



*The “urban-itarian” encounters in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan
after displacement from Syria*

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Over the last decade, displacement from conflict-ridden Syria has converged with an increasing emphasis on the “urban-humanitarian” nexus. Humanitarian actors have focused on urban livelihoods as refugees mainly move to cities in search of employment, and a predominantly camp-based mode of assistance has turned into support for urban refugees, internally displaced people and local urban dwellers. Within this framework, the politics of international humanitarianism has inscribed itself in cities and towns, generating layered “urban-itarian” encounters. Considering vernacular definitions of “urban” and “urban actors,” this presentation discusses encounters and missed encounters between urban and humanitarian systems and lifeworlds. Drawing on the case of humanitarian actors operating in border towns in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan and in an Istanbul neighborhood — all primary destinations for refugees from Syria — it will show how “urbanizing” humanitarianism, when insufficiently sensitive to local specificities, has tended to result in unsuitable humanitarian programming. It will also show how local urban histories are often ignored by humanitarian agencies.