing areas have now become a permanent part of the city. Finally, it draws out the ways in which the precarious lives of Afghans of a particular class, in this paper labourers, is comparable with the precarious lives of Pakistanis of the same class – also often migrants, this time rural-urban migrants or internally displaced refugees –, to bring to light the uneven/unequal nature of citizenship in Pakistan for certain marginalised groups.

Sanaa Alimia is a research fellow at ZMO. Her current project is on "Contesting Modernity in Urban Pakistan: Street Politics, Moral Lives and Transnationalism". She is part of the ZMO research field *Cities as Laboratories of Change*.

**Twice a month,
Mondays 5 pm - 7 pm****Venue:**Conference Hall
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