**“The impact of the ‘Arab Spring’ on socio-political developments in Lebanon:**

**Preconditions, process, and consequences”**

**International Workshop co-organized by**

**The Center for Contemporary Middle East Studies at the University of Southern Denmark**

**and the**

**Department of Social Sciences at the Lebanese American University**

**October 19 to 20, 2017, in Byblos, Lebanon**

**Science Building 607-608**

Most research on the “Arab Spring” has neglected Lebanon as an actor, as Lebanon did not play any spectacular role in the Arab uprisings. However, the uprisings had significant direct and indirect impact on Lebanon and significantly contributed to the sustainable (re-)politicization of central issues of Lebanese politics. Thus, the dominant portrait that Lebanon was primarily a passive recipient of a regional turmoil is misleading. For instance, as a direct impact of the uprisings, social movements have challenged the Lebanese state with claims pointing to its underperformance of good governance standards and demands for fundamental political reforms. An example of an indirect impact is the political engagement of various Lebanese actors in the wake of the Syrian civil war, which led to the displacement of more than one million Syrians to Lebanon. Against this background, the workshop will shed light on Lebanese actorness from four different angles: the domestic level both "from below” and “from above”, the international level, and the level of political discourse in media and academia.

*The overall aim of the workshop is to explore opportunities to apply for external funding of a two-year research project.*

**PRELIMINARY PROGRAM**

**Day 1: 19.10.2017**

***15.30-16.00 registration***

***16.00 – 16:15 Opening***

* Sami Baroudi on behalf of Dean Nashat Mansour (LAU)

***16:15-16:30: Introduction to the workshop and its objectives***

* Martin Beck (SDU, Denmark)
* Tamirace Fakhoury (LAU, Lebanon)

***16:30-18:30 PM Panel 1 Political actorness "from below” on the domestic level***

How have social movements, such as the anti-Sectarian Movement and "You stink", developed in the face of regional political uprisings and Syria’s displacement to Lebanon, respectively? How are these movements "from below” interconnected? What are their heretofore implications for society and politics? Have some movements given way to institutionalized political projects? If yes, under which circumstances? Can these movements contest the politics of sectarianism?

Preliminary hypotheses: Recent social movements in Lebanon have been inspired by the “Arab Spring’s” re-politicization of issues related to good governance. These movements have also been shaped by basic features of the Lebanese system, particularly sectarianism, insofar as social movements demanded serious reform processes. Moreover, social (rather than state) actors have been particularly active in coping with the Lebanese refugee crisis.

Chairperson: Marwan Rowayheb (LAU)

* John Nagle (University of Aberdeen, UK), Beyond Ethnic Entrenchment and Amelioration: An Analysis of Non-Sectarian Social Movements and Lebanon’s Consociationalism
* Makram Ouaiss (LAU), Civil society: Alternative pathway for political change?
* Maximilian Felsch (Haigazian University), The Rise of Lebanese Christian Nationalism in Times of Arab Upheavals
* Gilbert Doumit (Beyond), Betting on Change or Choosing Stability? Lebanon’s Difficult Trade-offs in a Tormented Region.

***19.00 PM Dinner (Locanda, Byblos)***

**Day 2: 20.10.2017**

***9:00 – 11:00 Panel 2 Political actorness "from above" on the domestic level***

How did challenged political leaderships in Lebanon respond to the formation and demands of social movements? What role did the extreme fragmentation of the political leadership play with respect to their responses (containment, “hijacking” along the lines of the two major political camps, “March 14” vs. “March 8”)?

Preliminary hypotheses: The responses of the Lebanese political class were diverse and even seemingly contradictory. Yet, all of them followed the logic of sectarian pluralism (hijacking as a strategy to gain an advantage vis-à-vis other camps, containment as a strategy to safeguard the elite-based system of sectarianism against threats “from below”). In reference to the refugee crisis, the central state delegated many tasks to non-state actors.

Chairperson: John Nagle (University of Aberdeen)

* Makram Rabah (AUB), Dissecting the Lebanese Sectarian Hydra
* Paul Tabar and Eduardo Wassim Aboulataif (LAU): Lebanon: National vs Communal Memory Building
* Maya Janmyr (Uni Bergen), The Legal Response to Syria’s Displacement: From Refugees and Displaced Persons to Economic Migrants
* Karim el Mutfti (USJ, La Sagesse), The Lebanese Political Class and the Syrian Refugees Crisis, the Knocking of an Opportunity.

***11.00 –11.20 Coffee Break***

***11.20 – 13.20 Panel 3 Lebanese Actors on the Regional and International Level***

Lebanese actors drew on the regional turmoil to become (more) active on the regional and international levels. This applies to both state and non-state actors.

Preliminary hypotheses: The Syrian crisis had contradictory effects on the regional and international role of Lebanon. On the one hand, Lebanon’s relevance for regional and global power paled in comparison to Syria’s bearing on the regional and international landscape. On the other hand, Lebanese actors gained significance on the regional level due to the ‘relative power decline’ of Syria.

Chairperson: Tamirace Fakhoury (LAU)

* Martin Beck (SDU, Denmark) and Simone Hüser (BAMF, Germany), Lebanese Strategies to Cope with the Refugee Influx from Syria: Beyond a Policy of non-Policy
* Bassel Salloukh (LAU), Sectarianized Geopolitical Contests, Non-State Actors, and State Rebuilding after the Popular Uprisings
* Thanassi Cambanis (Free Author), The Role of Hezbollah
* Peter Seeberg (SDU, Denmark), The Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and the EU-Lebanon Partnership Compact: New Strategies, Old Agendas.

**13.20-14.30 Lunch**

***14.30 – 16.30 Panel 4 Political discourse in media and academia***

How was the re-politicization of issues related to good governance standards portrayed in Lebanese media and academia? How did political affiliations and world views of authors and their institutional affiliations shape the discourse?

Preliminary hypotheses: Both media and academia did not just report in a neutral way but were engaged to a high degree (both in terms of immediate “Arab Spring” actors in Lebanon and indirect effects, particularly the refugee issue). Against this backdrop, journalism did not only *report* about new social movements but also contributed to their social construction through the various ways journalistic narratives did (not) portray them.

Chairperson: Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss (LAU)

* Sari Hanafi (AUB, Lebanon), Crisis of Postcolonialism’s After-Life: Analysis of the Arab Academic Discourse on the Arab Uprisings
* Rouba El Helou (NDU, Lebanon), The role of Media in the Construction of Imagined Communities in Lebanon: The Case of the Syrian refugees
* Yasser Akkaoui (Executive Magazine, Lebanon), Ethics, Journalism, and Confusion: The New Value Proposition
* Layal Bahnam (Al Maharat), The Role of Lebanese Media in Reform: Analysis of Media Content.

**16.30-16.50 Coffee Break**

**16.50-18.20 Designing research proposals**

**19.00 Closing Dinner (Al Baher, Byblos).**