

PETRA SAMAHA

petra.samaha@sciencespo.fr | [LinkedIn](#) | [ORCID](#)

EDUCATION

Doctorate in Urban Studies

Sciences Po Paris – Center for International Research

Oct 2020 — March 2026

Master of Urban Design

American University of Beirut – Faculty of Engineering and Architecture

Sept 2013 — July 2015

BA and Master of Architecture

Lebanese University – National Institute of Fine Arts

Oct 2008 — July 2013

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Sciences Po Paris

Cities are Back in Town – Seminar Series Co-Organizer

- Organized twelve seminars per year
- Organized one half day research workshop per year
- Managed communications on email and website

June 2023 — June 2025

Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS)

Researcher - Sami Atallah (director)

- Contributed to UN-Habitat's "Land, Natural Resources & Climate Change in the Arab Region" project
- Assisted to the elaboration of the Strategic Master Plans for four districts in South Lebanon
- Contributed to discussions with the research team on various policy papers and positions published by the center

Mar 2020 — Mar 2021

URBI – Architecture and Urban Planning Agency

Full time Architect/Urban Planner - Habib Debs (director)

- Consulted on urban regeneration legal frameworks in Afghanistan
- Worked on the Master plan of the city of Zahle, Lebanon
- Prepared training material for mayors on planning legal tools (master plans, SEA, EIA) in collaboration with UNDP
- Updated the National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territories taking into account the impact of the Syrian crisis
- Researched Taif city as part of the new master plan of Taif, KSA
- Worked on the Wastani neighborhood Master plan, Saida, Lebanon
- Worked on the urban design of Shrashif neighborhood, Makka, KSA
- Updated drawings for the cultural heritage project, Tripoli, Lebanon

June 2015 — Feb 2020

American University of Beirut

Department of Landscape Design & Ecosystem Management

Part time researcher - Yaser Abunnasr (Principal Investigator)

- Managed an EU grant project
- Organized the final conference of the project
- Reviewed literature on integrated energy planning and renewable energy, conventional zoning/planning tools, Ecological Landscape Associations, and Payment for Ecosystem Services

Feb 2016 — Oct 2018

Salim Abou Rizk – Architecture and Urban Planning Agency

Full time Urban Planner - Salim Abou Rizk (director)

May 2014 — Sept 2014

- Conducted field surveys, mapping, and data analysis
- Drafted the diagnosis report for the Master plan of Hammana, Baabda, Lebanon

URBI - Architecture and Urban Planning Agency

June 2012 — July 2013

Part time Architect/Urban Planner - Habib Debs (director)

- Developed visuals and maps for the Green Master Plan of Beirut
- Conducted field work for the Green Master Plan of Beirut
- Drafted detailed drawings for various architectural projects

TEACHING

Sciences Po Paris

Sep 2021 — May 2024

Teaching Assistant in Urban History and Urban Sociology, Urban School

- Assisted in lectures and communicated with students
- Lectured on urban mobility and inequality in Europe
- Prepared course bibliography
- Evaluated and graded research papers
- Organized student site visits (e.g. Carnavalet and Arsenal Museums)

American University of Beirut

Feb 2014 — May 2015

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design

- Assisted in teaching three courses within the undergraduate program of Architecture: Illegal Cities, Urbanism, and Architecture

INDEPENDENT APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS

- 2025. With Lugarit: Housing, land, and property outputs communication update in Syria.
- 2024 — 2025. With Beyond Group: KSA Eastern Province Regional, Metropolitan and Local Development Plans, Spatial Planning Policy and Urban Governance Support.
- 2023 — 2025. With SETEC, MORES, Mona Khechen & Habib Debs: UN-Habitat's Resilient Water Solutions against Climate Change, Strategic Planning for the Zahle district, Lebanon.
- 2022. With the American University of Beirut: Developing a new agricultural code for KSA.
- 2022. With the University of St. Gallen: Mapping public policy institutions in the Arab Region.
- 2021. With the Beirut Urban Lab and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Boston: Lebanon's Land and Housing Policy Debates. [http://api.beiruturbanlab.com/Content/uploads/Articles/410-Beirut-Land-Dialogues_Final-Report_220822_English-\(1\).pdf](http://api.beiruturbanlab.com/Content/uploads/Articles/410-Beirut-Land-Dialogues_Final-Report_220822_English-(1).pdf)
- 2021. With Lugarit: Housing, land, and property outputs communication in Syria.
- 2021. With the World Bank Group in Beirut: The Lebanon Public Expenditure. Fiscal Policy Review and Recommendations. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/37824>
- 2015. With Public Works Studio: Narrating Beirut through its tenants' stories, Research project.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

- 2025. Writing up Grant (2025), IJURR Foundation
- 2020 — 2023. SAFAR PhD Scholarship, Institut français du Proche-Orient (IFPO) & Campus France
- 2021. Research Grant, Innovation Fund on Land Governance, HBRC/GLTN/UN-Habitat/BMZ
- 2017. Arab Council for Social Sciences Travel Grant, to present at the Royal Geographic Society annual conference in London
- 2016. Research Grant, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program at the American University of Beirut
- 2015. Graduate students' speaker, 146th commencement ceremony at the American University of Beirut, Published in: Al-Fanar Media | Daily Star | McClatchy – Tribune Business News <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jun-02/300193-we-have-to-deploy-our-knowledge-for-a-better-future.ashx>
- 2013 — 2015. Graduate Research Assistantship, Master of Urban Design, American University of Beirut

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Articles and Papers

- Forthcoming. Lebanese Power Geographies. How Political Elite Reinvents Itself through Land and Property. In R. Atkinson & M. Holmqvist (Eds), *Elite Spaces: Social prestige, spatial obscurity, political risk*.
- 2025. When land became property in Lebanon. The transformation of land codes since 1858 and its implications on public domains and planning. *Planning Perspectives*.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/scpo.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/02665433.2025.2525510>
- 2024. [Review of the book *Sunni City. Tripoli from Islamist Utopia to the Lebanese Revolution*, By T. Gade], *Mondes arabes*, 5(1), 203–209.
- 2023-2024. بحثاً عن العام في لبنان بين الأرض وملكيّتها - سلسلة من 6 أجزاء. [Searching for the public in Lebanon, between land and its ownership – An article series of 6 parts]. *Legal Agenda*, Beirut. (Arabic).
<https://legal-agenda.com/?sfid=31857&authors=petra-samaha>
- 2023. بحثاً عن العام الذي ما يزال حيّاً. [In search of a public that still lives]. *Legal Agenda*, Beirut. (Arabic).
<https://tinyurl.com/5yfu957v>
- 2022. With Khechen, M. Land, natural resources and climate change in the Arab Region: tenure security issues and challenges. *Final study report*, LCPS & Global Land Tool Network/UN-Habitat.
<https://arablandinitiative.glttn.net/library/publications/land-governance-natural-resources-and-climate-change-in-the-arab-region>
- 2022. Land as a Cash Machine. The case of Lebanon. *Research Project on Land Governance in the Arab Region*, Global Land Tool Network/UN-Habitat. <https://arabstates.glttn.net/download/land-as-a-cash-machine-the-case-of-lebanon/>
- 2021. The seemingly (un)planned urbanization in Chouf: who is the planner? *Peace Building News Supplement*, Issue 27. UNDP. <https://www.salamwakalam.com/articles/public-spaces/524/the-seemingly-unplanned-urbanization-in-chouf-who/en>
- 2020. With Mohtar, A. Decoding an urban myth: An inquiry into the Van line 4 system in Beirut, Lebanon. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 85, 102743. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0966692319306507>
- 2017. Life in a Street: How Informal Mechanisms Govern Scarce Public Spaces in Nabaa, Beirut. *Jadaliyya, Cities Page*. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34399/Life-in-a-Street-How-Informal-Mechanisms-Govern-Scarce-Public-Spaces-in-Nabaa-Beirut>
- 2016. With Dagher, R. *Rethinking shared space: the case of Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud*. IFI, AUB.
https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/working_papers/2015-2016/20160822_nabaa.pdf
- 2016. With Mohtar, A. Decoding an Urban Myth: An Inquiry into the Socioeconomics of Van Number 4 in Beirut. *Jadaliyya, Cities Page*. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23511/decoding-an-urban-myth-an-inquiry-into-the-socio-en>

Conference Proceedings

- With Muwatunin wa Muwatinat fi Dawla – Citizens in a State (Eds.). (2022). بين ملكية أفراد وقضايا مجتمع الدولة. [The State, between private property and society's challenges]. *Seminar on land property in the region*. Beirut. (Arabic). <https://mmfidawla.com/public-property-book/>
- With Abunnasr, Y., & Darazi, M. (Eds.). (2018). Integrated Energy and Education in Mediterranean Universities. *ENEPLAN Project Final Conference Proceedings*. Beirut: Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management, American University of Beirut.

Talks and Presentations

- 2025. *The not-so-great transformation: French hybridization of the Ottoman land code and its impacts on today's spatial production in Lebanon*. Endgame of Empires: Post-Imperial Transitions and Incomplete Transformations after the Great War, New York University, Abu Dhabi
- 2025. *Land governance and power geographies in Lebanon. A socio-historical perspective*. 16th European Graduate Network Conference, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Barcelona.
- 2024. *Beirut's (public) spaces, continuities and ruptures 1850-2020*. Guest Lecture, Urban History, Sciences Po, Paris.
- 2024. *Colonial legacies in land management and institutions. When Land became property in Lebanon*. Guest Lecture, Comparative Urbanism, Sciences Po, Paris.
- 2023. *Land tenure, climate change and migration in Zahle, Lebanon*. Integrating Tenure Security into Land Restoration Initiatives – Africa and Arab Region, UNCCD-FAO Webinars on Land Tenure for All Stakeholders.
- 2023. *The Multiple Public(s) of Lebanon: Space, Tensions, and Representations*. The Urban and the Political seminar series, the French Institute for Anatolian Studies (IFEA) with IFPO, Beirut.
- 2022. *Retour du Liban. Candidater aux législatives en faisant du terrain*. Séminaire Retour du terrain, CERI Sciences Po, Paris.

- 2021. *Land as a cash machine. The case of Lebanon*. Séminaire Villes et Crises au Liban, CERI Sciences Po, Paris.
- 2021. *En quête du public dans un Etat privatisé. Le cas du Liban*. 8ème Colloque Annuel, Cercle des Chercheurs sur le Moyen-Orient, Paris.
- 2021. *A palimpsest of laws: the legacies of Ottoman and French land management in Lebanon*. GLSA Annual Conference, McGill University, Montreal.
- 2021. *Public Property: the confiscated eminent domain in Lebanon*. Seminar, IFPO, Beirut.
- 2021. *Rangelands and Pastoral Lands in the Arab Region: Let the Pastoralists Tell their Stories*. Roundtable Discussion, Second Arab Land Conference, UN-Habitat, Cairo.
- 2018. *Writing an Urban Design Thesis: Lessons Learned from the Public Spaces of Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud*. Guest Lecture, Lebanese University, Beirut.
- 2018. *Informal Streetscapes: Mechanisms of Space Reallocation and Conflict Resolution – Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud*. City Street Conference 3, Notre Dame University, Beirut.
- 2017. *Decoding an Urban Myth: Effective Mobility through a Negotiated Use of Corruption and Sectarianism, the case of Van Line 4 in Beirut*. Royal Geographic Society, London.
- 2016. *Le Transport Public comme Mode de Vie: le van #4 à Beyrouth*. IFPO, Beirut.
- 2016. *Public Transport as a Lifestyle: the case of van #4 in Beirut*. Bus Map Photo Action, Beirut.

Workshops

- *Urban, Ecological and Infrastructural Politics in SWANA*, January 2026, Winter Institute, American University of Beirut
- *Public transport in Lebanon and the new plan*, May 2025. Roundtable within the Beirut Urban Observatory Launch, Lebanon
- *Beirut Vacancy Tax Dialogues*, June 2024. Closed roundtable organized by the Beirut Urban Lab, The Policy Initiative, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Beirut, Lebanon
- *Beirut Land Valuation Dialogues*, May 2023. Closed roundtable organized by the Beirut Urban Lab and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Beirut, Lebanon.
- *Ninth Annual Doctoral Workshop*, January 2023. Organized by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru, India.
- *Critical Arabic Urban Lexicon I & II*, October 2017 & June 2019. Organized by Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (Cluster) and Public Works Studio, Beirut, Lebanon.
- *An exercise in Visioning and Planning: Al-Wastani and the Future Urbanization of Saida*, June 2014. Organized by the Municipality of Saida, Lebanon.

Theses

- 2026. *Governing through Land: On the Meaning of the "Public" in a Propertied Landscape. The case of Lebanon* [Dissertation]. Sciences Po Paris.
- 2015. *Informal streetscapes: Weaving the patches and patterns of contested public spaces in Nabaa* [Thesis]. American University of Beirut. <http://hdl.handle.net/10938/10621>
- 2013. *Mondialisation d'un terroir* [Mémoire]. Université Libanaise. (French).

Field Work Experience

- Public Spaces, Tripoli and Mina, Lebanon. Ph.D. Research, May — July 2022
- Urban Syrian Refugees, Zahle city, Beqaa, Lebanon. LCPS project: Lebanese Municipalities and Syrian Refugees: Building Capacity and Promoting Agency, July 2017
- Syrian Refugee Camps, Barelías town, Beqaa, Lebanon. NRC Lebanon Housing Study, June 2017
- Nabaa Low Income Neighborhood, Beirut, Lebanon. Master's Thesis, April 2014 — April 2015
- Green and Public Spaces in Beirut, Lebanon. The Green Plan for Beirut, June — July 2012

Other Media

- 2020. The play is over. Al Akhbar Newspaper, 18 August 2020. (Arabic). <https://al-akhbar.com/Opinion/292756>
- 2019. *InforNation* WebTV Program [YouTube Video Files]. Muwatinun wa Muwatinat fi Dawla. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJB6GcKxg1gb68Sm5QXSi6LNR7wWh-a>

- 2015. "Socio-Spatial Analysis of Public Spaces in Nabaa", In: *Practicing the Public*, Fawaz, M. Gharbieh, A., & Public Works (Eds.). Beirut: As-Safir Newspaper, October 13, p. 28. (Arabic). http://api.beiruturbanlab.com/Content/uploads/Articles/849-754_20160203_practicingthepublicinbeirut.pdf

SKILLS PROFILE

Linguistics

- Arabic (Native) | English (Proficient) | French (Proficient) | Spanish (Proficient)

Certifications

- AFD MOOC: Foncier et Développement 2024
- ESRI MOOCs: Cartography 2018 | Going Places with Spatial Analysis 2019 | Spatial Data Science 2023
- TOEFL iBT: 115 (21 December 2019)
- GRE: Verbal Reasoning 160 | Quantitative Reasoning 158 | Analytical Writing 4.5 (26 December 2019)

Computer

- GIS | AutoCad 2D-3D | Photoshop | SketchUp | Cmap Tools

MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS

- Lebanese Order of Engineers and Architects
- International Sociological Association (ISA)
- ISA Research Committee 21: Urban and Regional Development

INTERESTS

- Politics | Tango | Classical Music