Interstice appropriation by youth of the margins: a resistance to marginalisation

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Abstract
Informal neighbourhoods in Beirut, built on 'old interstices' - old peripheral lands devalued because of their contentious status – today have their own interstices that represent spaces of appropriation but also a source of conflict. Through the case of Ouzai, I will analyse the interstitial practices of what remains of a formerly famous beach in this neighbourhood. In fact, Ouzai turned its back on this massively built beach, and the inhabitants stopped frequenting it although it is part of the urban morphology. This has led to its appropriation by groups of 'street boys', leading to advanced initiatives.

Through a qualitative empirical survey carried out between 2019 and 2020, I aim to show how an interstitial space constitutes a resource within the margins of the city, and a vector of cultural practices for young people. They exploit the freedom of appropriation to transform the interstice and build an alternative to the lack of a private space. It is then a question of showing how this space quickly becomes a source of conflict with the other actors in the territory, namely the inhabitants and the local authorities. The study then shows how youth practices can be a form of silent resistance to marginalisation and domination, which are a set of oppressive norms derived from moral values or rules imposed by local authorities, and the negative image associated with their neighbourhood. In this sense, these practices make young people a new political actor by claiming their right to urban spaces.

Keywords
Interstice, interstitial practices, street youth, informal neighbourhood, marginalisation, resistance.

1. Introduction

I was lost in the suffocating density of a neighbourhood I knew little about, wandering the small alleys, looking at the buildings, shops, and the shopkeepers who were also looking at me, surprised by my presence. Sometimes I found myself squeezed into narrow passages between two walls, descending stairs where puddles of water had stagnated, and where waste had gathered. Occasionally feeling choked due to the burning weather and the odours of waste and sewers, I finally arrived in the middle of a staircase where I saw a blinding light; I moved cautiously because the steps were not regular and there, at the end, I saw the Mediterranean. I felt that the end of this staircase was a door to another world. It was the world of the small beach of Ouzai, which corresponds to a 'buffer zone' between the dense neighbourhood, which invaded the sandy zone, and the sea of the Lebanese coast . On the beach, I saw children and adults, all male, swimming, playing, and performing acrobatics in the water. I did not dare to approach them at that time. A year later, I found myself face to face with *Chabeb el-Baher* (young men of the sea) and with whom I later spent days and evenings, during which they shared their respective stories, their lives in Ouzai, and their relationship to their neighbourhood and to the sea.

Figure 1. 'Street boys' on the beach of Ouzai. Photograph: R. Kaedbey 2020.

Through the experiences of this group of 'street boys' (according to their words) occupying Ouzai beach, I aim to show how an interstitial space constitutes a resource within the margins of the city, and a vector of cultural practices. These young people mobilised a set of skills and exploited the freedom of appropriation to transform the space and build an alternative to the lack of a private space (Lebon and Sauvadet, 2019), notably through artistic practices, but also through lucrative investments in an abandoned space. It is then a question of showing how the space quickly becomes a source of conflict with the other actors in the territory, namely the inhabitants and the local authorities.

Then, I will show how youth practices can be a form of resistance to marginalisation and domination (Scott, 2009) which are a set of oppressive norms derived from moral values or rules imposed by local authorities. This assumption is demonstrated in two ways. First, the youth are in a process of affirming their street identity 'by transforming a default choice, inspiring misery, into a life choice, which reaffirms their free will and values the street by associating it with freedom, like the tramps studied by Declerck (2001)'[1] (Lebon and Sauvadet, 2019, p. 45). This, as we will see, is ex-

1 - '…pour transformer un choix par défaut, inspirant la pitié et le misérabilisme, en choix de vie, qui réaffirme leur libre-arbitre et valorise la rue en l'associant à la liberté, à l'instar des clochards étudiés par Declerck (2001)'. Author's translation.

plicit through their discourses. Second, the paper will highlight the process of valuing interstitial practices as a 'tactic'[2] (De Certeau, 1990) to change the image of marginalisation associated with them and their neighbourhood (Scott, 2009). In this sense, these practices become 'political scenes' (Daquin, 2019), making these young people a new political actors who have asserted themselves through their investment in an interstitial space. This implies a claim to the right to urban spaces (Bayat, 2009), and resistance against discrimination (Scott, 2009).

Thus, the observed practices of young people, who do not seem to be protestors, carry a strong political dimension expressed by the reconfiguration of a city space, contributing to the transformation of negative images and established imaginations which they wish to oppose. The interstitial practices in the margins that are a representative example of the laissez-faire of public policies are mobilised by a new (unforeseen) actor who appropriates them and transforms them through a 'social non-movement' (Bayat, 2009). According to A. Bayat, these are movements without articulated strategies that claim the right to urban space in the context of domination (Bayat, 2009; Scott, 2009). In the case of the youth of Ouzai, these practices claim that their urbanity is systematically discarded due to the exclusion suffered by the informal settlements. This de facto gives a political dimension to these youth practices.

The space in this case plays a driving role in embodying the practices in question. The beach is not only an interstice because it is abandoned, and the neighbourhood turns its back on it, or because of the less important attendance by the inhabitants. It is an interstice because it lends itself to appropriations, to discreet or even clandestine practices. The organisation given to the space by young people tends to go beyond the dominant norm. The beach is then an interstice because of the social representations that are granted to it, and not only because of its geographical situation.

2 - 'Tactics (different from strategy) reveals another truth about space. It is the place of a stratified compactness where forces with differentiated potentials and interests are constantly interfering' (Mboukou, 2015) based on M. De Certeau.

Based on an empirical investigation carried out between 2019 and 2020 among young people who frequently visit Ouzai streets and beaches, I aim to study the practices of occupation, appropriation, socialisation, conflict, and the struggle of young people in certain residual and abandoned spaces of this beach. Studying the transformation of this space will highlight it as a resource for young people as well as its constraints when it becomes a space of conflict. These interactions reveal the discrete resistance (Scott, 2009) carried by the youth against the marginalising image of their neighbourhood.

This article is organised into three parts. First, it explains the geography and context of the beach space in Ouzai. Second, I will show the structure of the youth group in question. Finally, I will show their appropriation practices, the resulting conflicts, and their aspirations to get out of marginality.

1.1 The context of the investigation

I began my investigations at Ouzai in 2018 on the topic of the informal rental markets in popular neighbourhoods and its role in urban transformation, while observing the socio-spatial inequalities it reveals. The beach did not interest me as a research topic until the end of 2019, when I found myself regularly on this beach, without really looking for it. I thus observed the forms of appropriation of the space carried out mainly by the groups of young people I saw in early 2019 and with whom I began to sympathise. I first met Hassan, a rapper from the neighbourhood. Gaining his trust took time, but once acquired, he quickly introduced me to his friends with whom I was able to conduct interviews on the topic of the thesis, and also on their practices in this space. My integration into Hassan's group was spontaneous. Being the same age as the members of the group, communication was easy as the discussions often spilled over into various topics of life, work, love, travel, politics, Lebanon, France, etc.

My presence with the young people aroused certain looks from the inhabitants, especially those who did not know me. I imagine that all the inhabitants of this nucleus knew me, but with certain families, I created bonds of friendship,

and they understood the nature of my work. For others, my status was ambiguous, revealing a lack of understanding of my regular presence, and even prejudices about the presence of a woman with these 'street boys'!

The street boys were grouped according to age: adults, teenagers, and children. I was able to investigate the adult group of 10 persons aged between 22 and 29 years. They are characterised by different profiles and trajectories. Only three of those whom I met have a stable job; therefore, we only saw them in the evening. The others, who did not have a regular job, were often present at the beach that later became a space for advanced initiatives of appropriation.

2. Case study and context

Ouzai, an informal neighbourhood of almost 100,000 inhabitants located in the southern suburb of Beirut, built on 'old interstices' - former peripheral lands devalued because of their poorly known land status (Clerc-Huybrechts, 2008) – today represents an important part of the city with its own interstitial spaces. The southern suburb of Beirut is, in fact, in the political territory of Hezbollah (Harb, 2010). The state intervenes very occasionally in this territory; the urban management is held by Hezbollah through the municipalities and the organisations of the party. Surveillance is very important in this territory, where Hezbollah soldiers are present and watching from every corner, including informal neighbourhoods.

Ouzai constitutes an urban margin in this suburb. In fact, despite its commercial polarity and the social rise of its inhabitants, the neighbourhood remains considered as 'illegal' or 'spontaneous', and increasingly suffers from a negative image of poverty, associated with hosting a significant number of vulnerable refugees and foreign workers.

Urban morphology in informal settlements has been the subject of several research studies starting with the work of Turner (1976), particularly regarding the way in which inhabitants construct and invest space. Research has also addressed the appropriation of public space as a place of sociability, I can cite the work of Navez-Bouchanine (1990) in the case of the Arab cities. Here, I will focus on a non-constructed and abandoned space of this neighbourhood, which is the beach and the way it is occupied by young people.

2.1 The beach:
an interstice in an auto-constructed neighbourhood

Ouzai is located in an area called until the beginning of the 20th century 'the sand area' (Figures 2 and 3). From the 1930s onwards, a few straw huts on the seafront were built in a legal manner and in accordance with the regulations of the time following authorisations given by the municipality of Burj el-Barajneh (Clerc-Huybrechts, 2008). As a result of the land ownership disputes between the municipality and the inhabitants of Burj el-Barajneh village, the owners started to transform the huts into hardened houses for fear of being dispossessed and built modern multi-story houses without worrying about urban regulations. Added to this is a rural exodus that exceeds the capacity of the city and a disturbed political context that weakens the state's role. As a result, informal constructions continued to grow, culminating in 200 houses on the Ouzai Plain during the 1950s. These houses developed around an existing nucleus in the northern part of the neighbourhood (Figure 4), and they followed roads that were designed to access the beach. In addition, the cottages built on the seafront were sold and transformed by the new owners to adapt them to long-term settlement. Then, during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), illegal constructions not only continued to multiply and spread along the main road of Ouzai, but also approached the sea little by little, leaving only a small area to the sandy beach.

What remains of the sandy area is today an interstitial space, where touristic activities no longer exist because of illegal installations. Similarly, a few fishermen settled in Ouzai in the 1970s and the 1980s to maintain their activity and be closer to the sea. This activity, which existed along the coast of Ouzai, was centralised in a new port built for this purpose. Now, we can only see a few amateur fishermen left on the rocks in front of the district.

With the multiplication of illegal constructions, the sea quickly turned from a privilege and a resource to a constraint, especially for those who had buildings close to it.

Figure 2. Photograph of the plain of Ouzai and the Mar-Elias Betina convent, 1935. Source: 'Des photographies à Beyrouth: 1840-1918', F. C. Debbas, 2001, Paris, Marval editions.

The water pollution linked to the dumping of the city's sewage into the sea from facilities next to Ouzai, as well as the salty air, contributes to accelerating the degradation of the buildings and decreasing the quality of life because of the unbearable odour and the multiplication of floods in winter. The waste brought by the waves along the beach will accentuate the marginalisation of this space by the inhabitants who have stopped frequenting it. The beach is thus reduced to the role of a buffer space between the neighbourhood and the sea which seems to be the residue of what the occupants could not build; sometimes it disappears, and sometimes it appears according to the progress of the constructions (Figure 5).

The abandoned character of the beach due to the risks it poses has given way to its occupation by young people. The presence of families, women, or the elderly is rather rare. If the street boys frequent this place, it is for two reasons. First, the youth in Ouzai have been betrayed by the disengagement of the state which does not ensure the most elementary rights. The street and, more generally, the interstitial spaces, like the beach of Ouzai, become an escape for these young people in the absence of a private space adapted to their needs and the absence of scholarly and professional activities. Second, this zone offers them the freedom of occupation and investment. Therefore, their practices usually are escaping the urban order and reinforcing their interstitial dimensions. However, who are these young people that we are talking about?

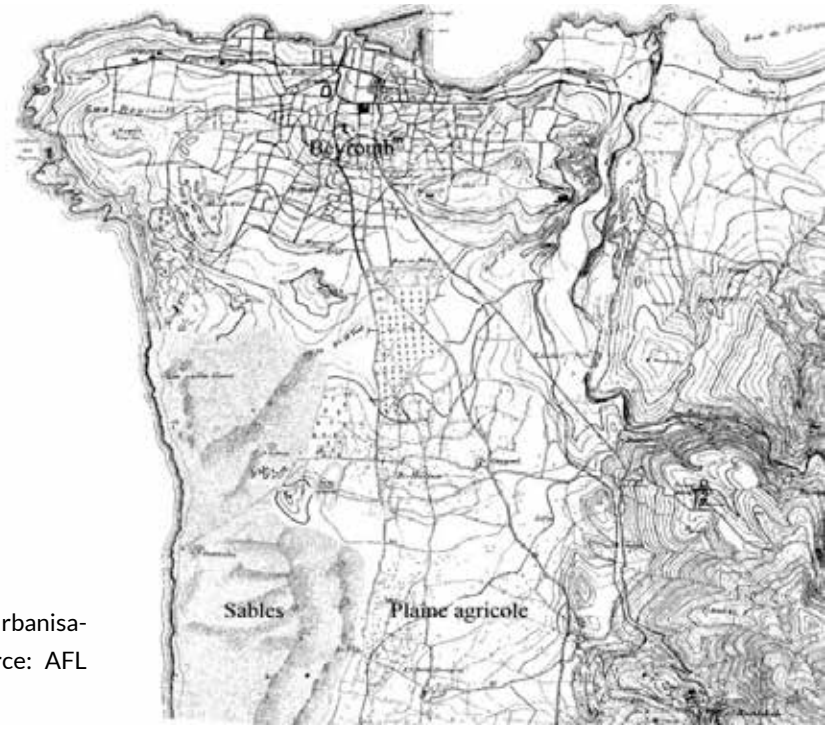

Figure 3. The vast sandy areas before the urbanisation of the southern suburbs of Beirut. Source: AFL Topographic Bureau, 1920, Beirut.

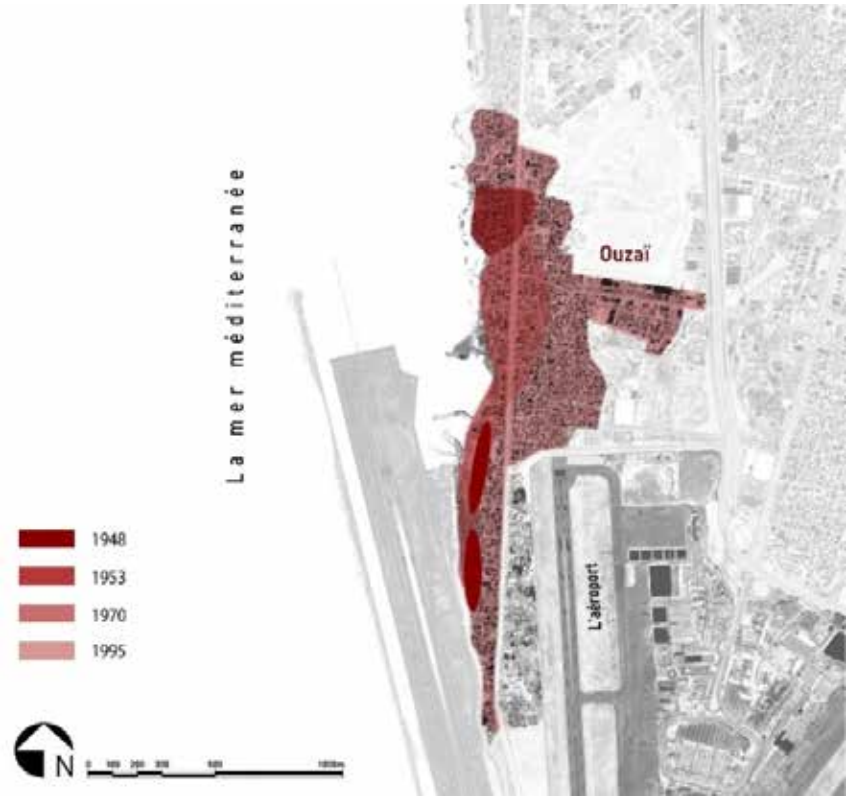

Figure 4. The urban development of Ouzai. Mapping: R. Kaedbey 2018.

Figure 5. The beach of Ouzai that appears and disappears depending on the progress of the auto-constructions. Photograph: R. Kaedbey 2020.

3. Who are the *awlad al chare'e* (the street boys)?

One of the first things Hassan said to me was: 'I'm not afraid of anything. As a kid, I lived in the street, I saw everything, and I am not afraid of anything [...] The boys you see here, most of them grew up in the street. We know the street very well; it is where we belong'. This quote reveals two dimensions: the first refers to a recognition of the street as a 'home', the place where he grew up, a place he knows perfectly. The discourse also evokes the development of the strength and courage that the street enables, which makes these boys 'resourceful' (Hassan and Mahmoud, 27 and 26 years old, interview in 2020).

However, Hassan and his friends settle on the street not by choice but due to a lack of alternatives (Lebon and Sauvadet, 2019). Their regular presence in the street is undoubtedly linked to the quality of the housing that their family occupies. These young people often live in small and dense houses, but in large families, leading them to spend most of their time outside and staying in the street until late. In this case, the street constitutes an 'identity and differentiation resource' facing family, school, and professional breakdowns (Daquin, 2019; Lebon and Sauvadet, 2019). This is justified by the fact that the respondents do not all identify themselves as 'street boys'. In fact, the different degrees of belonging to the street are a question of social category and residential quality. Those who have been able to benefit from an education and have found a stable job spend less time in public spaces and with friends, while 'those who have not had the same privilege, spend their days with friends on the beach' (Yasser, 23, interview in 2020).

The street is thus an alternative through which they build their universe with their own codes: they, children or adults, have their own language and common words that they use regularly, as well as nicknames[3]. They appropriate the public space, which is not limited to the street, as it also concerns all the interstices such as the unbuilt plots and the abandoned corners (lands, apartments, the beach, etc.). In addition, the street or interstitial spaces allow young people to be amongst each other (entre eux). The 'entre-soi' (to be amongst each other) here is based on a stigma (Tissot, 2014) that gathers these young people, namely the deprivation of basic rights (suitable housing, education, etc.). Tissot (2014) points out that 'microcosms are also based on long-standing relationships and a feeling of trust and connivance that is reflected in the fact that we feel "among ourselves"'. The case of the Ouzai youth is representative of this analysis. Their ties are reflected by the fact that 'what belongs to one, belongs to all!' (Hassan, 27; interview, 2019). If one of them acquires a scooter or motorcycle, for example, everyone can borrow it without asking. Solidarity is common among them. As soon as there is someone in need of money, everyone participates in helping him. In addition, multiple interactions exist between different generations of youth groups. Older people often have a caring relationship with the younger ones, trying to keep them away from the danger that they themselves may have faced when they were younger. This is reinforced when there are family ties between the adults and the children.

The group does not seem to have an organised structure, which differentiates it from 'urban gangs' if we consider the two criteria of gangs from scientific literature, which are the strong hierarchy of these groups, and the presence of clear and shared objectives (Boucher, 2016). In contrast, informality characterises these groups on the beach, which are nevertheless capable of collective action (Daquin, 2019), yet politically discrete, as we will see in the following example.

3.1 The place of girls/women among the boys/men group

The presence of girls in the crowd was occasional. Gender is certainly the most discriminating factor in the occupation of the territory insofar as it is only a group of young men who appropriate certain outdoor spaces permanently and exclusively. This is not new, as many sociological studies have shown how social housing areas are not exempt from a gender-based appropriation of public space (Buffet, 2005).

3 - In this article I have chosen to use the real first names of the interviewees, which are more common in this neighbourhood than the nicknames, to maintain anonymity.

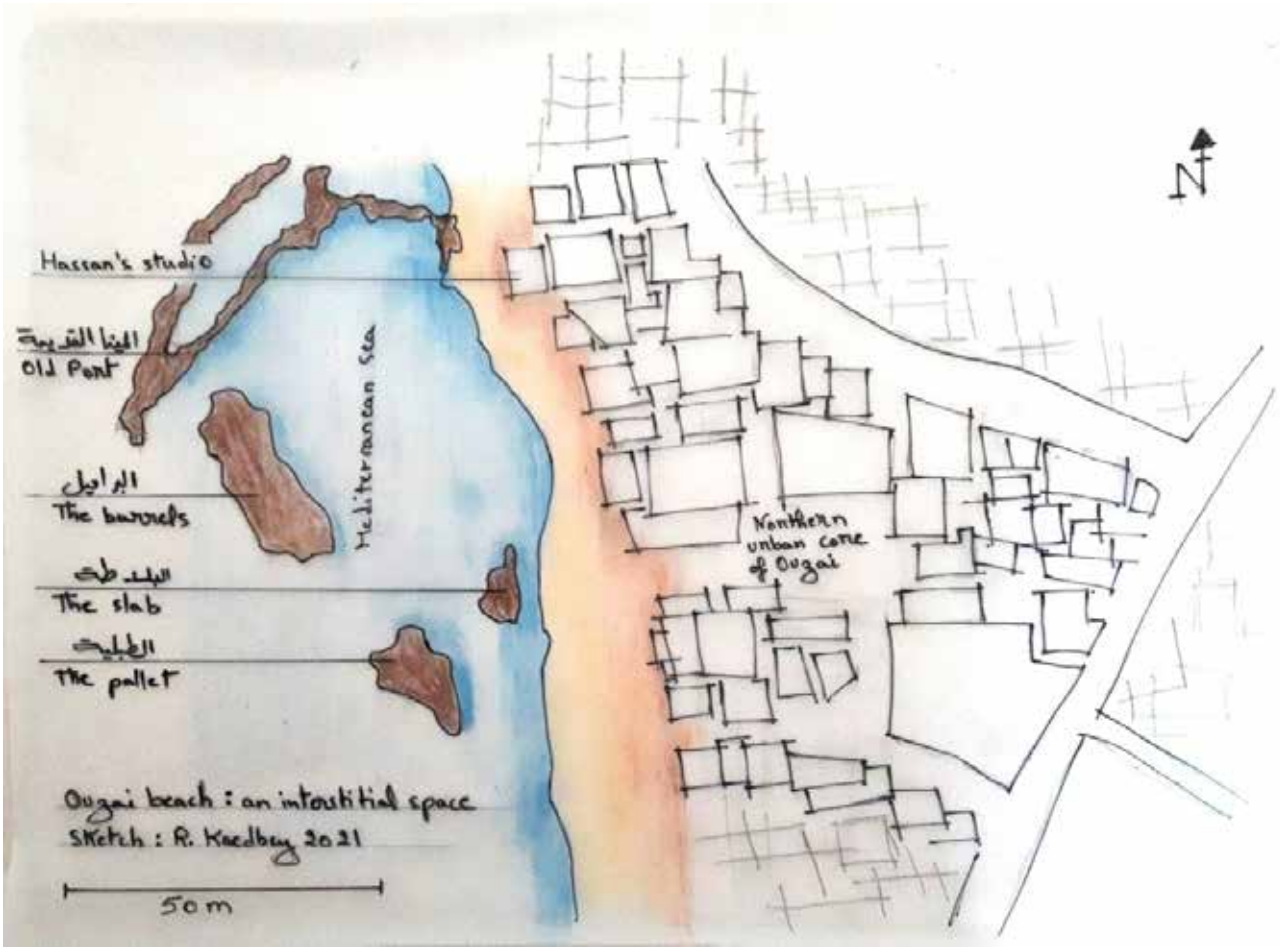

Figure 6. The given names to the rocks of Ouzai Beach by the 'street boys'. Sketch: R. Kaedbey 2021.

In Ouzai, it is in fact the 'honour' of girls being threatened here. According to local rules, a girl should not go out like the boys do. Knowing that all the men were of Lebanese origin, the women I had the opportunity to see during my visits to the group were mostly of foreign nationalities, notably Ethiopian workers and Syrian refugees who had often lost their families. These women have escaped family oppression, often through tragic trajectories that have severed family ties (war, death, exile, etc.). Sometimes, these paths lead women to prostitution as a way out. This is a generalised image imposed by the inhabitants on all the independent women in the neighbourhood. 'I know that people talk badly about me and my girlfriends in the neighbourhood but personally it doesn't affect me because I am free to do whatever I want!' (Rita, Ethiopian woman, age 24, interview in 2020) The presence of girls at the beach and having romantic relationships outside of marriage is not accepted within the families of the neighbourhood. Some women are independent of these rules and are therefore more visible in the public space than others who are subject to family constraints. This does not concern only the margins of the city; the same situations are present in the cities, but especially in the small villages in Lebanon where the freedom of women remains a sensitive subject, and a long fight is yet

to come.

4. The freedom of appropriation as a resource for stigmatised groups

The beach is a resource space and an escape for these young people, both adults and children, to meet up, have fun and cool off when the temperature rises to 45°C without electricity or water at home . Among the spaces frequented, the beach remains the most secluded, and they feel that they have more freedom to do activities that they cannot do in the streets. They have appropriated it in multiple ways. For example, they have given names to the different islands that are across the sea, where they spend a lot of time (Figure 6). They have also managed to take advantage of the resources this space offers, as we will see in the case of an artistic and entertaining initiative led by Hassan's group of friends.

In fact, the elaboration of various individual or collective strategies in the public space transforms this into 'a symbolic private space' (Wallez and Aubrée, 2005), 'like the squat which is inserted in the relations between the individual and the social environment, by articulating informal sociability and clandestine residential space' (Bouillon, 2003; Wallez and Aubrée, 2005). This transforms the beach into a space of embodiment of the entre-soi that allows the genesis of collective actions, or even 'foci of resistance' (Tissot, 2014). However, freedom of appropriation in this space remains constrained by a variety of elements related to neighbours and actors that manifest themselves depending on the activities that take place. The analysis of these tensions will highlight the priority objectives of each actor, including the 'silent claims' (Rosa, 2016) of the young people which oppose several social and religious pressures.

Two main factors impact the rise in tensions between youth and residents. First, the activities of the youth are in general formally legal (music for example), but 'their culture and way of life are sufficiently bizarre and unconventional for them to be labelled as outsiders by more conventional members of the community' (Becker, 1985, p. 79). This contributes to frequent opposition by residents to the activities of the young people. Second, disputes over the ownership of space in informal settlements are always at the origin of conflicts, which is a characteristic of informal settlements. In the case of the beach, the fact that young people acquire an income from their activities becomes a source of conflict with the neighbourhood, as shown in the following example.

4.1 Artistic and interstitial practices: a form of resistance

Hassan, with his friends, initiated a rehabilitation project for the abandoned beach. Initially, the goal was to develop a profit-making activity, but it turns out that a careful analysis of the project reveals, beyond the activity, strategies that contribute to reconfiguring the space of the margin and question its marginality. The beach we see on the plan (Figure 6) was ravaged by garbage. This group of young people began by cleaning up all the garbage over a whole week. Hassan then built a tent with sticks and fins that he and his friends collected from the beach (Figure 7). He set up tables and chairs that everyone salvaged, that people can rent to spend their day at the beach. The beach continues to remain accessible to those who do not want to rent tables.

Through social media, he created events such as parties and special Sunday gatherings. The reactions to his announcements were spectacular; dozens of young people from his neighbourhood and neighbouring areas came, as well as families with their children who came to enjoy the beach and its atmosphere. The young men continued with various works such as the rerouting of a sewer pipe to move the sewer outlet away from the beach. They also painted the entire pathway leading to the beach, where the buildings belonged to other neighbours. All this work was done with the help of friends, so there were only the materials to pay for, as the labour was provided by volunteers.

'We named this beach Santorini! I swear this place is even prettier than Santorini because we made it all from scratch. We turned nothing into something!' That is how Hassan greeted me one day when he announced the name given to the beach with pride in what he and his friends had achieved.

The beach was also transformed into a space of spectacle

Figure 7. The tent created by Hassan and his friends. Photograph: R. Kaedbey 2020.

- the young people sang, drew graffiti, rapped, and performed acrobatics, all the while filming these actions and posting them on social media networks. Social media plays a key role in these young people's strategies. Their videos drew inspiration from those filmed on paradisiacal beaches in Italy and Spain. This interstice was transformed into a space of expression, whose engine is the will to transform the stigmatising image of the neighbourhood and the dirty beach, and to show that 'our beach is worth the same value as the paradisiacal beaches we see on the pictures!' (Alaa, 26 years old, interview in 2020)

It was also a question of using rap songs, sung and written by young people from the neighbourhood, to show the difficulty of life in the margins, the multiple obstacles that youth must face when they are born and raised in these spaces. However, paradoxically, the songs show that life in the margins is not reduced to these circumstances. It is about showing all the value that the neighbourhood and its beach represent for them. Often, they sang improvised rap songs which evoked their neighbourhood, their lives, and their reality. The songs reflected, in a way, the spatial practices that I observed. Thus, it was an alternative means of communication between them during the evenings. Rap reflects the culture of resistance (Martinez, 1997) of a marginalised youth through the freedom of expression, and is also a facet of their practices of appropriation of the space.

Trainoir (2019) observes how, through social networks, young people 'from the street' or young people 'in the street' stage their 'street life' and make an identity, to the point of claiming their stigma. Additionally, they sometimes fabricate and invent a life for themselves, which is a way of experiencing their dreamed identities. However, in the case of Ouzai's youth, the ability to invest in spaces and then to transform it while facing constraints, makes them a full-fledged actor. Thus, beyond identity claims, this reveals a form of silent struggle against various rules without necessarily being based on social and political capital or organised action (Bayat, 2009; Erdi Lelandais and Florin, 2016; Scott, 2009).

4.2. The constraints of appropriation: power relations and conflicts

The transformation of the beach by this group, of course, has not gone unnoticed by neighbours and authorities. This initiative stemming from the young people's desire for change began to grow and involve several actors. Neighbours who were initially happy to see the beach clean began to complain about the noise and the 'foreign' people who pass through the front of their doors to access the beach. A neighbour who has a part of the beach in front of his house, and who initially agreed to install tables in this area, ended up claiming the money for the tables rented in front of his house. Other neighbours began to intervene claiming that the beach was public property that belonged to the whole neighbourhood, and one cannot develop lucrative activities to the detriment of the tranquillity of the neighbourhood. All of these elements have been a source of conflict between the youth and their neighbours, which has considerably reduced the margin of freedom of the former.

'On my beach there is no discrimination, everyone is welcome, including Syrians and Doms'; these are the words of Hassan. This did not please the neighbours either, who preferred complete separation from the poor and precarious foreigners . The spatial boundaries, especially with the poorest, were broken by their frequentation of the beach, and this was also a subject of conflict between the groups of young people and neighbouring families.

The authority which is represented by Hezbollah supervisors was implanted in every corner of the neighbourhood to monitor the arrival of unknown people and the consumption of alcohol that was categorically forbidden. This led the young people to drink secretly, either by filling bottles of soft drinks with alcohol, or by drinking only in the evening when the lack of light prevents the authorities from seeing everything that is going on. These conflicts reveal a discrepancy between an authority whose priority is the security of the suburbs of Hezbollah and a youth who seeks to live in the city, who seeks its urbanity and even its citizenship constrained by public policies that are out of step with the real needs of the population.

Despite the opposition, the group of young people have not stopped their activities and continue to occupy space in the beach, but have diverted some of the new restrictions imposed, such as the prohibition of alcohol consumption, or by assuming their choice to maintain a party contested by the residents, or lucrative activities that continue to be a source of tension. However, street youth remain mostly forgotten by the public policies in Lebanon. For the youngest, it is the NGOs that mobilise to get them out of the street. For the oldest, their spatial and artistic practices still suffer from a negative image linked to 'failure' as expressed by Abu Ali (inhabitant of Ouzai) who considers these practices 'child-like activities which modify our culture and traditions' (interview in 2020).

Interview with Mahmoud, 26 years old, 2020.

'You know, when we were kids, we always wanted to mess around with the locals and make them mad; this was fun. But now we just want to get on with our lives without being looked down upon by others. We want to integrate a new way of life in this space. We want our neighborhood to be clean, to reflect a good image. We are just looking for our freedom [...] Batroun or Jbeil [Lebanese seaside touristic spots] are not better than here, we will do everything to change this image'.

5. Conclusion

'Welcome to Santorini' is the sign that greets us with freshly painted white and blue walls, once we have crossed the whole area with its buildings next to each other and its narrow passages. Once this sign is crossed, we find a beautiful space–despite the extreme pollution of the water–where dozens of people (children and adults) swim. Hassan and his friends took advantage of the resources of their neighbourhood: the beach as an interstitial space, the solidarity, and freedom of appropriation to transform misery into privilege. For him, 'living by the sea is a privilege that we have not been able to exploit until now!' The sea for the boys and young men is a *ne'ema* (grace, blessing) that they are lucky to have, which is not the case in other neighbourhoods where there is no way to breathe in their suffocating density.

The sea, despite the harm it does to the neighbourhood, such as flooding and the rapid degradation of the buildings due to the sea air, remains for the youth a way to express freedom. I refer here to the 'tactics of the "deprived" [which] discreetly transgress everyday hegemonies [and which] can be read as forms of resistance or, again, "social non-movements" to use A. Bayat's notion, namely actions emanating from those "urban subalterns" who are the scattered and less organized poor'.[4] (Erdi Lelandais and Florin, 2016)

The 'poorly organized' youth and its appropriation without an articulated strategy constitutes a lever for the margins that begins with changing the apriorism and prejudices that homogenise these spaces and associate them with unique poverty. Their practices also emanate from an unconscious resistance to the marginalisation and refusal of the precarisation to which they are regularly subjected, especially for those who frequently visit the city's centre. Their refusal of racist and discriminatory practices toward vulnerable foreigners also testifies to a resistance to the recurrent inequalities they regularly face.

4 - 'tactiques des "démunis" [qui] transgressant discrètement les hégémonies quotidiennes [et qui] peuvent être lues comme des formes de résistance ou, encore, des "non-mouvements sociaux" pour reprendre la notion d'Asef Bayat, à savoir des actions émanant de ces "subalternes urbains" que sont les pauvres, dispersés et mal organisés' (Erdi Lelandais and Florin, 2016). Author's translation.

It is not a question of direct opposition to a certain power by developing a structured movement (Bayat, 2009; Keith and Pile, 1997; Rosa, 2016). The observation of youth practices shows a silent claim to find a place in the city (Rosa, 2016) through the transformation of the space, which can redefine them 'as new political subjects' (Freire and Farias, 2011). Their knowledge and appropriation of the city and its interstices, and their attachment to the urban space, are the driving forces behind claiming their urbanity.

The transformation of space by marginalised youth can be strongly linked to the social movements that Lebanon has experienced since October 2019 which, alongside political demands, has claimed rights that are often forgotten and/or taboo (women's rights, migrants' rights, youth rights, urban rights, etc.); they have also highlighted and somehow democratised culture and art as a means of expression within the urban space. The practices of the young people in the image of the social movement discreetly contest the imposed constraining norms by investing in the interstitial spaces.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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