Rethinking Public Space in Beirut Since the Ta’if Agreement: From the Reconstruction-Reconciliation Discourse to "Sphere-building"

Introduction

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The hostilities that raged across Lebanon since 1975, leaving 150,000 dead, over a million displaced and a country's infrastructure shattered, ended in October 1990, a year after the signing of the Ta’if Agreement. This agreement legitimated Syrian military presence and hegemony for a period of two years, demanded the disarmament of all militias – except Hezbollah, which was fighting against Israel's occupation of Southern Lebanon – and introduced amendments to the National Pact of 1943 with regard to the confessional distribution of public office posts and parliamentary seats. It did not, however, initiate any criminal proceedings against war crimes perpetrated during the war, nor did it materialize into any formal commemoration or process of national memorialization. In fact, the post-Ta’if recovery was forged as a "state-sponsored amnesia", where "structural forgetting was encouraged through the culmination of a general war amnesty in 1991, media-censorship laws … and the complete absence of criminal tribunals, compensation schemes, or truth and reconciliation committees." Memorialization of the war was left to the separate factions to initiate, according to their selective interpretations of events, and the overarching discourse that explained it as a "war of the others".

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Unsurprisingly, the country's reconstruction would crystallize many of these issues, but it would also embody hopes for a process of reconciliation through the rebuilding. Numerous publications that sought to capture what was seen as an opportunity for a refashioning of the city and of political relations reflected what today may appear as a naive take on post-conflict reconstruction. The reconstruction was hailed as "a golden

opportunity to restore ties of trust and association among a pluralistic society.”

"Planning for reconstruction, Beirut of tomorrow – can there be anything more exciting to be discussed? Growing out of the horrors of destruction arises the opportunity for recreation, for improvement and adaptation to new circumstances." Reconstruction is seen here as an opportunity to heal a fractured society, where projected spaces ought to be built to encourage and facilitate the coming together of diverse social groups in "the virtues of civility, urbanity and openness." In Salim Nasr's words, "it was a moment for the expression of utopias.”

Even if enthusiasm for the reconstruction process gave way to scepticism and cynicism in the 15 years after the war, the issues of public space and shared space have consistently been presented as conditions for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. The Ta'if Agreement and the country's reconstruction did not challenge the gains made by militias, but rather allowed their leaders to enter into formal politics, legitimizing and consolidating their hold over their respective communities. This was particularly apparent in the way the distribution of power created a geopolitics of competing territories demarcated and controlled through marking, manning and monitoring. This territorialization of Beirut and Lebanon is not new, but the radicalization of those territorialities and the intensification of their confrontation since 2005 has turned the city into a site of open and constant contestation. More than the temporary performance of political animosities, the marking of territory is the most explicit manifestation of a continual process of territorialization that has become the dominant feature of Beirut's urban order, organizing the socio-spatial structure of the city.

If public space, in the shape of streets, squares, parks and public institutions, is defined by its accessibility to all, its intelligibility to all and its capacity to support citizens' actions, then the level of territorialization in Beirut would mean that there is very little, or even none of it. In this context, how are we to think about public space? Pervading much of the literature on public space in Beirut, with a few exceptions, is the Western

4 Ragette and Khoury: (see FN 3), 20.
5 Ragette and Khoury: (see FN 3), 70.
6 Ragette and Khoury: (see FN 3), 22.
7 Nasr, Joe, “Reconstruction” in Huybrechts and Douayhi: (see FN 3), 21.
8 The main groups that emerged from the war were the Lebanese Forces headed then by Elie Hobeika; the Shi'a Amal Movement of Nabih Berri and Hezbollah; and Walid Jumblatt's Druze Progressive Socialist Party. The Sunni community lost most of its leadership to assassinations and exile, leaving a vacuum that Rafiq Hariri came to fill. Within Hariri's first government, the Ministry of the Displaced was given to Walid Jumblatt, while the Council of the South, which administered state aid towards South Lebanon, was given to Nabih Berri. In 1993, Elie Hobeika was given the Ministry of Electricity and Water Resources, also a key portfolio. Hariri also managed to bring several of his associates into the cabinet with him, extending his network to key institutions steering the reconstruction of the country's economy and the city, including the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the Central Bank, the Ministry of Finance, the Municipal Council of Beirut, the Governorate of Mount Lebanon, the Cadastre and the Higher Council for Urban Planning.
9 When May Davie outlines the characteristics of Oriental public space, she argues that it is not so much defined by its

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classical notion exemplified by the public square and a strict distinction between private and public, secular and sacred. As this paper will argue, studying Beirut through this lens has distorted analyses of public space and raised misplaced expectations in its capacity to play a reconciliatory role in the city. Moreover, to see the demise of public space in the territorialization of Beirut by confessional groups and their political declinations is to strip Beirut's urban condition from its rich set of practices and spaces that not only structure urban life today, but have done so for more than a century. Yet, the question remains: if confessionally demarcated spaces organize the Lebanese capital, how are we to think of public space? Is it a matter of a modernization yet to be fulfilled, or is the actual fragmentation of the city the very product of modernity, which, as Balbo argues, should be seen as a structuring rather than a divisive element? And then, how are we to think of the public in this context? What would be the unit of analysis, if it is not the city or citizenry? The confessional group? The political group? The tribe or clan?

By first addressing the premise of the reconstruction-reconciliation discourse, this paper will seek to make apparent the underlying assumptions made by a normative definition of public space. I will then turn to the challenge posed by communal territorialization to notions of public space, and argue that it may be productive to consider urban territory not as antithetical to but as constitutive of public space. Here, I will formulate a relational approach to public space as interior through the notions of asabiyya and "sphere-building", before illustrating my argument by looking at the neighbourhood of Tariq al-Jdideh.

**Reconstruction-Reconciliation: A role for Public Space**

The discussion about public space, which was at the centre of the reconstruction-reconciliation debate, was first and foremost concerned with the reconstruction of the centre of the old city, which stood on the course of the Demarcation Line and was the city's historical heart (Map 1). Functionally, it contained a variety of economic activities and political and cultural institutions. Symbolically, it was the representation in situ of the Lebanese model of coexistence, and historically, the perimeter where the layers of history had literally accumulated as a palimpsest since Phoenician times. After a number of different master plans and financial models were considered, the Parliament voted in 1994 for the project presented by then Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, for whom the reconstruction had become the main inroad into the Lebanese political landscape. It was led by a private company named Solidere, to which the state in practical terms devolved all forms of control over the implementation of the approved master plan, and transferred 120,000 property rights that had status, as it is established by practices. See Davie, May, "Théories et Réalités Historiques de la Publicité dans La Ville Arabe: Le Cas de Beyrouth", in Davie: (see FN 3), 277–301.


Société libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction du centre-ville or the Lebanese Company for the Reconstruction of the City Centre.
constituted a thick fabric of social, political and economic relations. Several authors became concerned about what amounted to the abandonment of the city to the logic of private real estate development, corrupt practices, and the extension of client networks under cover of the country's reconstruction and their insertion into the neoliberal regional and global economic flows.12

The question of public space, and by extension of the city and of an understanding of a post-war citadinité, were at the core of the debate. For Samir Khalaf, the city centre needed to recover its functional, symbolic and historical roles as the site that would pull the city's and country's inhabitants out of their confessionally

\*Map 1\*

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homogenous neighbourhoods, overcome the war-induced urban fragmentation and, through the creation of a public sphere, resolve "the disregard for public space" and "the deficiency in civic-mindedness that pervades society."  

If most reconstruction-reconciliation literature did not share Khalaf's confidence about the reconstruction's potential to generate a public sphere and thereby facilitate a process of reconciliation, the underlying assumption of most analyses was still that public space could and should play that role. In fact, the reconstruction not only animated academic circles, but these debates on public space also translated into urban projects, most of which have not yet materialized.

The Demarcation Line that divided the city into a Christian East and a Muslim West was seen as a privileged site where the remodelling of a space of wartime division into a centrality was investigated. The urban sociologist Nabil Beyhum, a key actor in the reconstruction debate, proposed that it should become a new centrality via the introduction of public spaces along this linear strip, around which Beirutis would coalesce, away from confessional territorialities. Suspended for many years, this project was eventually launched as a design competition in 2010 in the context of the construction of Beit Beirut, a museum and urban cultural centre housed in one of the landmark buildings dotting the Demarcation Line. The Pine Forest or Horsh al-Sanawbar (Map 1), a surface of 30 hectares that was part of the Demarcation Line during the civil war, was redesigned and landscaped following an international competition held in 1992. However, listing a series of reasons, the Municipality of Beirut, which manages the park, has to this day made only one third of it open to the public. The remaining two thirds are open to those with special permits preferentially granted by the Municipality of Beirut. In the case of the Pine Forest and the Demarcation Line, the opening of space where there had been division (in the form of parks, squares, or pedestrian routes) was promoted, following the argument that where there had been division, there should now be a de-territorialized centrality and the coming together of differences. Martyrs' Square (Map 2), the most iconic and symbolic site of pre-war Beirut, was the subject of a competition in 2004, and a series of designs were produced by the

14 Huybrechts, Eric, "L'oubli de la ligne", in Huybrechts and Chawqi Douayhi: (see FN 3).
15 Verdeil, Eric, Une ville et ses urbanistes : Beyrouth en reconstruction (Paris, 2002), 150.
16 See http://www.beitbeirut.org. It would appear that the former demarcation line is now sparking renewed interest, not least from Solidere, which had previously undermined a study and project to rehabilitate the area brought forward by IAUURIF (Institut d'architecture et d'urbanisme de la région d'Ile de France).
17 The Municipality of Beirut has justified the closing down of the park by arguing initially that there was a risk that people would damage or steal plants and trees, and that therefore they would need to be given time to grow before the park opens to the public. Later there were issues with the maintenance and management of the park, due to the difficulty of finding equal numbers of Christian and Muslim personnel, as stipulated by the labour code for the recruitment of public institutions personnel. More recently, the mayor argued that the Municipality is concerned that some of the practices of future users (such as picnics, barbecues, shisha smoking and littering) will damage the park. In January 2015, the Municipality of Beirut presented a controversial plan for the rehabilitation of the park that included the addition of a stadium on its northern side. Since September of the same year, the Horsh is open to the public once a week. For an extensive discussion on the Pine Forest, see Shayya, Fadi, "At the Edge of the City: Reinhabiting Public Space Toward the Recovery of Beirut's Horsh Al-Sanawbar", in Discursive Formations (2010).
competition laureates. However, in 2015, the square itself remains a *terrain vague*, with only the bullet-ridden Martyrs' Statue at the centre to mark the site.

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Finally, in a similar spirit but inspired and justified through theological and psychotherapeutic understandings of forgiveness, a Garden of Forgiveness (Map 2) initiated by Alexandra Assiely and designed by Gustafson Porter was articulated as a set of intimate pockets, within which visitors would be inspired to engage in a process of cleansing, pardon, introspection and the inclusion of difference. A multiplicity of small, intimate, differentiated environments would be joined together by straight pathways connecting the different churches and mosques that can be seen from this central viewpoint, overlooking the ancient, mostly Roman, ruins below. The actual building of the garden, however, has been repeatedly postponed since a design competition was held in 2000.

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Where ideas propounded by the reconstruction-reconciliation debates did in fact materialize, it would appear...
that these spaces have not yet been opened, and where projects have been initiated, they have not been built. Certainly, each project exemplifies a different set of issues, some of which are circumstantial or inscribed in a wider process of financialization of urban space, but for the most part, the given explanation is that Beirut and Beirutis are not ready yet. The limited progress in the reconstruction of prominent public spaces has been explained by the lack of appropriate socio-cultural conditions and the volatile political climate. Yet public spaces and shared spaces are seen as prerequisites for bringing the different communities out of their insular and introverted partisan confines.

Questioning Normative Approaches to Public Space

Underlying these projects is a normative understanding of public space, brought to bear on a discourse of reconstruction-reconciliation that sees in urban planning the capacity to steer debates, and to negotiate a multiplicity of subjectivities through a technical and neutral language embodied in the urbanist and the urban project. Public space is here understood through the Habermasian prism of "communicative action" as a site of deliberation and negotiation, leading unquestionably towards some form of resolution of differences or reconciliation." For Sofia Saadeh and Elizabeth Picard, for example, public space cannot exist under the current Lebanese political model – a segregationist system produced by political "communitarianism". In fact, in Saadeh's view, public space did not exist in Beirut before the emergence of a secular middle class, which thrived between independence and the civil war. Before this period there was no common public life, or even equality between all citizens. Thus, taking this approach, Beiruti public space was only experienced during a short period of the city's history, and in direct relation to the existence of a specifically Beiruti secular middle class. This has also nurtured among post-war analysts a propensity to look for Beirut's golden age in this period of rapid Westernization and political liberalization among its middle class, equating the statist presidency of Fuad Chehab (1958-1964) with a time when the cosmopolitan and modern character of Beirut was embodied in the country's Western lifestyle, modern architecture and public spaces.

This approach underlies most prevalent understandings of public space, and relies on a definition of public space very much in line with Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere, but, as Saadeh claims in the context of Lebanon this is challenged by the sectarian logic that takes over all spheres of urban life. Saadeh also practically equates public space to state space, in other words, to space that is nationalized under the control of an independent state that grants the same rights to all its citizens. Starting from the notion of the

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18 Habermas, Jürgen, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Cambridge, MA, 1991); Habermas, Jürgen, Theory of Communicative Action (Cambridge, MA, 1997).


Greek agora and the classical urban square, and echoing the works of his predecessors (Weber and Tocqueville, among others) on the individuation of society, rational judgment and political equality, Habermas proposes a fundamentally abstract definition of public space that has subsequently become normative. In such a space, idealized citizens could debate, deliberate, agree and take action as absolute equals who had abandoned their social identities upon entering this public realm, using rational arguments to reach agreements instead of coercive means to impose their wills and ideas on others. Participants in this debate would nurture a sense of understanding that would emerge out of persistent exchange and could build a shared rationality.

Saadeh and Picard's approach, as well as more popular assumptions about public space, cannot reconcile the existence of an active civic polity with any space other than the public, the open and the secular. But how can this be when the state itself has always followed sectarian divisions? In fact, Saadeh's and Picard's position helps to highlight one of the contradictions in the understanding of the public as coinciding with the state, and thus with the secular. This line of argument is not tenable when political sectarianism articulates the relationship between the individual and the state, and it neglects the large number of other institutions embedded within Lebanese society, predating, structuring and bypassing the state. They thus raise the question of whether "traditional" and religious institutions and their surroundings can be expected to fulfill the roles assigned to public space, so often assumed to be secular. These approaches leave no room to suggest that a mosque or a church – or other religiously marked institutions such as schools, universities, charities or hospitals – may be able to carry public life.\(^{21}\) Formally speaking, this is extended by the arguments of some for whom public space stems from the Western experience of state-building and urbanism and who therefore deduce that there are "no public spaces in the Islamic city. These spaces [are said to] exist in the extensions of these cities."\(^{22}\) From this perspective, public spaces have never existed in the Middle East, for Arab cities are made up of separate quarters, where societies are torn, or are even incapable of creating a public space (defined as a Western experience derived from the agora). The argument follows that public spaces were introduced with colonization, in the shape of squares, large streets, public parks and squares, and cannot be supported by the traditional Islamic city. In other words, public space is a Western phenomenon, formally defined and made possible because enacted by a single sovereign unit such as the polis or the state, whereas Middle Eastern cities, which are divided into contending quarters and governed either by weak states or heavily militarized ones, are said to be in essence antithetical to the core principles of public life.

\(^{21}\) Saadeh: (see FN 19), 70.

In opposition to this approach, we can cite May and Michael F. Davie, whose extensive work on nineteenth-century Beirut has prompted them to argue that the introduction of Western-inspired urbanism in Beirut brought about a decisive turn from which the city never truly recovered. The Davies argue that Beirut's Ottoman period was characterized by the development of a complex urban culture, of a "citizenhood" or citadinité that was lost with the imposition of foreign typologies of public spaces. For them, public space did indeed exist before the reformist decades of the Ottoman Empire and the French Mandate. Street intersections and openings marked by fountains, the souq (market), or the vast maidan adjacent to the city's medieval walls, were called public spaces (ammé) and performed a regulatory role around the city's dense semi-private clusters of extended family homes. The Davies highlight an irreversible paradigm shift, because they consider that the architectures of public space that had, in their understanding, grown organically with the Beirutis' economic and social practices and were continued through Ottoman occupation, experienced a brutal rupture caused by the French Mandate and the colonial machine from which they never recovered. This argument carries the useful insight of the embodied praxis of public space, but to argue that once the city grew out of its walls and accommodated formalized spaces under the French Mandate it lost the capacity to nurture a rich urban life is an overstatement. I argue instead that Beirut's inhabitants have adapted and reconfigured their urban lives around a plurality of spaces, constantly recomposing their place in the city.

Nabil Beyhum, urban sociologist and vocal figure in the post-Ta'if reconstruction-reconciliation debate, has presented different arguments and approaches to public space, changing his position as he led the contestation against Solidere's reconstruction of the city centre. Where he initially saw in the "order of the souqs" the discriminating factor between "citadins" and "neo-citadins" (city dwellers and newcomers), Beyhum later emphasized the more nostalgic undercurrent of his approach, lamenting the loss of the pre-war souqs and the city centre, which together constituted the agora of all forms of diversity. Following this approach, the destruction of the city's public spaces was not only the result of the war, but also of state-building and state formation, as the state invested the city with political centralities and excessive nationalism. The new, war-induced, confessional territories are seen as lacking the capacity to produce public spaces and new "citadinités".

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23 This is the term Muhammad Naciri uses to translate the French word citadinité into English. See Naciri, Mohammed, "Citizenhood: Proof Against the Century", in Jayyusi, Holod, Petruccioli, and Raymond (eds.), The City in the Islamic World (Leiden, 2008), 2:823-56.
25 Beyhum 1991: (see FN 3), 40 in Salamon (see FN 22).
27 Beyhum: (see FN 26).
Beyhum makes his situation of communal territory more explicit when he argues that territory is one aspect of the city that articulates both the public and the private. The sectarian territory is therefore a concentric circle between the wider public circle and the smaller circle of private space, the relationship between the two being articulated by the sectarian territory.28 Territorial logic would be one that strips the public from the practice of dissent and the private from real privacy. In this sense, the public and the private are under either the constant scrutiny of the militia, or of those inhabiting the territory whose project it is to establish control over these spheres. This approach pushes towards the conclusion that territory acts as the lowest and the only common denominator defining the group, stripping it from its agonistic needs within and accentuating the antagonistic sentiments towards other territories.

Public Space Post-2005

A more recent set of approaches has emerged following the events of 2005, that is, the pull-out of the Syrian military and the instability that has prevailed since. Some of this literature looks enthusiastically at the "Beirut Spring", or "Independence Intifada" (intifadat al-istiqlal), as the unprecedented event that it was:29 the largest ever demonstration in the city's centre to call for justice following Hariri's assassination and an end to Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. Others, with more hindsight, start to reveal the more troubling aspects that the removal of the Syrian "lid" entailed, as it became apparent that the demonstrations on March 8 and March 14 – held on different squares, for and against Syria respectively – would outlast the initial excitement and make explicit a new rift. As Franck Mermier describes it, this political polarization was immediately made apparent in the city's streets when he says that the Syrian pull-out liberated "the public expression of partisan allegiances, as much on the level of written and audio-visual media, as on the plain of territorial marking."30

In fact, apart from two collective volumes focusing on public space, one edited by Franck Mermier and another by May Davie, numerous other articles and studies have addressed public space indirectly. While it may be presumptuous to gather them under a single banner, this serves to highlight some common features. Micro-studies of shared practices and spaces have sought to address public space in its multiplicity of facets. Interestingly, some of the literature avoids using the term "public space" altogether, and focuses instead on micro-studies of spaces and practices of encounter. This is not an overall re-evaluation of the notion, but one that seeks to situate intra-confessional and cross-communal space in instances of shared space; in a

28 Beyhum: (see FN 26),
29 Beyhum, Nabil, "Le rôle du symbolisme dans la planification urbaine: Le cas de la Place des Canons", in Ziad Akl and Nabil Beyhum (eds.), Conquérir et reconquérir la ville: L'aménagement urbain comme positionnement des pouvoirs et contre-pouvoirs (2009); Khalaf: (see FN 13).
30 Mermier, Franck, "Liminaire" in Mermier: (see FN 3), 10.
workplace, a taxi ride, or nightlife, for example.31

Other studies call for another approach to public space, complicating the notion by introducing some of the literature stemming from disciplines such as social anthropology, postcolonial studies and feminist literature.32 As Khater argues, the dominant discourse has rested on a "bourgeois formulation of public space [excluding] subaltern groups like the working classes, immigrants, women," suggesting that "instead of a singular 'public space' there are in fact multiple public spaces."33 Instead of a personified and unified public space, "these critics … have proposed an imagined public space which is construed of conflicting social groups".34 Importantly, they share an assumption of the sectarian fabric of the city, and the need to rethink public space, as when May Davie says that "it is time to approach public space through other routes, which is certainly a difficult task, given the complexity of this paradigm."35

Amongst these reappraisals is an objection to the notion that a coercion-free space can exist, or that participants can completely shed their social identities upon entering public space. The suggestion here is that an idealized public space in the form of a neutral ground never existed; rather, it is a fantasy now replaced by an understanding of an inherently and continuously unstable arena. Most of the analyses that have emerged from the post-2005 literature on shared practices and spaces have, however, occurred as if in an urban vacuum, avoiding a larger questioning of the urban condition, and what such practices entail for our understanding of urban order. They argue for a de-centred view, where the vantage point is no longer the state or the planner's perspective, but the set of interactions and isolated spaces of encounter. These are interesting windows into different facets of Beiruti life, but such critics do not situate their analysis within a larger urban context.

Some of the exceptions to this are studies that address the urban periphery and suburbs, including publications by Mona Fawaz and, in particular, Mona Harb, who borrow Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "social field" to describe Hezbollah's territorialization and the production of meaning in the southern suburbs of Beirut.36 By acknowledging the city's decentralization, these authors, alongside more recent work by Michael

31 See Mermier, Franck (ed.), Liban, espaces partagés et pratiques de rencontre (Beirut, 2008).
32 Davie: (see FN 3).
33 Khater, Akram Fouad, "En(Gendering) Public Space: Fin de siècle Beirut" in Davie: (see FN 3), 17-42.
34 Khater: (see FN 33), 18.
35 Davie: (see FN 9), 296.
36 See among others: Deeb, Lara, and Mona Harb, "Choosing both Faith and Fun: Youth Negotiations of Moral Norms in South Beirut" Ethnos 78, no. 1 (March 2013): 1-22; Fawaz, Mona and Ghandour, Marwan (eds.), The Reconstruction of Haret Hreik: Deisign Options for Improving the Livability of the Neighbourhood (Beirut, 2007); Harb, Mona, "La reconstruction de la banlieue sud-ouest de Beyrouth: Une négociation entre état et acteurs politiques", in Huybrechts and
F. Davie, have implicitly (and in Davie's case explicitly) introduced an understanding of public space that acknowledges the city's geographical fragmentation. While the present paper is in line with this approach, and in this regard, closer to Harb's more multi-disciplinary writings, it also presents what I see as the explicit rethinking of public space, which may be simmering under some of this body of work, but which as yet remains latent.37

In presenting here the range of works tackling public space in post-Ta'if Beirut, I sought to highlight the persistence of the reconciliatory role of public space and the normative definition that is mobilized. In contrast to this approach, I suggest a more heuristic role for public space, stemming from an anthropological study of it as urban praxis rather than ideal type. Acknowledging the Lebanese capital's fragmented socio-spatial structure and the Lebanese state's complex articulation of competing sovereignties in the context of "the war yet to come",38 I will suggest that the strict boundaries between public and private, between sacred and profane, be blurred and that we start to bring in other elements into the discussion on public space: namely territory, asabiyya (explained below) and interior or "the immunological sphere".

**Public Space as Interior**

In many ways, the key element used in Western philosophical terms to define a space as "public" is its accessibility. In order for space not to be defined as private or "out of bounds", it must be open to the presence of all; or at least to all the citizens of that city or country. However, Isaac Joseph adds that accessibility, which is a "condition of urbanity",39 not only supposes presence, it should also entail capacity to act in that space and, thus, to understand it. In other words, such space should be "intelligible" and offer a "world at hand", as well as a space of weak relations of anonymity and distancing. Public space in its modern sense does not recognize religious and sacred space as public, because it is viewed as exclusionary and prescriptive. Public space, in this case, is detached from any institutional link outside that of the sovereign state which has achieved the nationalization of its territory. In this sense, any form of territorialization that asserts itself as a competing sovereignty could only qualify as exclusionary, and is thus bereft of the basic conditions of "publicness". The public here is equated with the nation, where territorialization is thus the fragmentation of national space and the decomposition of public space.

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37 Douayhi: (see FN 3); Harb, Mona, *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth, 1985-2005 de la banlieue à la ville préface de Sabrina Mervin* (Paris/Beirut, 2010).


Territoriality and publicity

In political geography, territory is seen by most as a bounded geographical space, delimited and invested with political purpose. This fairly pervasive approach underlies most definitions both of territory and territoriality, the latter of which Robert Sack defines as "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area." By definition, territorialization or restricted accessibility would preclude public space, which presupposes a pacified space, a sovereign state and an undifferentiated citizenry. Therefore, while public space is expected to reconcile, it can do so only on the condition that a state has achieved a level of undisputed, legitimate sovereignty, or is in "a central position of power [that] remains open for contest." In either case, public space in its modern sense is expected to regulate urban life while being under the sole sovereignty of the state, which has the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.

With regard to legitimacy, the Lebanese situation may appear ambiguous. The Lebanese state is, by definition, not a "centralized voluntarist state guaranteeing equal access to social and urban services to all its citizens through public institutions." As Harb argues, the Lebanese state "operates through a system of political sectarianism" within which each community has its national representatives, who distribute these services following a client logic and personalized relations." Indeed, at the very heart of the Lebanese state is the distribution of the highest echelons of public office to the demographically largest confessional groups (a Maronite President, a Sunni Prime Minister and a Shi'a Speaker of Parliament), and the distribution of posts in public administration and of parliamentary seats is done according to confessionally defined quotas.

Sack: (see FN 41), 19.
Harb 2010: (see FN 36), 43.
The expression used in the original French text and translated here as "political sectarianism" is that of "communautarisme politique". It seeks to differentiate between "sectarianism" understood as a clash of innate and primordial attachments and the actual political model that has been in place in Lebanon since 1926.

Harb 2010: (see FN 36), 43.
Moreover, the practice of public office is, for the most part, organized around extended client groups, where the redistribution of patronage draws the map of public service provision. The Ta'if Agreement only solidified political sectarianism by turning what was an unwritten rule of communal coexistence in the National Pact of 1943 into an explicit "pact of shared existence".\textsuperscript{47}

The refusal to abolish political communalism not only lifted the taboo against communal socialization but also presented it as the norm. Insecurity, dispersion of families, generational differences, the loss of socio-economic markers at a time of paralysis, and subsequent break-up of the state structure – all contributed to the revaluation of the religious community as final criteria of identity.\textsuperscript{48}

The post-Ta’if settlement thus presented a situation where "shared existence" of religious communities became the common horizon, rather than the gradual constitution of a single public through state-building and the homogenization of space. This effectively renders a perception of public space as the product of the modern state, and in contrast to other forms of territorialization, largely inoperative. Could we imagine a definition of public space that, contrariwise, assumes its territorialization?

\textbf{Hybrid and competing sovereignties}

While the modern state does bring about a different notion of territory, and with it a different understanding of the city, it is not entirely clear whether there can be no territory without a state. For if the state is to have the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence over a territory, there are situations, as in Lebanon, where not only the legitimacy of the state is questioned, but where different groups exercise differing levels of monopoly over the use of force in different parts of the country and city. When Stuart Elden writes that "control of territory is what makes a state possible, thus control of territory accords a specific legitimacy to the violence, as well as determines its spatial extent", he is insisting that states are entities in control of territory and can thus exercise violence in that territory.\textsuperscript{49} However, the state can no more homogenize the space it delimits than it can neutralize all other forms of power that contest it.

In her article, "Beyond the 'Weak State': Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut", Sara Fregonese disputes "traditional

\textsuperscript{47} Picard, Elizabeth, "Post-War Lebanese Communities in Search of Reconciliation", in Religionen im Konflikt (Münster, 2005), 127–41. Some modifications did apply, if only to shift from a 54:45 balance of parliamentary seats to an even split of 50:50 between Christians and Muslims, and parity extended to high-ranking posts in government and the public sector.

\textsuperscript{48} Picard: (see FN 47), 131.

\textsuperscript{49} Elden, Stuart, Terror and Territory (Minneapolis, MN, 2009), xxx.
views of legitimate state power and irregular non-state ‘dissidence’ as dwelling in distinct legitimacy
categories”. In agreement with Fregonese’s position, I would argue that the duality of state/legitimate, non-
state/dissident approach is ultimately untenable in Lebanon: “Sovereignty appears here not as a fixed state
but as hybrid, fluid, contested processes, knowledge, and practices alongside, with, and beyond the state.”
Sovereignty does not rest here on legal form of citizenship as much as on the capacity to control territory and
to provide for the population it encompasses. Thus, territorial forms of citizenship come to challenge abstract
individual rights as embedded in the concept of the nation state.

Territory is not, therefore, just the state’s prerogative, nor does territory need to be defined as the bounding
of space in order to control the population and resources that it delimits. In fact, territoriality – the effort to
create territories – can also be seen as the way groups and individuals inhabit the city, stabilize it and
navigate it. In parallel with Sack’s notion of territoriality, another strand of work on territory and territoriality
has emerged which in some ways contradicts Sack’s, and problematizes the Euclidean understanding of
space as well as Lefebvre’s constructivist approach. Claude Raffestin has argued for an understanding of
territory through a relational approach to “territoriality”, whereby territory is not a delimited, bounded space,
but a “set of relationships rooted in ties to the material environment and other people or groups, and
mediated by existing techniques and representations.” In this interpretation, territoriality is not just an
instrumental relationship to space, but also part of the act of dwelling and of the practices of everyday life.

There is therefore a level at which the territory can be seen as "the world-at-hand"; a mode of making sense
and inhabiting the city through a phenomenology of the everyday. But it is also situated and articulated by a
certain spatiality, defined by and articulating the material world. The boundaries drawn, both imaginary and
real, articulate a “political habitat” within the city, drawn from everyday life and practices, but also arising
from the more stable order of the city. This is not to say that the contours of urban territories and modes of
territorialization do not change. Rather, they are constantly redrawn, and utilize the city, its infrastructure and
architecture, roads, overpasses, walls and spaces to delimit those worlds.

The city being a diffuse and unstable environment within which groups seek to establish "spaces of certainty"
and stabilized environments in relation to other groups, public space cannot be a space from which city
dwellers are detached, or where they cannot find a sense of "at-homeness". To think, therefore, of territory
through a relational approach is to see the multiplicity of objects, spaces, beings, technologies, cosmologies,
legal structures, practices and figures that become crystallised and stabilized into a particular arrangement.

Fregonese, Sara, "Between a Refuge and a Battleground", in Geographical Review 102, no. 3 (July 2012), 316–36, 15.
Murphy, Alexander B., “Entente Territorial: Sack and Raffestin on Territoriality”, in Environment and Planning D:
Society and Space 30 (2012), 159-72, 161-62.
To consider the spatiality of public space is thus to also consider the way it orders public life, as well as how being in public space corresponds to a legible sphere of reference. As is argued here, public space is, according to Isaac Joseph, defined not only by its accessibility but also by its legibility and capacity to offer a "world-at-hand" in which one can act.

Order, chaos and the interior

"If God did not keep men separate from each other, there would be nothing left on earth."52

Here I would like to bring in the concept of asabiyya, Ibn Khaldun’s notion of group solidarity and cohesion, esprit de corps, and which was reworked by Michel Seurat, to explain the role of communitarian, sectarian, village, clan, or family solidarity in the contestation of the city and the state. The term asabiyya refers to the sentiment that binds together people who, through their association, seek to defend or attain some form of material or political gain. This, in turn, can and has been used by Seurat to describe a spatial unit, such as the quarter, or the neighbourhood, or possibly a small region assembled around a single tribe or a group of clans. It is therefore a term used to describe a group, as well as to refer to the intensity of the group’s cohesion. In his Muqaddima, Ibn Khaldun uses asabiyya to describe a number of different notions, including that of kin group, group feeling or tribal solidarity or, in French, esprit de corps.53 In modern Arabic, asabiyya often denotes a pejorative form of relationship equivalent to fanaticism or primitive tribalism, and refers moreover to the affective nature of that relationship; to nervousness, zeal, and vitality. The meanings of the verb "عصب", "to wrap or to bind around" or "to gather around someone",54 suggests a morphological dimension to the asabiyya that sits at the centre of this terminology and will be extended with Sloterdijk’s immunological spheres.

Bound around itself in a nervous vitality, the asabiyya is in no way detached and indifferent, but instead has its own intricate, at once explicit and latent order. The marking of a boundary or a border does not have control as its only objective. It reveals a kind of demonstration of the asabiyya, it carries symbolism and constructs identities, it criminalizes the Other, and it defines both external and internal strategies and policies. Internally, it is about marking the neighbourhood’s body politic, if only to provide the inhabitants with an “area of certainty” that makes them feel protected. This means that while there are different kinds of asabiyyat, whether they are based on patronage networks, clan or family ties, sectarian identities, professions, or territorial integrity, they do share a sense in which their cohesion is vital in the pursuit of

53 Al-Muqaddima: An Introduction to History was Ibn Khaldun’s major work, written in 1377, and is said to represent one of the first studies in political sociology.
shared interests or of their survival.

In this context, there is no larger constitutional framework that would facilitate or regulate relations between different actors. The dominant logic is that of all or nothing, and the space of the political then disappears behind militarized space, "with each asabiyya reconstructing in its fantasies a world made of unity and harmony". Very poignantly, Seurat describes the neighbourhood of Bab Tebbané in Tripoli in the 1980s as it was undergoing rapid militarization, affirming itself as exclusive and superior through its articulate leader Khalil Akkawi, and through committed youth, or shabab. The neighbourhood was thereby embarked on a war that far exceeded its precincts: Bab Tebbané, Tripoli and the umma as a whole are three of the levels of representation of space through which Akkawi and the shabab articulate their identity and strife. The quarter here is, in the most affective way, the most sacred, since it is the symbol of purity and authenticity.

Whilst asabiyyat may be instrumental in nature, they also breed a certain world-view defined in terms of interior and exterior, "[creating] community out of chaos". With this realization, it is useful to consider the asabiyya in spatial terms that ultimately have an effect upon urban reconfigurations of the city. Moreover, the notion of asabiyya enables a reading of the Lebanese situation in which we do not simply have immutable sectarian groups fighting each other on confessional, political or feudal grounds, but we see shifting shared interests around which groups violently coagulate, redefining themselves depending on the conjuncture of political processes and ambient ethos, or as Elizabeth Picard describes it "[circumstantially], in other words, constituted with an eye to the conquest of power". The asabiyya can thus potentially also provide order where a sense of chaos (fawda) prevails. Beyond communitarian concerns, "in its materiality, the marking of territory becomes a set of bearings that contribute to creating a refuge and thus to respond to the anxieties and expectations [of the inhabitants]".

In introducing the notion of asabiyya, this paper seeks to suggest that public space is also the "world at

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55 Seurat, Michel, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli (Liban): Étude d'une 'Asabiyya urbaine'," in Mouvements communautaires et espaces urbains au Machreq, CERMOC, 110–70, (Beirut, 1985), 58.

56 Khalil Akkawi was a prominent leader in Bab Tebbané and a leading member of the Islamic Unification Movement, Tawheed. He was assassinated in 1986.


hand” which enables urban life in its numerous facets. In order to be so, public space needs to encompass and project, obviously but even more so latently, architectures and the symbols that generate this sense of an everyday “at-homeness”. Not in the sense of an entirely private realm, but in the sense of a sphere; an atmosphere of “familiarity” in a space of anonymity. This is a far from “neutral” ground. On the contrary, it is a space loaded with difference and its constant re-affirmation. Members of a group thus give each other bearings that constitute a “web of significance”, or “interior”.

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Literature on Beirut has often relied on the notion of “sectarian space” or espace communautaire to describe the spatial extent of the deployment of sectarian groups and their exclusionary practices in the city and country. As discussed earlier, Beyhum situates this between the individual sphere and the public space in a series of growing concentric circles, but also as a prism through which the individual engages with the public.60 Sectarian space is thus inserted as a gradient between the public–private dyad that signifies the different extents to which relationships are defined by common belonging, traits or beliefs. The more one distances oneself from the core, the more relations are indifferent to creed and belonging, and the more “public” they become. This gives way to diagrammatic understandings of the public as fringe space at the edge of defined assemblages, which in turn have given way to concepts such as “heterotopias” and “thirdspaces”, which seek an outside where anything can happen, usually somewhere humans have never stepped and hence utopia can find its place.

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However, in analysing this often unproblematised diagrammatic understanding, it becomes apparent that this approach raises a difficult question both about public space and what is described here as “sectarian space”. The public is here associated with the indifferent, the infinite, the open, possibly the neutral. It is morphologically understood as the correlation between nature and society, whereby nature is the public, “a vast outside”, and the sect is an “ordered inside.” When it is not the undefined exterior, the public is the space of the sovereign state and its citizens, to which it indifferently provides the enclosure of national borders and protects the rights of the passport-bearer.

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Rather than thinking of public space as this neutral, infinite, indifferent, vast outside that escapes the sect, which would be an ordered inside, we should think of public space as another interior. Quoting from Bruno Latour:

Are you outside? There is no outside: outside is another inside with another climate control, another thermostat, another air conditioning system. Are you in public? Public spaces are spaces too, for goodness sake. They are not different in that respect from private spaces. They are simply

60 Beyhum: (see FN 26).
organized differently, with different architectures, different entry points, different surveillance systems, different soundscapes. To try to philosophize about what it is to be "thrown into the world" without defining more precisely, more literally (Sloterdijk is first of all a literalist in his use of metaphors) the sort of envelopes into which humans are thrown, would be like trying to kick a cosmonaut into outer space without a spacesuit. Naked humans are as rare as naked cosmonauts. To define humans is to define the envelopes, the life support systems, the Umwelt that make it possible for them to breathe. This is exactly what humanism has always missed.61

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To think with Peter Sloterdijk, through his immunological spheres, to develop a spherological understanding of Beirut and the city in general, means that one seeks to identify the ways in which the city provides "spheres"; a morphological and cosmological interior or sets of interiors. When looking at Beirut, rather than assuming a pre-existing unity now lost to conflict and division, Sloterdijk forces one to bring forth the ways in which people build and animate space as immunizing and enveloping. "Space is understood "gynaecologically" as a set of envelopes or surrounds or shelters, self-animated spaces that give their inhabitants the resources to produce worlds","62 more than just a condition of being "protected from physical threats [it is] a state of being immersed in a psycho-immunological sphere of protection".63 In extension to Heidegger's being-in-the-world, Sloterdijk argues that all being is "being-with", and that this takes on a spatial dimension in the shape of a sphere, whether it is a "womb, a home, a polis, a nation, an empire, or some other sheltering envelope".64

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The interiors we inhabit are not, then, built by material architectures on the one hand and metaphysical cosmologies on the other. Even if they are ontologically different, the two are constitutive of each other. City walls are not simply a defensive barrier, nor are city limits merely administrative boundaries. For Sloterdijk, they embody a deep sense of order that may even be more vital than military imperatives and state sovereignty. Humans are boundary-making beings, and these boundaries need not be walls or infrastructure, legal barriers or economic inequalities. Boundaries order our "being-in-the-world" as extensions of our bodies set in motion with others. They cannot be understood as limits, but rather as extensions of human groups and their life-worlds.

<43>
Sloterdijk helps us overcome not only binary understandings of tradition versus modernity and public versus

64 Thrift: (see FN 61), 124.
private. Public space is understood here as the socio-spherical interior generated by co-existing beings imbricated in one another and constituting "the shelter that they offer each other, to the extent that they conjure up to one another a specific psycho-social space". In this sense, rather than considering public space as a legal or contractual construct, this paper considers a relational understanding of public space as constantly built and produced, redefined and negotiated in relation to other public spaces.

In the process of "sphere-building", Beirut's inhabitants draw on a variety of references to negotiate their place in the city, whether this be the family, the sect, the nation, the West, the umma, or the urban asabiyya. This "spatialization" of the public necessarily involves a whole array of objects and things that provide latent meanings and grounds in which people dwell. While power is very much embedded within this "web of signification", this "enclosure of meaningful forms" is not the sole prerogative of state power or militias. It is constantly produced and reproduced, adapted and contested, and adopts different qualities and meanings.

As argued above, public space has been the subject of an unrelenting normative analysis that renders any attempt to understand the role of the concept in Beirut practically an exercise in box ticking, with all the boxes unticked. This paper attempts to take seriously the existential – rather than natural or animal – need to constitute "immunological spheres" in order to exist and participate in the city. Such interiors are of different natures and scales, and mobilize both material and immaterial boundary-making techniques and technologies. The room and the apartment are significant interiors (microspheres), but so are sectarian spaces, transnational networks and the nation state (macrospheres). To repeat Bruno Latour's words, "Are you outside? There is no outside: outside is another inside with another climate control, another thermostat, another air conditioning system." The outside is the space of other life-supports for other life-worlds, which are not in indefinite or undefined space. This means that speaking about public space as distinct from sectarian space through defining it by its level of accessibility supposes that there is a way to transcend the individual, the asabiyya, or the political grouping and to bring the self under a wider single envelope, which is often assumed to be the nation state. However, as we have seen above, the Lebanese State does not represent a powerful referent asserting itself as a distinct entity: a constitution and government that horizontally encompasses everyone. Instead, as may be the case elsewhere – though to a lesser extent – the nation state is constituted by its parts – here, the sectarian groups and their political representatives.

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65 Sloterdijk, Peter, Bulles: Microphérologie (Sphères I) (Paris, 2002), 272.
66 Geertz, Clifford, Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York, 1983), 182, in Dawahare, Michael D., Civil Society and Lebanon: Toward a Hermeneutic Theory of the Public Sphere in Comparative Studies (Parkland, FL, 2011), 58.
67 Latour: (see FN 60), 8.

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Another inference is that public space, which is assumed to be a uniform space, would be seen as fragmented or divided. This approach assumes a pre-existent unity or a yet unachieved unity, which, I argue, is a lure. The question is then, how are public spaces formed at all? Rather than seeking to explain why national space is divided, this paper seeks to investigate how coexistence is possible within any group, and how "being-in-the-world" is first and foremost "being-with" and "being-without". This is where the asabiyya, understood not as a derogatory term but as a way of appreciating how groups are formed, what makes them "stick" and the shape they take within a city, can reveal aspects of differing urban orders and different interiors. By resorting to Sloterdijk's spherology, this paper attempts to make more apparent the importance of "webs of signification" comprised of both material and immaterial "life supports": "a sphere is a world formatted by its inhabitants". Sloterdiijk's "immunological sphere" could be understood as the spatialized ontology of the asabiyya's vitalist understanding of group cohesion. Together, they can help bring to the fore the fact that sectarian territories can constitute a rich and complex urban entity that is not performed in the way classic Western understandings of public space expect, but as a conurbation made up of separate spheres "rubbing along" and defining their own world-view and space in the city in relation to each other, without an overarching modern state or a single civic space to represent them. To explain this, it is useful to turn to Tariq el-Jdideh, a middle- and lower-class Sunni neighbourhood, where since the late 1990s and particularly since the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, a national but also a Sunni leader, we can observe the materialization of the construction of Sunni sectarianism, as a Pan-Arab horizon gradually shrank and the Sunni leadership turned to confessional patriotism.

**Tariq al-Jdideh: Urban Autonomy and Urban Asabiyya**

The neighbourhood of Tariq al-Jdideh (New Road) first grew along the road from which it draws its name, which was constructed by the French Mandate authorities to link the city to the prison, Sijn al-Raml (Sand Prison), that they had built on this sandy terrain. The road now forms the central spine of the neighbourhood, cutting across it from its north-western to its south-eastern flank. Today, the area is clearly delimited by the highways that frame it on all sides but the south, where the camps of Sabra and Shatila were established in 1948. From the more affluent Qasqas in the east overlooking the Horsh, to the extremely poor slum-like dwellings of migrants from the nearby countryside on the periphery of the Palestinian camps, the neighbourhood since its densification in the 1960s has exhibited a level of autonomy that reflected both the

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70 Fregonese: (see FN 50), 319.

71 Gervais, Victor, "L’ascension politique de Rafic Hariri: Ampleur et limite de d’émergence d’un leadership sunnite uniifié", in Mermier and Mervin: (see FN 57).

72 Charara, Waddah, "Mosquee et Quartier: Une ‘pratique du paysage social’", in *Maghreb-Machrek* 123, no. January-

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lack of public infrastructure to support the growth of the suburbs, and the Sunni power structures. There is indeed more to the neighbourhood than religious homogeneity. It is also home to the more deprived sections of the Sunni population, and an area that has always formed a pool from which traditional za’ims73 sought to rally support through patronage and a sectarian discourse.

Rafiq Hariri’s assassination on the 14 February 2005 would shake the country, but more immediately and deeply, it would destabilize the Sunni community. The bubble of Sunni dominance that Hariri embodied burst with his assassination, inflicting a trauma onto a whole community. His death provoked a wave of support which momentarily silenced his and his group’s critics, and generated the unexpected coalition of 14 March, gathering the Christian right with Saad Hariri, Rafiq’s son, and Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader, against Syrian occupation. His assassination was also a catalyst for Sunni group solidarity, animating communal solidarities around a discourse of victimization and martyrdom. Beirut's Muslim communities became increasingly armed, resorting to wartime neighbourhood structures, mobilizing an anxious and angry youth along Sunni–Shia sectarian divisions. The slogan “the blood of Sunnis is boiling”74 and “Ali, Ali, the blood of Shi’as boils over”75 would appear in demonstrations, funerals and on walls across the country. Mirroring Hezbollah’s neighbourhood surveillance structure, Hariri’s Future Movement mobilized its members within Beirut’s Sunni neighbourhoods, in particular Tariq al-Jdideh, where the party structure was developed into a chain of command linking the Future Movement leadership to street corner shabab through modern-day qabadayat76 and local party officials.

Today, within the neighbourhood’s limited perimeter, there are as many as 13 mosques, and the Maqassed (Islamic Society of Benevolent Intentions, the most important Sunni Muslim organisation in Beirut) have a hospital, a college, a social centre, the Tariq al-Jdideh Centre for Urban Development, a nursery, a supermarket and a cemetery (Map 3). While schools or cemeteries belonging to the association can be found elsewhere in the city or the country, the highest concentration of its work is in Tariq al-Jdideh, where it has its headquarters, and from where it has serviced the wider Sunni population since the 1960s. It is also where the Hariri Foundation established the headquarters for its network of medical clinics in 2000, next to

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73 The word za'im literally means leader, ringleader, chief, or guarantor, and in this case refers to the communal boss.
76 According to Samir Kassir, the qabadayat [plural for qabaday] were descended from the informal urban militias (ahdath’ or ayarun) that traditionally maintained order in the working-class neighbourhoods of Arab cities, see Kassir, Samir, Beirut (Berkeley, CA, 2010), 232.
the first school it opened in Beirut, the Hariri School III, near the Palestinian camp of Sabra. The Hariri Foundation has also funded the construction of an additional building to the Beirut Arab University, which is found on Tariq al-Jdideh's main street (Map 3).

Map 3
1. Hassan Khaled Square
2. Ali Ben Abi Taleb Mosque
3. Omar Ibn al-Khattab School – Maqassed
4. Maqassed institutions: college, nursing home, secondary school, health clinic
5. Maqassed Hospital
6. The Social Welfare Institutions
7. Municipal Stadium and al-Ansar grounds
8. Arab University
9. Al-Ansar Club
10. Islamic Hospital
11. Garage Darwish
12. Sports City
13. Hariri Schools II and III
14. Martyrs’ Cemetery
15. Imam Mohamed Shamseddine Mosque and Complex

Rafiq and Saad Hariri consolidated their monopoly over the Sunni milieu in other ways, not least by
becoming patrons to two Sunni football clubs, one of which is based in Tariq al-Jdideh. Through these clubs, they were able to affirm their confessional patriotism in a "ritualized war at the service of partisan passions." The stadia of these two teams also served as the sites where Hariri father and son launched electoral campaigns: Nejmeh Stadium in Ras Beirut for Saad's campaign in 2009 and the Municipal Stadium in Tariq al-Jdideh for Rafiq in 1996. As Sloterdijk notes, the success of modern stadia as architectural innovations are representative of the modern epoch, in that they can "regroup masses charged with identical excitation with the help of organized events in large, awe-inspiring buildings." Stadia are, effectively, part of a wider geography of partisan support intimately tied to sectarian relations, "giving rise to phenomena in Lebanon that one rarely sees in other sports arenas in the world: naming stadia after patrons, playing in the colours of the party that a team is politically affiliated with, and the display of large posters of one's patrons around the arena". In the slogans of the opposing teams in the period that followed Hariri's assassination, one can read the immediate relationship between territory, religion and confessional leadership, and an identification between the three dimensions echoed throughout these neighbourhoods, which animates their distinct milieus through mimetic strategies:

Slogans of al-Ahed supporters: "Allah, Nasrallah wa-l-Dahiyyah kulla" (God, Nasrallah and the entire Dahiyah)
Slogans of al-Ansar supporters: "Allah, al-Hariri wa-l-Tariq al-Jadida" (God, Hariri, Tariq el-Jdideh)

At the height of the tensions between 2005 and 2011, each entrance to the neighbourhood was monitored by groups of men, young shabab for the most part, but also older, more established modern-day qabadayat on the more tense border areas, like the route along Corniche al-Mazraa (Maps 1, 3) at the level of the Barbir bridge and across from Amal-dominated Barbour. Between 2005 and 2008, a profusion of posters announced the Future Movement's entry into Tariq el-Jdideh, and filled the interior of this Sunni neighbourhood with an iconography of loyalty to the slain za'im, Islamic references and the celebration of Sunni confessional patriotism. Residents participated in a bottom-up territorialization that was also integrated within a top-down structure organized by the Future Movement. From the unemployed youths paid to run errands and monitor street corners, to the neighbourhood coordinators and the zone managers, the Future

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77 Lamloum: (see FN 72).
78 Rafiq Hariri had, beforehand, renovated the stadium.
79 Sloterdijk: (see FN 67), 556.
81 The large majority of al-Ahed supporters are Shi’a and support Hezbollah. See Lamloum: (see FN 72). The club won the Lebanese championship for the first time in 2008.
82 Hariri father and son have been patrons of the al-Ansar football club, which has its stadium in Tariq el-Jdideh.
83 Lamloum: (see FN 72), para. 43. Translated by the author.
Movement established an apparatus of “eyes on the street” that mirrored Hezbollah’s territorial strategies. Indeed, like Hezbollah in Haret Hreik, the Future Movement has deployed a considerable institutional and security machine across the neighbourhood it calls its Zone 1;\(^{84}\) but, unlike Hezbollah, it has not been able to articulate a “society-building” model to diffuse its presence more “ideologically” and less territorially. Instead, it projects the Sunni milieu through the prism of victimhood, martyrdom and the restoration of Sunni pride against the take-over of Beirut by the Shi’a and Hezbollah. In this context, Tariq al-Jdideh’s horizon becomes the urban asabiyya, and its territory its dearest sanctuary from which to ward off enemy incursions.

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At times, walking through Tariq al-Jdideh, it would appear that the entire neighbourhood is invested in its defence, participating in its immunological strategy. From youth gangs to the naming of cellphone shops, the choice of colours for curtains covering balconies, to objects, slogans and images: all express, in different ways, the asabiyya’s immunology. As it to also announce the identity of the neighbourhood, of the 13 mosques nested within this perimeter, six are situated along the edges of Tariq al-Jdideh, making explicit a confessional and symbolic reconversion of territory while performing a wide array of social functions. Also, at the south-eastern corner of Tariq al-Jdideh is one of the city’s largest Sunni cemeteries, the Martyrs’ Cemetery, established in 1958 over a part of the Horsh, following that year’s clashes.\(^{85}\)

\(<53>\)

Buttressed against the highways that frame it, the edges of the neighbourhood carry more hostile signs, more austere pictures and the harder forms of security. In some places party loyalists set up permanent sheds, with seats, a roof, and walls of posters of the martyr leader and his son. Even the arguileh (water pipe) is part of the monitoring architecture of Tariq al-Jdideh, since it often features where party loyalists set up their monitoring spot.\(^{86}\) Their presence on street corners is extended by the inconspicuous participation of informants who can identify “outsiders” and evaluate the risk they pose. The “Panthers of Tariq al-Jdideh” at different times hung large posters proclaiming their loyalty to Saad Hariri across from the Amal stronghold of Barbir and at different entry points of the neighbourhood. More explicitly, however, the Lebanese army has a permanent presence at key intersections and hot spots, along the “new demarcation lines”, where Tariq al-Jdideh borders Shi’a-dominated neighbourhoods, and where clashes occur when tension between the two communities run high: Barbir in the North, the Cola intersection, Sports City along the new airport road, and at the level of Qasqas, along the old airport road.

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As one enters the neighbourhood and reaches the more residential areas, a more intimate aspect of the

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\(^{84}\) Kaabour, Marwan, “City as Poster,” undergraduate dissertation, AUB (2008). This portion of the research is highly indebted to the work of Marwan Kaabour on Tariq el-Jdideh and to my conversations with him.

\(^{85}\) Shayya: (see FN 17), 24.

\(^{86}\) Kaabour: (see FN 82).
asabiyya is staged. Next to the Municipal Stadium, at the heart of the neighbourhood, Hassan Khaled Square (host to the assassinated Mufti's shrine) is the site of communal gatherings where football championship victories are celebrated, funeral processions of eminent Sunni personalities pass through, or political rallies are held. In places, images also show a different and more compassionate side of the za'im, as well as the more tangible side of the neighbourhood's esprit de corps. The Maqassed hospital is a dominant feature, as are its schools and mosques – and the colour blue, the Future Movement's adopted colour. The dominant colour code is echoed by the branch of Bank Med on Hassan Khaled Square, which seems to make a partisan gesture by framing this Sunni landmark. Just south of the square is Garage Darwish, another landmark that has been the preferred site for the headquarters of those dominating the area: the Palestinians, followed by Syrian intelligence, followed by the Future Movement and Secure Plus.

Public space is animated as a set of relationships between places, beings and collectives that in moments of heightened tensions coalesce into a formidable esprit de corps that does not support internal dissension. In the case of Tariq al-Jdideh, assemblages of institutions, spaces, and symbols ingrained with a confessional identity are mobilized in times of sectarian tensions as coherent territories embodying the community and its horizon. When a resident of Tariq al-Jdideh says, "to me, Tariq al-Jdideh is the capital, it is Beirut itself", he is echoing what Seurat described in Tripoli 23 years earlier, when the neighbourhood, rather than the city or country, becomes the horizon. The "line" (khatt) that delineates the urban territory becomes "sanctuary" and is at once invested with emancipatory and immunological qualities. It becomes the site that expresses the asabiyya's freedom from other authorities or asabiyyat, while at the same time embodying the different spheres through which the asabiyya sees itself.

The Hariri dynasty has enjoyed deep-seated loyalty in this part of Beirut, stemming from its institutional work through its eponymous foundation, but even more so from the nurturing of partisan Sunni pride. Marked as Zone 1 of the Future Movement's map of Beirut, it is clearly a site where Sunni leadership seeks its embodiment, and where Sunni Beirut is forged. Whereas before the war "the street" was dominated by Ibrahim Quleilat, the Maqassed by Sa'eb Salam, and the mosques by Mufti Hassan Khaled and their independent committees, since Ta'if, the neighbourhood's plural leadership and internal agonism and

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87 Bank Med is owned by the Hariri family. Its logo and the colour coding of its premises and branding is also blue.
88 Secure Plus was the private security organisation allegedly set up by the Future Movement to protect its leaders and certain neighbourhoods, including Tariq al-Jdideh.
89 Kaabour: (see FN 82), 42.
90 Seurat: (see FN 55).
92 Charara: (see FN 71).
competition has been dominated by different structures leading back to the Hariri dynasty and the Future Movement. Therefore, when its za‘im was assassinated, Tariq al-Jdideh was hit directly at its core.

The contours of Tariq al-Jdideh, wide highways, became sharp lines against which the residents came to lean in order to create the imagined world of a pure body, bereft of exogenous elements that would destabilize or put into question the order of their interior. The autonomy of Tariq al-Jdideh has even tested its loyalty to Saad Hariri, most apparent following the 2008 takeover of parts of West Beirut by militias affiliated with March 8. In May 2008, neighbourhood qabadayat and Future Movement officials – sometimes the same people – wanted to take up arms against the takeover of West Beirut and their neighbourhood. Saad Hariri, however, ordered against it. While the March 8-affiliated militias did not enter the neighbourhood, their takeover of West Beirut did come as a blow to Tariq al-Jdideh’s inhabitants, and the anger felt towards the enemy was diverted by some toward Saad Hariri, who was seen as having betrayed Tariq al-Jdideh. Posters of the za‘im were burnt the same night, and Hariri’s image was tarnished among his most vocal supporters. More important than loyalty to the leader was the sanctuary’s perpetuation, and the asabiyya not only became detached from its immediate surroundings, it also exhibited its potential for autonomy from the za‘im and its diminishing loyalty to the Hariri dynasty.

The relationship between Saad Hariri and Tariq al-Jdideh has been crucial for both. Saad Hariri had embodied “the promise” that his father had symbolized for Sunnis and for residents of Tariq al-Jdideh in particular, while Tariq al-Jdideh had been the source of unflinching support for the young and inexperienced za‘im. The vertical relations between the Sunni leader and the neighbourhood are for the most part mediated by Future media, the Future Movement’s local structures, the educational and health facilities related to the Hariri Foundation and Tariq al-Jdideh’s football teams. When in 2011 Saad Hariri’s unity government was brought down by the concerted resignation of the cabinet’s March 8 ministers, supporters of Hariri in Tripoli and Beirut took to the streets in a “day of rage”, burning tyres and attacking posters of the Sunni Prime Minister of the subsequent government, billionaire Najib Miqati. While these overt expressions of anger and the pervasive use of posters and banners celebrating Saad Hariri throughout Tariq al-Jdideh may signal loyalty, it would be short-sighted to assume that this is non-negotiable. As was seen in 2008, and as has become apparent since the collapse of Hariri’s government in January 2011, the Sunni milieu has undergone an important redefinition, and the re-fragmentation of its leadership. Spending most of his time abroad, facing economic difficulties and Saudi Arabia’s uncertain support, Saad Hariri has not been able to command the level of loyalty he enjoyed after his father’s assassination. Although it seems that he has lost much

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93 In March 2011, the Jamaa al-Islamiyya announced its realignment with a pan-Arab, pro-resistance stance, siding with Hezbollah (Ghandour 2011). Despite his vocal support in the post-2005 period, most clearly expressed when he held a Friday sermon in December 2006 in the Grand Séraïl in support of the government, the former Mufti, Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani has also distanced himself from Hariri in 2011 (Qassem 2012). In the summer of 2013, Saida-based Salafist Sheikh Ahmed al-Asir, whose relations to the Future Movement are not entirely clear, has made inroads into
support among Sunnis in Tripoli and Saida, Tariq al-Jdideh still expresses a very high degree of loyalty. Whether this will remain the case, however, is an open question, but its importance for whichever Sunni leader emerges in Beirut is decisive.

**Conclusion: Hospitality and Creating a Horizon within a Finite World**

A recently published advocacy publication entitled "Positive Peace for Lebanon: Reconciliation, Reform and Resilience" gathers the opinions of young and established academics on Lebanon, covering aspects such as the provision of public education, public administration, the economy, the writing of national history, work on memory and reconciliation. A notable absence from this list of issues that formerly dominated the debate on reconciliation is public space. The reconstruction-reconciliation discourse so prevalent in the 1990s has been put into question. Terms such as coexistence and cohabitation appear to be less about the managing of shared space than about representing pluralism, further imaged through such metaphors as the "mosaic" to describe the separate existence of multiple value systems or confessional, political and familial groupings. It is as though Michel Chiha's ideas, which permeated the National Pact, are now resurgent, but with a less ambitious tone:

> Synthesis is not the same thing as uniformity: it is the exact opposite. Uniformity supposes the abolition of what is particular; whereas synthesis proceeds from the element to the whole; it does not abolish anything, it composes a horizon.  

The use of the term mosaic to describe Lebanon's pluralism is not new, but its connotations are less about living together than about living side-by-side, and possibly less about synthesis than about managing distances and proximities, enmity and conviviality. However, how does this then transpire into a discussion about public space? How are we to think of public space if it does not bring about a shared realm, and possibly a shared understanding of civility and citizenhood? In fact, how are we to think of public space if it actually defines competing urban realms, competing asabiyyat and competing citizenhoods? Are we to think, as Lieven De Cauter does, that without a unique sovereignty Beirut is in a Hobbesian state of nature, in which the war of all against all is never very far away?

As I have argued, a relational approach to public space seeks to make explicit the relations between the materiality of the city, its inhabitants and the narratives they formulate, in order to articulate "webs of signification", their "immunological spheres" and spaces of certainty in the city. As Isaac Joseph argues, the

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Tariq al-Jdideh promoting a sectarian agenda, calling for the disarmament of Hezbollah and supporting the Sunni insurgency in Syria.

legibility of space is what enables its use and praxis as public space. The use of public space appears to be dependent on a sense of "at-homeness", the result of a shared territorially articulated by the architectures, spaces, practices and world-views that situate different groups within the city. Public spaces are not outside urban territorialities, but a part of them, and in fact are the sites where territory is made explicit. The city's streets and squares are inscribed within a larger network of spaces, and instrumentalized in a competition over the stabilization of urban territory.

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While Beirut is highly volatile due to the multiple groups that seek to make a claim over it, these different groups are developing institutions, practices and rich webs of meaning that stabilize their respective environments, and these environments in no way resemble Hobbes's state of nature. These spheres are instead multiple and competing sovereignties that are in constant friction, and within which public space is invested from the top-down and the bottom-up to achieve and stabilize a space of certainty. In a "post-historical" time, or as Michael F. Davie describes it, in a postmodern society that favours space over time, the political question is one of composition or cohabitation. We are no longer following the arrow of modernization and the grand narratives of pan-Arabism or Libanism, but rather narratives of the composition of spheres or atmospheres within a finite world.

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For Ibn Khaldun, asabiyyat relate to each other in a power struggle until one supersedes the other and incorporates the weaker. The successful asabiyya, Michel Seurat notes, could be called a state. For Sloterdijk, plural-spherology, or the coexistence of different spheres, is captured by the metaphor of "foams", as interdependent cells separated by thin membranes.\footnote{Sloterdijk: (see FN 67), 42.} The foam has no centre and as ensembles they tend towards a fragile stability that can be undone by the bursting of any cell that composes it:

> With time, each bubble will come to be shaped by the surrounding ones and its interior will stabilize itself … In this aggregate, each bubble is a "world", a place of sense, an intimate room that resonates or oscillates with its own (interior) animation/life. Each of these worlds is simultaneous and connected to all others, yet at once separated by a transparent and flexible boundary. The result is a system of co-fragility and co-isolation: a compact proximity between fragile entities and the necessary closure of each cell unto itself.\footnote{Morin: (see FN 68), 67.}

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While in Sloterdijk's "Foam City", individual cells may take the form of apartments in "connected isolation", the individual cells he refers to are more a metaphorical representation of psychopolitical processes through a spatialized ontology than they are bounded territories per se. They do, though, present an interesting figure that complicates the metaphor of mosaic, which as an image lacks the dynamism and invocation of a
constantly creative process of world-building that foams convey. However, what is more important to address in this approach to a plurality of spheres is the fact that, in reality, no realm is entirely sealed off, even if it constantly attempts to be so. More specifically, the incursion of "outsiders" may in fact be very much part of the formation of these spheres, which can cloak the arrival of outsiders under a wide set of rules and customs of hospitality:

Any practical offer of hospitality requires that the host maintains a degree of sovereignty over the home; he/she must remain "master" of the house, country or nation, because to be hospitable, it is necessary to have the power to host. Furthermore, to be hospitable, the host must have some kind of control over those being hosted. If the host unconditionally relinquishes judgment and control, property and ownership, the guest can take over the house and hospitality is circumvented because the host is no longer in control, the host no longer hosts. \(^97\)

Hospitality not only implies a level of acknowledgment of the host's sovereignty over a space, but it is also the host's opportunity to let the guest know that she/he is a guest. This can be exercised at the level of the private home, the za'lim's manzal, a religious or congregational space, or that of the country or nation. We can also extend the idea to include the hospitality industry. What is of interest here, however, is a situation whereby the collective sense of belonging to a space latently defines the urban quarter, instilling in the passer-by or visitor the sense that she/he is entering a specific territoriality and atmosphere. Understanding the city's territorialization through the double bind of hospitality also brings with it the problem of hospitality: "namely how to enact autonomy and exchange, openness and closure, within the same social space." \(^98\)

Moreover, in Beirut's case, it is the very sovereignty over the city that is being contested, which always challenges the legitimacy of separate sovereignties, themselves the objects of intense power dynamics.

Nevertheless, at a more latent level, the deployment of territorialities and building of spheres in times of relative peace does not preclude a level of accessibility to different neighbourhoods. What is apparent is that a dominant order does indeed constrain the types of activities and symbols that make their way into the neighbourhood, but only to the extent that incursions threaten the prevailing order. Under certain stringent conditions, Beirut remains a fairly accessible metropolitan region, but it is those conditions that define the nature of public space, and its capacity to play a regulatory role in the urban realm.

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\(^98\) Shryock, Andrew, "Breaking Hospitality Apart: Bad Hosts, Bad Guests, and the Problem of Sovereignty", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. 1 (2012), S20–33, 520.
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