

Abstract for N-Aerus 2021

Session #3 Co-operation

Title: Participatory design and planning to build human infrastructures able to deal with shifting identities and new challenges.

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In a fragmented society, we argue that participatory design can build the capacity for intra-city dialogue across the different dimensions of identity of local residents. However, traditional participatory processes are often unable to deal with internal diversity, particularly when there are pre-existing conflicts. The tensions between individual and collective identities as well as their fluidity and simultaneity are making identities impossible to be fully understood and used for planning and design. However, through an relational and intersectional codesign approach, it is possible to engage with a dynamic understanding of identity and address diverse needs and aspirations of residents.

Using a collaboration between two universities, an NGO, and local residents in Lebanon as a case study, the paper demonstrates how the development of an intersectional methodology sensitive to social diversity can contribute to individuals and groups of residents developing an “aware participation” in co-producing the city. By analysing the process of implementing a participatory spatial intervention, the chapter argues that the outcome of the process was more than the physical infrastructure intervention; the process built a human infrastructure made of residents of the city with different identities who have been able to participate in and initiate city-making processes that have taken into account and analyse a diversity of needs and aspirations. Through the process, residents were able to exercise a new kind of participatory urban citizenship that transcends the limitations of traditional national citizenship.