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Arab Cities in the Neoliberal Moment: Space, Power, Uprising

Urbanism and Neoliberal Order: The Development and Redevelopment of Amman

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ABSTRACT:

This article explores the self-representation of market urbanism as an economic project. It does so through an historically situated study of the redevelopment of the Abdali district of Amman. Drawing upon recent fieldwork, press reports, and interviews with municipal officials, urban planners, and architects, the article questions the understanding of property markets and the production of space under contemporary capitalism as rooted in the economic rationality of the market. Instead, it uncovers the degree to which colonial state formation and the production of the Jordanian capital were both outcomes of and vectors for the fusion of economic and political rationalities. The article traces this internal relation between the political and the economic through what the author calls the networked production of space and demonstrates the continued ability of oligarchic networks at the heart of this internal

relation to turn economic reform discourses, including that of contemporary market urbanism, to their own decidedly illiberal purposes.

The Abdali Boulevard Project, 2012. Photo by Najib Hourani.



Additional information

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Najib B. Hourani is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Global Urban Studies Program at Michigan State University.

Having received his PhD in Politics (New York University, 2005), Hourani's research today investigates the dark underside of capitalist globalization in Middle Eastern cities. He is currently working on a book-length manuscript, entitled *Glass Towers and Heritage Trails: Neoliberal Urbanism in Beirut and Amman*. Therein he draws upon extensive fieldwork in Lebanon and Jordan to understand how neoliberal urban development and redevelopment strengthens illiberal politico-economic networks in the contemporary Arab world.



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