

## “A demarcation in the hearts”

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# “A demarcation in the hearts”: everyday urban frontiers in Beirut

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## **Introduction**

Conflict in Lebanon is very frequently interpreted by media and foreign policy experts and practitioners as solely a ‘proxy battleground’ and a ‘microcosm’ of regional rivalries, notably between Saudi Arabia and Iran (via the party-and-militia Hezbollah). The violent clashes that engulfed the country and its capital in May 2008 were also framed within this interpretation. More generally, this tendency is also common to academic studies of conflict. According to Kalyvas (2006), most research on violence focuses excessively on “macrolevel” narratives and predefined social cleavages and instead tends to dismiss microlevel evidence “as irrelevant or too messy” (2006, p. 6).

Within days in May 2008, Beirut’s urban space and built environment were re-drawn: roads barricaded, areas divided, and buildings deliberately targeted. This chapter concerns the formation and resurgence of urban borders during and in the aftermath of the violence. While there has been copious amounts of studies of cities as constellations of self-contained entities such as enclaves, gated communities and ghettos, there has been less attention in urban studies on borders and boundaries (Iossifova, 2013) intended as “intricate urban phenomena shaped by complex transcalar processes” (2013, p. 4), and on the ways in which microlevel urban cleavages shape the everyday tangible and intangible spatialities of conflict.

This chapter bridges this gap, by linking previously disjointed theories from architecture and political geography: namely, frontier urbanism (Pullan, 2011) and urban geopolitics (Fregonese, 2017; Graham, 2004a; Yacobi and Pullan, 2014). Particularly, the notions of sense of territoriality and of obduracy of urban frontiers, are built upon and developed here to highlight the importance of everyday aspects surrounding the resurgence and formation of old and new urban borders in situations of conflict.

The first part of the chapter traces the context of the clashes that engulfed part of Beirut in early May 2008, and outlines some of the nodes in the urban geography of violence that became relevant in the interpretation of the conflict by the research participants. The second part conceptualises theoretically Beirut's conflict-driven urban changes, building mutually on urban geopolitics and frontier urbanism: the former benefitting from frontier urbanism to expand its over-militaristic focus, and the latter benefitting from recent debates in urban geopolitics about the value of the everyday (Fregonese, 2012) and the ordinary (Rokem et al., 2017) in thinking about conflict in cities. The third part focuses on three processes of resurgence and renegotiation of tangible and intangible borders: the green line, targetable spaces, and latent demarcations. The chapter ends with an invitation for more research on conflict that takes seriously the everyday and experiential aspects of urban frontiers.

The following pages rely on qualitative evidence gathered from 20 semi-structured interviews (of which 2 walking interviews) in Beirut between October and December 2010. Interviews focused on residents with direct experience of the May 2008 clashes, by living in targeted areas or working in targeted buildings.

## The escalation of violence<sup>i</sup>

In early May 2008, a controversy over infrastructure between the Lebanese government, drawn from the so-called 'March 14' coalition, and the 'March 8' opposition, including *Hezbollah*<sup>3</sup> rapidly escalated into deadly street clashes between armed militias.<sup>4</sup> These dramatic events, popularly known as '7 May' (*Sab 'at ayyār*), were a rapid and, for many, unexpected deterioration of the socio-political polarisation that followed the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al Hariri on 14 February 2005, and the consequent wave of popular protests that led to the fall of the government (the 'Cedar Revolution').

Between 3 and 6 May 2008, the Lebanese government, then led by PM Fouad Siniora, took a series of controversial decisions with respect to *Hezbollah* and its use of certain infrastructures. The first decision was the removal of General Brigadier Wafiq Shuqeir from his role as security chief of Beirut's Rafiq al Hariri International Airport (BIA). The accusation was that Shuqeir tolerated the installation by Hezbollah of a system of surveillance cameras overlooking the airport's runway 17. This runway, mainly used for private aircraft, is surrounded by the Hezbollah-dominated semi-informal neighbourhood of Al-Ouzai. The government argued that these cameras were a security threat against Lebanon's sovereignty because of their alleged use for spying on – and possibly targeting – private aircraft flying VIPs in and out of Beirut.

Secondly, the government decided to outlaw a network of underground fibre optic cables that Hezbollah had installed in eastern and southern Lebanon, and which had reached parts of Beirut's southern suburbs. The network, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah argued in an emotionally charged press conference, allowed secure communication within the military wing of the party, with less risk of eavesdropping and interference by Israeli surveillance than wireless technology:

‘There are wireless communications, either radios or cellars, that is, the voice goes out on the air, in the various forms that current technology has made possible. There is another simpler form, land lines, which is spread out from one set to another, in which the voice does not go out on the air, but stays contained’ (Nasrallah, 8 May 2008, translated by Wilmsen, 2009)

Keeping the voice in the ground rather than dispersing it in the air was a crucial technical consideration for Hezbollah's geopolitical cause of Resistance (*Al-Muqawama*) against Israel's occupation of south Lebanon, part of which remains contested, after Israel's withdrawal in 2000. The government instead unambiguously condemned *Hezbollah's* communications infrastructure as a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty.

Confronted with the government's attempt to regulate and limit Hezbollah's control of infrastructure, territory, and ultimately the geopolitical project of the Resistance, Hassan Nasrallah compared the outlawing of the communication network and the events at the airport to ‘a war declaration’ by the government against his party ([Al Jazeera English, 2008](#)). Following the press conference, *Hezbollah* launched a paramilitary operation, the objectives of which were to shut down media outlets affiliated with the governing March 14 coalition, surround March 14 politicians' residences, and neutralise the March 14 armed militants in the streets.

## **Frontier urbanism and urban geopolitics**

In the last decade, a vast corpus of interdisciplinary research has explored “the effects of geopolitical events upon the practices of everyday urban life” (Yacobi and Pullan, 2014, p. 516) under the broad umbrella of *urban geopolitics*. Contributions to urban geopolitics are multidisciplinary and diverse (Rokem and Boano, 2017), but their common interest are the

specific connections between urban space, localised dynamics of power and violence, and discourses and practices of global politics.

As argued elsewhere (Fregonese, 2017), however, much of urban geopolitics has suffered from analytical over-reliance on a limited pool of case studies consisting of extreme, heavily militarised conflicts. Besides a use of Israel/Palestine as a paradigmatic case of the tight interconnections between urban spaces and infrastructures and wider dynamics of global power and conflict (Abujidi, 2014; Graham, 2005, 2004b; Yacobi and Pullan, 2014), Arab cities have also often featured in urban geopolitical writing as military targets of the war on terror (Graham, 2006), or as agglomerations of ‘complex’ infrastructures and insurgencies that obstacle the US techno-military dominance (Graham, 2008). The military- and to a certain extent techno-centric – perspective presents a double rift: first, it shifts away from earlier urban geopolitics work in Francophone contexts (Douzet, 2001; Hulbert, 1989), which engaged with broader issues of power mechanisms and inequalities in cities. Secondly, it tends to overlook the more everyday aspects and sites of urban geopolitical manifestations (Fregonese, 2012) that, while not ‘a fall-out from warfare doctrines and military technoscience’ (Harris, 2015, p. 4) , are far from being distinct from the dynamics of conflict and actually contribute to shaping them. In other words, and particularly related to urban boundaries, “conceptualising urban geopolitics beyond the total rapture and breakdown of municipal systems and cities as [...] war-torn battlefields, allows developing a renewed look more attuned to the everyday manifestations across the messier ordinary processes of *segregation and mobility*” (Rokem et al., 2017, p. 254).

Cities play an active part in shaping how sovereignty is exercised and managed (Davis and Libertun de Duren, 2011). State sovereignty nowadays is increasingly exerted, reinforced, and reproduced inside cities for example by the installation and use of surveillance and security infrastructures, resulting in the militarisation of urban space (Graham, 2010) and even the shifting of national borders inside urban space, for example to govern migration (İşleyen, 2018). The spatial and architectural dynamics that characterise the presence and power of frontiers inside cities where opposing groups confront each other, and the way in which these inner urban frontiers differentiate themselves from state boundaries or the urban periphery, has been theorised as “frontier urbanism” (Pullan, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Disturbing the state-centred interpretation of the notion of frontier, and noting that “most studies of contested frontiers [...] focus on states or regions rather than cities” (15), Pullan argues that, particularly under conditions of globalisation and cities rising as a major incubator of identity politics, the importance of urban frontiers and their “profound spatial implications for the structure, orientation and growth of their cities” (2011:15) has increased, especially for cities experiencing high degrees of conflict.

Frontier urbanism employs a concept – that of the frontier – that belongs traditionally to the realm of the state to interpret dynamics of urban contestation and segregation, especially in the case of Jerusalem. Through an architectural lens rather than a military and techno-centric one, the frontier is re-conceptualised here as a spatial dynamic of the inner city. The dense inner city core is the site of multi-layer daily contestation between Jewish settlers and Palestinians “generated from the two conflicting populations, with the purposes of religio-political activism and resistance” (20), and follows a much different rhythm and intensity compared to Jerusalem’s suburbs punctuated by “state-sponsored peripheral settlements” (20).

While the notion of “sense of territoriality” is one that I wish to retain for this chapter, in discussing the case of Beirut I depart, however, from Pullan’s point that conflict and the urban frontier, with time, become absorbed in the urban form – through organisations, institutions and official architectures<sup>ii</sup> – and become part of the city in the long term until the frontier becomes non-violent (yet extremely sensitive part of inner city life). First, I show how even frontiers that have been at least partially reabsorbed into the city’ daily life can resurge (like the former green lines). Second, differently from Pullan’s examples of frontier urbanism where the frontier is enacted through planning, official architecture and associations, I wish to de-institutionalise the frontier and de-couple it from recognisable planning and architectural processes, and see it instead as an everyday capillary practice that is often disjointed from organisations and is more ordinary, unplanned.

### *Old and new frontiers*

In May 2008, a number of neighbourhoods along to the ex-Green Line – the no man’s land that, during the civil war, partitioned Beirut into a predominantly Christian east and a predominantly Muslim west – became violent hotspots. There is a geographical overlapping of the majority of the 2008 clashes with the course of the former Green Line of the 1975-1990 conflict. Zokak el Blat, Khand el Ghamiq, Basta, Burj Abi Haydar, Barbour, Ras el Nabaa, Corniche el Mazraa and Tariq Jdeedeh were recurrent mentions by participants, as confirmed in Figure 1: “it started in Hamra and in Zokak el Blat, Khand el Ghamiq, Basta, Burj Abi Haydar, Barbour, between Barbour and Corniche el Mazraa, this started to be a line of clashes between Barbour, the Shi’a and the Sunni” (Interview 1).



**<FIGURE 1 HERE>**

Fig. 1: Locations of the May 2008 clashes in relation to the Green Line. Source: Limes, rivista italiana di geopolitica, map and drawing by Laura Canali. Translation by the author. Obtained with permission.

The nomenclature of Beirut's civil war urban political geography, including the names "East Beirut" and "West Beirut", re-emerged in the interviews. However, this revived urban border was also described by participants as working differently from its predecessor. Whereas during the civil war the Green Line was a no-man's land controlled by militia checkpoints and snipers, dividing Beirut into two separate sectors, with respective internal cleavages and violent geographies, in May 2008, the line divided Beirut into a mostly embattled West and a mostly peaceful East. In the latter, everyday life continued practically undisturbed, as pointed out by an Achrafieh-based participant: "for us, in Achrafieh, it was like normal life: we went to work, I was sending my son to day-care, everything was normal because everybody thought that [the fighting] was limited to West Beirut and to the mountains" (Interviewee 2, 2010). Despite the presence of both March 8 and March 14 supporters in the East, according to several participants there were political, logistical, and geographical reasons for avoiding fighting there. Firstly, Hezbollah did not want to undermine its reputation and jeopardise its alliance with the Christian parties of the March 8 coalition, by inciting them to fight the March 14-affiliated Christians: "there's a general understanding that, if Hezbollah go [to] the streets, ... [Hezbollah] will not go to Christian areas because there is an understanding between [them] and Aoun [the March 8 Christian leader in East Beirut]...It's too much for [Hezbollah] to go to Christian areas" (Interviewee 3, 2010). Another interpretation of this difference was that East Beirut's March 8 ranks were not ready to fight against the Christian component of March 14, known to be better equipped: "Aounists are not made to fight, they

are not up to it. Because on the ground the Lebanese Forces [March 14 militants in East Beirut] [are] much stronger...It would have been really nasty...They wouldn't have [been able to] take over...East Beirut" (Interviewee 2, 2010). The third political factor to shape the geography of the border was that the clashes were mainly confined between the Shi'a component of March 8 and the Sunni component of March 14<sup>iii</sup>, and thus targeted the areas and buildings associated with those components. The spatial genealogy of the green line is important here: March 14 politicians' private residences, party headquarters and offices were historically situated in the western sector, and especially since the civil war: "Walid Joumblat lives here... the government building is here... the Sunnis are in West Beirut...most of them they are here" (Interviewee 19, 2010).

Hospitality and mobility were further practices that contributed to reinforce the east/west border. East Beirut was where residents who were fleeing the fighting West found temporary hospitality and, once the fighting ended, where residents shifted their daily routines and activities, and even found a safe area to move to, in name of safety rather than belonging: "after May 7th we have decided to move to a Christian area, which is safer. [In] Achrafieh, we discovered that it's not only us. Where I live now... I find several people, several Muslims". (Interviewee 3, 2010). One participant reported, his whole life "started to be in the East. I was feeling afraid to go [West]. Really afraid" (Interviewee 1, 2010), and another described how before the clashes was "[going] out in Achrafieh [East] more, I used to go to Hamra [West] every time I [wanted] to go out, but not anymore" (Interviewee 2, 2010). The violence and its aftermath affected day-to-day routines, driving people away from previously sought-after residential and entertainment neighbourhoods because "if you want to go out at night and you want to be somewhere where you want to be yourself, it's not [possible] anymore because...you meet people who you don't want to discuss politics with...and they

all come from a different background and it's just something... I don't want to go there"

(Interviewee 2, 2010).

East Beirut also provided infrastructural back-up to the services and infrastructures affected by the violence. As we will see in the next section, the attacks often targeted more or less openly pro-March 14 media offices (TVs, newspapers, radios), as part of a concerted strategy by Hezbollah and its allies to 'silence the voice' of the March 14 party. These targets were in the West, while the media buildings in the East remained widely unscathed, but "would have been targeted if we were in West Beirut" (Interviewee 2, 2010).

The May 2008 clashes re-activated a pre-existing frontier, but the genealogies of that frontier influenced the modalities of this reactivation. The clashes between March 8 and March 14, and especially between their Sunni and Shia components ignited in mid-lower income areas along the former green line, that had become less mixed and more confessionally homogeneous during of the war (ref), however, in the context of the 2008 clashes, the border became also "completely new, because in the civil war you had Beirut [divided] in two parts, the Christian and the Muslim part" (Interviewee 14, 2010). now you have the Christian part, but in the West Beirut it's a labyrinth. You [also] have a new line of demarcation [within the West] between the Sunnis and the Shiites" (Interviewee 14, 2010).

### *Shared spaces, targetable places*

In internecine conflict, it is often the spaces of encounter between different groups, that became the first targets of violence (Bryant, 2016; Pullan, 2006). Precisely because these places host a vast and dense diversity of people and practices, they become hubs of fighting, as well as targets of wanton violence against specific groups and their built environment. Thus, social mix becomes materially impossible, the place often abandoned, and the way

paved for physical segregation and division (Coward, 2009). The targets are not only places conducive to specific communities and/or identities (religious buildings, government premises, or monuments), but the ordinary spaces where people come together in everyday life: from schools to cafes', from markets to offices.

This was true of Beirut's historic city centre in the wake of the civil war: while the conflict ignited in the south-eastern suburbs of the city, it is in the city centre that the destruction became particularly vast and wanton, due to the presence of assets considered more valuable by the militias (e.g. the port), the wanton burning and looting of shops, libraries and government buildings, the presence of high rise buildings granting control for snipers. Soon, what had been a hub of commerce, transport and culture had no reason to be, and remained empty.

Albeit the attention was often on the systematic takeover, by March 8-affiliated militias, of media offices linked to March 14 politicians, it was the more ordinary and shared spaces in the city that were targeted in May 2008. A participant who resided in what he had until then perceived positively as a mixed neighbourhood near Beirut's city centre, stated that the militias "broke the idea of [being] neighbours" (Interviewee 1, 2010). Religiously mixed neighbourhoods, especially those on fault lines between Sunni and Shia communities, suffered most, because of the developing rivalry between the two communities across the March 8 and March 14 divide: "this is the area that is more prone to clashes, and basically some more clashes happened after May 7, but this, the centre, is really, really dangerous, where you have Burj abi Haidar, Mussaitbeh, Batrakieh, Zqaq le Blat, Hay al Lija, these are poor neighbourhoods. Tariq Jdideh , Ras al NAbah, is a poor neighbourhood , but because

Tariq Jdeedeh is not mixed, is still on the safer side, but these areas the really, really mixed. “  
(2).

The consequences for residents’ mobility and co-existence were severe: checkpoints appeared and mobility was interrupted by barricades; side streets and alleyways were sites of incidents, beatings, and even abductions; while major arteries exposed passers-by to firing. One interviewee described an incident in a residential street: “I reached this close to my home, and I found a bunch of young men, obviously Amal and Hezbollah, trying to break [down] the door of a building” (Interviewee 3, 2010).

These new divisions penetrate the everyday lives and built environment of both Sunni and Shia residents, whose proximity in certain neighbourhoods has become increasingly problematic : “You have in the same building on the same floor, an apartment with Shiite, and their neighbours are Sunni, and they hate each other. And the demarcation is the stairs” (Interviewee 9, 2010). Another states: “The problem is that they are living together, in the same buildings, same streets, so you have a demarcation in the hearts (Interviewee 14, 2010)”.

### *From street corner to checkpoint: latent frontiers*

By the second week of May, the conflict started to de-escalate in Beirut, first with Prime Minister Siniora’s withdrawal of the two decrees against Hezbollah's communication network and the airport security, and then with the army ordering the militias to withdraw from the streets of Beirut, and to hand over control of the street to the army. The following week, the National Dialogue Conference was held in Doha, Qatar, resulting in an agreement ending an

eighteen-month political deadlock in the country. Following the Doha agreement, a new President, General Michel Suleiman, was elected.

Despite the official peace in Doha, the urban frontiers that (re-)emerged in 2008 did not disappear overnight: “Things calmed down in Doha, not in the street” (Interviewee 2, 2010). Security has been traditionally understood, in international relations, as part of a state’s provision to its population and as a measure of its sovereignty against external threats; even though critical scholarship has long debunked realist views of states as ‘containers of security’, approaches to security have been predominantly state-based. However, research into urban expressions of security is increasing highlighting the nature of security as a problematic (yet vastly normalised) assemblage of everyday discourses, materialities and affects that strides across traditional boundaries of public/private and state/nonstate (Adey et al., 2013; Kaker, 2014; Paasche and Sidaway, 2010) . Reflecting on their exhaustive survey of visible security mechanisms in Beirut (Fawaz et al., 2012), Fawaz and Akar (2012, p. 108) see security critically as “a complex, overlapping, and contentious set of anxieties that materialize spatially in entrenching segregation and socially, by differentiating among urban dwellers along lines of gender, class, race, or religious/sectarian belonging.”

Security in Beirut after the May clashes can be viewed as an assemblage of state, non-state and private dispositives of socio-spatial differentiation and boundary-making. While in some urban areas (notably in the city centre), some boundaries and blockades lifted, and mobility swiftly returned<sup>iv</sup>, in other parts of the city the socio-material presence of the border persisted in more or less tangible ways, experienced and negotiated by residents in their everyday practices.

For Pullan (2011) frontier urbanism is characterised by “the settling of civilians as frontier populations, and the use of urban spaces and structures to promote a particular power and to foster confrontation” (p. 31). The renewed presence and meaning of territorial markers in the

aftermath of the clashes contributed to shaping urban frontiers, such as in the neighbourhood of Zoqaq al Blat. This quarter lies at the edge of Beirut's city centre, an area that since 1991 has seen reconstruction and privatisation led by Libano-Saudi tycoon Rafiq al Hariri (who had also been, before his death, the leader of the Future Movement, the leading party in the March 14 coalition). Instead of spatial continuity, Zokak al Blat's proximity to the centre instead emphasises the presence of a frontier space. After 2008, there has been a surge in political markers in the area, especially by the Amal party: "The flags, the posters, they came back. They were much more present than I had ever seen them before" (Interview 1); this is paralleled by the perceived heavier presence of territorial markers in the Hamra neighbourhood west of Zokak al Blat: "you won't feel comfortable [...] because you see the flags everywhere" (Interview 2).

Subtle, but palpable, physical and human frontiers pervaded the streets. This presence was described by several interviewees as the watchful presence of militants in local neighbourhoods: "In the street...it still feels the same [as during the clashes], [the fighters] are not in the street, but you feel that they [could] appear at any second. You still have this feeling of...you cannot do anything. [The] fighters withdrew ... but they still have their arms, they are still ready, they are still controlling, and they are still watching" (Interviewee 1, 2010). The apparently innocent practice of young men (*shabāb*) 'hanging out', sitting at street corners smoking and playing cards was perceived, post-2008, as an intimidating practice of surveillance; one participant states: "they just sit, in civilian clothes and you don't see the arms, but you know that they are there to monitor the street and to watch" (Interviewee 2, 2010) and another: "...I don't remember always seeing *shabeb* [guys, lads] on their chairs all the time and now you do. You know... you can feel the difference" (Interviewee 9).

But it is also less blatant signs and presences: the figure of the shabeb at particular street corners or pavements. Connection with youth unemployment, classically sitting at the side of the street, smoking argileh and playing backgammon or on their phones. [any literature on the shabeb?]

The point that these presences denote a readiness of the population to come back and take position in the neighbourhoods, should conflict escalate again, is depicted by another participant, who described the double role of one of his neighbours during the clashes, as someone he'd see every day sitting at a street corner, and at the start of the clashes was manning a local checkpoint, and politely greeted him and waived him through. Another participant states: "someone who lives in my neighbourhood was describing how the guy that normally walked around selling coffee off his shoulders, was suddenly seen with a gun and guarding a checkpoint for a while". (9)

## Conclusion

In a 2001 special issue of *Herodote*, Yves Lacoste pointed out the need to expand the focus of geopolitics, in a way that doesn't simply *re-scale* classical geopolitics and its theories and tools from the study of the geographical elements of inter-state politics to the study of cities, but rather *adapt* geopolitics with theories and methods that are apt to the particular context of the town:

*Par géopolitique, il faut entendre – répétons-le – toutes rivalités de pouvoirs et d'influences sur du territoire, quelles que soient leurs formes – plus ou moins violentes – et quelles que soient les dimensions des espaces concernés*<sup>v</sup> (Lacoste 2001: 3).



Applying an urban lens on Kalyvas' (2006) critique of the overreliance on macro-level narratives in the analysis of conflict, this chapter has shown that the micro-dimensions of conflict and the local territorialities of Beirut's May 2008 clashes are not purely backdrops on which regional geopolitics are simply played out, but are instead both intimately connected to such geopolitics, crucial to the dynamics of conflict and, most importantly, permeating the residents' everyday lives in often intangible, but impactful, ways. I have used the notion of frontier urbanism to innovatively develop the agenda of political geography and more specifically urban geopolitics into the non- or less-militarised and the ordinary aspects and dynamics of conflict, in order to emphasise how space and politics are negotiated within the urban environment on a daily and ordinary basis, in ways that might be messy, but are impactful and deserve serious consideration.

This chapter has analysed three processes underpinning the formation, resurgence and governing of urban frontiers in central Beirut during and in the aftermath of the May 2008 internecine clashes.

The first process concerned the resurgence of Beirut's former green line, once a hostile frontier between fighting parts, but partially reabsorbed into the daily life of the post-conflict city and, at least in the section closer to the city centre, even become the site for a number of individual architectural and heritage projects that deliberately speak to and of the conflict, but in pacified, civic and creative terms<sup>vi</sup>. With the clashes, a pre-existing but temporarily absorbed civil war urban frontier was re-activated, but along new manifestations of difference and contestation.

Another process of differentiation and boundary-making during and in the aftermath of the clashes was, like in many internecine conflicts, the everyday practice and perception of space

as shared, especially in those areas by the former green line which presented a greater and denser mix between Sunnis and Shia. Rather than being epitomised by a tangible divided line, these new divisions penetrate the everyday lives and built environment of both Sunni and Shia residents, whose proximity in certain neighbourhoods has become increasingly problematic

A third process of differentiation occurred in the aftermath of the clashes and involved the perception and experience of specific urban everyday practices as double-edged, as seemingly peaceful practices that can quickly be re-gearred for war. As the opposite process of the absorption of conflict into the life of the city (as with the green line and the civic and creative establishments that punctuate it), here we witness a mimetising of civil life into landscapes of readiness for war. The spatial consequence of the May 2008 clashes has been the resilience of informal urban boundaries after the clashes and the establishment of latent frontiers characterised by the presence of civilians acting as watchful elements, and the use of territorial markers to project power and provoke confrontation.

On the one hand, the chapter has benefitted from Pullan's theoretical work on the urban frontier, which allows us to step beyond a military-centric approach in urban geopolitics, and be able to analyse geopolitically urban landscapes that are certainly highly contested, but not always fully and completely annihilated by state-led military force. On the other hand, and departing from frontier urbanism, I approach the urban frontier from beyond the architectural, into the realm of the ordinary, in order to make sense of a conflict that was deadly, but not always mappable through the lens of planning and architecture, or interpretable through the long-term lens of the absorption of urban conflict via tangible civic organisations and institutions, but often through ad-hoc, temporary and short-term practices that deserve serious study.

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<sup>ii</sup> Pullan makes the example of the city of Gubin (hard border crossing) and Nicosia (museum of national struggle)

<sup>iii</sup> With the addition of Druze leader Walid Joumblat who, as a March 14 minister at the time, started the airport controversy.

<sup>iv</sup> Soon after the Doha agreement was declared, a vast protest camp by March 8 supporters that surrounded the Government building (Grand Serail) in the city centre since December 2006, was lifted almost overnight.

<sup>v</sup> By geopolitics, we must mean [...] all rivalries about power and influence on the territory, regardless of their forms – more or less violent - and regardless of the dimensions of the spaces concerned. [...]

<sup>vi</sup> Two examples are particularly telling: the Yabani restaurant by Architects studio Bernard Khoury, purposefully located by the former green line and developed mainly underground, this is a deliberate celebration of denial of conflict and of the incongruous relationship of the building with its surroundings, in a structure where “The patrons can [...] enjoy their dining experience in total denial of their immediate urban surroundings.”

(<http://www.bernardkhoury.com/project.php?id=153>). The other example is the Beit Beirut – Museum and Urban Cultural Center, a neo-ottoman style building located on the former green line at one of its main crossings and checkpoints, and thus used as a sniper's position during the civil war. Thanks to civil society and municipal efforts, the building has been listed and turned into a museum and cultural centre, with facilities “for archiving research and studies on the city of Beirut throughout history”

(<http://www.beitbeirut.org/english/historyen.html>), amidst a renovated building where the marks of the fighting have been deliberately left exposed.