Of citizens and ordinary men: Political subjectivity and contestations of sectarianism in reconstruction-era Beirut

Boekelo, M.

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Chapter 1

Territorialization and the sectarian city

This chapter accomplishes two goals. It provides an introduction to Beirut, where the action of this thesis takes place, and it develops an initial review of how others have written about this place. It concludes that review by asking in how far these works help us understand what people in Beirut (think they) are up to, as members of their (imagined) political community.

Firstly, it is necessary to qualify the scope of this research. While ‘Beirut’ can in many ways stand in for ‘Lebanon’, in other, equally significant ways, it cannot. In a few broad strokes, Beirut stands out in Lebanon for the sheer diversity of the city: a particular mix of segregation and intermingling of confessional, socio-economic, ethnic and national differences. It does so because of the incredible concentration of capital: it is the premier site for investment of all sorts in Lebanon, even as investment is unequally distributed across the city itself. Another particularity can be tied to the close imbrication of local (district) and national politics, which has historically meant that constituencies are quite closely imbricated with national political developments. Given these specificities, the tale I tell in this thesis is a Beiruti one. That doesn’t mean that “Lebanon”, as an imagined horizon doesn’t often come up in people’s interactions. However, how people imagine Lebanon to be is certainly tied to their place in this city. The reader therefore requires some historical background as to how this city has been formed. This chapter aspires to provide such a background, by presenting a thematically focused discussion of roughly half a century of Beiruti history. It ventures out into national and geopolitical developments whenever necessary to understand that history.

Secondly and equally importantly, the chapter doubles as a review of the literature on Beirut. This review is far from exhaustive, and more scholarly works will make their appearance as the materials of the suc-
cessive chapters require it. In this chapter, though, I suss out the structuring themes of a loosely urban sociological literature, one that surveys the effects of the civil war on city life, on the one hand, and how the city gets built and is governed, on the other. The dominant trope and concern of works in these two domains is that of ‘territorialization’ and fit largely in those ‘paradigms’ in urban studies that have focused on ‘divided’, ‘wounded’ or ‘contested’ cities (Low 1999; Susser & Schneider 2003; cf. Low 1996). Roughly, the idea is – sometimes as an explicit argument (Khalaf 1993, Beyhum 1992), sometimes as a starting point (Genberg 2003, Bou Akar 2012) – that the Lebanese wars between 1975 and 1990 saw increasing, deepening involvement of political actors (and their military counterparts) in urban space, which served to parcel up the city, both on the ground and in people’s imagination. If so, that would be immediately relevant for our questions: if military and political actors intervened in spaces of everyday life, and if people understood themselves primarily as taking part in spatially relatively closed communities, then obviously that would shape how people perceive and engage with the political field. Thus I close this chapter by asking more pointedly how far territoriality can take us in understanding people’s social imaginaries and the practices that instantiate these imaginaries.

Preamble: a note on words The 50-odd years of Beirut’s most recent history that I present here is really an overview of factors leading up to what is usually called the ‘civil war’, of the war itself, and of its aftermath. I’m somewhat loathe to foreground the war in this way, as it already tends to become an explain-all factor in Lebanese history and society (a shortcut both scholars of Lebanon and Lebanese themselves are at times tempted by). At the same time, it would be equally unwise to understate its impact and it does provide a relatively accessible framework with which to wade through the intricacies of recent Lebanese history. I will therefore proceed with this framework, the objections notwithstanding. To offset these risks somewhat, allow me to preface it with the following caveats.

The focus on the ‘civil war’ poses two problems: one terminological, the other more properly historiographic. The terminological problem is threefold. Firstly, the inclusion of the term ‘civil’ implies that it was a war ‘internal’ to the nation. Nothing could be further from the truth, as in many ways it was a proxy war by regional and global powers. (And

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4 Davie summarized the confusion in 1983 thus: Il n’y a aucune définition unanimement acceptée de la guerre au Liban et surtout à Beyrouth. A ceux qui la définissent comme « guerre-civile » entre Libanais,
in fact, most “civil wars” aren’t ‘internal’ anyway, see Cramer 2006: 61ff.) At the very least, the influx of materials and capital allowed it to last as long and to reach the scale it did. This qualification of course does not imply that one should disregard the fact that various Lebanese factions were pitted against each other, as for example Ghassan Tuëni’s famous qualification of “the war of others on our territory” seems to encourage (as attractive it might be for those living on said territory)⁵. Secondly, the term ‘civil’ most likely comes with the supposition that the war was carried out by civilians – one step along the descent into a Hobbesian state of nature. This assumption is also quickly invalidated by empirical reality – in fact, a tiny proportion of the Lebanese population was in some structural way active participant in the conflict (cf. Nasr 1990: 4). Thirdly, then, for some the term ‘war’ may imply one ceaseless battle, stretching out over the 15 years of its duration. In point of fact, the period is a container for a series of armed conflicts (or ‘wars’), carried out at different times, in different places and by different actors with stints of relative peace in between.

The historiographic problem of placing the war front and centre in an overview of Lebanese history is that it becomes easy to assume that it was somehow a uniquely defining moment, a break from the preceding period and an indubitable and indelible stamp on the post-bellum. Such a view belies a number of continuities. The analytical problem runs in two directions. First, as many (intellectual) Lebanese will contend, it belies the continuities from the war period into the post-war period. One will often be able to hear the claim that ‘the war has never ended’. That claim, while more polemical than analytical, is based on a few observations: issues at stake during the war have not been settled; those same issues have been the basis of constant tension and they seem to have sparked recurring violent conflicts over the past 15 years; and that many of the protagonists of the war are still protagonists of today’s political scene (there’s a pattern here). Second, there are continuities running in the opposite direction, from before the war, extending throughout and beyond it. Contemporary Lebanon was in fact not made there and then – militias built on paradigms of rule developed in the decades previously, the post-war compro-

⁵ And in fact, Leenders (2004a) argues that we should not lose sight of the fact that the Lebanese state remained a main (political and moral) stake in the conflict.
mise changed nothing substantially in the political system, and people have continued living ordinary lives, by and large with depoliticized notions of who the other is, revved up about his dangers only in times of heightened stakes. These caveats should be kept in mind, as I move on to explain the ‘build-up’ to the war, its impact on Beirut life, and its legacies in the post-war period.

**Antecedents to war** This section is built up around three segments. Each segment presents a different empirical emphasis: the first discusses demographic changes in Beirut, the second shifts in Lebanese the political landscape, and the third broader, geopolitical developments. All these three tie into each other. The following section then presents a discussion of the actual war period and more specifically of attempts by the various armed factions to claim and rule its spaces. Together these two sections serve as a short empirical introduction that will help the reader understand and place the literature that I then go on to discuss and which has tried to develop a narrative of what these varies historical developments have culminated in during the war.

**Rural-urban migration** We start off with demographic changes. This is mostly a story of urbanization and the dislocations it tends to bring in its wake. One the one hand, you have the capitalization and mechanization of agriculture. These developments produced a grand-scale rural exodus, primarily of Maronite and Shia peasants who moved to the cities, especially Beirut, in search of other employ. The cities were only partially able to absorb this new influx of labour force. The Maronites, slightly higher educated, generally found semi-skilled jobs, while the majority of Shia were inserted into the unskilled sector. Here, they entered into competition with Syrian migrant workers as well as many Palestinians from the camps, who were legally barred from a number of more highly skilled professions.

At least two consequences of this increased competition over scarce (urban) jobs are directly relevant here. One is the development of an anti-foreigner discourse, in which Syrian migrant workers as well as the

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6 Cheat sheet for those unfamiliar with Lebanese denominations: Maronites constitute largest Christian confessional community in Lebanon. The Maronite church is largely Catholic in rite and doctrine, under independent leadership but tied to Rome. The community’s leadership was the most fervent advocate of the Lebanese nation in the lead-up to independence, and was actually instrumental in bringing the very country into being during the French Mandate.
Palestinians were identified as the exemplars of this category of undesirables (Traboulsi 2007: 147f.). This discourse would reverb with discourses about national sovereignty, especially as regards the Palestinian resistance (see below). The second pertains to the social and political position of the rural migrants, who came to occupy a marginal position in the system of political representation, which was intimately tied to the provision of social services. (Hanf 1993; Johnson 1986, 2001) Politicians accorded help – financial aid, jobs, and mediation with state authorities – on the basis of loyalty in the ballot box. A particularity of the Lebanese electoral system is that place of residence and the location of one’s voting booth are not automatically linked, and synchronizing these after a move can in fact be quite difficult (I discuss this particularity in more detail in Chapter 3). The migrants – living in Beirut but still registered in their ancestral villages – thus became relatively marginal to the political representatives in their voting districts (Hillenkamp 2005: 220; Hanf 1993: 85). With their lives now rooted elsewhere, they were no longer in as great a need of services back home, provided by the rural notable families, nor were the these families capable of providing services in the city (where they were less influential), and some may not have relied on services previously anyway, given that, especially among the Shia, the relations to the political families who ‘represented’ them were near feudal (at least, “feudalism” was an accusation levelled at the political bosses from the old families by both the Lebanese left and right).

In sum, economic and demographic changes produced a number of strains on the system that organized the polity. Urban desolation led to challenges and frustrations that the patron-client relations only had insufficient answers to. This is where new social movements and political parties stepped in. The social insecurity that seemed unmanageable resulted in a tense environment that (non-establishment) political actors capitalized on to mobilize for, or legitimate, more radical interventions.

From ‘notable politics’ to the rise of new social movements and parties Urbanization and capitalization of the economy fuelled political developments already under way. The political system in Lebanon had been dominated by various notable families, tied to a particular district, and servicing in tit-for-tat fashion, though to regionally varying degrees, the population of that district. Other factions or actors, such as intellectuals or lesser notable families, participated in politics, local or national, through their connections to the more powerful families. The anti-colonial struggle had yielded several movements, most of them pan-Arab in identity or ideology, but none had gained a significant foothold in either
society or the political system. This started changing in the 1960s. Pan-
Arabism with Nasser & Co. had provided new élan and funding for
social movements and parties tied to their cause. The institutionalization
of the resistance against Israel also provided some infrastructural back-
bone for various movements, particularly on the (communist and social-
ist) ‘Left’. On the right as well though, particularly the Christian right,
tectonic shifts were becoming visible. The prime example of such a shift
was the growth of the ‘Phalangist’ party. It was founded as a national-
ist, socialist in the sense of anti-communist, and aspirationally fascist
movement in the 1930s, in the midst of ideological battles for and over
Lebanese independence. It only became a substantial political force as
it gained in popular affiliation in the 1960s and 70s with various actions
and protests through its militia wing, as well as shifting alliances with
other movements or political notables. These movements tapped into the
‘unsettlement’ of social, economic and political practices, and cumula-
tively altered the political calculus in the country (cf. e.g. Hanf 1993: 85).
There are three main factors that transformed the ‘calculus’. Firstly, the
institutionalization of militias (also as employer) and the use of organ-
ized violence as a structural (rather than occasional) modality of politi-
cal organization. Secondly, the incorporation of the lost urban tribes into
social movements and ‘ideological’ parties, such as the Nasserites (espe-
cially Sunnis), Communists (especially Shia) or the Phalangists (espe-
cially Maronites). The result was not necessarily the marginalization of
political notables, though that could certainly be the case (especially the
Shia notables fared ill); savvier notables knew how to strike strategic alli-
ances, but as Johnson suggests (1986: 210; cf. Traboulsi 2007: 208f.), they
were mostly just trying to regain a grip on the situation. The social move-
ments and political parties would be the main protagonists of the war. It
would be impossible to understand this particular development without
the increasing importance of geopolitical considerations and alliances
though, which could make and break ideas and forces. I discuss these in
the final segment of this section.

Impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict One cannot understand the ‘civil
war’ without the impact of the foundation of the state of Israel. It was
the common denominator in the foreign policies of all countries in the

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7 The admittedly curious phrase is meant to identify parties to which some kind of ideolog-
ical program is more central, and in which the formation of a political cadre is more important.
These characteristics differentiates them from the parties that serve as more as a convenient
platform for political notables. The line is a blurry one, though.
region, and even if some by 1974 had signed peace agreements, others had not. Most notably, Syria had not. That entailed serious consequences for neighbouring Lebanon. But let’s take a few steps back. Particularly in the South of Lebanon, Palestinian militias had built up their forces and scaled up their resistance, first after the 1967 Six-Day War and then especially after the PLO’s expulsion from Jordan – their former base of operations – in 1970. This caused numerous tensions – with the Lebanese population of the south who bore the brunt of Israeli retaliations and with the right wing of the Christian political forces who saw the rise in power of the Palestinian militias with wary eyes. Many Christians feared a de-facto takeover of Lebanon by the Palestinian movement (a fear, ultimately, of losing autonomy and protection for the Christian communities). A pacification of the issues seemingly had been reached with the so-called Cairo Agreement of 1969, which gave the Palestinian movement sovereignty within the established Palestinian ‘camps’, but proscribed their actions outside of that. (These ‘camps’ were largely legal fictions. Though some were indeed somewhat delimited spaces, with marked borders and checkpoints, most had already fused more or less seamlessly with the surrounding [urban] environment.) However, the agreement soon proved impossible to enforce. The Phalange party then decided to take the ‘defence’ of the state into its own hands. They found political and material backing in the rising influence of Saudi-Arabia’s more conservative approach to the Palestinian Question – after the Nasserite defeat in 1967. This “Christian-Palestinian” conflict was the start of the war. Soon the various other parties took position in this conflict. The ‘left’ – and largely Muslim – movements and parties took the side of the Palestinians – central as pan-Arabism was to the Arab Left – and united into the ‘National Movement’. The religious overcoding of this political conflict – the opposition of forces dominated by ‘Muslims’ against ‘Christian’ parties – allowed older tension and distrust to come to the surface. Quite quickly the conflict turned sectarian in nature, most markedly through the “ID-killings”, for which people were kidnapped and murdered on the basis of the confessional belonging marked on their identity cards, and through massacres and expulsions in vulnerable minority sectors. The war, as it developed throughout its various phases, did so, therefore, along three main points of contention: the resistance against Israel and

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8 Palestinians first fled to Lebanon with the 1948 foundation of the state of Israel. While they were active in the resistance, full militarization did not occur until the 1960s, especially after 1967 and 1970. The PLO was certainly the dominant faction, but many Arab nations had their own (sizeable) pro-Palestinian militias operating in Lebanon.
the ‘Palestinian question’; the assertion of the political parties against the primacy of the old notable political elite; and questions of confessional equality and protection.

**Wartime in Beirut: territorial reshufflings** The various stakes as well as the relatively large diversity of actors created a somewhat chaotic dynamic that is difficult to capture in a modest number of lines. Even if the details in the following overview defy the reader’s focus, what should at least become clear is that the city becomes the stake itself for political and military competition. Rounds of fighting occur on the basis of attempts to secure and control sectors of the city, though always with the aim of accomplishing other (political) goals.

The clash between the Phalangists (and partners) and the Palestinians (and their leftist allies) made for the first phase of the war, which lasted for about two years. It came to an end through Syrian intervention, which put a halt to Christian advancements. Syria wanted to preserve the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, as it still thought they might serve well as proxy warriors in Syria’s own relations with Israel. This phase of the war saw the division of the city into a largely ‘Muslim’ western and a largely ‘Christian’ eastern sector, where the conservative Christian militias managed to consolidate themselves into a single front and the Palestinian-Left forces divided the front line into respective domains. This latter division would bode ill for ‘West’-Beirut. The establishment of this bifurcating military geography meanwhile coincided with demographic reshufflings: Christians ‘moving’ to the east, and Muslims (especially many of the Shia rural migrants) moving to the west.

A somewhat quiet phase followed that lasted until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Plans for reconstruction were being drawn, but in hindsight still the period is characterized by the entrenchment of the factional interests and by increased international interventions, whether directly by the presence of their forces (beyond Syria and Israel, the U.S., France, the U.N. and others) or indirectly through the material and financial support of militias (such as Iraq, Libya, Saudi-Arabia and the U.S.S.R.). As for the Lebanese parties, the National Movement began falling apart, with things turning sour particularly between the Palestinians and the Shia, especially in the south, where Palestinian activities provoked Israeli retaliations that made life unbearable. Clashes in the south, meanwhile, also produced substantial migration of Shia to Beirut, most of whom settled to the south of (West) Beirut, where rural migrants had already preceded them, thus forming the ‘southern suburbs’ (that we will hear more of further along). The break-up of the Palestinian-Shia alliance as well as the
cooperation between various leftist parties would set up the repeated clashes for control over various sectors of west Beirut, in the aftermath of 1982 Israeli invasion.

In 1982, Israel rolled out a full-scale operation in order to crush the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon for good. It was successful, marching all the way up to Beirut, where a safe departure for the Palestinian leadership was then negotiated. With the Palestinian forces now diminished and decapitated, when the Israelis retreated to the zone in southern Lebanon that they already controlled, they left a vacuum (i.e., a collection of weak military groups) in West-Beirut that Syria subsequently filled. The invasion and subsequent Syrian take-over also entailed the virtual destruction of the Leftist forces. Among other things, their demise signified the definitive rise of confessional alternatives to notable politics in the Shia community, in the form of the militias Amal and Hizbullah.

These rearrangements heralded the last phase of the war. This phase is characterized by repeated rounds of fighting, in various constellations, between the former allies and made tight spatial control and invasive security apparatuses a fact of life in West-Beirut. One of the most powerful militias to emerge from this phase is Amal, the first Shia militia, who now sought the protection and support of Syria. The culmination of their rise is the ‘take-over’ of West Beirut, which they accomplished with the help of the main Druze militia, the PSP, the other strong force on the ‘Muslim side’ to emerge out of 1982. Together they also defeated and dissipated the only Sunni fighting force, the Murabitun. (Sunnis were subsequently left in a political near-vacuum, only to be filled after the war.) Amal’s dominance would wind up wreaking havoc on greater West Beirut. Its troops would harass remaining Christian communities out of West-Beirut. In 1984 they laid a series of (bloody) sieges on the Palestinian camps in order to prevent Palestinian militias from returning and regrouping (the sieges lasted until the First Intifada of 1989, at which point it became symbolically untenable to continue this already exhausting conflict). Later they would fight their former Druze allies for control over West Beirut, with block-to-block fighting. In 1988 it engaged in yet new rounds of war with their new rival, Hizbullah, for control of the Shia areas. Hizbullah was basically a split-off from Amal, around a number of more radical members who did not believe in negotiating for Shia interests with the Lebanese state and government. In the fighting between these two, Amal lost control over many of the Shia centres in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Once these parties

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9 East Beirut was left unscathed, as the Israeli forces had come at the invitation of Christian leadership.
had exhausted themselves, Syria moved in once more in 1989, occupied West-Beirut, and established order. There are two developments that stand out in this last phase. Firstly, it saw relatively long monopolies of the PSP and Amal over assigned territories in West-Beirut, even if both were broken by the end of the war. Secondly, it brought a significant change of military rule in the southern suburbs, with Hizbullah’s successful uprising against Amal. One area in Beirut was never successfully claimed in its entirety by any party – the Downtown area. The status quo of each of these three areas by the end of the war set up differential trajectories for post-war reconstruction and political consolidation. More of that after the next section.

The war ended largely on Syrian terms. It co-supervised negotiation talks in the Saudi resort Ta’if, in 1989. After those talks, it managed to beat down a Christian insurrection against its army and its peace plan by general Michel Aoun in 1990. The Ta’if agreements were implemented and have since formed the basis for a largely demilitarized political order in Lebanon, under official Syrian ‘tutelage’ until 2005.

Effects of war on the physical, social and political landscape of Beirut

In the following section I discuss how these historical developments have been studied and framed. Before doing so, however, it may be helpful to synthesize some of the general trends that the exchanges described above have culminated in.

One major urban outcome of the war was the reversal of the place and function of Beirut’s city centre. The city centre covered the area of the old, mediaeval, *intra-muros* Beirut. As economic and population growth pushed people out beyond of the mural confines, in the late 19th century, the old city increasingly took on the character of a commercial centre. While some of the financial services sector that took flight in the 1950s and 1960s found a home in the more modern Hamra area, the centre hosted most of the major banks, the sūq marketplaces, and major public transport hubs, in addition to housing the national government. In many ways, therefore, the old city was indeed the city’s centre. The war changed that. Some of the most intense fighting of the early period took place in the centre. While the victory officially went to the allied leftist forces of the National Movement, a good part of the centre was never claimed and settled, turning instead into a dangerous no-man’s land, under sniper surveillance and subject to at times heavy shelling. One effect was the decentralization of the city, with the disappearance of a central transport relay point and the dispersal of economic and commercial functions across the city (see Davie 1993; for post-war developments of the pluricentral city,
see Davie 2007). That no one had effectively incorporated the area into a sphere of influence, aside from some settlement of Shia refugees on its western edges, resulted in a second effect. It made the area the likely symbolic centre of attention after the war (together with the fact it was one of the most heavily damaged areas in the city), when people started thinking about and negotiating over reconstruction.

In the previous section, I already indicated the religious homogenization that occurred during the war. The most saliently visible and paradigmatic manifestation of that homogenization was the “Green Line” (usually called “the demarcation line” in Arabic) – a thoroughfare separating what became West and East Beirut respectively. It started out as merely a front line between the Christian forces and the National Movement, a front that was historically conditioned (though certainly not determined) by confessional patterns of settlement (the rightist Christian forces set up their front on the outer edges of where they could still rely on a strong territorial base). Soon, however, it became an organizing principle of political and military action. While previously confessional residential patterning was clearly visible, it was far from uniform. Older upper-class confessional diversity existed in neighbourhoods like Zoqaq al-Blat (which will return in Chapter 5 and 6) and Hamra, and more working class diversity around the old centre, and along what would turn out to be the Green Line. More recent sectors of confessional diversity were formed by the rural migrants coming to the city in the 1960s and early ‘70s. (Cf. Hanf 1993: 200f.; for a longer overview of settlement in modern Beirut, see Davie 1991.) The symbolic reality of the Green Line however imposed itself as several moments of extermination, expulsion and flight caused people to regroup on either side of the boundary. Thus, the Syriac Catholic population of Khandaq al-Ghamiq fled due east quite quickly after the beginning of the Two Year War10, making room for Shia refugees from the eastern suburbs. The Green Line is paradigmatic because it came to inform how many Lebanese think about how (other) Lebanese have changed: their greater adherence to communal life and the in- or prohibition of crossing communal ‘borders’.

The Green Line, however, was not the only border erected in Beirut. As described in the previous section, in West-Beirut, armed factions fought each other for control over the sector. The united ‘Lebanese Forces’ on the

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10 Incidents like the following will have urgently precipitated their flight: “One of the earliest atrocities occurred at the end of May 1975 when a Shi’a Muslim gang called the Knights of Ali (fifyan ‘ali) set up a roadblock outside the Bashoura cemetery [near Khandaq al-Ghamiq] and abducted and killed around fifty Christians. The bodies were left among the graves, ‘their penises neatly severed and stuffed in their mouths’” (Johnson, citing Randal, 2001: 10f.).
eastern side of the dividing line had set the tone here. With the consolidation of their dominance, they were able to “[take] over the fifth basin of Beirut port, [organize] a tax system on individuals and enterprises and [administer] the state’s public services”, which resulted in the duplication of the state’s most important administrative sectors in East Beirut (Traboulsi 2007: 210). Traboulsi argues that the Lebanese Forces thus served as a model for what Western militias sought to achieve. There are a number of reasons for this, the one not always clearly distinguishable from the other. One reason is economic in nature: ‘taxes’ and monopolization of economic resources (such as ports) helped sustain the war effort (and for certain high-placed individuals to make a decent profit out of it). Another is more ideological: the services that they are able to perform serve as a symbolic replacement for a state that is depicted as having crumbled or fallen into ‘enemy hands’ (in so far as the political process continued, it was indeed dominated by the Christian parties).

Yet these services were of still greater import. They served two political objectives. One is to establish ties to the constituency and maintain popular support. The second is to use these ties as bargaining power at the recurring rounds at the “table of national dialogue”. Perhaps the most crucial service for both objectives is housing. The militias were instrumental in securing housing for refugee populations (cf. Yahya 2000: 136f.), whether by organizing squats of abandoned buildings, taking over entire areas (such as the beach resorts in Jnah, to the south of Beirut), or even (at times) through the co-ordination the construction of new buildings (most of urban growth during the war was through private initiative though [for a case-study see Fawaz 2008]). Protecting these residential gains (and concomitantly, presence on the ground) was vital for the militias, and clashes over the presence of refugees in various parts of the city were recurrent. To illustrate just how vital, the momentous and still traumatic break-up of the Lebanese army into a Christian and Muslim (Shia) part in 1984, occurred when a general sympathetic to the conservative Christian leadership decided to organize a clean-up operation of Shia refugee squatters in the southern suburbs. Amal, which had until then always held up the primacy of the state and the sanctity of its army, in order to prevent the action, decided to call on Shia soldiers to desist from armed action against their “brothers”. The army subsequently split.

In many ways then, the militias became representatives of constituencies, turning more into political parties. That initiates a third dimension of the territorial dynamics of militia rule in Beirut. While the first was arguably more strategic in nature – capturing and controlling certain sites as part of a larger political stand-off (whether as bargaining chip or as measure
to exert pressure), the second was already more concerned with creating territories in a more political sense – by creating a degree of homogeneity within them. This third representative function then follows suit, in which rule and representation occur on the basis of spatial contiguity and delimitation. This last dimension propelled the militias into the everyday life and governance of the neighbourhoods they controlled. Militia members, for example, began acting as ‘elders’ in the neighbourhood – acting in their capacity of representatives of more and less influential forces in the country (depending on the geopolitical position of the mother-militia) and as individuals with the means to violence. That is, they entered into negotiations with religious institutions, they mediated instances of conflict and regulated retribution and intervened in (private) social relations. In doing so, they also impacted other relations of mediation, as former political notables had to retreat and secondary social powers were able to ascend, such as locals who are able to play role of intermediaries between militias and neighbourhood residents, when militia members overstepped their mark (Beyhum 1991: e.g. 588ff.). In short, they began establishing themselves as obligatory passage-points, or political blocs.

Beiruti sociology: ‘territorialization’ and the paradigmatic divided city How have scholars of Lebanon interpreted these developments? One can make a rough distinction between works published prior to 1990 and those in the decade or so immediately following. The distinguishing line is the announcement of the reconstruction projects for Beirut. I go into these projects in more detail below; for now it suffices to say that ‘reconstruction’ quite quickly became about reunification – a project to make a nation split apart come together again. That strongly informed the lens with which many (Lebanese) scholars reviewed the legacy that the war had bequeathed on Beirut. Previous to the preoccupation with reconstruction, scholars showed the dynamics of the militia governance in the different neighbourhoods (Beyhum 1991; Nasr 1990), the changed geography of urban functions (Davie 1993), changing intra-confessional struggles over power and religious identity under these new ‘ecological’ conditions (Chbarou & Charara 1985) or the relations between confessional belonging, demographics and economic position (e.g. by Nasr and collaborators, cited in Hanf 1993: 105). While there are obvious family resemblances among the studies undertaken and the themes covered, most of these reports are still quite tentative and exploratory. It is only in relation to a new issue – reconstruction – that a cohering narrative starts to emerge. That narrative is based on the notion of territoriality and a related preoccupation with identity. That notion of territoriality coalesces around
the debates that take place after the official plans are announced for the reconstruction of the old city centre, quite quickly dubbed “Downtown” (a term that indicates the direction the planners were thinking of). In reaction to those plans, and the fear they would lead to a “ghetto of prosperity”, quite soon the consensus developed that ‘Downtown Beirut’ should – “once again” – be the ‘centre’ of town, i.e., that it should bring together – unite – people from all the neighbourhoods and from all “walks of life”. This consensus dialogically emerged out of re-readings of what the war had done to the city and to its denizens (and Lebanese citizens, by extrapolation11).

The shift may be illustrated by a text written by Beyhum in 1992, in which he provides an overview of the three official reconstruction proposals for the city centre since 1977. Previously, Beyhum had already developed the notion of the ‘territorial system’ in his doctoral thesis published a years earlier (1991: 507ff.). At the same time tough, the thesis explores a wide, even unwieldy, range of effects of the war on the city12, especially in micro-political situations. These researches subsequently converge in the following overview, in the 1992 text, in which he responds to the first reconstruction plans:

The sociological pattern integrating Beirut’s public spaces at the [old] center was seriously undermined by the rise of single-community ghettos in the suburbs. The city was divided into several unconnected islands, and neutral spaces were either annexed to these islands or destroyed. Local public bodies, too, were either attached to these territories, dismantled and deprived of their resources, or divided, thus limiting their efficiency. The population was increasingly marginalized by the war, isolated in its domestic spaces, and was an economic crisis lasting longer than the era of the militias; although the latter disappeared, the economic and social legacy they left behind remained. (Beyhum 1992)

This overview also serves to summarize the consensus in the intellectual commentaries of the time. It comprises two processes generally identi-

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11 As mentioned, Beirut is often taken as pars pro toto for Lebanon, since a third to half of Lebanon lives there (Davie 1993; Hanf 1993: 199) and the city hosts all of the confessions, the basic elements in any national imagination.

12 Though the ‘reduction of public life’, as he calls it, was already a recurrent theme in that thesis. Such reduction he argued, was both the result of security measures (‘territoriality’ in Sarkis’ language below) as of unpredictable occurrence of violence that had people retreating into more knowable spaces.
fied: a ‘political’ process, in which (military, sectarian) forces control urban spaces and constrain movement within and between them, and a subsequent ‘cognitive’ process, in which people start to adapt mentally and socially to these newly constituted spaces, ‘withdrawing’ into their communities.

Beyhum is the editor of an important edited volume (published originally in Arabic, translated into French) about the 1991 reconstruction proposal called *The Lost Opportunity*. That book was important in diffusing this dual narrative of the war. A different, trend-setting volume (in English this time) under Khalaf and Khoury’s editorship (1993) may serve to further illustrate that perspective. One of the contributors, Sarkis, argues that political logics in Lebanon have changed during the war: political actors started thinking politics in spatial terms, creating “territories” by marking them and defending their boundaries. (His ensuing suggestion for reconstruction is that instead of retreating onto neutral ground – the old centre – the state should break each of these territories by marking its own presence on each of them, thus creating ‘one national territory’). Here, Sarkis develops the theme of this political kind sequestration. In it, the notion of territoriality (“the practice through which the social and the physical [the built environment] interact in a power relationship” [1993: 104, quoting Sack]) takes centre stage.

The graver consequence of that first (‘political’) process is that it becomes lodged in people’s functional daily geographies and, subsequently, in their minds (the second, cognitive process). People develop a new spatial consciousness and “ideology” as Davie (1993) puts it, even if Davie himself remains cautious in extrapolating from a navigational consciousness to the existence of a full-blown folk sociology of urban difference. Khalaf & Khoury (1993b) are less cautious. They identify two challenges for urban planners: the consolidation of “separate, exclusive, self-contained entities” and a society in which the most elementary ties which normally cement [it] together – ties of trust, loyalty, confidence, compassion, decency – have been, in many respects, grievously eroded. […] More compelling and problematic [than reconstructing a state] is the need to restructure basic loyalties (1993: xvf.).

Yahya, later in the volume, explicates how the first challenge has led to the second. The “beleaguered inhabitants” of Beirut, she explains, have “developed strategies that enabled their survival in those times of crisis”, but which may “disable their re-entry into a civil and orderly society. Their
perception of the environment was radically altered as the city turned into an “arena of conflict” ceasing to be everyone’s domain” (1993: 129).

The notion of territoriality (in whichever guise) has remained a structuring principle, or at least an underlying assumption, in much of the literature in the 1990s and 2000s. In order to understand that literature though, we need to first return to our historiography and see how Beirut has fared in the post-bellum. The following section picks up the thread with the official reconstruction project.

**Beirut in the Era of Reconstruction** During previous lulls in the fighting, two reconstruction projects had already been studied and proposed. Beyhum (1992) spells out the significant features of these plans. They include most notably the extension of geographical inclusiveness of the project, in how far social diversity should be a factor of consideration, the choice between redevelopment and reconstruction, and whether the locus of agency should be private or public. The project proposals that were developed during the war varied in all these respects: whether they studied only the city centre or the entire metropolitan region, as it sprawled during the war; whether they considered the connection between the centre and the surrounding city; how they balanced the regulatory or executive role of the state, on the one hand, and private initiatives, on the other; and in how far the city should be the facilitator and expression of the integration of people from diverse backgrounds (whether that be social class or confession).

These considerations were still up for discussion in 1990. In rough outline, the plan that was ultimately ratified, reflected the following choices. In terms of the geographical inclusiveness, three different projects for three different areas were proposed. One projected for a new area called Downtown, comprising much of the old city centre and a few adjacent areas, particularly to the west; a second one to develop the coastline along the north-eastern suburbs, clearing a regional dumpsite that had developed over the war years; and a last one along the coastline of the south-western suburbs, building more decent social housing financed by the liberation of the coast for commercial development. In addition to these main projects, a few infrastructural projects were slated, such as a highway connecting Downtown to the airport and a ring road around Downtown.

The dimensions of (social) diversity, redevelopment or reconstruction are interrelated in the case of the Downtown reconstruction. Originally, in

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13 The first came after the Two Year War (1977) and the second was developed between 1983 and ‘86.
1991, the project proposal called for the creation of a business and commercial style Downtown. The critiques from intellectual quarters that this unleashed led to a reconsideration. Instead of razing all the remaining built fabric (i.e., redevelopment), a section of the old city – mostly the area the French had built plus a few religious buildings – was to be preserved, whereas the larger surrounding area would be redeveloped, while maintaining some of the older street patterns. Rhetorically, ‘Downtown’ was to be the “heart” of Beirut, open to people from all aforementioned “walks of life”, and it would host a “garden of forgiveness” as a gesture to help the nation “heal the wounds of the war”. The general consensus in Beirut appears to be though that beyond rhetorics, the project did not do much to address and facilitate any substantial form of diversity, as it is seen as an elite space, catering only to those with substantial purchasing power (the “garden of forgiveness” is yet to materialize).

The last aspect is a bundle of considerations we may call political-economic. It comprises at least three questions – which actor gets to execute the project; who are defined as stakeholders; as well as the status of property rights and tenancy deeds. How these questions were settled requires a little context. It is impossible to understand the actual reconstruction process without considering the role of Rafiq Hariri. While his actions and strategies are certainly not beyond the Lebanese pale, his creativity and tenacity in navigating planning culture and shaping and utilizing networks between private and public actors yielded a reconstruction project that would most likely have looked quite different otherwise. Thus, on his own account (and finances) he boldly commissioned the original New-York-to-Tokyo type Downtown proposal from the reputable Dar al-Handasah engineers, which set the terms of the discussion.

At the same time, he managed to gain control (by proxy) over the Council for Reconstruction and Development (the CDR, created in 1977), formally responsible for setting up and supervising the framework for reconstruction. He then ran for parliament in 1992 and became PM – a function he would hold until his assassination in 2006, with only a two-year interruption in 1998. From this position, he was able to strengthen his hold over the reconstruction process, with increased clouts over appointments and the allocation of money flows.

The results of this concentration of power are notably the following. The locus of agency was going to be private: a special reconstruction company, Solidere, was called into being. The company would work within the con-

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14 Though the official website http://gardenofforgiveness.com (retrieved 2015-01-11) asks us to stay tuned because “we are currently working on something awesome”.
fines of the general reconstruction mandate, but otherwise make development decisions on the basis of profitability. The requisite condition for that framework was to cancel all existing rights and claims to the area in favour of exclusive property rights for the company. Existing rights were transferred into shares in the company. This aspect of the reconstruction framework was probably even more controversial than the original skyscraper-architecture proposal, and its legality has always been disputed. The power thus vested in the company also allowed the speedy removal of the (mostly Shia) refugees that had settled to the west of the city centre, now part of Downtown. Their usufructuary claims to the area (based on at times decade long residence) – and the back-up provided by the Shia parties, Amal in particular – were bought off with Solidere supplements to the official compensation money for evacuated refugees that was available through the state.

Thus far, of the three reconstruction projects, I have only discussed the Downtown project – though that priority runs entirely in parallel to the creators’ intentions, as it was to be “the crown jewel” of the reconstruction. However, before going into the two remaining projects, note the absences – the Green Line, itself a long trail of destruction, was not included, nor were some of the areas adjacent to the ‘Downtown’ area, equally damaged. (Specifically, al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq was also left out. In the following chapter I discuss some of the consequences.) The deciding criterion on which areas to include appears to have been one of profitability – a consequence of the choice to delegate reconstruction to private parties. The project of the north-eastern littoral never materialized. The reasons were mostly technical in nature – the coastline geography didn’t allow the kind of construction that would make clearing the landfill a profitable project. The project in the southern suburbs also did not reach completion. The story here is a bit more complicated.

The reconstruction (or really, redevelopment) project for the southern suburbs, dubbed Elyssar, was to re-organize, regularize and partially undo population displacement during the war, mostly of Shia refugees, in the western section of the southern suburbs, including its coastal strip. It was a ‘slum-like’ area (Fawaz and Peillen 2003) of hastily built houses and apartments on squatted land. The project was to (re)connect the area to Beirut proper by new infrastructure, provide access to the airport just to the south, improve living conditions in the neighbourhoods and capitalise on the valuable land on the coast (which included a resort [itself contested before the war] squatted by Amal for the sake of Shia refugees from East-Beirut). Like Solidere’s project, Elyssar was contested, even if it was less of a public contention, taking place primarily between (self-declared) political
representatives. The contention concerned some of the same aspects at stake in the Downtown project. The major issue was the recognition of property claims to the area: Amal and Hizbullah, who set themselves up as the representatives of the residents of the area, required the prevention of eviction as condition for their ratification. Instead on-site resettlement should accompany any necessary eviction. Secondly and relatedly, they refused the premise of a private actor as the agent of reconstruction. Instead, they successfully lobbied for the transformation of Elyssar into a public agency, which would guarantee their voice in planning decisions. Despite initial agreement on these amendments, the differences persisted. Work started on the highway connecting the airport and Downtown and resulted in the eviction-for-compensation practices the parties had sought to prevent. As a consequence, they prevented any progress beyond that highway.\footnote{However as Huybrechts (2008) shows, an important result of the project was the recognition and regularization of the current inhabitants.}

In connection to this latter project, it is instructive to consider one last reconstruction project, the reconstruction of the southern suburbs after the Israeli bombardments in the so-called July War, in 2006. It concerns roughly the same area and involves roughly the same actors, but is set in a different political and institutional context. Israel had targeted the area for bombardment because it considered it a Hizbullah ‘stronghold’ (for a discussion of this notion, see Deeb 2006), which, aside from the populist imagery here, was indeed the case. Hizbullah kicked out Amal out of most of the suburbs in the final years of the civil war, and had since progressively institutionalized its presence in the area. It provided some key utilities (such as water and electricity), formed the institutional backbone of various kinds of welfare provision (from sustenance to health), managed public order (traffic police, security) and was also behind many public religious processions and events.

The bombardments had caused, aside from extensive destruction, massive population displacement. Hizbullah’s priority was to resettle people in the area as soon as possible, probably fearing people would settle into other places if they had to long to wait (I take most of the information below from Hilal 2007). This priority made much of how the reconstruction has taken place intelligible. Initially, the government had declared the task of reconstruction its own and formed a panel to form a reconstruction proposal. While the panel came up with some sensible planning suggestions, with regards to quality of residential life, it would entail rezoning the area. Also it advocated a decentralized approach. Both
suggestions clashed with Hizbullah’s desire to make haste. Legislation for ezoning would be stalled in the political process; decentralization would entail loss of executive momentum. Instead then, it formed its own reconstruction agency, called Waad (Arabic for promise, referring to Hizbullah’s promise to rebuild “more beautifully”). In response, the state restricted itself to providing compensation money to families. While the building committees that were set up were free to rebuild on their own, very few made that decision in the end, simply because of the logistical nightmare it posed. The scale of, and political clout behind, Waad’s operations meant things would get done\textsuperscript{16}.

In the following section I conclude this initial overview of the literature about Beirut, by showing how scholars have interpreted these reconstruction projects, in the light of the aforementioned ‘lessons learned’ from the civil war. That in turn will allow me to tie this chapter more directly back into the thread of this thesis, and return to the question in how far the works of these scholars can help us identify and understand kinds of politics and political subjectivity in Beirut.

**Beiruti sociology: territoriality from turf warfare to real-estate competition** There is a fairly extensive literature surveying the various political economic dimensions of the reconstruction. The central concern in these works is, in one way or another, state formation. That is, while these studies tend to look at the projects as economic undertakings, the ultimate question is what they say about, or have meant for, the nature of the Lebanese state. Thus, a fairly straightforward costs and benefits analysis of the Downtown reconstruction by Becherer (2005) revolves around the analysis of a “Faustian pact” between private and public partners. In this pact, it is naturally the state who sold its soul, surrendering its autonomy to the ‘private’ sector, as it plunged into debt. Dibeh (2005), in a far less polemical report for the World Bank, also draws attention to the erroneous economic strategies and false underlying expectations behind the reconstruction project and the fiscal policies tied to it. The financial crisis that set in after the predictable end of the reconstruction boom, Dibeh argues, has led to a crisis of the state, which itself had never been ‘rebuilt’, nor had reconstruction involved the protection and fortification of civil society. Dibeh also formulates a critique that takes on ‘political reconstruction’ more head-on: in so far as redistribution took place it was done “horizontally”, to satisfy (elite) confessional demands, rather than

\textsuperscript{16} The sacrifice for expediency was the opportunity to structurally improve the quality of the built environment as a whole, mostly through de-densification.
“vertically”, to reduce class inequalities. The appropriation of rights of landowners in the city centre was symbolic for a disregard for civil society. These two points, individually or in conjunction, are reiterated by a number of other authors: political elites secured too much power over state organs and policy in the post-bellum era and – as a result – the actual reconstruction of the nation (its human and social capital, if you will), and the re-establishment of the authority of the state, were neglected. Thus Höckel (2007) argues that the focus on Downtown allowed ‘para-statal’ actors like Hizbullah to set up shop elsewhere; Gebara (2007) attempts to show corruption has prevented serious state-building; Adwan & Sahyoun (2003) argue similarly, though from the opposite direction, that indeed rent-seeking prevailed over state-building, but that this form of corruption was made easier by the sectarian division of the state. These latter kinds of phenomena are called ‘capture of the state’ in the political scientific literature.

Leenders has produced a series of publications (2003; 2004a; 2004b; 2012) that detail and explicate this kind of ‘capture’ type corruption, in a way that is generally more helpful in getting a handle on ‘the nature of the Lebanese state’. His interest is in what corruption ‘does’. Rather than assuming a ‘weak’ state then, his assumption is that ‘corruption’ is actually an intrinsic part of state-formation (in this case, of ‘reconstruction’) and thus that it provides a lens on what kind of state is being built (in that sense a ‘weak’ state might actually be a quite effective one). More empirically then, state ‘capture’ occurs often when two factors are in play: extraction of natural resources and rentier-like sources of wealth (land in the case of Solidere); and ‘hybrid’ organizations and networks that straddle public and private (both of which were in play in the way Hariri & Co. organized the reconstruction). In both cases, either boundaries are not – yet – clear or older (economic) practices become classified as ‘corruption’ in a reconstruction setting, where the boundaries themselves become subject to scrutiny and contestation. The issue underlying these analyses is the tension between territory (land) and sovereignty (public-private cross-overs). Concern with issue reverberates through many discussions, public and scholarly.

In addition to this political economic literature, various authors (Makdisi 1997, Cooke 2002, Kassab 1997, Sawalha 1998) have drawn attention to

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17 Huybrechts & Verdeil (2000) look at similar phenomena, but from a planner’s perspective and note more dryly that while the central government is an important actor in terms of investments, because it is weak (i.e. badly coordinated), it leaves considerable space for local actors to pursue their own interests.
the extensive symbolic production that accompanied the reconstruction of the ‘Downtown’ area. Makdisi even claimed the project would help to determine the unfolding narrative of Lebanon’s national identity, which is now even more open to question. For it is in this highly contested space that various competing visions of that identity, as well as of Lebanon’s relationship to the region and the wider Arab world, will be fought out (1997: 663).

The reconstruction was therefore the occasion of various parties to “lay claim” to Beirut (in Makdisi’s analysis these parties were chiefly the Solidere company versus the intellectuals). This same kind of competition was identified by Sawalha, who examined how Solidere related to the (mostly Shia) refugees who had settled on the western edges of the old centre. The refugees used various tropes to claim some right to their place in the area, based on their length to stay there, their emotional ties to their home or to the fact they had purchased their residence (in the war’s black market). Sawalha (2003: 276f.) explains however that popular perception tended not to be on their side, with public voices advocating their eviction in order to “heal the wounds of the war”, given that their very physical presence in Beirut’s old centre was a symbol and reminder of all that went wrong during the war. Thus, their moral claims to the area became mere rhetorical complements to the negotiations between their political representatives and Solidere, which ended with the latter paying dearly for the refugees’ eviction so as to expedite the reconstruction process. These negotiations were widely framed as territorial competition18. A parallel consequence was that a new sense of territoruality was encoded in Beirut’s geography. In a popularly shared perception (see e.g. 2006-08-04, New York Times, Michael Young), Shia ‘withdrew’ from the city centre, and symbolically, their political parties ‘relinquished’ their claim to representing the area. Instead, Shia refugees and their political parties were seen to ‘regroup’ in the southern suburbs. Numerous studies have since documented how the ties between political representatives – foremost Hizbullah – and constituency have been tightened in those same suburbs. Bou Akar (2005) documents how many of the refugees from the Downtown were provided social housing type abodes with the compensation money they were given (Bou Akar uses the case to analyse

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18 They were also in part the basis for e.g. Yahya’s 1993 analysis of the relation between territory and political authority, discussed in the section outlining the urban sociology of the war.
how sectarian conflict plays out on different scales and in both formal and informal governance mechanisms). Harb in a series of studies (2001, 2007; Harb & Fawaz 2010) looks at the parties’ engagement with Elyssar, as well as how more everyday and smaller-scale forms of governance have solidified their political authority (both to ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’) in and over the area and its residents. Deeb builds on these studies and provides a more ethnographic account of the workings of this institutional complex – largely by focusing on female volunteers working for and with charity organizations. This exploration of the everyday instantiation of the culture of Hizbullah’s ‘Resistance society’ later found a follow-up with her collaboration with Harb (2013) on the ‘leisure’ ecology that has been developed within this ‘culture’. Fawaz (2009) and Hilal (2007, under Fawaz’ supervision) analysed the lead that Hizbullah took in the reconstruction of the southern suburbs within this same vein, as an attempt to maintain political authority in and over an important ‘territory’.

So there are two paradigms that organize the literature on post-war Beirut: one is the ‘capture’ of the state, in the political economy literature, and for which Downtown is considered the exemplar. The other is the idea of post-war political territoriality (or territorialized political rule), for which the southern suburbs have been paradigmatic. As regards the first paradigm, the political economic analyses have been extended to real-estate construction by Fawaz (especially on low-end development: 2009; 2009b) and collaborators (especially on high-end development: Krijnen & Fawaz 2010; Wierzborski 2010), who look at how private actors manage to create favourable conditions for their operations. (Specifically sectarian territorialities retreat to the background in this literature, though. The tension in the triad real-estate, sect and territory returns in the following chapter.) As for the second paradigm, the southern suburbs case appears to have informed later studies in Beirut, prompting comparative analyses of other (but similar) territorial dynamics. Thus, on the one hand there are attempts to re-think political power per se in the city. Kastrissianakis (2012) proposes a reading of violence in Beirut as the product of a system of urban governances that is based on the competition of several non-state sovereignties (while empirically drawing largely on the polarization between Hariri’s Downtown and Hizbullah’s southern suburbs). Fregonese (2012) makes a quite similar argument, drawing on cases from the civil war and the clashes between Hizbullah forces and armed factions of opposed political parties in 2008. Her proposal is to see Beirut as a case of “hybrid sovereignties”, where the “traditional” distinction between state and non-
state becomes irrelevant and unhelpful. (Kastrissianakis, meanwhile, to propose more or less the same thing, builds on Sloterdijk’s “spherical” imagery and Seurat’s (1985) resurrection of Ibn Khaldun’s notion of asabiya.) On the other hand you will find studies that explore the contestation of space and what (political, confessional) territories look like on the ground (Masri 2006, primarily thinking through such contestation through the lens of identity; Bou Akar 2012, transposing the problematic of ‘territory’ into a ‘security’ framework).

There is one final strand of research I would like to draw attention to. This strand displaces the focus of attention from the political actors to ordinary citizens, often exchanges the paradigmatic cases for other areas in Beirut, and asks how people navigate the ‘sectarian’ city. The question of territoriality is therefore still in the background (and sometimes in the foreground). This is immediately apparent in one of the dominant concerns and tropes in this literature, which is that of public space. The question whether public spaces exist in Beirut, and if so, how public they in fact are, is actually a particular Lebanese twist of a question that is perhaps a defining feature of a regional scholarship (public spaces are highly sought after scarce goods in “MENA” research). Thus, there are a number of studies of open space in the city and their function in facilitating a genuinely public (i.e., trans-confessional) type of sociality and urbanity. Genberg (2002; 2003) tries to figure out which places in Beirut people can come to where they are not always bearers of a certain sectarian identity (the Corniche, mostly). Shayya (2010) mapped out social interactions in the small open section of the largely closed-off park “Horsh Beirut” and advocates it be opened to the public (declaring it is ready for the responsibility). In a more political vein, Chaoul (2007) surveys the possibilities and modalities of staging public protest in Beirut. Another recurring public ‘space’ is one beloved by Beirut’s middle classes – the cafés. Sawalha (2010) portrays the self-consciously “public” sociality, its historical imagination and accompanying aspirations of women from the middle classes in cafés, mostly in Hamra. Farah (2011), meanwhile, considers how residents on the borderline between Christian and Muslim suburbs use and

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19 The choice for these recurrent cases becomes problematic once one starts looking at different ones, as I contend and show in the following chapter.

20 Hamra’s cafés, as a backbone of the area’s “intellectual” reputation, deserved a special overview by Douaihi (1994). Salamey & Tabar (2008) seem to place their hope for a non-violent Lebanon in the hands of the Hamra regulars, whose (“secular”) political perceptions need to be bolstered. (This contrasts with the Downtown area, which was heavily branded as a public space but was precisely perceived as having failed to fulfil that ‘promise’. The 2005 demonstrations against Syrian “tutelage” have been framed as understood as a function of the nation’s premier public space [Khalaf 2006; 2012].)
value a more popular kind of public space, in dealing with their historically conditioned mutual “alterity.”

The trope of territoriality then, developed largely retrospectively immediately after the war, extends to a wide range of scholarly works on Beirut. There are a number of common themes that emerge. One is that the territorial logic of political competition during the war is preserved (political actors are still in the business of “claiming space”), but its means are transposed from warfare to (access to) real-estate. The three paradigmatic reconstruction cases – Solidere, Elyssar and Waad – show that control over areas is achieved by securing access to land. (One of the ways this theme is discussed is in terms of the relations between statehood, sovereignty and territory. These are also the underlying questions that preoccupy many Beirutis, in how they talk about the challenges for Lebanon, about who they are in the polity, and what they think the relation between sect and state should be. See also Chapter 4.) A second theme is that territoriality remains not merely central to the reproduction of political power (as in the paradigmatic example of Hizbullah’s “stronghold” or “bastion” in the southern suburbs), but also maintains its pervasive influence on Beirutis’ social imagination (the cognitive sectarian closure that e.g. Khalaf and Sarkis talked about). From this theme, one can also understand the preoccupation with public space, which, in the Lebanese context, really is the inverse of territorial space. Thirdly, the polarization between the North of Beirut (Solidere’s Downtown) and its South (Hizbullah’s suburbs) organize this trope iconically. The opposition between the two is a pronounced feature of popular political imagination, which manifested itself for example in the widely used trope of “invasion” to characterize Hizbullah’s clashes with government-loyal forces in 2008, which occurred in Beirut proper. It will also pop up here and there in the remainder of this thesis, as it allows for an anchor point in relation to which people can situate themselves morally and politically.

**Conclusion** I already dropped a few hints at how the events and their interpretations may be relevant for the present investigation. Let me be more systematic about it now. Reiterating, the main conclusions from the literature are 1) that politics operates in a large degree on a territorial basis and 2) people have learned to see themselves as inhabitants of sec-

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21 A more playful take on such a navigation of over-determined spaces is Chakar’s (2003) proposition to understand Beirutis not as dwellers but as tourists, always waiting to perform in (someone else’s, political actors’) spectacle – one caught in the inevitable snapshot of the observer (foreigner, media).
tarian islands, wary of others living on other islands. Both seem directly relevant for a question after conceptions and practices of citizenship. The imbrication of rule and politics in the spaces of everyday life should certainly impact how people view their sectarian membership (in the way it is shaped by religious and political organizations), the nation and the state (as these are perceived relationally to sectarian membership), and their own role (the scope for action they see and exercise within these spaces of everyday living). What then is role of territorialization in constituting people’s political subjectivity and what place does ‘territory’ occupy in people’s political imagination?

The next chapter goes into the first ‘case-study’, the Khandaq neighbourhood. Khandaq really is a different ‘case’, from the ones mentioned thus far. For starters, it has not been the focus of a lot of reconstructive attention. It is however closely tied, geographically, to the Downtown area; yet at the same time, its population is largely Shia – and politically tied to parties who are symbolically tied to the southern suburbs. Little research has been carried out in the neighbourhood (though more research has been undertaken of late about neighbourhoods that similarly have not enjoyed the political or economic limelight). Clear from the start though is that it isn’t one of these paradigmatic cases. Hence, questions for the following chapter include: What is the ‘territorial’ status of Khandaq al-Ghamiq? Is the logic of territorial competition operative? What, if any, is the influence of the territorial imagination on people’s perception of who they are (what moral community they think they belong to) and what role do they play in the political community?