

## Intimate Legacies Workshop

Tracing the Spatiality of Actors during the 2019 Lebanon Protests

Project – <i>Lebanon Unsettled</i>	Workshop Convener: Dr Fadi Shayya Date: July 25-29, 2022
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### **Rationale**

Protest is often idealistically and empirically conceived as a collective category where *homogenous* social groups gather to form a larger social collective, often in central urban public spaces. In describing the 2019 Lebanon protests, this is evident in narratives about “the Lebanese” (vs. foreigners), “the people” (vs. the herd), “the citizens” (vs. subjects), or “non-sectarian groups” (vs. sectarian communities) gathering in Beirut’s Martyrs’ Square or Tripoli’s Sahet Al-Nour. However, the 2019 Lebanon protests showed how heterogenous identities, ideologies, and orientations gathered under unified slogans (كلن يعني كلن), a heterogeneity which generated sharp political divisions in the protests’ aftermath. Moreover, these mass protests decentered public space – or more suitably “protest space” – from city proper and major cities to the extended urbanized areas including towns, villages, infrastructural spaces, and privately owned empty lots (see [geographic mapping](#)).

Central to theorizing this collective category – and predominant in media reporting and academic research – is a heavy dependence on analyzing and historicizing *the social* based on known Social/Political structures (such as sectarianism, clientelism, patriotism). This becomes particularly problematic with the curatorial practices of archiving such histories, as the notion of the collective abstracts the multi-layered and complex individual experiences and their entanglements.

This workshop introduces interrelated concepts from Actor-Network Theory (ANT): the concept of “attachment” (Latour 1999; Gomart and Hennion 1999; Hennion 2017) to trace how actors maintain/modify their entanglements; the notion of “reassembling the social” (Latour 2005) to analyze how actors are always bound within networks that maintain/reconfigure alliances; and the notion of the archive as a “site of anxiety” (Yaneva 2020). Consequently, these notions shed light on the archiving process as a curation of actor-networks and events, which feeds back into the larger scope of the *Lebanon Unsettled* project.

This workshop is meant for those interested in mapping the complex – and often contradictory – social relations and political practices, especially as they manifested in the 2019 Lebanon Protests. It is open to graduate students interested in (or interested in learning about) pragmatic approaches to empirical analysis and visualizing research data and outcomes. Prior knowledge of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and/or mapping is a plus but not a requirement to apply to the workshop. Selected participants will be asked to read a few basic texts from ANT, and examples of visual methods and counter-mapping will be discussed during the workshop.



Figure 1 How does an individual contribute to the collective socio-spatial dimension of a protest? Original caption: “A Lebanese demonstrator—Cynthia Aboujaoude, her face painted as the DC comic book and film character the Joker, but using the colors of Lebanon’s flag—takes part in a protest in Beirut’s Martyr’s Square on October 19, 2019.” (Patrick Baz/AFP/Getty; [source](#))

Note on language: English is the formal language of the project. However, consulting Arabic, French, and other sources and references is encouraged.

### **Pre-Workshop Reading**

[Required] Latour, Bruno. 2005. “Introduction: How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations.” In *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 1–17. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Recommended] Hennion, Antoine. 2017. “Attachments, You Say? ... How a Concept Collectively Emerges in One Research Group.” *Journal of Cultural Economy* 10 (1): 112–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2016.1260629>.

### **Methodology**

This workshop invites its participants to take a step back and see the 2019 Lebanon protests with a fresh empirical lens. Instead of the common and overused Social and Political explanations – with capital S and P, participants are asked to look for and scrutinize relational socio-political practices in an actor’s multiple paths within existing/new networks and sturdy/fluid alliances. The aim is to trace how this actor-network’s sociopolitical practice operates to disentangle from old “attachments” and entangle into new ones (Gomart and Hennion 1999; Latour 1999; Hennion 2017), including the degrees of difficulty for doing so.

Each participant is an actor-network. Each will trace their autobiographical journey before/during/after the 2019 protests. This includes all levels of participations, be it actively taking to the streets, joining on and off, following the “televised revolution,” or taking an agnostic/passive stand. What did you do during the protests?

1. Start with a reflection: How do you try to understand the protest when you look back in retrospective? You dig into your experience (e.g., marching, organizing, sitting idle, discussing with parents/friends, etc.), and you refer to other sources (e.g., listen to news shows, read news articles, search online, attend debates, do academic research, look into archives, etc.).

>>> Step 1 helps you initiate tracing your complex connections to understand how your environment influences you (kinship, social groups, institutions, states of urbanization, available technology).

2. Select the most prominent of these connections and trace your practices in more detail, including what you did during the protests and how you did it.

>>> Step 2 helps you draw on the sources that influence you most, whether they are the people around you, the way the news is framed, or the way history is crafted and archived.

3. [Parallel to Step 4] Map the spatiality of your practices to visualize the relationality of the connections and influences. You don't have to be skilled in professional mapping or drawing. Simply represent how the actors form networks (be they humans, nonhumans, environment, systems, crises, cultures, feelings, etc.) through mental maps, sketches, diagrams, and/or collage. You can start on a blank sheet of paper to create a unique map or overlay these traces on an existing geographic map.

>>> Step 3 helps you perform a critical mapping exercise where you can “de-territorialize” the set territories on a map and “re-assemble” – and thus, “re-territorialize” – radical or alternative mappings.

4. [Parallel to Step 3] Cross reference the field notes you collected and mapping you generated with archival and non-archival material you drew on in Step 2.

>>> Step 4 helps you situate the relationality of your connections and influences, be they existing sectarian and patriotic discourses, existing pedagogical strategies in schools and universities, or crafted historical narratives in archives.

5. Wrap-up by reflecting on the curatorial process you employed in this exercise, including what you maintained, improved, or completely changed in your outlook. Add these reflections, as text or sketches, to your mapping output.

>>> Step 5 helps you come full circle to the beginning of the exercise where tracing the actor-networks becomes a continuous and cumulative practice.



Figure 2 How does the spatiality of protest unfold through human–nonhuman actions, and beyond typical representations of gathered people? Original caption: “Lebanese demonstrators pose for pictures in front of a tire fire during a protest in Nahr Ibrahim, north of Beirut, on October 18, 2019” (Joseph Eid/AFP/Getty; [source](#))

### **Expected Outputs**

A1/A2 sheets with the final mind maps, collages, or drawings. These must be produced as high quality and organized sheets so we can scan and document them to share on the project website.

No special technical skills are required; just an open imaginary to creatively capture the complex connections of the actor-networks. The workshop organizers will provide stationery and paper material to create the mapping sheets.

More details will be shared during the workshop.

### **Suggested (quasi)Archival Sources**

- AUB: *Lebanon Protests – Oct. 2019* [[link](#)]
- UN Women: *Understanding the Role of Women and the Feminist Actors in Lebanon’s 2019 Protests* [[link](#)]
- ANND: search keywords (Lebanese + revolution) [[link](#)]
- Megaphone: category (November Revolution) [[link](#)]
- HRW: *Lebanon Protests* [[link](#)]
- ACLED: *Breaking the Barriers: One Year of Demonstrations in Lebanon* [[link](#)]

## **Inspiration for Mapping**

- *Beyroutes: A Guide to Beirut* (Ernsten 2009) >>> alternative and counter mappings of Greater Beirut, including its suburbs.
- *At The Edge of the City: Reinhabiting Public Space toward the Recovery of Beirut's Horsh Al-Sanaubar* (Shayya 2010) >>> alternative mappings and multimedia documentation of public space practices.
- *Radical Cartography* [[link](#)] >>> browse (by geography or problematic) through radical mapping of various socio-political and socio-ecological issues. There is also a downloadable book *After the Map* (Rankin 2018) [[link](#)].
- *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* (Mogel and Bhagat 2010) [[link](#)] >>> a collection of ten essays and maps about activism and cartographic practice.
- *MENA Mapping: Mapping Prisons, Checkpoints and Former Clandestine Sites of Torture* [[link](#)] >>> check how violence in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and Beqaa is documented on maps.
- *Disembodied Territories* [[link](#)] >>> browse (by method or theme) through the various counter-mapping approaches such as *Unconfessed Architectures*, *Spatial Storytelling: Conduit and Vessel*, and *A Geopoetics of Dust*.
- *Cloud Cosmogram* [[link](#)] >>> a representation of the world of data centres.
- *A timeline of Wars of the United States* [[link](#)] >>> a representation of parallel and intersecting chronologies.

## **Convener's Bio**

Dr. Fadi Shayya is an architect, urbanist, researcher, and educator working across the fields of science and technology studies, design, and the built environment. Trained in Beirut, New York, and Manchester in architecture, urban theory, and the social sciences, his interdisciplinary professional and pedagogic practice engages with militarization, urbanism, technology, and post-war spatial cultures. He convened the graduate workshop *Dissident Times [Square]: Urban Protest in New York City* with Parsons' Urban Program, NY; led master planning projects at *Dar Group*; advised *Visualizing Palestine on information visualization*; published in *Open Gaza* and *Critical Cities*, among others; organized academic panels and contributed to artistic/advocacy projects; and taught at the *Manchester School of Architecture*, *Parsons School of Design*, and the *American University of Beirut*.

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