

## **ATLAS OF LEBANON: TERRITORIES AND SOCIETY**

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'Atlas of Lebanon: Territories and Society' presents a territorial, spatial approach to understanding this country's history, which is meant to complement more traditional geopolitical and confessional approaches. In the authors' words, "to propose a reading of Lebanon through the analysis of the territory and its contemporary dynamics constitutes an original and novel project in the works of social science." The book has two main objectives. The first one is "to show that the geographic point of view helps to interpret the organization of the country's territorial structures, to explain the country's evolution during the second half of the twentieth century." The second objective is "to go beyond the logic of the inventory of resources, by placing cartography at the service of an understanding of spatial structures and their evolution in a context of social and political reorganization."



### **UNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATIONS**

The book is aimed at enabling us to better understand the transformations that the country has undergone since the onset of the civil war by focusing on spatial, social, and political dynamics. The authors use four levels of analysis. The first is that of national construction, in particular in its territorial aspect. "The current organization of the territory results from the definition and gradual adjustment of the different levels of administration that divide the territory....This dynamic of adjustment of the territorial entities comes into conflict with the pre-existing social and political organization of the local territories." The second level of analysis is the insertion of the country's territory into the world economy. "In a sense, since the capitalist penetration of the European powers in the nineteenth century and the rise of a strong migratory movement towards Americas, Lebanon has been looked upon as a precursor of globalization." An entire chapter of the book is devoted to an examination of this country in the context of globalization. The third level of analysis is that of the tension and geopolitical crises in the Middle East. Regional upheavals "constitute major factors in the mutation of the Lebanese territory." The fourth level of analysis is that of social transformation, such as changes in lifestyle and urbanization. Social transformation is largely the product of changes in the first three levels of analysis. It also "constitutes a central element in the territorial dynamics." 'Atlas of Lebanon' is a valuable contribution to our knowledge about the administrative geography, demographics, and economic development of this country, in particular with regard to how they have affected its territorial dynamics.