BORDERING AS A CRITICAL AND SPATIAL PRACTICE

The subject of borders within the city of Beirut requires a close investigation into the current spatial practices of its dwellers, specifically defined as residents, politicians and political parties/militias. These are the border practitioners I study in this research. The list could be expanded to include the army and the private sector and I will refer to other groups as well when required. These border practitioners are involved in shaping everyday life at times of conflict with varying power positions, and they engage in bordering practices in different capacities and modes of participation in the city of Beirut. For these people, borders are tools for configuring urban spaces along political and religious lines and for segregating and differentiating different uses of space. But borders are also the site of counter practices – tactical and/or critical – through which residents resist and negotiate political strategies of conflict as part of everyday life.

In their work on various practices that relate to power, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau consider spatial practices to be closely tied to the production of everyday life and lived experience. De Certeau describes a distinction between spatial practices in terms of strategy and tactics produced respectively by those in power and those who occupy positions of resistance,[9] while Lefebvre contrasts the practices of those in power with the passivity of users' practices – a passivity that can sometimes give way to dramatic subversion of the power relationship.[10] Other types of practice, termed by Jane Rendell as critical spatial practices, offer critiques of a society's mode of practice. Critical spatial practices explore the border as a potential space between theory and practice, between art and architecture, and between public and private. Such practices take the form of everyday tactics, as well as site-specific art and design projects that are both spatial and critical in their aim for social and political change.[11] For Rendell, critical spatial practices aim to reflect on the spatial conditions, situations and experiences through which they are produced, and to offer alternatives to the existing political situations and modes of binary thinking.[12]

The bordering practices that this project investigates and produces do not all belong to the same category. I define bordering practices as practices that construct material and immaterial borders as part of the socio-spatial interaction between individuals in time, as well as those practices that negotiate the splits created by existing borders by crossing and transforming them. This lends a more conceptual dimension to the notion of bordering practices; hence, while some bordering practices intend division and segregation, others seek to work across borders, to critique them, and to change them – or what I term critical bordering practice. Thus, critical bordering practice addresses the condition of borders, is critical of them, and aims to transform certain border positions. Specifically, I explore the possibilities that, in times of conflict, the critical bordering practices of research and art can operate as sites of resistance in everyday life by negotiating the bordering practices of political conflict. My project involved producing artwork as just such a critical bordering practice.

Throughout my research I have been gathering and documenting a 'List of Bordering Practices'. These bordering practices vary in the ways in which they occupy spaces – their locations, durations, materials and uses, and in the specifics of their practitioners. Some are located in fixed urban nodes – for example, the positioning of posters, monuments and street-corner gatherings; some involve transportable objects – for example, wearable accessories and gadgets, and aural and mobile practices such as fireworks, songs and political speeches in cars; and some are located on temporary demarcation lines that separate areas – for example, barricades of street objects, tyres and sand hills.

These bordering practices emerged gradually in Beirut and each political event associated with them gave rise to a practice that in turn suggested another practice, and so on. Responses to political and violent acts – whether a politician's speech, a demonstration or a bomb – might include, for example, motorcycle convoys cruising the streets, flags being hung on balconies and windows to show affiliation, or people going into the streets at night to protect the neighbourhood. To take another example: men smoking the hubble-bubble (*arguilé*), in men-only cafés or outside shops, is a common activity in the country; in the current conflict, this activity has been utilized to self-secure neighbourhoods from possible 'invasions' by outsiders or to monitor the street against the setting up of explosives at night.[13] The spatial practice of smoking *arguilé* on the street has been displaced from the social context that produced it; instead, it is used as a bordering practice for a different political purpose in the conflict. Such security practices were suggested by the leaders of political parties, who capitalized on civilians' fear and their desire to participate in protecting their neighbourhoods; later, these practices were formalized or legitimized. In the absence of state protection, the security of neighbourhoods justified civilians being armed for self-protection; this, in turn, confirmed the use of arms in the public space and in some places the practice was a camouflage for military training by armed groups.[14]

De Certeau makes a distinction between spatial practice as a tactic and strategy, and their association with space and place, that can help explore further the spatiality of bordering practices mentioned above and their political dimension. Spatial practice as a tactic is the domain of users who do not have a '"proper" spatial or institutional localization';[15] spatial practice as a strategy is the domain of those of 'will and power'[16] who own a '"proper" place or institution'[17] from which they operate. De Certeau argues that tactics 'constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities"',[18] and that these tactics of consumption 'in which the weak make use of the strong, ... lend a political dimension to everyday practices'.[19] He also differentiates between space and place: 'space is a practiced place',[20] is fluid, and is an 'intersection of mobile elements' set in time;[21] whereas place 'delimits a field',[22] is static like geometry, and is a fixed urban location as well as institutions and disciplines.[23] De Certeau argues that tactics as practices transform '"places" into "spaces"', commenting that 'a tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance'.[24] In relation to borders

and the formation of the other, he proposes that space produces tactics and forms the 'other', yet without creating a fixed boundary or a border, and without domination of either of the actors involved.[25] In this respect, the power of a tactic as a bordering practice is in occupying and manipulating a space without fixation and while transcending the limits of both places and spaces.

De Certeau's theory allows us to highlight two categories of bordering practices: tactical bordering practices that are interested in 'space' occupation/manipulation and transportable (transient and ephemeral) borderings, and as such have a critical capacity for change; and strategic bordering practices that are interested in 'place' acquisition and fixed borders, and as such institutionalize the border into a fixed political logic that replaces the process of negotiation.

A different way of considering how to negotiate between borders and bordering and their material and immaterial interplays is offered by Lefebvre's theory of space, as outlined in the *Production of Space*. Lefebvre proposes a twofold spatial triad to explain space as a 'social product',[26] consisting of 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'representational spaces',[27] which are linked to the 'perceived', 'conceived' and the 'lived'.[28] In this triad, 'spatial practices' mainly concern the material production of life in the form that subjects or individuals 'perceive' as a physical spatiality.[29] 'Representations of space' are conceptions and imaginations in the form of maps, documents and information, which are 'conceived' by, for example, planners, institutions and 'social engineers';[30] for Lefebvre, this is the 'dominant space in any society'.[31] 'Representational spaces' or 'spaces of representation' are spaces that are associated with 'images and symbols',[32] such as monuments and buildings, and they are forms not used to describe the spaces themselves, but which are inscribed materially and experienced by users. 'Representations of space' stand, for example, against the spaces of power and state: they are passively 'lived' by subjects and provide the space of resistance.[33]

Lefebvre's definition of space is fluid and dialectally encompasses many 'spaces' – representational, imagined, mental, immaterial, social and physical. His dynamic definition of space helps to understand borders as practices diffused in space, at times material, at others immaterial. The distinction between border and bordering practice is a direct correlation between Lefebvre's representations of space (border) – the imagined and conceived – and spaces of representation (bordering practices) – the lived and resisted.

In the context of this research, spatial practices, and the process of their gradual transformation into border/ing practices, take place over time. Time's relation to space can be usefully considered according to Edward Soja's 'triple dialectic' of the socio-spatio-temporal that he employs to think about and interpret space.[34] The process of border production, which is part of the production of social space, involves time. This temporal aspect is twofold: it indicates time as the gradual intensification of violence and the duration of the time it takes to build a border, or the quality these borders may have as they move, transform, or

LIST OF BORDERING PRACTICES

Territorial / Marking

Hanging political posters on buildings
Hanging political banners in the street
Commercial billboards and advertising campaigns
Displaying politicians' photographs
Painting buildings and shops façades in a party's political colour
Roundabout statues from posters and found material
Opening up political party offices
Control of cable broadcasting

Neighbourhood Security / Surveillance

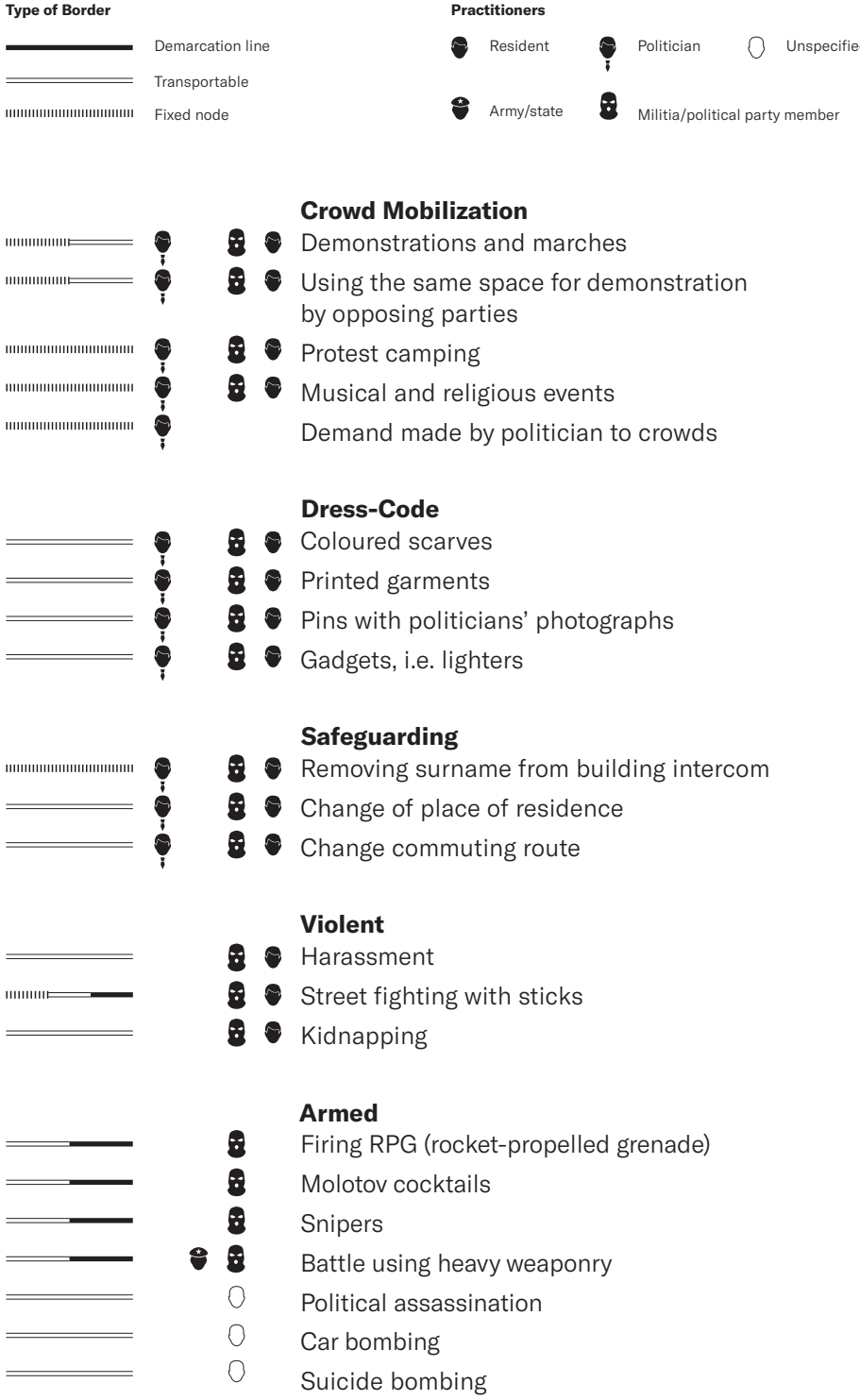
Men gathering on street corners
Smoking *arguilé* on street corners
Gathering around fire on street corners
Watching out for suspicious behaviour
Installing surveillance cameras
Prohibiting photography in specific areas
Opening *arguilé* café as surveillance front
Hiring private security companies

Access and Mobility Control

Checkpoints
Military tanks/vehicles
Human barriers
Burning wheels
Barricades (trash bins, sand bags, barbed wire, etc.)

Aural / Mobile

Motorcycle convoys with political flags
Vehicles playing loud political and sectarian sonic material
Fireworks following a speech of a politician


Type of Border
Demarcation line
Transportable
Fixed node
Practitioners
Resident
Politician
Unspecified
Army/state
Militia/political party member
Crowd Mobilization
Demonstrations and marches
Using the same space for demonstration by opposing parties
Protest camping
Musical and religious events
Demand made by politician to crowds
Dress-Code
Coloured scarves
Printed garments
Pins with politicians' photographs
Gadgets, i.e. lighters
Safeguarding
Removing surname from building intercom
Change of place of residence
Change commuting route
Violent
Harassment
Street fighting with sticks
Kidnapping
Armed
Firing RPG (rocket-propelled grenade)
Molotov cocktails
Snipers
Battle using heavy weaponry
Political assassination
Car bombing
Suicide bombing

disappear over time. And it also involves diachronicity, that is, how time can be employed as an element of confrontation and occupation in the bordering practices associated with conflict, such as practices of recurring and being on hold for a long period of time.

The list of bordering practices that I documented highlights how different communities of interest are formed, whether through direct or indirect involvement, among residents, politicians, militia members and the army. It also indicates how they shift and negotiate their positions according to specific situations. The shifting of positions by individuals/groups is a tradition in Lebanese life, particularly because of the way political parties shift between being militias on the streets to returning to state and government positions. It is notable that most militia leaders who fought in the civil war are present and represented in state institutions, as, for example, members of parliament, speaker of the house, and ministers, while the militia members are integrated into the police forces.[35] Thus, the notion of operating from someone else's position, such as a resident becoming a militia member, is formalized as a cultural and social tradition by those holding positions of power.

It is the negotiation of positions, and of spatial practices as tactic and strategy, material and immaterial, within the space of the other, that I explore as bordering practice. To consider borders as spatial practices and critical spatial practices and as part of everyday life helps generate a deeper understanding of the making and using of borders that socially and physically divide people while simultaneously connecting them.

FROM BORDER TO BORDERING PRACTICES

There is currently a proliferation of the logic of border, war and division, and the practices of bordering, in the domain of social life not only in Beirut but also in many of the world's cities. Racial segregation in the US, the rise of exclusionary politics and discrimination against minority groups and 'others' in Europe, and religious sectarian tensions in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia are evidence that borders and bordering practices are found well beyond Lebanon. The changing aspects of borders have been well expressed by Etienne Balibar who describes their vacillation in terms of layout and function, noting that borders 'stopped marking the limits where politics end … but have indeed become … the space of the political itself'.[36]

It is the thinking of two sides, according to Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams, that structures Western political and social thought and underpins the notion of borders. They suggest that borders need to be considered in relation to epistemology, ontology, and spatial-temporality and, in so doing, they 'begin thinking of [the border] in terms of a series of *practices*'.[37] Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen suggest that the changing 'nature of borders and practices of