

# CALL for PARTICIPATION

## Reclaiming the City Square: Urban Protests in the Mediterranean

May 25-27, 2014

From Madrid to Athens, from Tahrir to Taksim, the shores of the Mediterranean have been stormy with waves of urban protests in recent years. Discontent over socioeconomic policies related to issues such as austerity measures; the uneven distribution of basic commodities such as food and housing; corruption; lack of democracy or democratic majoritarianism; overdevelopment; capitalism; and commercialism have found expression on the streets and in the city squares.

While some of these movements have brought down governments and caused regime change, others have not. What is clear is that in all of these movements, civil society actors and activists have played a central role. We think that these events are an indication of a growing dissatisfaction among urban citizens with the existing socioeconomic agenda tied to global changes. Meanwhile the emergence of new social media has given citizens new tools and outlets.

As these urban movements give voice to political, economic, and social grievances of citizens, they raise crucial questions regarding the relation between public space - in its political, symbolic, and tangible senses - and democracy and citizenship.

The aim of this academic workshop is to discuss and conceptualize the recent social protest movements from an interdisciplinary, regional perspective. We will study individual movements within the broader context of social movements in the Mediterranean and examine regional trends and commonalities. The city square - whether Tahrir, Taksim, or Rothschild - provides the main inspiration for this workshop: it is the place where citizens come to voice their concerns and express their demands.

Topics of discussion include but are not limited to:

- Are these movements the result of a new world order, or are they mere coincidences?
- To what extent do these movements reflect a battle between competing geopolitical and spatial perceptions?
- What is the function of public spaces in cities today?
- What do the geographical and spatial aspects of the social protests reveal about the nature of new (urban) citizenship?
- What is "the public"; does it include ethnic and racial minorities, women, and migrants?

The workshop will take place in Jerusalem on May 25-26, 2014. Participants will be invited to a May 27, 2014, conference co-organized by civil society actors in Israel.

To apply, submit an abstract of up to 500 words by **February 1, 2014**. Invited participants will be asked to submit their draft papers by April 1, 2014. Selected papers presented at the conference will be published in the *Journal of Levantine Studies* following a standard peer-review procedure.

For inquiries and to submit your abstract, contact Nathalie Alyon: [nathaliea@vanleer.org.il](mailto:nathaliea@vanleer.org.il)

Workshop committee: Dr. Haim Yacobi, Dr. Anat Lapidot-Firilla, Nathalie Alyon.