

Reconstruction as Violence

THE CASE OF ALEPPO

FRIDAY MAY 10 & SATURDAY MAY 11, 2019 IN MIT ROOM 6-120

A two-day symposium organized by Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor, and Deen Sharp, AKPIA@MIT Post-Doctoral Fellow. Sponsored by the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.





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A two-day symposium organized by Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor, and Deen Sharp, AKPIA@MIT Post-Doctoral Fellow. Sponsored by the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

This symposium seeks to address the following questions: How does violence and conflict not only destroy but constitute, design, and organize built environments and infrastructures? How do we understand the urbanization of warfare in relation to urban theory and reconstruction practices? Finally, participants will be asked to consider the recent warfare in the Middle East, with a special focus on Aleppo, in relation to the built environment and the extent to which reconstruction processes can be weaponized.

Cover photo by Sergey Ponomarev: An election campaign poster for President Bashar al-Assad is displayed on a ruined shopping mall in the Khalidiya district of Homs, shortly after Government forces regained control of the area. Built just before the war, the mall had never opened for business.



Program

FRIDAY AFTERNOON **MAY 10** IN ROOM **6-120**

2:30 **OPENING REMARKS**

Hashim Sarkis

MIT

INTRODUCTION

Nasser Rabbat

MIT

SESSION I

URBANIZATION AND DESTRUCTION

MODERATOR: **Allison Cuneo, MIT**

3:00 *Rethinking Urban Reconstruction through Informal Settlements, a Syrian Historical Perspective*

Valérie Clerc

French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD)

3:30 *(Re)Constructing Memory (as Violence)*

Aleksandar Staničić

TU Delft

4:00 *Territorialities of Sovereignty: Deconstructing the Spatial Correlates of Conflict*

Diane Davis

Harvard University

4:30 **Discussion**

SATURDAY MORNING **MAY 11** IN ROOM **6-120**

SESSION II

THE CASE OF ALEPPO

MODERATOR: **Nasser Rabbat, MIT**

9:30 *Survivor Cities: Cultural Heritage in Context and in Contest*

Hegnar Watenpaugh

University of California Davis

10:00 *Aleppo, Patterns of Damage: Beyond Winning the War*

Laura Kurgan

Columbia University

10:30 Discussion

10:50 COFFEE

11:10 *The Ambiguities of Syria's Reconstruction*

Frederick Deknatel

World Politics Review

11:40 *Towards an Ethical Framework for Reconstructing Aleppo*

Rim Lababidi

University College London

12:10 Discussion

12:30 LUNCH

SATURDAY AFTERNOON **MAY 11** IN ROOM **6-120**

SESSION III

RECONSTRUCTION AS VIOLENCE

MODERATOR: **Huma Gupta, MIT**

2:00 *Planning as Re-Orientation: Baalbek and Tripoli, c. 1952*

Lucia Allais

Princeton University

2:30 *Umudugudu w'Ingunguru: An "Ordinary" Model Village*

Delia Duong Ba Wendel

MIT

3:00 *Concrete Conflict*

Deen Sharp

MIT

3:30 Discussion

3:50 COFFEE

4:10 *Domicide in Syria: Reconstruction as Re-Destruction of Home*

Ammar Azzouz

Architect, London

4:40 *Culturescaping the Post-Conflict Environment: The Spatial Politics of "Peace"*

Andrew Herscher

University of Michigan

5:10 Discussion

5:30 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Deen Sharp

MIT



Participants

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Domicide in Syria: Reconstruction as Re-Destruction of Home

Ammar Azzouz

Architect, London

Abstract: 2011 marked a turning point in the modern history of Syria, this period witnessed the destruction of the built environment throughout the country and the mass displacement of more than ten million Syrians from their homes. Now after more than eight years of violence and conflict, debates on the future reconstruction of Syria have begun to emerge. Many of these debates focus on monumental and iconic sites, such as Palmyra and the Old City of Aleppo, which have elicited international attention from journalists, politicians, policy-makers and researchers. This significant interest in ancient and iconic sites have also lead to the neglect of more humble, lesser-known and everyday spaces and places that mattered the most to many in Syria. In addition, only a few scholars have focused on the impact of war on the urban practices and everyday life in urban Syria. In this presentation, therefore, I argue that beyond urbicide, the killing of urbanity, there is a need to examine the impact of war and the destruction of homes, what I term domicile. I utilize an anthropological approach to the urban and I have interviewed Syrians who still reside in Homs, a city that has been divided, sieged, destroyed and ruined. This talk shows how the loss of the built environment has also meant a loss of sense of home even for those who still reside in the city. Today, with the increasing interest in reconstructing Syria, there are fears that impacted communities will not have the ownership and the right to shape the future of their cities. There are fears that reconstruction will bring new cycles of destruction to cities and countryside to create a place of forgetting where certain societies are prohibited to mourn, grief and remember.

Biography: Ammar Azzouz is an architect at Ove Arup & Partners, London. He studied architecture in Homs, Syria, and completed his PhD in architecture at the University of Bath. He is a former Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research at the University of Cambridge. His research interests include local and international responses to destruction and displacement in Syria and the politics of reconstruction. His recent article 'A tale of a Syrian city at war: Destruction, resilience and memory in Homs', was published in the journal CITY in 2019.

Planning as Re-Orientation: Baalbek and Tripoli, c. 1952

Lucia Allais

Princeton University

Abstract: While the “urban turn” in international preservation discourse is usually attributed to the reconstruction of European cities after World War II, a number of early postwar missions to Middle Eastern cities also played a crucial role in testing out new principles, notably for “re-orienting” urban life around historic architecture. This presentation takes the Lebanese examples of Baalbek and Tripoli, subjected to competing projects for infrastructural modernization in the 1940s and 50s. Examining the spatial and epistemic roots of “re-orientation” reveals a debt to the embeddedness of public building typologies in the medieval Islamic city, as well as a desire to move past the stark geometries of both Beaux-Arts re-alignments and modernist zoning.

Biography: Lucia Allais is Associate Professor of Architecture at Princeton University. Her book *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: 2018) traces the invention of the cultural monument, as a global building type, from midcentury scenarios of war, modernism, and modernization. Recent articles include “Amplified Humanity and the Architectural Criminal” (*Future Anterior*) and “Architecture and Mediocrity at UNESCO House” (Marcel Breuer, Lars Müller: 2017).

Allais has received a number of grants and fellowships for her scholarly work, including from the CASVA, the Graham Foundation, the Krupp Foundation, and the Radcliffe Institute. Before joining the Princeton faculty she was the Behrman-Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow at the Princeton Society of Fellows. In 2015 she was selected to be the inaugural Detlef Mertins Lecturer on the History of Modernity at Columbia University.

She received her BSE in Civil Engineering and Architecture from Princeton, her M.Arch with Distinction from the Harvard GSD and her PhD from HTC at MIT. Allais is a member of Aggregate and an editor of Grey Room.

Rethinking Urban Reconstruction through Informal Settlements, a Syrian Historical Perspective

Valérie Clerc

French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development

Abstract: This presentation questions the reconstruction of Syrian cities from a historical and ontological reading of informal urbanization and its treatment in Syria. The question of informality should be considered in relation to Syrian urban reconstruction policies and perspectives. Whereas before 2011, informal settlements housed on average 30 percent of the inhabitants of large cities (40 percent of the population of Damascus), the conflict caused an increase in the informalization of both land and property markets. The great majority of destruction is located in informal neighborhoods. Law 10/2018, established for the reconstruction of cities, is based on a decree initially tailored for the urban renewal of informally built neighbourhoods. Through a historical analysis of competing urban policies towards informal settlements, and their rationale related to land and urban perception, I consider not only the conditions for rebuilding cities that were largely informal but use urban informality to think about the processes of reconstruction.

Biography: Valérie Clerc is a Senior Research Fellow at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD - Institut de recherche pour le développement) and at the Center for Social Science Studies on Africa, America and Asia (CESSMA). She holds a doctorate in urban planning and architecture, her research focuses on cities of the Global South, informal settlements and public policies. As well as, land and housing issue, property markets, sustainable urban development, public action and urban planning practices. In Syria, she was responsible (2007-2011) for the Urban Observatory of the Middle East at the French Institute of the Near East (Ifpo), where she led inter alia a research program on land competition and access to housing in the Maghreb and the Middle East. She has also worked on Lebanon, Cambodia, India and Myanmar.

Territorialities of Sovereignty: Deconstructing the Spatial Correlates of Conflict

Diane Davis

Harvard University

Abstract: This presentation seeks to problematize the notion of sovereignty, asking questions about the territorial scales under which ethno-national conflict has materialized historically, and considering the possibility that nature and intensity of conflict is a function of territorial scale and how sovereignty and other forms of governing power manifest in physical space. After theorizing the territorial dynamics of conflict, and the ways that competing sovereignties affect those processes, I examine a range of spatial interventions that have been shown to enable or constrain pathways towards violence reduction.

Biography: Diane E. Davis is the Charles Dyer Norton Professor Regional Planning and Urbanism at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she is currently Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design. Her research interests include the politics of urban development policy, socio-spatial practice in conflict cities, the relations between urbanization and economic development, and comparative urban development. With a special interest in Latin America, she has explored topics ranging from historic preservation and informality to urban social movements and policing. Her books include *Cities and Sovereignty: Identity Conflicts in the Urban Realm* (2011), *Discipline and Development: Middle Classes and Prosperity in East Asia and Latin America* (2004), and *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century* (1994). More recently, she has turned her attention to sovereignty at the urban scale, examining the ways that contemporary challenges of climate change, migration, and violence transform governance practices. Davis is a member of the Executive Committee of Harvard's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and the Chair of the Faculty Committee on Mexico at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

The Ambiguities of Syria's Reconstruction

Frederick Deknatel

World Politics Review

Abstract: Aleppo is the story of Syria's reconstruction so far: Token rebuilding efforts are underway in the city, but they are shrouded in propaganda and only the authorities in Damascus and their allies are involved. In Aleppo, as in other Syrian cities hardest hit by the war, Bashar al-Assad's regime is already prioritizing what to rebuild, and what not to, and in doing so changing the meaning of reconstruction itself. It will restore symbolic sites that are considered useful for propaganda purposes but neglect the devastated stretches of the city, overwhelmingly Sunni-majority, that supported the opposition. Assad already hinted at this strategy when he told a conference in Damascus two years ago what he thought Syria had "won" in the war: "a healthier and more homogeneous society in the true sense." Although Western governments are currently withholding reconstruction assistance in order to pressure Assad to make some of the same concessions that he has resisted over the past eight years, they may not have much leverage. The promise of Western money for reconstruction may not appeal to the regime if rebuilding all of Syria isn't really its goal.

Biography: Frederick Deknatel is the managing editor of World Politics Review, an online source of news and analysis on global affairs, based in New York. His writing on urbanism, culture, and heritage in the Middle East has appeared in *The Nation*, *Foreign Policy*, *The New Republic*, *Even Magazine*, and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, among other publications. He was previously a staff editor at *Foreign Affairs*. In 2008 and 2009, he was a Fulbright fellow in Syria, where he conducted research on architectural and urban preservation in Damascus and also worked for the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR. He has an M.Phil. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from St Antony's College at Oxford, where he wrote a master's thesis on the politics of urban planning and historic preservation in Cairo, and a B.A. in history and Arabic from Vassar.

Culturescaping the Post-Conflict Environment: The Spatial Politics of "Peace"

Andrew Herscher

University of Michigan

Abstract: States and international organizations alike typically pose "peace" in terms of a cessation of military violence, on the one hand, and the introduction of the institutions and practices of the liberal-democratic state, on the other. Practiced in this way, peace-building becomes synonymous with state-building and the historical legacy of peace-building within global antifascist struggles is forgotten. How is the built environment enlisted in contemporary "peacebuilding" projects? I will explore this question by focusing on the role of cultural heritage in post-conflict Kosovo, where post-conflict peace-building has excluded the heritage of antifascism in favor of ethnic-based heritage—a rendering of peace-building in depoliticized terms that cannot encompass the anti-fascist resistance that is urgent across the globe.

Biography: Andrew Herscher endeavors to bring research on architecture and cities to bear on struggles for rights and justice across a range of global sites. In his scholarship he explores the architecture of political violence, migration and displacement, and self-determination and resistance. His books include *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* (Stanford University Press, 2010), *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit* (University of Michigan Press, 2012), and *Displacements: Architecture and Refugee* (Sternberg Press, 2017); with Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi he co-edited *Spatial Violence* (Routledge: 2016) and with Daniel Bertrand Monk he is co-authoring *The Global Shelter Imaginary* (University of Minnesota Press: forthcoming). He has also cofounded a series of militant research collaboratives that work to support and empower communities under threat of disenfranchisement and displacement in Detroit, including *Detroit Resists* and the *We the People of Detroit Community Research Collective*. He is currently based at the University of Michigan where he teaches in the Architecture Program, the Department of Art History, and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and co-directs the interdisciplinary faculty/graduate seminar "Decolonizing Pedagogies."

Aleppo, Patterns of Damage: Beyond Winning the War

Laura Kurgan

Columbia University

Abstract: The city of Aleppo split in half over the course of the war, between a regime-controlled western side and a revolutionary eastern side. How did this divide manifest itself in social, political, economic, architectural, and urban terms? Or rather, how can we see and map this division in a way that teaches us something about what was at stake in the conflict? Columbia's Center for Spatial Research (CSR) developed a series of experimental methods to follow and record damage in Aleppo during the five years of "active civil war." CSR created a documentary archive, as well, for viewing the damaged city on a multi-layered map. Between the multiple forms of media we spatialized, and the data we collected from a variety of sources, what can we learn about Aleppo? We are exploring patterns of urban damage, to ask what they reveal of the traces of tactics and strategies of designed destruction, organized violence that exceeds that of "military necessity" (as problematic as that criterion itself can be). The data raises very specific questions: how do changes in control over two major highways into and out of the city enable the siege and ultimate victory of regime forces? What role do Aleppo's "informal" neighborhoods, and various historic masterplans for their 'renewal,' play in the civic rebellion and its transformation into civil war? How, and where, has Law 10/2018 re-introduced new violence into the so-called reconstruction efforts? With the vast majority of eastern Aleppo's urban fabric in ruins, questions of land ownership, real estate speculation, and the lack of housing — all already prominent before the outbreak of military violence — continue to consolidate the economic, political, and spatial division of Aleppo's residents.

Biography: Laura Kurgan is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation at Columbia University, where she directs the Center for Spatial Research and the Visual Studies curriculum. She is the author of *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics* (Zone Books, 2013). Her work explores the ethics and politics of digital mapping and its technologies; the art, science and visualization of big and small data; and design environments for public engagement with maps and data. In 2009, Kurgan was awarded a United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship.

Towards an Ethical Framework for Reconstructing Aleppo

Rim Lababidi

University College London

Abstract: As soon as the old city of Aleppo became accessible in 2017, after nearly five years of bloody combat that left the city as a skeleton, projects were almost immediately launched to restore two of the city's most significant cultural icons; the Citadel and the Umayyad mosque. Those projects and further endeavors to reconstruct Old Aleppo, however, have been widely criticized for favoring a specific spectrum of society, and their potential role to facilitate the Syrian Government's attempt at demographic engineering. This presentation analyzes the destruction that had affected the cultural assets of Old Aleppo between 2012 and 2017, the actors that have contributed to it, and the aims and principles underpinning their debated reconstruction plans. I conclude by stressing the need for an inclusive recovery process that responds to the complex socio-political and economic conditions of Aleppo. A process based on long-term developing plans that can foster reconciliation, democracy and social justice.

Biography: Rim Lababidi is an architect and a researcher who investigates the preservation and safeguarding of built heritage in times of peace and crises, with a special emphasis on first aid practices. Rim has been mapping and analyzing the damage to the Syrian heritage, specifically the old city of Aleppo. Her research interests include broader issues of Western practices of preservation and valuation of material culture, and their compatibility with the local values of the Islamic World.

Concrete Conflict

Deen Sharp

MIT

Abstract: Many scholars and analysts have remarked upon the fact that the opening decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed the intensification of violence and warfare in urban contexts. It is not only that warfare has entered the city, however. Contemporary urban fabrics across the world are often actively designed, planned and organized by various stakeholders in the context of war and violence or the threat of it. Conflict and violence, I argue, is not something that should be understood as outside the processes of urbanization but, in some cases, as central to it. The increased proliferation of urban science, and their smart cities, has also witnessed the strengthening of surveillance apparatuses as part of attempts to control and subdue civilian populations, in particular in the Middle East and even Syria specifically. The construction of the built environment, as well as mobility and surveillance within it, can be central to the conduct of warfare and the extension of violence. Through a broader analysis of how conflict has been embedded within the processes of urbanization and the construction of the built environment through a range of contemporary case studies in the Middle East, I situate the current attempts by the Assad regime to “reconstruct” Syria. I argue that this rebuilding is not an attempt to resolve the conflict but is rather the continuation of warfare through other means: reconstruction as violence.

Biography: Deen Sharp is the co-director of Terreform, Center for Advanced Urban Research, and a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the MIT. He is the co-editor of *Beyond the Square: Urbanism and the Arab Uprisings* (Urban Research: 2016) and the soon to be published *Open Gaza* (Urban Research: forthcoming). His most recent journal article was published in *Progress in Human Geography*. He is currently working on turning his doctoral dissertation entitled, “Corporate Urbanization: Between the future and survival in Lebanon” into a book. Previously, he was a freelance journalist and consultant based in Lebanon. He has written for a number of publications, including, *Jadaliyya*, *Portal 9*, *MERIP*, *Arab Studies Journal* and the *Guardian*. He has worked for several UN agencies, including UNDP and UN-Habitat, governments and international NGOs.

(Re)Constructing Memory (as Violence)

Aleksandar Staničić

TU Delft

Abstract: Recent scholarship in the field of embodied cognitive science have proposed a notion of the “encultured human being” following the conception of cognition as being enacted through (bodily) interactions with material, social, and cultural environments. (Memorial and heritage) architecture exists at this boundary between the cultural/collective memory and the collective body memory because it has both a supportive and contingent role in memory making. This has been followed by the most recent trends in design of memorial places that notably shift from static, unilateral readings of “future heritage” to more dynamic, affective experience of architecture and creation of memories, which ultimately raises the question of (ever-changing) political readings and intentions. In the most extreme cases, the perverse insisting on guilt, victimization and/or ideology in the design of places of memory can be considered as violence in its own right. This is particularly symptomatic for divided, war-torn societies, such are those of former Yugoslav Cities.

Biography: Aleksandar Staničić is an architect, researcher, and Marie Curie Fellow at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. Previously he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, and a research scholar at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Columbia University. Aleksandar’s work, broadly speaking, explores the architectural engagements with violence-driven transformation of urban morphology, politics of urban (re)construction in cities of upheaval, and disaster resilience design. It stems from two book projects, *War Diaries: Design after the Destruction of Art and Architecture* (co-editor, University of Virginia Press, 2019) and *Transition urbicide: Post-war reconstruction in post-socialist Belgrade* (author, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). His professional portfolio includes awarded design on postwar housing in Syria, and multiple grants and fellowships from the Government of Lombardy Region, Italy, and Ministry of Education, Republic of Serbia. Aleksandar earned his PhD at Politecnico di Milano in 2014.

Abstract: Cities that have experienced war and atrocities, and survived, acquire the power to recall the horrors of the past. They symbolize violence, but also survival and resilience. They are survivor cities. Although the recent acts of cultural destruction in Syria have reverberated around the world, similar practices have a long and fraught history in the Middle East. In the past, they have been entwined with practices of colonialism, empire-building, and nationalism. They have also intersected with the mass extermination of civilian populations by their own states. These episodes still cast a long shadow, not only in the Middle East but beyond. We not only have to come to terms with the immediate implications of the destruction of heritage that we witness in our own time, but we also have to grapple with the long-term consequences of the destruction of culture and its many afterlives. Moreover, we need to understand how the experience of destruction shapes the architecture itself, and its role in the social world. When followed closely, the story of a destroyed building or neighborhood, and of its people, reveal much about the nature of survival and the centrality of architecture and cultural heritage to it. They show us at eye level the experience of art that legal notions and treaties about the human right to culture seek to enshrine in law. Post conflict design proposals for cities that have experienced atrocities and civil war need to take stock of the past, but they also have to face forward, towards future urban dwellers and citizens.

Biography: Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh is Professor of Art History at the University of California, Davis. She researches the visual cultures of the Middle East, including issues of architectural preservation, museums, and cultural heritage. Her book, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, received the Spiro Kostof Book Award from the Society of Architectural Historians in 2006. Her scholarly publications have also won the Best Article Prize from the Syrian Studies Association, and the Ömer Lütfi Barkan Article Prize from the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association. She was the guest editor for a special issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, on “Cultural Heritage and the Arab Spring” (2016). Her new book, *The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript, from Genocide to Justice*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2019. She has served on the executive boards of the Society of Architectural Historians, the Syrian Studies Association, and the Historians of Islamic Art Association. In addition to her scholarship, her writing has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, and was featured in a BBC series about cultural heritage lost during the current conflict in Syria.

Abstract: In Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, the government and its partners turned to architecture and planning to build peace. These projects are case studies in liberal peace orthodoxy, which has increasingly called on development to do the work of sociopolitical, physical, and economic repair. Ethnographic research in one “model village” in northwestern Rwanda reveals both the challenges faced by residents and how particular socio-spatial contexts shape relationships between citizens and state after the genocide. There, relocated residents enact strategies to render themselves “ordinary”: dutiful citizens that endorse state development policies and wish not to attract unfavorable attention from the government. This ordinariness is, in one sense, reproduced as placelessness—a sameness that derives from the settlement’s uniform design and technocratic administration. This is also a placelessness that shuns relationships between ethnic identity and region. Residents’ construction of ordinariness arises from an interest in negative rights: the right to be left alone, to not be implicated in the region’s history of political extremism, and to participate equally in national development objectives. It is actively constructed by compensating those who died during the genocide and positioning residents as model citizens willing to apologize and recompense for the wrongs of others. Doing so seeks to demonstrate that residents are worthy of urbanization and development benefits. The village reveals a case in which citizenship is not only defined by building and living in Rwanda’s model villages. To be a model citizen here is to assume the burden of government expectations and narrative of a region, and to attempt to repair that image through accord and labor in service of model village construction.

Biography: Delia Duong Ba Wendel is an Assistant Professor at M.I.T.’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Her research explores how communities recover and rebuild after conflict. An interdisciplinary perspective that builds from training in Urban Planning, Cultural Geography, Architectural History, and Anthropology shapes her approach. Delia is currently working on two book projects that draw from historical and ethnographic research in central Africa. The first, *Rwanda’s Genocide Heritage*, focuses on the production of a visual and material memory of mass violence that was propelled by both state interests and human rights practice. The second book, *The Ethics of Stability*, explores the Rwandan government’s approach to building peace through architecture and planning and the related challenges that residents face.

Delia received a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from Harvard University in 2016. Her dissertation was recognized with grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, Social Science Research Council, Harvard Center for Ethics, and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. She also holds degrees in Architecture (BArch, Rice University), Cultural Geography (MSc, University College London) and Architectural History and Theory (MDes, Harvard GSD).

Allison Cuneo

MIT

Biography: Allison Cuneo is an archaeologist specializing in critical heritage studies. Her current fieldwork centers on northern Iraq and her research concerns cultural heritage destruction, international heritage management policy and practice, and community-based participatory research. She has conducted archaeological and ethnographic fieldwork in Greece, England, and Spain, and has been a manager for capacity building and monitoring, reporting, and fact-finding programs, including the University Linkage Program at Mosul University and the Cultural Heritage Initiatives at ASOR. Currently she is a post-doctoral fellow in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT and a co-principal investigator with the Mosul Heritage Stabilization Program, a multi-year U.S. Department of State Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation cooperative agreement with her independent consulting firm, Cultural Property Consultants, and the University of Pennsylvania Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

Huma Gupta

MIT

Biography: Huma Gupta is a doctoral candidate in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture. She is currently a SSRC International Dissertation Research Fellow. Her dissertation "The State Between Dwelling & Building: Sarifa Settlements and the Formation of Iraq" deconstructs the 'problem of the migrant' and the alleged 'problem of informal urbanism' that were central to state building in mid-century Iraq. In 2011, she graduated from MIT's Department of Urban Studies with a Master's in City Planning. Previously, she has worked on municipal planning in Damascus, increasing accountability in post-war reconstruction projects across seven provinces in Afghanistan, and changing how United Nations' humanitarian agencies help integrate internally displaced persons in cities around the world. She has a forthcoming article in the spring issue of the International Journal of Islamic Architecture titled "Staging Baghdad for Development, 1957-8," which examines a rare film that depicts settlements of rural migrants. Some of her policy-based publications include "Community-Based Monitoring of Post-Conflict Reconstruction" for Integrity Watch Afghanistan, "Home Sweet Home: Housing Practices and Tools that Support Durable Solutions for Urban IDPs" for the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and "Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies" for UNOCHA and Care International.

Nasser Rabbat

MIT

Biography: Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor and the Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. His interests include the history and historiography of Islamic architecture, medieval urbanism, modern Arab history, contemporary Arab art, and post-colonial criticism. He has published several books, most recently 'Imarat al-Mudun al-Mayyita: Nahwa Qira'a Jadida lil-Tarikh al-Suri (The Architecture of the Dead Cities: Toward a New Interpretation of the History of Syria) (2018); an online book, The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoléon to ISIS, co-edited with Pamela Karimi (2016) and al-Naqd Iltizaman: Nazarat fi-l Tarikh wal 'Ururba wal Thawra (Criticism as Commitment: View-points on History, Arabism, and Revolution) (2015), which deals with the roots and consequences of the "Arab Spring." He is currently writing an intellectual biography of the 15th century Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi who penned the first true urban history of Cairo.

Hashim Sarkis

MIT

Biography: Hashim Sarkis was appointed Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning in January of 2015. Prior to that he was at Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD) as the The Aga Khan Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism. In addition to professorships at Harvard University and MIT, Dean Sarkis has held numerous visiting appointments around the world including the American University of Beirut and the Metropolis Program in Barcelona.

In addition to his academic work, Sarkis is principal architect in the Cambridge and Beirut based firm, HashimSarkis Studios, founded in 1998. His architectural and planning projects include affordable housing, institutional buildings, and town planning throughout the globe. His current projects include the Byblos Town Hall and the Courtowers, both under construction.

Sarkis has a Bachelor of Architecture and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Rhode Island School of Design and a Master of Architecture from Harvard University GSD. He received his Ph.D. in Architecture from Harvard University GSD for his thesis Publics and Architects: Re-Engaging Design in the Democracy. He is the author of many articles and books that have filled important gaps in the history of modern architecture and urban design. These include Circa 1958: Lebanon in the Pictures and Plans of Constantinos Doxiadis, and the edited books CASE: Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital and Josep Lluís Sert: The Architect of Urban Design (with Eric Mumford).

