

# *Politics of the Grid:*

## *The Reform of Urban Policy in France*

### **Mona Atia**

*George Washington University*



In 2014, the French government changed the geographical targeting of poverty and urban policy. Billed as simplification, the changes symbolize an economic approach to poverty as discrete, static and contained rather than fluid and relational. The highly technical changes couched in the language of simplicity in fact represent an intense political debate about the recipients of state subsidies and the criteria for urban renewal. As a result of the reform, new technocratic practices, city contracts and territorial maneuverings emerged with disparate impacts on cities across France. I analyze how the poverty mapping process in France is framed as a technocratic intervention and used as a political instrument. Using a case study of Roubaix, considered the poorest city in France, I explore the spatial implications of the new mapping, the scaled

politics of negotiation and the impact on communities that reside in so-called priority neighborhoods.

**Mona Atia**, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Geography and International Affairs and Director of the Middle East Studies Program at the George Washington University. She is a critical development scholar specializing in Islamic charity and finance, philanthropy and humanitarianism, and the production of poverty knowledge. Her book *Building a House in Heaven: Pious Neoliberalism and Islamic Charity in Egypt* (University of Minnesota Press) analyses the emergence of a unique blend of Islamist-led human development principles and market-based neoliberalization processes. Professor Atia's current research project, "The Impact of Poverty Mapping on the Geography of Development," is supported by a U.S. National Science Foundation CAREER grant, the NSF's most prestigious award in support of early-career faculty to serve as academic role models in research and education.

Thursday, April 5, 2018, 3:00 pm Geography Room 229

*All are welcome!*