



## **SESSION 3**

### **FEB. 16, 2022**

#### **Cities and transit migrant and refugee populations**

**Chair: Zeynep Sahin Mençutek**, Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies;  
CERC Migration, Ryerson University

**The urbanization of asylum,**  
**Jonathan Darling**

**The “urban-itarian” encounters in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan after  
displacement from Syria,**  
**Estella Carpi**, University College London

**Performativities of (dis)location: Sheltering practices and migration research  
in México’s southern border,**  
**Cesar E. Merlín-Escorza**, Radboud University

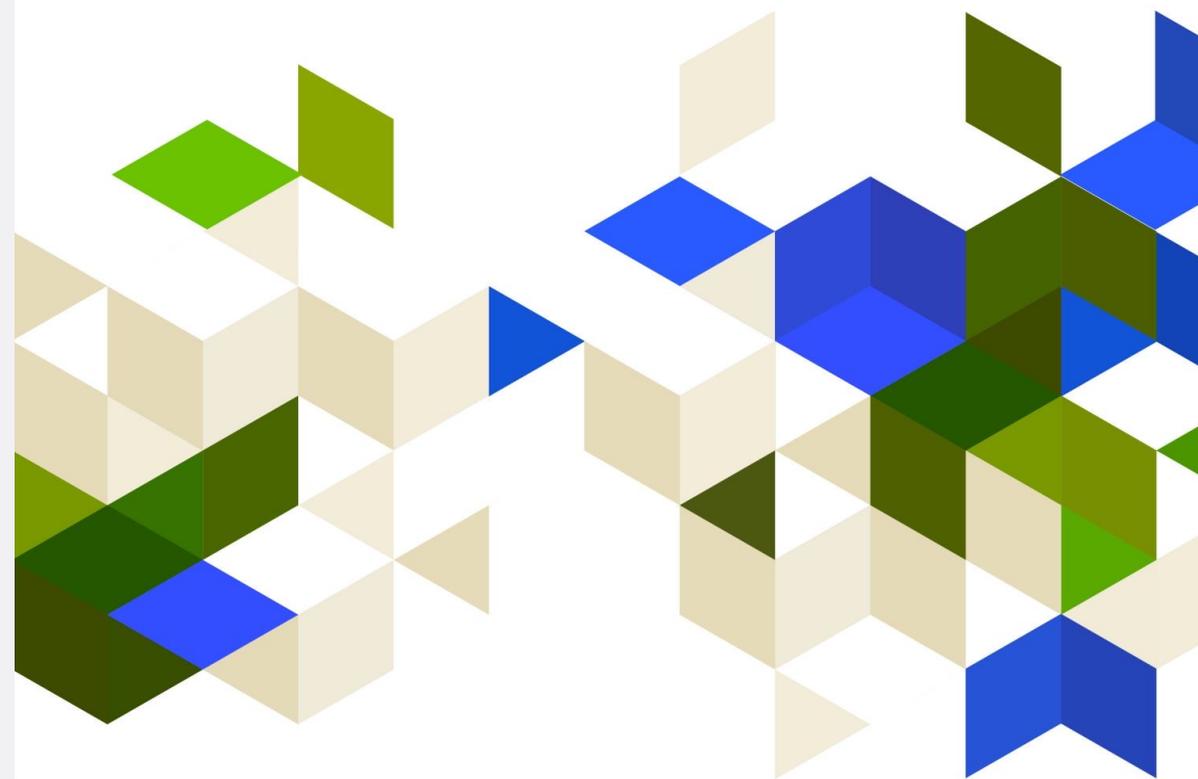
# *'Urban-itarian' Encounters in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan After Displacement from Syria*

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CERC - Migration Annual Conference, Ryerson  
University, Toronto (Canada)

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# *Outline*

## *How do I conceptualize the 'urban-itarian'?*

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- 1st Study: **Standardized and exclusive applications of the 'urban-humanitarian' nexus**

The case of Lebanon (2016-18)

- 2nd Study: **Border towns in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, and the inappropriateness of the urban focus**

Revisiting my past research in the 'urban' and 'peri-urban' areas bordering Syria (2016-2018)

- 3rd Study: **What's the nature of the urban-itarian relationship in Istanbul at various scales?**

Preliminary thoughts on the city of Istanbul (Dec 2021-present)

## *The need to look at the ‘urban-itarian’*

- More than **60% of refugees** and **more than 50% of IDPs** live in urban areas or outside camps: displacement increasingly urban
- Only 2.5% of refugee crises are resolved within three years: **protracted displacement** as a predominant tendency, which raises reflections on refugeehood as a normal human condition in cities
- Not only official governance of humanitarianism in cities, but also **shared experience of humanitarian and urban actors**: stories of contestation, compliance, inclusion, assimilation, or neglect and marginalization (focus **not on urban refugees**)

## What's the 'urban-itarian'?

- What's the nature of the relationship between urban and humanitarian actors (local, foreign, informal or official), and how this relationship reshapes the urban space?

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- How does the humanitarian presence relate to local urban spaces?

For instance, how it reshapes spaces of residency, leisure, social mingling and necessity?

- Did the humanitarian fuel the urban potentials or hamper them in the city of Istanbul?
- How did the humanitarian presence reshape power relations in the urban space, if ever?

*Neglect of local urban histories:*

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*The case of Halba, Lebanon*

*“Neither a village,  
nor a city”*



# *Neglect of local urban histories: The case of Halba, Lebanon*

1. Humanitarianism needs to be contextual (what sort of urban?)
2. Needs to know in depth the pre-existing urban system from a political and infrastructural perspective  
(e.g., how did the urban system cope with crisis before humanitarian emplacement? Are local authorities willing to be involved?)

Photo credits: Estella Carpi, February 2017.



# *The humanitarian tendency to assimilate the 'peri-urban' into the 'urban' can endanger people's livelihoods*

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Neglected peculiarity of places which are **neither camps nor cities**

Kilis (Turkey), ar-Ramtha (Jordan), and Halba (Lebanon): border localities where **rural livelihoods** need to be supported (e.g., olive-picking *versus* hair-dressing and IT jobs, etc.)

**Centrality of the rural economy** in livelihood sustainability = no proper 'urban economy'

## Vernacular understandings of “urban actors”:

### What makes a ‘city’ beyond ‘system-thinking’?

- The Municipality Mayor (*ra'is al-baladiye*) and Deputy Mayor (*na'ib ar-ra'is*)
- The governor of the district (*mohafez*)
- The *makhatir/muhtarlar* (central state officials)
- The director of the University
- The municipal library secretary
- Shops/malls and cafeterias
- Businessmen

# *The 'urban-itarian' in two Istanbul's districts*

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- Vernacular faces of urbanization (*kentleşme*) and the urban age (*kent çağı*): product of multi-parties interventions (Lotfata, 2013)

- A result of displacement from war (e.g., Syrian crisis) and from domestic natural hazards (e.g., floods, earthquakes, landslides)

-Invisibility of humanitarianism in Istanbul's public urban sphere *versus* humanitarian logos 'making' cities in Lebanon

-Humanitarianism made invisible twice: central state's implicit policy + class-centred idea of urban upgrade through the 'Occidental city' (Erkan, 2010)

-Esenyurt where several humanitarian actors are located *versus* Beyoğlu as a space of (self)invisibilization

## References of my research on urban humanitarianism

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Lotfata, A. (2013) **"Transformation of Urban Spaces through Time- Space Politics towards Ethical Developing Urban Spaces in Turkey Context"**, *Global Journal of Human Social Science and Political Science*, 13(4): 21-26.



*Feel free to remain in touch!*

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