Proposal for the panel on Protest, Resistance, and the Urban at the 2019 Swiss Geosciences Meeting in Fribourg

Graffiti in Palestinian Refugee Camps: from palimpsest walls to public space

Abstract:
This paper is the result of a doctoral thesis defended in June 2019 at Geneva University and Grenoble-Alpes University. Updating an article published in the Articulo Journal of Urban Research at the end of 2017, the focus will be on the Palestinian graffiti movement that developed in refugee camps as an act of resistance in the late 1960s and continues to this day. This movement was built as part of the struggle against Israeli occupation. To question an ephemeral aesthetic practice in a space where the urban is considered temporary, allows us to reflect on the way in which the inhabitants build a way of living without giving up their request for the right of return. The analysis of graffiti on the streets of the Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem reveals palimpsest walls that allow the refugee community to build common spaces in the political sense of the word. The walls then become a space for debate and the construction of history. Through an examination of visual elements on the walls of refugee camps today, I propose an understanding of the relationship to public space as one where politics is at play, outside of any institutional structures.

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