



OPEN CALL

**Architecture of the Territory**  
*Constructing the National Narrative*

**OMRAN'19 Publication**

## **OBJECTIVES**

This is a call for contribution to form a publication which follows the success of the Architectural Forum OMRAN'19. It will furthermore engage and explore the main theme of "Architecture of Territory" by offering a compelling perspective of territorial planning in the Arab World. A territory three times the size of the European Union, home to 423,000,000 inhabitants.

There is a lack of accessible information about architecture and urban planning in the Arab territory which currently undermines the potential research accessible to students, academics and any citizen. The recording and documentation of such information is crucial for the development and evolution Arab culture. This publication will offer readers an overview of projects that will contribute to the ready found information on State territorial ambitions.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**National Narrative:** A National Narrative is a story written or spoken, that unifies a Nations' citizens, and promotes an awareness of their common values and characteristics. It is often used by governments to consolidate their power. It is a multi-story strand that adapts through time beyond the government's version.

**Nation-State/Country:** The narrative of a single cultural identity used to unify and organize a territory under a specific sovereignty to form a political entity. On one hand the state is an abstract infrastructure meant to provide stability and other hand, the nation is an ideology for unity.

**Post-Independence:** Countries in the Arab World that took their independence either by foreign domination or through the formation of a new national state in the Twentieth Century.

**Political Structures:** Institutions and mechanisms set up by governments to directly or indirectly implement political, social and economic systems.

**Arab World:** The 22 countries of the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

**Architecture:** The conceiving / strategizing / designing of the built environment, affecting economic, political and social policies.

**Territory:** A geographical delimitation, under the jurisdiction of a ruling power.

**Territorial Planning / Planning:** A decision-making process resulting in the development of spatial strategies aimed at realizing specific goals through the application of policies, mechanisms and regulatory procedures over a specific territory.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **To what extent do post-independent political structures in the Arab World rely on Architecture and Territorial Planning to promote their respective National Narratives? By what Architectural means and planning strategies are National Narratives being translated on the Territory?**

Since the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the Arab World witnessed a dramatic phase of decolonization process, taking their independence either from foreign domination or through the formation of a new modern country, transforming the territory and its spatial organization. There was an opportunity for post-independent countries to reclaim their destiny and national ambitions by promoting a National Narrative, using political structures such as institutions and mechanisms, directly or indirectly, to implement their political and economic ambitions through spatial and territorial interventions. The concept of controlling cities and territories through Planning has been perpetuated through the millennia well before the creation of Nation-States. Architecture and planning, through conceiving, strategizing and designing often emerge as a result of proactive policymaking that seeks to endow a territory with facilities, and by extension, to leave a tangible trace of government. Through the use of territorial planning, the government consolidated and influenced their National Narratives. These Narratives can be instilled and diffused through writings and images but most effectively through the built environment. For a National Narrative to become tangible on the territory it goes through efficient methods of planning and developing infrastructure but also through a range of political and economic schemes. The National Narrative unifies citizens, with an awareness of their common values and characteristics as a nation by recounting the story of who they are, what composes their past and where they are heading as a people. National Narratives emerge in the form of stories, written or spoken, that a national collective tells about itself. It does not only include the government's/states' version, it is a multi-story strand, with adaptation, reinterpretation and addition. The creation of Architectural typologies, methods, and languages through the Planning of squares, neighbourhoods, and infrastructures, are some of the tools used by Nation-States to implement and legitimize in the collective mind a National Narrative. The aim is to stake out a territory to communicate, if not proclaim, an ideal. Above and beyond their primary program, any kind of public building, infrastructure or masterplan first and foremost is meant to express the power of the state over its territory. Architecture thus becomes a crucial vehicle to instil and perpetuate a National Narrative.

- *What are the common practices carried out across the Arab World in planning their territory?*
- *Are the Nation-States the main stakeholders in territorial planning, or has the private sector and independent organizations taken over?*
- *To what end are territorial projects being produced? What are the forces driving those developments? And what is the role of the architect in developing and producing these projects? What are the implications on the end user? How did these urban visions modify the way of life of these societies?*
- *How did regional forces and states' ambitions shape the planning development of those nations?*

To examine the translations of National Narratives through architecture and planning strategies and their impact on the Arab territory, we invite you to submit a written piece with an open format. It can include images, drawings, or maps. We ask that examples of built or unbuilt, current past or future projects be used to tackle the problematic.

## **SUBMISSION DETAILS**

Abstracts of around 400 words, can include images and illustrations in low resolution, should be sent, together with a short biography, as one single pdf-file that is not bigger than 3mb to [submission@collectiveforarchitecture-lb.com](mailto:submission@collectiveforarchitecture-lb.com) before **31 July 2020**.

A list of up to six key words may be placed below.

Publication date to be around Spring 2021.

Nation-State / National Narrative / Arab World / Territorial Planning / Architecture / Role of the Architect / Power Structures / Policy-making / Economic and Political Vision.