



American University of Beirut  
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences



وزارة الزراعة  
Ministry of  
Agriculture



# CONFERENCE

## Unfolding Middle Eastern Landscapes

Changing Forms, Evolving Tools, Transforming Meanings



Beirut, Lebanon **31 May – 2 June 2016**

Jointly organized by the newly established Lebanese Landscape Association (LELA), the American University of Beirut, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management and the Lebanese University, Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Veterinary Medicine, Department of Landscape and Territory Planning, sponsored by the International Federation of Landscape Architecture (IFLA) and with the support

of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon. This conference aims to bring together landscape academics and professionals to reflect on the discourse of landscape in the Middle East. The organizers hope that speakers, contributors and participants will contribute to the environmental and cultural specificities shaping the emerging profession of landscape architecture in the Middle East.

# Conference **Background**

Landscape is a word with multiple meanings, an idea that is complex, in part nature and in part culture. The layered meanings and complexity was addressed by definition of landscape by the European Landscape Convention as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. Nevertheless, the visual meaning, landscape as scenery, dominates the common understanding of the word universally and in the Middle East. Introduced during colonial restructuring of traditional cities in the early twentieth century, the word landscape continues to be perceived in terms of city parks, green boulevards and spacious roundabouts. This narrow interpretation is problematic not only because it precludes the layered meaning of the English word and the overlap with nature, region and country, but also because it limits the professional scope. Nor is there a sufficient body of critical research into the regional landscape history, traditional landscape practices and indigenous management to complement the prevailing understanding of landscape in the Middle East.

A growing numbers of young landscape architects, is slowly changing the narrow understanding of the professional scope in the region. Landscape architects are increasingly

contributing to postwar recovery and refugee camps, urban nature and sustainable greening, human rights and local community empowerment. Equally significant are formal and informal links with the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). The Iranian Society of Landscape Professionals (ISLAP) was established in 2001, application by the Lebanese Landscape Association (LELA) was certified by IFLA on 31 of december 2015. The Jordanian Association for Landscape Architects (JALA) is in the process of being certified. International support is invaluable at this early juncture in the development of the profession to support and guide the development of landscape architecture and to accelerate local recognition of the professional potential.

The conference title, “Unfolding Middle Eastern Landscapes” alludes to the layered and complex idea of landscape as embracing physical, tangible space and intangible social and cultural values and perceptions. The conference bring together academics, professionals and researchers to dialogue ongoing transformations of the landscapes we inhabit, to expose different design, planning and management methodologies and approaches and to question shortcomings and obstacles to professional advancement in the region.

# Call for Abstracts

The conference organizers are calling for abstracts that demonstrate a range of professional and academic approaches to landscape design and planning in the Middle East at the local and the regional scales.

**Contributions can follow one of six broad themes:**

## 1. Landscape History and Heritage

The Middle East is one of the oldest, continually settled regions in the world. This is the land of 'Eden', famed for Assyrian hunting parks, Babylon's 'hanging gardens' and the Islamic lush palace gardens in Samarra and Esfahan. The regional landscape heritage is just as significant. What lessons can be learnt from vernacular natural resource management? Can these traditional landscape serve as inspiration to 21st century landscape architecture?

*Themes: traditional gardens; water management; terraces and mountain cultivation; vernacular use of biodiversity*

## 2. Landscape and the Agrarian Challenge

What is the fate of the food producing landscapes of the Middle East and North Africa? Massive de-peasantization is systematically depopulating the region's countryside. As the proletarianized peasantry moves to urban fringes, the City overtakes the villages and rural towns, affecting their forms and functions. Where there is no war or environmental crises, capital-and resource-intensive exploitations are replacing the traditional farming systems at great ecological and socio-cultural costs. The current situation has been described in economic and social terms, but there is tremendous paucity of research looking at the implication of the agrarian crisis on the region's cultural landscapes. This panel will invite research papers that explore quantitatively and qualitatively the spatial projection of the agrarian question in the Middle East and North Africa.

*Themes: agrarian crisis; sustainable agriculture; rural/productive landscapes*

## 3. Greening the Urban Landscape

Urban Greening has long been valued for its aesthetic, environmental, ecological, social and health benefits. The rapid growth of cities in area, population and building density, green areas are becoming scarce and social gathering spaces are in decline. The challenge is to find innovative approaches to urban greening at the metropolitan, city and neighborhood scale. What models can be offered for sustainable greening? What lessons can be learnt from successful case studies? What strategies and best practices can support the limited capabilities and resources of municipalities in managing green areas?

*Themes: green roofs; interstitial urban spaces; private-public management*

### Requirements

Abstracts in English, 3000 characters including spaces, formatted in A4, single-space, Arial 11 font, Office Word.

Title (English, and in the participants native language, Arabic, or Farsi or Turkish), name of author(s), affiliation/institution, address and email address.

Indicate in your email which of the six themes does your abstract fall under.

Short Bio of author(s) 800 characters including spaces.

## Timeline

*For all attendees  
and those submitting  
an abstract*

**15 February 2016**

Call for papers

**30 March 2016**

Submission of abstracts

**15 April 2016**

Early Registration (reduced fees) starts

**15 May 2016**

Early Registration ends,  
Registration (full fees) starts

**30 April 2016**

Notification of Acceptance  
(Authors informed whether  
oral or poster presentation)

## Abstract Submission and Enquiries

iflabeirut2016@lela-lb.org

## 4. Landscape, Ecology and Environment

Resource use and extraction in the Middle East over millennia has degraded the ecological integrity and produced environmental threats with impacts already being felt. Loss of forest cover, agricultural systems, water resources, pollution, changing climate all result in degraded natural and cultural landscapes. Research on landscape systems that incorporate ecological principles in design and planning, address environmental concerns, document traditional social-ecological systems, and inventory contemporary best practices at multiple scales will provide an alternative lens to conceptualize a sustainable and resilient future. To what extent can the relational understanding of landscape understanding inform ecological and environmental stewardship of the land?

**Themes:** *social-ecological systems; ecological restoration; ecological design and planning; water and plant systems; social-ecology; landscape ecology*

## 5. Landscape, Networks and Infrastructure

Networks and infrastructural systems are fundamental drivers in shaping the landscape at the site, city, and regional scales. Human-made infrastructural networks tend to fragment the landscape, river corridors and natural networks overcome the degradation and fragmentation. A holistic landscape approach to the management of space and natural resources harmonizes human-made and natural networks finding the complementarity between the two. Infrastructural landscapes, streets and railway corridors that were approached through engineering solutions in the 1960s-1970s are increasingly re-conceptualized as multifunctional landscapes, living ecosystems and amenity spaces that can enhance the quality of life in cities and surrounding regions.

**Themes:** *rivers and seasonal watercourses; streetscape; ecological corridors*

## 6. Landscape, Displacement and Human Rights

Social injustice and political marginalization have found expression in the last few years in the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring and mass migration from the political conflict in countries of the Middle East. Every day millions of people leave their country in search for better chance in life. Transitional movements and population shift from one nation to another or inside the same country transform and re-structure our world economically, socially, politically and spatially. The session explores the role of landscape design in envisioning scenarios at varying scales and phases of intervention to address this particular type of emergency and questions of landscape as an enabling framework for local communities to express their views and claim their rights .specifically to public spaces in the city

**Themes:** *Displacement; Transitional landscapes; human rights; civil action; democracy; local empowerment*

## Invited Guests | Speakers

### Maguelonne Dejeant-Pons

Received her Doctor of Law from the University of Montpellier. Since 1987, she has been working at the Council of Europe, Strassbourg: as Administrator at the European Court of Human Rights (1987-1992), Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats of Europe (1992-1997), as Principal Administrator and Head of the Environment and Sustainable Development Division, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Conference responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning –CEMAT (2000-2013) and of the European Landscape Convention (2001-2016). She is a member of the Société française pour le droit de l'environnement (SFDE) and former Chair of its East Section, member of the Société française pour le droit international (SFDI), Association Européenne de droit de l'environnement, European Council of Environmental Law (CEDE), of the Commission on Environmental Law (CEL) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and of the International Council of Environmental Law - ICEL.

### Mohammad Motalebi

A practitioner-lecturer Iranian environmental and landscape designer. He earned his Bachelor of Landscape Engineering from University of Tabriz and Master of Environmental Design from University of Tehran. Environmentally-responsible design and sustainable urban development have been Mohammad's core focus throughout his career. He has worked in different Landscape, Urbanism and Tourism projects. Iran's National Tourism Development Plan and landscape design of Milad Tower Complex in Tehran are samples of his works. In 2012 he was elected as ISLAP's President. In this year, he was invited to be Jury of IFLA-Asia Pacific Landscape Awards and now he is a member of jury team for IFLA Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe Gold Medal. He is the head of IFLA-Middle East project, too. In 2015 he was invited as an international speaker to UNESCO 's conference on Culture for Sustainable Cities.

### Anna Grichting Solder

Architect and urbanist from Switzerland, Anna holds a Doctor of Design in Urbanism from Harvard University. She teaches sustainable architecture, landscape and urban design at Qatar University at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels. Her fields of interest are in holistic and systems approaches to Design and include Food Security and Food Urbanism, Constructed Wetlands in Drylands, Urban Biodiversity, the Urban Legacies of Mega Events, Public Art in Contemporary Urban Realm, Cultural and Memorial Landscapes as Healing Ecologies in Border Landscapes.

### Gloria Pungetti

Professor, founder Director of Cambridge Center for Landscape and People and Chair of the Darwin College Society, University of Cambridge, UK. Professor Pungetti is also Chair of Biocultural Landscape and Seascape at the University of Sassari, Italy, sits on boards of journals and of international working groups, and coordinates European projects on holistic landscape research. Her books and initiatives have received international nominations and awards, include Sacred Species and Sites: *Advances in Biocultural Conservation* (co-editors Oviedo and Hooke, Cambridge University Press, 2012), *European Culture expressed in Agricultural Landscapes: Natural and Cultural Approaches* (co-editor Kruse, Palombi Editori, 2010), *Mediterranean Island Landscapes: Natural and Cultural Approaches* (co-editors Vogiatzakis and Mannion, Springer, 2008) and *Ecological Networks and Greenways: Concept, design, implementation* (co-editor Jongman, Cambridge University Press, 2004).





# Organizing Committee

## Jala Makhzoumi

Affiliate faculty, American University of Beirut, co-founder and president of the Lebanese Landscape Association (LELA), founding member and senior fellow in the Cambridge Center for Landscape and People. Jala studied architecture in Baghdad, completed her master in Environmental Design, Yale University, PhD in landscape architecture, Sheffield University. Jala advocates an expansive, developmental landscape approach to mediate community needs with ecosystem health, biodiversity protection and landscape heritage conservation. Her professional and academic expertise includes postwar recovery, energy efficient site planning and sustainable urban greening. Her publications include *Ecological Landscape Design and Planning: the Mediterranean context* (co-author Pungetti, Spon, 1999) and *The Right to Landscape: contesting landscape and human rights* (co-editors Egoz and Pungetti, Ashgate, 2012). In 2013 Jala co-established UNIT44 a Lebanon based practice offering services in architecture, landscape architecture, ecological planning and urban design.

## Salma Samaha

Landscape Engineer with a PhD in Cultural Landscape from the University of Rome Tor Vergata in Italy, a Master degree in Landscape and Territory Planning from the University of Aix-Marseille in France and an Agriculture Engineering diploma from USEK in Lebanon. In 1998 she co-founded the Landscape and Territory Planning department at the Lebanese University, Faculty of Agriculture and has since 2013 served as department chair. Her professional and academic expertise includes Landscape infrastructure, Landscape restoration, Landscape integration and impact studies. She is the FAO national consultant for the "Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism FLRM". She has initiated a collaborative project between UN-ESCWA and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture for the development of the "Guidelines for Roads Landscape Design to Enhance Roads Safety". Salma is a co-founder and the vice-president of the Lebanese Landscape Association LELA and currently Landscape Advisor of the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture.

## Maria Gabriella Trovato

Assistant Professor in the LDEM Department at the American University of Beirut. She had a Phd in 2003 at the University of Reggio Calabria and the University of Naples in Landscape Architecture: Parks, Gardens and Spatial Planning. Maria Gabriella most recent researches focuses on MEDSCAPES project funded by the ENPI/CBCMED, on Landscape Atlas for Lebanon, and on Urban and Peri-urban landscape in the Middle East and North Africa exploring approaches to understand the transitions taking place and their multiple drivers and impacts in order to design strategies of interventions using the landscape as a medium to interpret and propose innovative approaches to the design of urban spaces. Actually she is working on Landscape in emergency research with special focus on Syrian informal settlements (ITS) in Lebanon. With a group of international landscape professors she is exploring, theoretically and practically through workshop on site, landscape methodologies that could permit the definition of a flexible, relational and creative strategy capable of managing continuous changing and transformations. She has worked in a number of countries including Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Canada, and was lead partner in EU-research programs.

## Nayla Al-Akl

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the LDEM Department. Her interests lie in urban greening and transforming underutilized and unconventional spaces into social and cultural sustainable sites, using manufactured landscapes which integrate ecology, technology and design. Her current research focuses on Design Guidelines for Therapeutic Green Roofs in Healthcare Facilities and her collaborative work looks into Design Assessment in Studio Teaching. Nayla holds a BArch from the American University of Beirut (2002) and an MLA from Harvard University Graduate School of Design (2007). Her extensive professional background includes landscape design and planning projects in the Middle East, the USA and China.

## **Yaser Abunnasr**

Landscape architect, architect, and planner with a PhD in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA. Dr. Abunnasr adopts a landscape and environmental approach to urban and regional planning that mediates ecological and ecosystem concerns with community wellbeing and livelihood. His current research is on green infrastructure systems as a planning and design framework for climate change adaptation for urban, landscape, and regional resilience. The work on adaptation investigates frameworks and procedures that account for impacts on natural and manmade systems, incorporate uncertainty in current and future conditions in the planning process and addresses vulnerability and exposure of communities to these impacts, with applications to the MENA region. He has also collaborated on other research projects, namely landscape character assessment; vulnerability to floods and the UHI; and pedagogy of design teaching.

## **Mehran Madani**

Holds a doctoral degree in interdisciplinary design with specializations in sustainable characteristics of urban landscape, social concerns of healthy community design, current theories in landscape architecture, and innovative 2D and 3D visual communication and GIS data models. He is now an assistant professor at the LDEM, at American University of Beirut. Prior to this position, he has taught several lecture, seminar, workshop, and studio courses in design thinking and creativity process, graphical communication, healthy community design, thesis programing, site planning and design, the built environment invitation quality, and digital technologies at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning (UC Berkeley), the Architecture and Landscape Architecture Department (North Dakota State University), and Interdisciplinary Design Institute (Washington State University).

## **Salwa Al-Sabbagh**

Graduated with an MS in Urban Design from the American University of Beirut, and BS in Landscape Design and Eco-system Management (LDEM). Al-Sabbagh worked on landscape design and city planning projects ranging from rural to urban contexts and tackling heritage, ecological, urban and informality issues in Lebanon and MENA Region. In her MUD Thesis project, she explored the possibility of integrating Ecological Landscape Design and Planning approach into Lebanese urban design and planning tools and regulation. Professionally, she followed The Ecological Landscape Design framework to provide holistic city planning strategies and producing comprehensive design solutions. Al-Sabbagh also engaged in research with Dr. Makhzoumi, where she studied various topics on landscape, public space, urban development and planning policies in Lebanon and the Middle East.