

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Interest in the study of space was already increasing in Middle East studies, as in other areas of scholarship, before the 2011 Arab uprisings and the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey—combined with the Occupy movement in the United States and similar phenomena elsewhere—turned worldwide attention to the politics of public spaces in the era of globalization and neoliberalism. This issue of *IJMES* reflects both the ongoing “spatial turn” in the scholarship and the more immediate and contingent attempts, sparked by recent events, to (re-)theorize public space in particular.

The first three articles in the issue are grouped under the subtitle “Urban and Rural Spaces.” Farah Al-Nakib’s “Revisiting *Ḥaḍar* and *Badū* in Kuwait: Citizenship, Housing, and the Construction of a Dichotomy” provided the image featured on the issue’s cover. Taken from a 1952 state-commissioned “master plan” for Kuwait City designed by a British firm, the drawing illustrates the new “ring road” system radiating out from the old *sūr* or town wall, which was built in 1920 and is often imagined (incorrectly, as Al-Nakib shows) as intended to protect the settled townspeople, or *ḥaḍar*, from the nomadic *badū* of the neighboring countryside. Engaging with and challenging other recent scholarship that explores why the *ḥaḍar/badū* binary has remained so salient in Kuwait despite the fact that over 99 percent of the population is now indisputably *ḥaḍar*, Al-Nakib argues that the dichotomy’s persistence can only be understood through historical exploration of “a spatial politics that fixed the *ḥaḍar* and *badū* as not only distinct but also geographically bounded groups.” State-led modernization schemes starting in the 1950s and 1960s, the early decades of the oil boom, worked “at the micro level of lived reality” to construct and maintain the dichotomy, especially through housing and urban development policies that “divided the population into discrete social residential zones” and distributed rights and benefits accordingly, thereby creating a “hierarchy of spaces” within the city. Yet, in recent years, the same policies have transformed those Kuwaitis now commonly classified as *badū* from the main loyalty base of the ruling Al Sabah “to their primary and arguably most confrontational opposition in history.”

The article by Jessica Watkins, “Seeking Justice: Tribal Dispute Resolution and Societal Transformation in Jordan,” addresses some similar themes in exploring what many Jordanians understand as a recent resurgence of *‘ashā’iriyya* (tribalism) in a country where four-fifths of the population are urban dwellers. Focusing on diverse contemporary uses, by rural and urban Jordanians alike, of tribal dispute resolution processes that privilege patrilineal kinship networks, Watkins questions two trajectories in the scholarship: one (anthropological) that has addressed the application of tribal laws in Jordan only within bounded, rural communities and another that frames *‘ashā’iriyya* in the context of government techniques to assimilate and control the population “at a national level.” The article argues instead that it is “the intersection of top-down policies with bottom-up practices across multiple spheres that is constantly reinscribing the significance of tribal dispute management in Jordan.” In a point that resonates

with the previous article by Al-Nakib, Watkins notes that if that many of the current manifestations of *'ashā'iriyya* in Jordan can be analyzed historically as of the state's making, what is much less clear today is "whether the state is still in the driver's seat."

The third article, James Gustafson's "Household Networks and Rural Integration in Qajar Kirman," explores how urban provincial elites in 19th-century Kirman creatively adapted to, and shaped, the province's increasing absorption into the global economy. Responding to the significant rise of prices of opium, cotton, and henna on the world market, they invested in commercial agriculture and contributed to the development of Kirman's rural infrastructure as well as the subordination of its pastoral nomadic tribes. Gustafson focuses on these provincial elites' "adaptation to and active participation in changes in their economic environment" specifically through the mobilization of their established household networks, which enabled them to usurp "the role of the rural landed elite." The result was "an intensification of the flow of wealth from rural agricultural districts to the urban center through the networks of Kirman's elite households." Through skillful manipulation of both internal and external forces, the Bihzadi family, for example, "integrated a vast tribal territory through its household networks into Kirman's newly emerging regional political economy."

The next two articles explore the spatial politics of two very different "borderlands." Will Smiley, in "The Burdens of Subjecthood: The Ottoman State, Russian Fugitives, and Interimperial Law, 1774–1869," focuses on "the changing relationship between subjects, their states, their labor, and the law, and on the process of demarcating human and geographic boundaries between states in the interimperial context of the Black Sea." The article explores shifting treaty laws and practices that regulated the treatment of Russian subjects who had crossed the (itself fluctuating) border into Ottoman domains either involuntarily as slave captives or voluntarily as fugitives from Russian serfdom and military conscription. The two empires had long been linked by these borderland relations of "migration and unfreedom," but starting in the late 18th century the Ottoman state began enforcing treaties to return both fugitives (thus shoring up Russian forms of unfreedom) and slaves (thus undermining its own). Smiley argues that the outcome of this "imperial collaboration in controlling unfree labor" was a hardening of "the empires' human and geographic boundaries," and meant that for many Russian subjects residing in the Ottoman Empire—in contrast to many western European ones—"foreign subjecthood under treaty law was not a privilege, but a liability."

If Smiley traces particular hardenings of territorial boundaries as relatively porous early modern empires transformed themselves into modern nation-states, Asher Kaufman's "Between Permeable and Sealed Borders: The Trans-Arabian Pipeline and the Arab-Israeli Conflict" looks at how the borders of such nation-states in turn become permeable in their own, sometimes unrecognized, ways. Tracing the forgotten history of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline—which connected the oil fields of Saudi Arabia to the Zahrani port in Lebanon from 1950 to 1982, cutting through the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights after 1967—Kaufman shows how the pipeline reveals "a world where hard political borders [are] easily crossed by the pipelines, by the oil that flows inside them, and by the teams of experts and workers who build and then maintain them." In the borderlands explored here, "state sovereignty is willingly

relinquished by governments so as to establish ex-territorial strips of land where the pipelines are laid down, land that is often controlled by foreign oil companies and their governments.”

The last two research articles in this issue, under the subtitle “Egyptian Cultural Domains,” look at different entertainment industries in Egypt from the late 19th into the 20th centuries. Adam Mestyan, in “Arabic Theater in Early Khedivial Culture, 1868–72: James Sanua Revisited,” intervenes in several debates over the role of James Sanua (Ya‘qub Sannu‘)—more widely known for his satirical writings in the journal *Abu Naddara*—in the early history of modern Egyptian theater. Drawing on previously unexplored evidence, the article argues that Sanua was indeed an important pioneer of Egyptian theater in Arabic, establishing a short-lived theater troupe in 1871, but also that his plays and performances in this period cannot be read as an “expression of subversive nationalism,” as some scholars have claimed. Instead, Mestyan situates Sanua’s early theatrical experiment in the framework of the expanding domain of “official khedivial culture,” arguing that “it can only be understood in its loyalist relation to the ruling elite, not in opposition to it.”

Omar Foda, in “The Pyramid and the Crown: The Egyptian Beer Industry from 1897 to 1963,” explores the history of the beer industry in Egypt from the foundation of two breweries by Belgian investors in 1897 to the nationalization of these companies in the 1960s. Arguing that the “continued presence of an alcohol industry in Muslim-majority Egypt” was due in part to the industry’s “hybrid nature,” Foda writes that those who worked in the industry “existed in the interstices between East and West and those who consumed [its] product did so to communicate both their Egyptianness and their foreignness.” While foreign capital and local connections were necessary to the industry’s success, they would not have been enough had not “many Egyptians found this beverage a powerful tool” for the performance of various kinds of modern, secular identities. Analyzing depictions of alcohol consumption in films and literature of the period, Foda shows that what beer signified depended largely on the social class to which the drinker belonged, and was shaped by contestations over “what the ideal mix of the modern and the traditional” was imagined to be for the members of each class.

In this issue’s roundtable—inspired both by the attention to space in several of this issue’s research articles and by the ongoing occupation and alteration of public spaces in the region—we invited scholars across a range of disciplines to reflect on scholarly approaches to the politics, production, and transformation of public space. The first two responses explore both how “spaces *become* the public spaces of political aspirations . . . through the collective actions and practices of ‘the public’” (Kaveh Ehsani), and how some public spaces—such as Baghdad’s Liberation Square in 2011—can lose their “chance to be reclaimed by the people” (Nada Shabout). The last three essays address how experiences and understandings of public space are shaped by gender (Aseel Sawalha), by frames of knowledge production (Ahmed Kanna), and by rural/urban difference (Nancy Reynolds).

The review article in this issue, by Barbara Harlow, looks at eight recent literary studies of the modern Arabic novel, each of which is, “directly or obliquely, concerned with charting the literary historical trajectory from classical Arabic literature through the 19th-century *nahḍa* . . . into the (so-called) postcolonial period, with its uncertain

and convulsive present of regional uprising.” The article reflects an increasing number of review copies in literary studies sent to the *IJMES* editorial office. It also parallels a welcome rise in articles by literary scholars both submitted to and published in the journal over the past few years.

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