Re-Imagining Spaces for Representation in the Divided City:

The Cases of Urban Street Art in 'Post'- Conflict Beirut and Belfast

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Abstract

The research study investigates the social and political dimension of contemporary street art production in the deeply divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. Specifically, it examines how historical experiences with the ethnonational and the neoliberal urbanisation of space constitute and maintain the perceptions and motivations of street artists to engage with everyday life. While more is understood on the neoliberal urban and ethnonational impact of social realities on the social perceptions within the milieu of divided cities, much less is understood about the impact of new social realities about the social perceptions of street art communities. The research design for the project compared the urban and social phenomenon of street art in the post-conflict cities of Beirut and Belfast, over a four-month, blended case study and focused ethnography. The researcher conducted twenty-two semi-structured interviews with eighteen street artists, three festival organisers and one city management official, and observed participants while volunteering at two street art festivals in Belfast. By shedding light on some of their artistic practices, the findings reveal that street art communities engage in small- 'p' political acts. They re-purpose taken-for-granted spaces within the city to demonstrate how street artists adjust their practices to reveal pragmatic and rule-based forms of placemaking to avoid jarring with sectarian identities while bringing attention to the democratic, transient and transformative nature of their practices. While they do not have an impact on the nature of space, their interactions could remark on the possibilities for the co-production of space. Moreover, they intend to awaken the slumber of urban dwellers with the visceral enjoyment and experiences of creating and producing street art for the inhabitants of the space. While small, their artistic interventions gift the inhabitants of Beirut and Belfast with ephemeral and gratuitous forms of interactions which present an opportunity, however temporary, for different social worlds to meet.

Acronyms

Ahla Fawda Street Art Festival – AF
Arts Council of Northern Ireland - ACNI
Beirut Central District – BCD
Belfast City Council – BCC
The Cathedral Quarter – CQ
Good Friday Agreement - GFA
Hit the North Street Art Festival – HTN
Irish Republican Army - IRA
Laganside Development Corporation – LDC
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ)
Société Libanaise pour le Development et la Reconstruction de Centre Ville de Beyrouth – Solidere
Urban Dawn - UD

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter consists of three parts. The first part presents the background of the study's investigation into the everyday experiences of street artists in the divided societies of Beirut and Belfast. The second part provides the research study's focus, its objectives, the value of researching artistic engagement within divided cities, and the implications it has on the formation of alternative cultural identities in deeply divided societies. Finally, the third part presents the outline of the thesis.

1.2 Background information

The post-conflict societies of Beirut and Belfast are transitioning out of a violent episode of social and urban conflict where strong and persistent forces of sectarianism and neoliberal urban development continue to fragment and segment their societies. The street artists of Beirut and Belfast inhabit and produce their artistic interventions in a divided cityscape, where "places [are] riven by ethnic and or national cleavages across all areas of political and social life" (Nagle, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, the social, cultural and political divisions in Beirut and Belfast "are so firmly attached to vociferous and rigorous ethno-sectarian discourses" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 174), that they continue to influence the occurrences and the course of events in everyday life. The combination of political and ethnic ideologies is one of many pillars of identity formation in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast. The sectarian discourses persist in post-conflict Belfast and Beirut and continue to serve as the enduring legacy of unresolved territorial and identity disputes which further fragment everyday life (Nolan, 2012a).

The social and visual manifestations of these ideological divisions exist in the form of single-identity neighbourhoods, and exclusive shopping districts, where the multiplication of social services caters to the sectarian communities in Beirut and Belfast. At the social and communal level, these identities are "a source of group solidarity and a venue for vital socio-psychological and economic support" (Khalaf, 2013, p. 236). Societal problems such as child and family welfare, drug use, mental health, poverty, protection of the environment, domestic problems and other public issues are all secondary to the segmented political concerns (Khalaf, 2013; Nucho, 2016; Randall, 2014; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). Nagle (2016) discusses the potency of intercommunal conflict "from the simple issue of refuse collection which exposes the dysfunctional character of public institutions dominated by ethnic leaders who principally work to further the pluralistic interest of their community rather than pursue policies that contribute to the greater good" (p. 2). Shirlow and Murtagh's (2006) research examined the visible manifestations of urban segregation as "symbolic expressions of group identity and avoidance of an 'objectified' other" (p. 82). These manifestations exist in the form of political murals, agitprop art, symbols, flags, and posters and represent the diverse ideological attachments with places in Beirut and Belfast.

The study seeks to investigate what motivates the street artists of Beirut and Belfast to engage with their city, and what that registers about the nature of everyday life in divided societies. Situating a fundamentally social and urban practice in divided spaces requires an analytic and conceptual framework capable of examining the perceptions of the producers of these artistic interventions. The quintessential urban and social process of street art has taken root in cities across the world since the 1990s where street artists transform drab city walls and produce temporary open-air art galleries in public spaces. In addition to beautifying urban spaces, street art is known to register the social, political, and economic health of a city by painting images which are visually representative of diverse commentary, opinions, and claims. Street art is also a local artistic practice "inscribed into urban history, social relations, architectural forms and textures, and the economic and power relations in a given city" (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015, p. x). The relationship between street art and the city is a social process of co-production between the street artists who engage with spaces and their everyday experiences with the events, occurrences, and "pulse" of the city. The artist's intention and practice "allow[s] us to see a balance of power and the course of events" (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015, p. 8) at the site of their intervention.

Moreover, the study seeks to investigate the power relations which restrict or create opportunities for civic engagement by examining the perspectives and the social understanding of street artists towards the social and urban changes around them. Many scholars investigate the social and spatial realities of sectarianisation and neoliberal urban development in Beirut and Belfast and their implications on transition, social cohesion and national reconciliation (Fawaz, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010; Nagle, 2018; Traboulsi, 2008). More recently, scholars of the Lebanese and Northern Irish societal and urban divisions employ Henri Lefebvre's socio-spatial framework of the 'right to the city', to examine what processes exist to form and maintain the framing of individuals to organise their experiences (Goffman, 1975) of everyday life in the divided cities. The application of a social and spatial understanding of the lived experiences of street artists will help uncover their motivations and place-making practices to create their vibrant and colourful masterpieces on city walls, and thus, undoubtedly will paint a clearer picture of their intentions.

1.3 Research Focus

The research focuses on the social understanding of street artists towards their social environments by uncovering their intentions of engaging in the practice of street art, their motivations for placing their artistic interventions in the public environment, and whether their temporary placemaking practices differ from, or confront, existing sectarian and neoliberal logics of space. These perspectives will then enable an understanding of what the placement of temporary and ephemeral artistic interventions can help uncover about the social practice of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984) in these deeply divided environments. The street artist's social and urban perspectives in the comparison of two case studies of the phenomena of street art practices in Beirut and Belfast will differ because of the unique dimensions of power, and the course of events inherent in those societies. Kerr (2009) refers to Beirut and Belfast as "sister cities that 'enjoy' a lot in common" and "provide rich pickings

for any researcher who seeks to develop an understanding of civil war and ethnic conflict"(p. 6) on the practices of everyday life. Both cities emerged after decades of prolonged socially protracted conflict (Avruch, 2008), which vociferously attach social identity to territorial fault lines and contributes to a series of comparable issues.

Thus, the study seeks concepts which can offer a comparison between the experiences of street artists within the different cities (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). The urban notion of space is the product of tense relationships between the ideological power to impose economic and political values on the qualities of social interactions (Harvey, 2008, 2003; Lefebvre, 1991). Furthermore, the research's focus on the experiences of the street artist also discusses the content and style of the art itself to examine the various positions of the different artists concerning their social and political contexts and backgrounds. The relationships which the street artist has with economic and political spaces can provide us with useful frameworks to study how non-traditional communities practise everyday life from their recounted memories, desires, and experiences (Riggles, 2010).

Ordinary citizens have used street art as a form of protest or as a counterculture tool and mechanism to encourage dialogue in modern cities (De Notto, 2014; Riggles, 2010; Ross, 2016; Young, 2014). In the cities of Beirut and Belfast, strong forces of neoliberal urban redevelopment and diverging sectarian aspirations have changed and shifted the fragmentation and segmentation of their civil societies. Furthermore, the divided city is a stage which generates conflict (Nagle, 2016), and a "dynamic social and political environment where hostile ethnic identities and politics are challenged and even transformed" (p. 3). Such transformations can be seen on the ground where groups mobilise on "issues that rise above ethnic divisions to promote plural identities and alternative forms of political thinking outside of ethnic communalism" (Nagle, 2016, p. 3). The present and diverse narratives which defy co-option into ethnic categories include the 2015 YouStink movement in Beirut and the May Day rallies and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) parades in Belfast. While this is not the focus of the research, it is worth noting the existence of non-sectarian and non-nationalist communities which challenge traditional politics of the everyday divided city. Within the last decade, the emergence of street art in these conflict-afflicted societies raises the question of what these temporal and subversive acts register and whether new cultural identities and alternative forms of political thinking have the potential to imagine social relations, collaborations and civic engagement.

The study combines inquiries from social sciences and urban studies to locate the social process of street art production within the milieu of the divided city. The intellectual scaffolding places spatial processes of the production of urban spaces as a set of social relationships between the individual and ideologies which inform the nature of places. Lefebvre's 'right to the city' framework (1996) is a useful application to uncover the spatial processes and mechanisms by which ordinary inhabitants use spaces in the act of laying claim to the city by appropriating public spaces. The intentions to engage with street art as a practice for everyday life is a framing exercise which organises the experiences of the artist and influences why they engage with such spaces. The study uses Goffman's (1975) concept of framing to interrogate sectarianism and neoliberal urban, which will influence the artist's perspectives of their everyday life. The emergence of street art exists in cities undergoing a socio-economic

decline, political upheaval, and where street artists register the need to beautify public spaces. However, few studies examine the street artist social understandings of the practice of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984) in post-conflict cities characterised by political uncertainty and socio-economic decline. Moreover, while street art is a portmanteau of the words 'street' and 'art', the thesis is concerned with everyday experiences of the 'street' and where inhabitants learn the necessary language, symbols and rituals to uncover the motivations of street artists and how they engage with space in a divided city.

The proliferation of street art in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast represents a new model of civic engagement which the researcher wants to investigate. Through the "careful observation and analysis of the people, activities and interactions that constitute spaces can [help the research to] illustrate the social geographies of a place" (Elwood and Martin, 2000, p. 649). The experiences of political, sectarian, and neoliberal urban divisions influence the practice of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984), where the street artists derive their motivations to produce their temporary interventions within those environments. The social process through which communities in Beirut and Belfast produce street art sheds light on how street art communities engage in, and with, the polarised cities, contributing to the areas of sociology and urban studies, at the intersection of intense creativity and hostile environments in divided cities.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

Against the backdrop of diverse social and political experiences with sectarian and neoliberal urban placemaking, the study explores the processes which frame the motivations of some inhabitants of Beirut and Belfast to produce street art. The research also examines how social processes of sectarianisation influence placemaking and the way inhabitants in Beirut and Belfast engage with their city. The territorialisation and communalisation of space are some of the placemaking processes in which sectarian societies make sense of, and navigate, existing spatial arrangements, inherited by decades of ethnonational conflict. Sectarian violence and diverging narratives of nationhood contributed to the destruction of the social fabric, and the carving out of territorialised neighbourhoods from the urban landscape with sectarian allegiances. The formulation of a placemaking process informs the reconstruction of Beirut as a divisive social experiment (Leclair-Paquet, 2013; Makdisi, 1997). Comparatively, in Belfast, Nolan (2012, p. 6) suggests that "social goods and services" are "divided up by political leaders on a one-for-me, one-for-you basis", which exacerbates the already divided social fabric. Nolan (2012) also suggests that this new form of dispensation is "a form of 'benign apartheid' where the two communities maintain a wary peace by keeping their distance from each other, with high degrees of self-segregation in the school system, and in housing settlement patterns of social and cultural pursuits" (Nolan, 2012, p. 6).

There are three aims of the investigation. The first aim of the study seeks to explore what social processes and motivations exist behind the creation and production of street art. The second aim seeks to understand how the social perceptions of street artists are constituted amid the sectarian and neoliberal urban divisions of the city. The third aim then investigates whether their

practices suggest a subculture reading of everyday life and experiences within the divided city, namely, the 'right' to lay claim to spaces or whether their practices "encourage an alternative reading of politics" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 6) of the divided city. The research objectives of this study were designed to be appropriate, concise, precise and achievable within the three-year time frame of the research project. The purpose of the study is to uncover the social and political motivations of street artists, towards the contemporary social and urban changes in Beirut and Belfast. The study also seeks to understand whether conversations about art and culture imagine the possibilities of everyday life and experiences within the divided city, namely, whether street art offers new understandings of civic engagement that may emerge from the quintessential urban phenomenon. As such, the disciplines of social science and human geography frames the motivation of this research is to examine the artistic creation and production of cultural identities, which exist at the edge of social and political contestations, divisions, and transformations in the divided city.

With these aims and objectives in mind, the following are research questions to guide us in further discussion. In comparing the effects of sectarianism and neoliberal urban development on the practice of everyday life in Beirut and Belfast, what does the phenomenon of street art register about post-conflict experiences? What insight can street artists' perceptions and use of space help uncover about alternative placemaking practices within divided cities?

1.5 Research Value

The social process through which communities in Beirut and Belfast produce street art sheds light on how nascent cultures engage in polarised cities. The research, thus, contributes to the areas of sociology and urban studies, at the intersection of intense creativity and contested environments in divided cities. Like the existing placemaking practices of urban subcultures, such as skateboarders (Young, 2014a), Gay Pride (Nagle, 2016) and youth (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010), the norms and conventions of street art necessarily re-purposes walls throughout the city to temporarily display their artistic interventions. The study of street artists within divided cities in terms of civic engagement lacks critical investigation, to determine accurately whether new cultural identities can inform the experiences of everyday life, from the ground-up. Many scholars have investigated the social and spatial realities of sectarianisation and neoliberal urban development in Beirut and Belfast, and its implications on transition, social cohesion and national reconciliation (Khalaf, 2013; Larkin, 2010; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010; Nagle, 2018). More recently, scholars of the Lebanese and Northern Irish societal and urban divisions have employed Lefebvre's socio-spatial framework, of the right to the city (1996) to connect it to "non-sectarian social movements' struggle to forge participatory democracy in Beirut's city centre" (Nagle, 2018, p. 149) of the right to the city.

The research study elevates discussions of art and culture in the study of deeply divided societies and divided cities by exploring the social and spatial process of a community of inhabitants who place temporary artistic interventions within the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. While research of the global phenomenon is not new, applying these practices within the

context of social and urban polarised environments offers a novel way of examining everyday life from street level. The value of this research proposes a new way of elevating the motivations of nascent urban communities who vibrantly and vividly display new forms of social and civic engagement within highly territorial sectarian and neoliberal cities. In doing so, an exercise in examining civic engagement and active participation in polarised societies has the potential to imagine cultural identities and non-traditional civic relationships with the urban environment, based on creating temporary non-commercial and non-tribal interactions.

Through promoting diverse identities and the value of inter-communal relationships, non-sectarian communities provide meaningful alternatives to the politics of division prevalent in divided societies (Kraidy, 2013; Nagle, 2013, 2018; Sinno; 2017; Tripp, 2013; Zogbi, 2011). The study of these communities presents an opportunity and "the capacity to imagine non-sectarian solutions towards achieving conflict transformation" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 174).

1.6 Thesis Outline

Chapter two provides the reader with the multidisciplinary motivation for this research. The literature review presents discussions of everyday life in ethnonational societies undergoing neoliberal urban development, which helps to reveal deeper underlining social processes which have some tentative generalisability across different settings. There has been further work done on street art in European capitals, but they do not appear in deeply divided societies. In deeply divided societies, street artists find themselves in environments where public space is highly sensitised, with plentiful use of charged symbolism and street art is in public space. However, its symbolism is of a different kind altogether. The chapter discusses theories about the urban production of everyday life in modern cities. By exploring post-conflict experiences of everyday life, the chapter presents useful concepts to tease out the tense social and spatial relationships which elicit, organise, and frame the formation of street artist's cultural identity. The learned language, tools and symbols associated with post-conflict Beirut and Belfast come in the form of material expressions of social and spatial segregation and are visually manifested by sectarian, political and neoliberal neighbourhoods.

Chapter three contextualises the overarching aims and research questions by situating the practise of street art within ethnonational and urban neoliberal forms of placemaking imbued with ideologies and discourses. While not totalising, some of the ideologies overlap and create hybrid spaces, which can help reveal particular conflict dynamics between ethnonational spaces and the increasing urban development charged by neoliberal economic ideologies. As the study seeks to understand the intentions of the street artists, a survey of the street art locations of Ouzai, Mar Mikhael, and Hamra in Beirut and the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast' city centre speaks to the different characteristics of the different space. In other words, the experiences on the ground reveal the complex conflict dynamics of how these ideologies might influence their motivations to place artwork, if at all. Therefore, chapter three subsequently frames the discussions for the finding's chapters five and six, which seek to uncover

whether the motivations and placemaking practices of street artists uncover new understandings of the practice of everyday life in Beirut and Belfast.

Chapter four outlines the researcher's design for addressing the research question and achieving the research aims. The first part demonstrates the rationale to blend the comparative case study design within a focused ethnography (Fusch et al., 2017) and how methodological triangulation can ensure a reliable and valid account of the research study. The second part describes the research instruments used in the investigation, namely participant and direct observation, field notes, a reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews. The third part explains how the management of the data collected, and subsequently, interpreted the collected evidence through an iterative process of thematic construction and analysis. The final part presents the outline for chapters five and six, with a discussion of the overall findings and subsequent analysis of the research question with an examination of existing ethnographic research.

Chapter five analyses and discusses the first finding of the blended comparative case study design and focused ethnography studying the phenomenon of street art in divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. As a social process, the intentions of street artists from Beirut and Belfast register a social understanding of their artistic interventions as small but significant attempts to define a different social interaction, one of enchantment and gift giving, which is a perceived collaboration between artist, and their intended audience. Moreover, a discussion on the content and style of individual artists reveals insight into their social and political background and proffers limitations to the notion of gifting. Although street artists might consider their artwork as a gift, a critical reflection about the nature of the gift reveals the subjectivities of the artists and the spatial realities of sites where no one will visit. The street artists age, class, gender, educational backgrounds, and residencies play a role, the discussion challenges and questions the interviewees and their positionality, funding, artwork style or message. However, the artists' positionality in terms of their relationship with the creative and commercial gentrification of the locations of street art in Beirut and Belfast is discussed with insight from the content and style of their artwork. Here, the implications behind these motivations in the ever-changing and divided city exist in the imagination of the street artists, primarily and as such, the discussion speaks to the different characters of the different spaces in Beirut and Belfast   The artists' positionality in terms of their relationship with the creative and commercial gentrification of the locations of street art is discussed with insight from the content and style of their artwork. Here, the implications behind these motivations in the ever-changing and divided city exist in the imagination of the street artist. Street art, in this sense, is not about claiming a 'right to the city'. Instead, their intention to gift their artwork has no direct impact on challenging the ethnonational or the neoliberal processes.

Chapter six analyses and discusses the second finding of how artists read space and what they want space to be in the modern city. The chapter presents the placemaking practices of street art in Beirut and Belfast as small- 'p' politics which engages with public space differently than the ethnonational and the neoliberal. The finding suggests that street artists in Beirut and Belfast encompass the power relations which restrict their use by introducing new forms of placemaking which are pragmatic

and rule-based, democratic, transient, and transformative. The small- 'p' political act of street artists, then, registers the small-scale interventions of non-traditional communities which imagines new possibilities for the city, one where it is not about the creation of new spaces for engagement.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis and proceeds in three parts. The first part briefly summarises the findings of the blended case study design and focused ethnography concerning the research objectives. The chapter, secondly, makes recommendations that are specific to the evidence of the study and for future research. Finally, the third part demonstrates how the research enhances existing scholarship by presenting the main contributions to knowledge which exists within the empirical work.

The following chapter presents a literature review of theories and concepts which frame the phenomenon of street art within the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. The research is dedicated to examining new forms of art and activism in divided urban spaces, specifically the creation and production of street art (murals) in highly divided societies emerging from prolonged periods of social conflict. Although much research on art interventions in divided societies has studied traditional Northern Irish political murals (Rolston, 1998; Jarman, 1998) and Lebanese political posters and sectarian graffiti (Chakhtoura, 1975), this research will break with tradition and examine contemporary street art production of wall art in Beirut (Sinno, 2017) and Belfast (El Masri, 2016) likened to mural art in Berlin, Lisbon, and Philadelphia. The framing of what is meant by 'street' and 'art' enables an understanding of 'street art' in the imagination of Beirut and Belfast street artists and their intentions for producing their artwork, their perceptions of the divided city and as an artistic intervention of perceptions, motivations and placemaking practices on site-specific locations as another 'public'.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Overview

2.1 Introduction

The research study looks to address the social and political dimensions of contemporary street art production in the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. The diverse sectarian make-up of these two societies has long been a source of their socially protracted conflict (Avruch, 1998), where diverging national discourses influence contemporary discussions on identity. Moreover, within the last decade, the emergence of street art on the walls of the cities exists along the throughways between the myriad of ethnically different and diverse political communities and urban neoliberal development projects. The historical traditions and power relations of ethnonational and neoliberal ideologies imbue the cityscape with "codes" (Hall, 1974), and inform how inhabitants should engage with each other, and practice everyday life (De Certeau, 1984; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Miles, 2000). The foreground of everyday life in the two cities is categorised by socio-economic, religious, and political divisions, which not only influence the social realities of inhabitants but also contributes to maintenance and fragmentation of national identities. In a tense relationship, many Beirut and Belfast inhabitants possess a mix of two or more divisive and different identities (Bhabha, 2013; Fregonese, 2012) and inform how they engage with each other and their city. These hybrid identities reflect the conflict dynamic between ethnonationalism on the one hand and neoliberalism on the other, as two of many other ideologies which shape the urban geographies of many neighbourhoods in both cities.

Street art is a new global phenomenon which exists in cities, where "both economic decline and socio-political fragmentation have reduced the power and resources for clean-up or enforcement" (Evans, 2016, p. 179). Many ethnographies in the field of cultural geography cite the correlation of gentrification and economic recession as some of the root causes for the emergence of street art in cities like Athens (Avramidis, 2012; Tsilimpounidi, 2015), Cairo (Abaza, 2016), Abu Dis (Peteet, 2016, 1996) and Belfast (Bush, 2013; El Masri, 2016). Others have sought to frame the rise of street art in Lisbon and Berlin as the collective action of artists laying claim to their city (Avramidis, 2012; Avramidis and Tsilimpounidi, 2017), experimenting with the city walls as their canvas (Visconti et al., 2010) or merely beautifying public space (Banksy, 2006). The study seeks to place the urban phenomenon of street art in Beirut and Belfast in "conceptualisations of urban space as a social construct and relational process" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, the study contends that there is less knowledge about the motivations for street artists to produce their work in ethnonational cities undergoing neoliberal urbanisation. Street art takes on the performative role of vernacular social diaries, according to Samutina and Zaporozhets (2015) which "allows us to see a balance of power and the course of events" (p. 7). If this axiom is true, then the existence of street art in Beirut and Belfast, each with its constellations of processes of social and urban polarisation, offers insight into civic engagement with cities transitioning out of conflict.

The social process through which communities in Beirut and Belfast produce street art sheds light on how subaltern cultures lay claim to polarised cities, contributing to the areas of sociology and urban studies, at the intersection of intense

creativity and contested environments in divided cities. The next three sections tease out the multidisciplinary motivation for this research. The first section, 2.2, examines the spatial and social processes through which inhabitants frame the meaning of places through interactions and experiences with spaces. The second section, 2.3, examines how framing street art processes as tactics or repertoires can shed light on the contentious politics of the right to participate and appropriate space in already highly divisive and exclusionary cities. The third section, 2.4, presents the overall research questions and objectives of the thesis as an attempt to elevate discussions and analysis of street art communities and practices at the intersection of peace and conflict research.

2.2 The Urban Production of Everyday Life in Divided Cities

The process through which street artists produce their artwork within public space is political. Moreover, public space in Beirut and Belfast consists of 'private' public spaces. Spaces for interactions in these two cities are quickly identifiable by the visual markers produced by neoliberal urban and ethnonational spaces, which direct and limit non-commercial and non-sectarian social interaction. As a result, the production of street art in divided cities involves the co-sharing of spaces between pervasive placemaking processes and nascent communities who temporarily leave their mark in the form of artistic interventions. The political dimension arises from the ongoing sites of struggle for representation where the social reality of the artists motivates their attachments to their cultural identity, their community, and their city.

The chapter examines the modes of spatial production, towards an insight into how social interactions and experiences with space attach meaning to places, and in turn, inform the perspectives of street art communities. He examines senses of place-attachments as a process of making claims to the city, where distinct local contexts of social and economic divisions influence how inhabitants encounter and navigate spaces.

An overarching framework of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1967) and the production of space (Harvey, 1998; Lefebvre, 1991) guides the discussion of how public spaces often feature as sites of political contestation in contemporary cities. According to Goffman (1971), historical encounters with familial and community-based institutions, influence, and maintain social processes of meaning-making. Therefore, it is vital to understand the implications of sectarian and neoliberal urban ideologies on street art communities who produce artwork in cities with economic decline and socio-political fragmentation (Evans, 2016). Understood as placemaking processes, social participation, and practise in the public sphere within sectarian societies undergoing neoliberal urban development, contribute to divisive social arrangements in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast. Sectarian violence and diverging narratives of nationhood contributed to the destruction of the social fabric, as in the case of Beirut, and the continual erosion of uneasy arrangements between the people of Belfast.

2.2.1 The Right to the City

French urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre situated the global social struggles of the late 1960s as a desire to restructure social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond. In response to what Lefebvre observed in his native Paris among the student demonstrations of 1967, he famously quoted that "the *right to the city* is like a cry and a demand "can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158). Key to these radical natures is that the right of the city reframes the arena of decision-making away from the state vision of "publics" and explores other forms of "publics." Purcell (2002) discusses this idea "toward the production of urban space. Instead of limiting democratic deliberation to just state decisions, Lefebvre imagines it to apply to all decisions that contribute to the production of urban space" (Purcell, 2002, p. 101). Park (1967) formulates what such a city/society might be, in principle, as:

> "man's most successful attempt to re-make the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. Nevertheless, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is hereafter condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has re-made himself" (p. 3).

The question of what kind of city inhabitants want "cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationships to nature, lifestyles, technologies, and aesthetic values we desire" (Harvey, 2008, p. 23). Harvey argues that the right is more than an individual right since the transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of collective action:

> "to reshape the process of urbanisation. The freedom to make and re-make our cities and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (2008, p. 23).

Moreover, while Harvey (2003) presupposes a city made of the individual for the individual, the reality is that "the sheer pace and chaotic forms of urbanisation throughout the world have made it hard to reflect on the nature of this task" (p. 940). We have been made and re-made without having known precisely why, how, wherefore, and to what end.

2.2.2 The Production of Urban Space

Lefebvre understood "space" as inherently contentious and unjust because the power dynamic created favours capital accumulation over the fundamental "rights to the city" (1968). The right to the city, then, imagines inhabitants to have two primary rights:

"(i) the right to appropriate urban space; and (ii) the right to participate centrally in the production of urban space. In advocating the right to appropriate urban space, Lefebvre is not referring to private ownership so much as he is referring to the right of inhabitants to 'complete usage' of the urban space during their everyday lives" (Purcell, 2002, p. 577).

These rights offer a particularly rich set of principles on which to base such alternative citizenship forms (Lefebvre, 1996, 1968). Moreover, they serve as the theoretical basis to answer whether the street artists practice and appropriate 'in-between' space existing within securitised notions of urban spaces. "Lefebvre's concept poses a radical challenge not only to the current citizenship order, but also to capitalist social relations and their increasing control over social life" (Purcell, 2003, p. 564). Moreover, the promotion of civic engagement through street art's artistic and ephemeral interventions produces insight into the strategies or tactics which social groups form, participate, and use spaces.

Since urban space features prominently in the right of the city, it is vital to explore Lefebvre's concept of space (1991). He theorises 'space' as a fluid 'trialectic' or triple dialectic between three different forces: (i) conceived space of power-play between capital and state, (ii) lived space of the desires, dreams, and memories of dwellers, and (iii) perceived space which dwellers live. In other words, 'space' is the dynamic between top-down plans, bottom-up experience, and the negotiations between them. The study explores the lived space of street art communities in Beirut and Belfast as the basis of the social and spatial inquiry. Lived space is not just a "passive stage on which social life unfolds but represents a constituent element of social life, therefore, social relations and lived space are inescapably hinged together in everyday life" (Purcell, 2002, p. 102). Sachs-Olsen (2013) places art practises within a spatial analysis as "having the potential for offering powerful catalysts for transformative forms of politics", providing new sets of resources or 'repertoires' for urban and spatial thinking (Hawkins, 2012).

Lefebvre (1991) informs the urban aspect of the research's inquiry into the spatial practises of ordinary inhabitants as a tense social relationship between conceived, perceived, and lived spaces. Harvey (2003) and Mitchell (2003) have understood this as an issue for social justice, and the fight for public space as ordinary citizens try to make sense of their social reality. This trialectic of space inherently exposes the tensions, which the 'right to the city' seeks to conceptualise: "claiming the right to live, play, and practise the city", through the struggle over a right to and for public space (Mitchell, 2003). Accompanied by the relational process of spatial production, the next sub-section looks at how social groups practise this right to the city of

laying claim to the production of and appropriation of space for representation. In the mosaic of the divided city, with multitudes of social groups negotiating and contesting space, claiming space can be considered a small- 'p' political act (Kennedy et al., 2017; Mitchell, 2003). As will be shown in this research, social communities have long challenged existing hegemonic structures of spatial production dialectics through discrete local repertoires such as protests, demonstrations, or collective action, which Tilly and Tarrow (2015) examine as an exploration of how social groups engage in laying claim to the city:

> "the interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which government are involved as targets, imitators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics" (p. 7).

It would be vital, therefore, to explore whether the practitioners of street art understand their practice as "a repertoire of formal devices for registering a world that appears chaotic, disrupted, and radically new" (Highmore, 2002, p. 23). Repertoires are the tactics employed by social movements (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015) such as protests, demonstrations, and petitions. Street art, as a diverse and various art-based, practise, umbrellas stencils, paste-ups, stickers, yarn bombing, and the focus of this research on aerosol murals, argues that street art is a tactic employed by inhabitants in the emergence of a fluid "in-between space" or "thirdspace" (Soja, 1996; 1989). On a final note, producing urban space, for Lefebvre, necessarily involves reproducing the social relations that are bound up in it (1991).

Mitchell (2003) contends that public space acts as a space for the representation of political movements who stake out territory to be seen and heard. He contextualises Lefebvre's trialectic of space through the case study of People's Park inside the University of California Berkeley campus where he uses an example of homeless people, as marginalised or disenfranchised groups who remain invisible to society, as they vie for the use of public space against the wishes of university administrators. Two groups have laid claim to the public space: homeless people and activists on the one hand, and university representatives for whom the park comes under their authority. Understood by Mitchell (2003) as two visions of public space, differing definitions of the 'right to the city' are at stake: as spaces for representation (appropriated, lived space; space-in-use) and representations of space (planned, controlled, ordered space). If public spaces arise out of a dialectic between representations of space and representational spaces, between the ordered and the appropriated, then they are also, according to Mitchell (2003), spaces for representation. That is, public space is

> "a place within which political movements can stake out the territory that allows them to be seen (and heard) ... In public space – on street corners or in parks, in the streets during riots and demonstrations – political organisations can represent themselves to a larger population, and through this representation give their cries, and they demand some force" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 129).

In both modern and deeply divided societies, public space is the product of competing ideologies about what constitutes that space – ordered and controlled or free, and dangerous, interaction (Mitchell, 2003). However, as we will see in Beirut and Belfast, the control of public space has led to "steady erosion of the ideal and the erosion of the urban fabric of society; of the public, of the collective, and the steady promotion of private, rather than democratic, space" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 137).

The earlier section offered a brief theoretical overview of the tense social relationship with places. Applying a relationship between places within the context of polarised societies with socio-political fragmentation is an attempt to frame the practice of street artists within volatile landscapes, such as Beirut and Belfast. It can also shed light on broader placemaking processes such as communities' struggles against the gentrification of their neighbourhoods and similar neoliberal urban development processes. The research study's interest rests in the notion that relationships with a place influence the perception of an inhabitant's social reality. The following section presents two foundational pillars upon which to explore how inhabitants understand their sense of place, which, in turn, informs how they perceive their sense of belonging. Goffman (1971) contends that framing processes inform and maintain an individual's perception of their existence, and as such, informs how they make meaning of their everyday life.

The first two sub-sections examine the tense relationships between claiming a right to the city while contending with the spatial production where the perceptions of the individuals form. The first hypothesis is to understand whether street artists' experiences differ from those of their fellow inhabitants, and, if so, whether it alludes to a 'hidden' placemaking process where new cultural fields (Bourdieu, 2003) influence the practice of street artists. The second hypothesis is to query whether the enduring legacy of ethnonational identities and patterns of socialisation in divided societies influence how inhabitants engage with, and experience, their understanding of space. Lefebvre (1991) contends that the production of space exists through tense social relationships between the politicians and urban planners who create the physical requirements of a designated space, those who use it in their everyday life, and those who might experience that space differently to its intended design.

2.2.3 The Framing of Everyday Life in Divided Societies

This section examines and analyses the divided city through Goffman's frame analysis, to tease out the constitution, formation, and maintenance of social relationships. Frame analysis provides a lens for understanding the perceptions and intentions of street art communities to engage within the milieu of the divided cities. Central to the research is understanding how street artists make sense of living in a complex social world where contemporary conflicts of territory and identity influence the traditions and values of their practices towards their city.

Scholars conceptualise meaning construction by employing the verb "framing" (Benford and Snow, 2000; Goffman, 1975; Snow and Benford, 1998). If meaningfulness of everyday activity is dependent on a closed set of finite rules, then

explications of them would give one a powerful means of analysing social life (Goffman, 1975, 1966). Goffman (1975) cleverly applies a game of chess to illustrate this point. The exclusive world of chess is a game that "generates a habitable universe for who can follow it, a place of being, a cast of characters with a seemingly unlimited number of different situations and acts through which to realise their natures and destines" (Goffman, 1975, p. 5). Chess is an organisation of experiences with limited or small sets of interdependent rules and practises, whereby the agents playing the game do so with a set of knowledge of its rules and practise of engagement, as such, chess is an experienced actor. Similarly, social frameworks provide a background understanding of events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effect of intelligence, active agency – the chief one being the human being.

Frames enable an individual to "help render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organise experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (Snow et al., 1986, p. 464). Benford and Snow define framing as:

"an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic and evolving process; it entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of a social movement organizations or movement activists; and it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them" (2000, p. 614).

The concept of framing allows for the simplification of everyday life accounts, and the main influencing variables for how street artists contextualise their everyday life amid social and urban divisions and transformations. The framing of street art as a result of a collection action is active in the sense that something new is being done, it is processual in the sense of a dynamic and evolving process, it entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movements organizations or movement activists. It is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretative frames that not only differ from existing ones but that also may challenge them. Specific considerations and schemas lend more weight to encourage the reader to think in a certain way. That is, as opposed to thinking of street artists as a collective merely reacting to the ongoing processes of sectarianisation and neoliberal urban development, their frames could be concerned about the uncertainty of everyday life in their divided societies, the desire to experiment with new canvases, skills and techniques, or merely a wish to beautify the urban environment. "Collective action frames also perform this interpretive function by simplifying and condensing aspects of the 'world out there', but in ways that are 'intended to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 198). Thus, collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organisations" (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614).

Goffman (1975) aims to isolate some of the necessary "frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events" and to analyse what he calls "special vulnerabilities" to which these frames of reference are subject (p. 83). For Goffman, fabrication is the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more other individuals will be induced to have a false belief about what is going on (1975, p. 83). The individual considered is "someone who has perceptions, frame-accurate as one possibility, deceived, deluded, or illusionary as the other" (Goffman, 1975, p. 345). The individual also acts, both verbal and physical, based on these perceptions, and, finally, the individual's framing of activity establishes its manifestations. Frames, Goffman contends, also organises more than just meaning, it also organises involvement (1986). He uses an example of a European listener of Indian music. The listener has a sense of what is going on, in the manner of the distinct sounds of the sitar and other instruments in the composition of a tune but will also become engrossed and enthralled by it. The example provided by Goffman suggests that social frames are a duality of enjoying the music and the sudden and unpleasant constraint of sitting out on the experience while sitting in it (Goffman, 1975, p. 345). In sum, we tend to perceive events in terms of primary social frameworks. The types of frameworks provide a way of describing the event to which it is applied, the intent and the involvement of getting caught up in the activity, such as cleaning the sidewalk outside your home or fixing the kitchen sink.

The research's concerns seek to unpack the processes which influence the social and spatial framing of the individual living in these divided societies, in particular, their experiences with the social fields, particularly at the level of formation of social perceptions of space. Understanding an individual framing of their organisation of experiences allows for an analysis of how experiences with space influence social perceptions of space, and allow the reader to explore the individual's framing in deeply divided societies as manifested in conversations linking identity to territory and social processes. The social perceptions towards everyday life come from the historical experiences with the power-material relationship enforced, magnified, and then hardened by cleavages between communities, such as duplication of public services, internal displacement, political murals, demarcation flags, posters, graffiti, and checkpoints. These material fault lines are given importance and gravity, as they are the visual reminders of the production of power relations, which act as a reminder of processes, for those who subscribe to its members or those who routinely challenge such homogenisation.

Our first thinking tool will allow us to understand the construction of an individual's perception of the world by a series of lenses, which are formed by the frames which organise their experiences with the practice of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984). We drew examples from Goffman's game of chess and the unpleasant constraint of sitting out of the experience while sitting in it, using the example of listening to music and not understanding the mechanics behind its formation. We now turn our attention to discussing divisive ethnonational identities, which breached the urban contract of socialisation in divided societies. The experiences of these power relations reinforce and influence how inhabitants engage with and experience their understanding of space and shape the formation and the maintenance of frames to those places.

2.3 The Practice of Street Art

This section aims to present the process of framing street art practices and interventions as a social community where individuals within it, "locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space and life in general" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). The study of street art lacks a consistent, identifiable body of hypotheses and propositions, theories, and models (Ross, 2016). However, a considerable number of untested and unquestioned assumptions of street art exist. New scholarly research on this subject, particularly the ethnographies, tends to see street art as an expression of youth subculture (Ferrell, 1993) for juveniles' and young adults' desire to achieve 'sneaky thrills' (Katz, 1988), street art as an expression of masculinity (Pabon, 2016; Macdonald, 2001), and as a stage in an individual's development, whereby they graduate into other kinds of pursuits (Lacmann, 1988; Macdonald, 2001; Snyder, 2009). While some researchers examine the political content of street art (Ferrell, 1996), Walnder and Dobratz (2013) understand it as contesting public space and as a form of resistance and political communication. Political and cultural artworks extend beyond the individual and the subcultural to provide a means to comment on political, social, and cultural environments (Pabon, 2016). For Pabon (2016), street art is a mode of resistance, which changes public perspectives and communicates messages by broadcasting their commentary. However, as Ferrell (2016) points out, "the arguably western notion that street art/graffiti writing is only (sub culturally) legitimate if it is legally or socially transgressive does not hold because the context of the scene's emergence is radically different" (p. 83), for the following reasons.

As Ross (2016) and Riggle (2016, 2010) point out, scholarship on street art must be conducted in a manner that allows for a better understanding of it, especially its communicative and transgressive elements, not merely as another tool in eradications, abatements, and resistance, but for developing alternative, progressive approaches to the presence of street art. Samutina and Zaporozhets (2015) suggest that,

> "It is impossible to study a multi-layered cultural phenomenon such as street art from within just one, narrowly defined discipline. An adequate understanding of a specific work of street art in its urban environment necessitates taking a multitude of factors into consideration. It may require simultaneous familiarity with local communities ethnographic background, the logic of gentrification, along with the philosophy and aesthetics of contemporary art, not to mention the economics and principles of legal regulation of property relations in a specific city" (p. 7).

Street art, or more broadly, vernacular images in the contemporary urban environment, have quickly become part of the modern discourse of cities – whether commenting on controversial social issues, praising the daily life, or making it humorously unfamiliar (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015). In the last fifteen years, street art has come from being a trendy urban novelty to gaining a permanent position in official tourist guidebooks on cities and individual neighbourhoods, such as Berlin's Kreuzberg, Paris's Belleville, London's Shoreditch, or New York's Williamsburg.

Overall, street art studies have shifted from the more straightforward, essentialist questions, to more variable contextual logic, and from analysing only street art to scrutinising the social relations, communicative mechanisms, and problem configurations of contemporary cities through this medium (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015). There are monographs about street art intended to cover this phenomenon's development by detailing its objectives and fundamental parameters, from its role and function in the city to the changes it makes or is going to make to legal practises, modifying our notions of what dwellers are capable of in the urban environment (Bengsten, 2014; Hoppe-Soares Neves, 2014; Young, 2014b; Waclawek, 2011). This research project attempts to study the producers of street art from post-conflict Beirut and Belfast to understand their motivation and individual trajectories and the specifics of their relationships with their urban space, and then to, "extract from various local cases a more general social logic" (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015, p. 6).

There is a need for a more encompassing definition to underscore the inscriptions of "city surfaces or by their embeddedness in the city's everyday life and visual environment" (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015, p. 8). Matlon (2015) uses the concept of the 'city's vernacular', thereby shifting the emphasis from the images' visuality to the way of their functioning as every day practises; such as spontaneous daily routes or navigation through spaces where the "rules are written in clear signage but understood collectively through the trials and errors of time and experiences" (p. 3).

2.3.1 The Practice of Art on the Street

Street art is an art form that employs the 'street' as an artistic resource (Riggle, 2010). Riggle (2010) names various kinds of artistic resource that we will revisit when we discuss the differences between street art and graffiti shortly. Riggle (2010) offers three conceptualisations of street art practice as conceptualised by, the practice of street art is conceptualised as being, firstly, "an intentionally anonymous, most of whose works are destroyed by nature, and often intentionally, by humankind. This anonymity and ephemerality hinder the construction of a master narrative" (p. 243). The second condition considers "a practise whose artworks are largely disconnected from the art world because their significance hinges on being outside of that world," and that "disconnection is something that impedes the art world's involvements in the practises and ensures that the works enter the museum, gallery, and art market only at a great, if not the total cost" (Riggle, 2010, p. 243). Finally, street art is also "an art practice, which, instead of delighting merely the refined sensibilities of an elite few, has the power to engage, effortlessly, and aesthetically, the masses through its manifest creativity, skill, originality, depth of meaning, and beauty" (Riggle, 2010, p. 243).

Street artists use elements of the street, and as such, "an artwork is street art if, and only if, its creator uses the street as an artistic resource in at least one of these ways" (Riggle, 2010, p. 245). However, commercial art uses the street as an artistic resource in both senses – mass stencilling by a movie production company, posters, billboards, projected advertisement. Riggle (2010) contends that commercial art is not street art because for the work to use an artistic resource, it is necessary that the creator of the work intentionally use it in the creation of the work. When this material is the street, ephemerality is a further commitment,

which needs to occur. In using "the street, artists willingly subject their work to all" (Riggle, 2010) its many threats – it might be stolen, defaced, destroyed, moved, altered, or appropriated. Street artists relinquish any claim on the work's integrity or on the integrity of the part of the work that contributes to it being street art.

The artist C. Finley beautifies rugged steel dumpsters by covering them with wallpaper (Riggle, 2010). The fact that wallpaper is on a dumpster "is what makes it significant. By covering dumpsters with such homely décor, she draws attention to the fact that the street is also a kind of living room" (Riggle, 2010, p. 246). Interestingly, Riggle (2010) suggests that a common trait and theme among street artists is to make the city "more habitable, inviting and friendly" (p. 256). The meaning of the work becomes compromised if someone removes Finley's wallpaper from the dumpster, or if a gallerist places the wallpaper dumpster in a warehouse or a gallery.

Similarly, the work of Shepard Fairey, the contemporary American street artist, is both ambiguous and exciting.

"In the 1990s, Fairey littered the streets with stickers of a stylised image of André the Giant that simply said, 'OBEY'. But in the early 2000s, Fairey started clothing and marketing companies that use the very same insignia and styles so familiar from his street art. Now the OBEY posters are ambiguous between a commercial plea to buy OBEY products and street art with some other meaning" (Riggle, 2010, p. 256).

Applying Riggle's logic of an artwork being street art (2010), "if and only if, its material use of the street is internal to its meaning" (p. 246), allows for critics to suggest, interestingly, that Shepard Fairey's evolution from street art to commercialisation might not consider him a street artist in this sense as discussed earlier with commercial art.

Another salient question is whether graffiti is street art. It helps to distinguish between two basic kinds of graffiti: mere graffiti such as "so and so was here" or "Jack loves Jill" and artistic graffiti. Riggle (2010) does not consider mere graffiti to be art, so the question of its status as street art does not arise. The salient question, then, is whether and when artistic graffiti is street art. "Suffice to say that the paradigm case of artistic graffiti is done in a distinctive *style* that originated in New York City in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is created with a distinctive attitude or intention" (Riggle, 2010, p. 251, emphasis in original), and graffiti writers create it with a distinctive style and orientation. The argument that artistic graffiti is street art, now goes artistic graffiti is public writing in a distinctive style, created with an attitude.

Moreover,

> "The material use of the street is irrelevant to its meaning because artistic graffiti can be anywhere – on the side of subway cars, for example – and still means the same thing. Therefore, according to the definition of street art, no artistic graffiti is street art. There is no essential connection between the two. This is not to deny that graffiti and street art have a strong *historical* connection" (Riggle, 2010, p. 251, emphasis in original).

"Graffiti culture was the driving force behind the development of street art in the 1990s" (Riggle, 2010, p. 251). The historical connection does not imply a connection and demonstrates that street art is just one form of postmodern art – a category that includes artistic graffiti.

Blanché (2015) considers a definition of street art as consisting of "self-authorised pictures, characters, and forms created in or applied to surfaces in the urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people" (p. 32). Street art did not develop out of the field of art and, as such, cannot be considered as an emergent property of art assemblages. Stahl (2009) escapes this "street art equals art" dilemma by referring to the photographer, author and artist Brassai, who, in 1993 "labelled scratch-Graffiti, more closely related to the graffiti in Pompeii that was on the streets of Paris in his time, as '*l'art bâtard des rues mal famées*' or 'bastard art of the back streets'" (p. 7). Street art repurposes public space as a "model of coexistence and blending with the city and quietly existing in its hidden corners, acting in subtle ways to breathe art" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 2) or animate the deadening grey of the city.

Street artists practise the right to the city more visibly than they practise any other social community through the aesthetic practice of stencilling, mural painting, graffiti writing, paste-ups, stickering, and yarn bombing images and concepts on the facades of the urban built environment, regardless of arrangement, form or function. However, with some notable exceptions (Zieleniec, 2016), there is little attempt to place street art explicitly within divided cities. Moreover, little attempt has been made to contextualise street art as social communities composed of individual street artists for whom the right to the city is practised and performed through the collective action of painting and writing aerosol. Another identifiable gap is to locate the production of street art in divided cities where the production of public space is much predicated on capitalist spatial iterations as is on ethnonational territorialisation; where public space production is controlled and ordered by pervasive ideologies of capital accumulation and ethnonational aspiration.

In the last forty years, modern street art and graffiti have "become a universal urban phenomenon, an almost ubiquitous feature of towns and cities across the world, bridging time, and space as well as crossing cultural divides" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 1). Moreover, "its practitioners seek to use and transform the space of the urban. By creating signs, symbols and motifs that convey meanings and messages, urban space is transformed by its adornment and co-option as a canvas for the expression of

identity, status, style and culture" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 2). Street art scholars (DeNotto, 2014; Riggles, 2010; Ross, 2016) have argued that street art offers the potential for resistance, as a small-p political act to existing modalities of spatial arrangements and distancing strategies (Kennedy et al., 2018; Pullan and Baillie, 2013; Sawalha, 2011). The ability to prompt a 'counter-narrative to the hegemonic operation of power and social control' (DeNotto, 2014), as well as the ability to connect people to a broader sense of collective agency (Riggles, 2010), suggests that street art and graffiti are in fact repertoires where individuals through collective action employ their right to the city. For these theorists, the areas which street art in Belfast's city centre exists would then be a practice of an everyday act of resistance, which visualises a multitude of connected places separate from the officially circulated image of a "post-conflict" and "reconciled" city (Allen and Kelly, 2003). In Beirut, stencil art and graffiti became a tool of propaganda for wartime militias to leave visual markers of the highly territorialised ethnic neighbourhoods, as is the case of Belfast's political murals. However, as Rolston (2002, 2011, 2013) and Jarman (2004) contend, the art on the walls of Belfast's single identity communities served the community itself with messages, symbols, and signs of membership exclusivity and marked territorialised spaces. It was also a form of agitprop, which further removes it from the study's focus on street art. As such, the research's scope does not consider an analysis of the producers of the mural art of Belfast's single-identity communities and the graffiti and stencils used in Beirut during the civil war.

In a sense, all street art is public art since all street art is public. Public art is an art world-sanctioned, and protected space and such is not the street (Riggle, 2010). Whether a place is a street depends in part on the way people who inhabit or frequent the place treat it and treat is at as street, which means they must maintain a vague constellation of practical attitudes. As it is, the purpose of this research to understand what the social attitudes of the street art communities are, and the following considerations can hold firm: in using the street, the artists must ensure a commitment to the ephemerality of the artwork, which relinquishes any claim on the work's integrity.

2.3.2 Street Art as Repertoires

Repertoires as tactics to contest existing strategies and state-controlled spatial arrangements draw on the identities, social ties, and organisational forms that constitute everyday social life (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). From those identities, social ties and organisational forms emerge as both the collective claims that people make and the means they have for making them. As a global phenomenon, skilful local artists adapt the generic form of graffiti and street art forms to a local circumstance, embedding a modular form in languages, symbols, and practises that make them compelling but also like other forms of graffiti and street art worldwide. Street art emerged from graffiti as a separate category of aerosol art, even more, hinting at the temporal nature of the art-based practise (Riggle, 2010, 2016; Ross, 2016).

Zieleniec (2016) explores street art and graffiti as, "the right to appreciate, appropriate, know and use its spaces and places, a living creative work of art, always in the process of being made and remade" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 10). "The perspective

presented here views graffiti in Lefebvrian terms as everyday acts of intervention and engagement with urban space in which representational (lived) space is literally, figuratively and artistically created through imaginative acts that recreate social space through embodied praxis and visual objects" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 13). That is, graffiti and street art are political as well as artistic and aesthetic exercises. The 'right to the city', for Zieleniec, allows for graffiti and street art to write the city, which

> "provides an urban semiotic that engenders new spatial practises and offers the possibility of new ways of seeing, reading, and understanding the urban, the city and everyday life. It gives voice and acknowledges the existence of those who live in the city but are often overlooked or ignored" (2016, p. 13).

Harris (2011) suggests the aesthetic practises of de-risking and sanitising derelict neighbourhoods of deindustrialised locations and generates the discussion on the role of artists as agents of the gentrification process. This instance is prevalent in cities such as Berlin's Kreuzberg although the action of street artists suggests a stark break from the claim. In a city, that is re-imaging (Hocking, 2015), the observation should be made on whether the emergence of street artists in Belfast's or Beirut's city centres provide an imagined possibility for property developers to initiate the process of gentrification as with Kreuzberg. However, the role of artists as agents of gentrification in both cities offer differing outcomes with Kreuzberg artists taking a political stance by defacing their art in defiance of the prospect of gentrification, while artists in London's Shoreditch are benefitting economically from the commodification of their work (NuArt, 2018). Italian artist BLU purposefully defaced his Curvy-Brache street art in protest against gentrification. Originally painted in 2008 to beautify the derelict building and homes of squatters, BLU blacked out his awe-inspiring murals that spanned the old hospital building of Kreuzberg. The practice of producing and then covering up by the artist suggests a repertoire employed against the strategy of neoliberalism with the property developing arm of gentrification (Zukin, 1995). Moreover, the act performed by the blacking out of his mural to de-beautify the built environment was a sign of protesting against the eviction of squatters who occupied the old hospital building.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

The literature and concept overview of this chapter presented the theoretical underpinnings of the social and urban inquiry to situate the study of street art with the divided societies and cities of Beirut and Belfast. The rationale of this study seeks to understand how street art communities who necessarily use space in the creation of their work, encounter their post-conflict cities. The social process through which communities in Beirut and Belfast produce street art sheds light on how subaltern cultures lay claim to polarised cities, contributing to the areas of sociology and urban studies, at the intersection of intense creativity and contested environments in divided cities. Section 2.2 discussed the production of space as a tense relationship through which inhabitants frame the meaning of places through interactions and experiences. Section 2.3 surveyed the literature on the nascent field of street art production in contemporary cities and sought to understand what their presence meant for inhabitants' engagement with their cities.

Chapter 3 – Examinations of Everyday Life in Post-Conflict Divided Cities

3.1 Introduction

Comparatively, there is little knowledge about the impact of new social realities on social perceptions, in the milieu of divided cities (Khalaf, 2013; Larkin, 2010; Makdissi, 1996; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010; Nagel, 2002; Nagle, 2016; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). Moreover, the research explores the process in which this inherently spatial and artistic intervention operates and intervenes echoes the call put out by Lefebvre, Soja and many others to "encourage alternative readings of politics" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 6), and, more precisely, everyday political life in divided cities. The places where individuals experience their everyday life exist on the visible fault lines of processes of social and political transformation, incidentally, where contemporary street art exists. The focus of this chapter then examines the enduring legacy of the divisive placemaking process, while building the case for establishing how the motivations and practices of the street art community might differ from the discourses surrounding the ethnonational and neoliberal claims to space. A survey of street art locations understudy in Beirut and Belfast can help shed light on the social, political, and economic conditions of these different spaces. Moreover, the spaces and discourses attached to these locations are hybrid and overlapping. As such, the conflict dynamics of the street art locations in Ouzai, Mar Mikhael, and Hamra in Beirut and the Cathedral Quarter (CQ) offer meaningful consideration of the processes of creative gentrification, through an examination of the ethnonationalist framings and neoliberal spatial elements. Whether street art is an act of resistance/tactics to "thwart the homogenization and amnesia of space" (Khalaf, 2006), or merely as an ephemeral and temporal act, intrinsic to its meaning, will be empirically examined in the latter stages of this research.

Therefore, any form of analysis to determine how the ephemeral and temporal act of street art operates, and more precisely, how street artists themselves perceive their social and urban conditions, requires an understanding of the conflict dynamics on the ground. In doing so, a survey of street art locations offers insight into the different ethnonational and neoliberal characteristics of the different spaces. The first section, 3.2, examines the place making processes of ethnonational discourses from the prism of their impacts on the spatial segregation, violence, and securitisation. The second section, 3.3, then examines everyday life from the perspective of the convergence of culture and commerce in the creative gentrification of street art locations, while highlighting the considerations which subcultures incorporate into their interactions with the city. The third section, 3.4, then applies these conflict dynamics of spaces and discourses on the street art locations under review. With the emergence of street art within the centre of Belfast and the neighbourhoods surrounding the city centre of Beirut, the locations represent the overlapping and hybrid nature of the ethnonationalist and neoliberal discourses and bring insight into how street artists might use and perceive these spaces in the later findings' chapters.

3.2 The Social Geographies in the Divided City

The process of meaning-making and perception construction in the social fields of deeply divided societies links to the ongoing framing of everyday life as an organisation of experiences with those fields. It also allows for a reading of 'legitimate' understandings of the social world that are imposed by dominant groups, and how those influence a 'practical sense' for organising perceptions and actions in the social world (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993, 2003, 2008, 2010; Goffman, 1966, 1975, 1990; Swartz, 2013). The researcher understands that framing is the organisation of social experiences where the production of power by social fields directly influences an individual's sense of place. Shedding light on how interrelated and complex processes of, firstly, spatial fragmentation brought on by segregation, secondly, ethnonational nature of violence, and, thirdly, threat management through the securitisation of perceived threats, constitutes some of those experiences. Many occurrences of everyday life are "produced by sectarian political and religious organisations at the same time that they are the channels through which sectarian belonging and exclusion are experienced, produced and recalibrated" (Nucho, 2016, p.6). Nucho adds that it is the "very networks of infrastructures, institutions, and services that reproduce particular notions of sectarian belonging and community" (Nucho, 2016, pp. 6-7). This is by no means an exhaustive list of processes which influence social perception meaning-making, however, because we are interested in the socio-spatial dimensions of conflict, all three are inextricably linked to identity formation and territory.

As places are a socially constructed phenomenon, the discussion proceeds with locating 'place' in a relationship between three interrelated ordering processes of ethnonational violence, sectarianisation, and securitisation. The following section suggests that, from the 'vantage' point of ethnonational territorialisation and placemaking with symbolic demarcations, we can understand how violence, sectarianisation, and securitisation of space creates or perpetuates division in the city. Specifically, how ethnonational discourses of space affect the way people from Beirut and Belfast use urban space.

3.2.1 Spatial Segregation in Beirut and Belfast

Everyday life in the post-conflict cities is marred by the lack of public spaces for social cohesion (Khalaf, 2013) and duplication of social services in education, health, residential and employment (Jarman, 2006; Joseph, 1975; Traboulsi, 2008). The organisation of experiences for individuals living in Beirut and Belfast tie to the experiences with spatial division brought on by sectarian conflict as in the case of Beirut and long-standing communal divisions in Belfast. However, amid their differences, experiences with duplication of public service provisions (Jarman and Bell, 2009; Jarman, Railings, and Bell, 2009; Nucho, 2016), massive internal displacement and relocation (Boal, 2006, 2002; Calame and Charlesworth, 2008, 2000; Gaffikin et al., 2016; Gaffikin and Morrisey, 2011; Joseph, 1975; Morrissey and Gaffikin, 2006) have deepened spatial segregation and promoted a sense of self-sufficient neighbourhoods whereby different sets of finite rules (Goffman, 1975) influence how individuals relate to each other and inform their practical sense (Bourdieu, 1990). The fault lines of the urban fabric of the city

locate the visual encounters with the hardened realities of a stratified social order (Bollens, 2000, 2007, 2012; Pullan and Baillie, 2013).

The legacy of ethnonational and ethnosectarian divisions persist in the material expressions of interface walls, Peace Walls, political murals, symbols and flags in Belfast and political flags, posters, and sectarian graffiti. In both cities, these material expressions are the *de facto* borders of the physical and social divisions, which, like fault lines, serve as reminders of the tectonic shifts of opinions and drives in the post-conflict environment. Illustrative examples in Beirut are the bullet-ridden and empty buildings in the political faction Amal controlled Khandaq Al-Ghamiq, which exists a stone's throw from the revamped city centre. The social fields that constitute these cleavages are constructed and imbued with their meaning and rules for engagement through making and marking places as their own. As such, placemaking and marking is an interrelationship with the production of power and the material, through which such relationships are culturally articulated, challenged, and reproduced in social fields (Aretxaga, 2005; Bourdieu, 1993; De Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996, 1989). In other words, the experiences of encountering urban divisions and social perceptions create a practice of engaging with spaces. The spatial dimension of social experiences organises interrelated encounters with complex conflict dynamics of ethnonational framings of space and, culture-led, neoliberal urban development, which is often, hybrid and overlapping. It is these places where the everyday happens, and it is where the processes of social perception formation occur.

At the outset, segregation means the act, process, or state of being separated or set apart and is often a process of territorial isolation that places limits or restrictions on contact, communication, and social relations. It is a way of organising inter-ethnic relationships. At the same time, it is also a factor contributory to the shaping and maintenance of those very relationships bound to territoriality. Soja defines territoriality as a behavioural phenomenon associated with the organisation of space into spheres of influence or demarcated territories, made distinctly and considered at least partially exclusive (1971). Its most apparent geographical manifestation is an identifiable patterning of spatial relationships resulting in the confinement of specific activities in particular areas and the exclusion of specific categories of individuals from the space of the individual or group (Soja, 1971, p.19). Historical experiences of spatial divisions have been widely documented as either interfacing as in the case of Belfast (Jarman, 2002; Jarman and Bell. 2009; Jarman et al., 2009; Rolston, 2002), and through residential segregation, and demarcation as in the case of Beirut (Nasr, 1993; Khalaf, 2006; Khalaf and Khoury, 1993; Makdissi, 1996, to name a few).

Belfast

The often physical and material barriers serve as a reminder of what happens when the urban fabric of the city is torn apart. They also offer insight into how Northern Ireland haphazardly reifies the fault lines back together, not with public conversations for social cohesion and national reconciliation, but with concrete, corrugated steel fences and reinforced with

political murals, kerbstones, flags, and graffiti. Shirlow and Murtagh (2006) remind us that territorial conflict in Northern Ireland has played out via place-centred interpretations of struggle and has been aligned "to discourses of torment, anguish, moral rectitude, and the entitlement to challenge any 'terrorisation' and 'threats' that could occur" (p. 171). Furthermore, Murtagh (2002) argues that territory is vital to the expression of identity and strategies of protection, survival, and cultural enrichment (p. 30). Many factors affect the levels of segregation and people's experiences of sectarianism and which so affect the daily routines of individuals in Belfast (Jarman, 2009). Jarman's research highlights how segregation and sectarian attitudes affect various aspects of everyday life in differing ways, in different areas:

> "In some areas, there are greater levels of mixing, sharing, and integrating, while in others the legacy of the past, of hostility, fear and mistrust dominate the wider social environment. In most social environments, the process of avoidance still appears to dominate interactions between members of the two main communities. However, while segregation and division remain dominant aspects of daily life in areas across Northern Ireland, it is not a completely stark binary division, rather their research illustrates something of the diversity of experiences that are affected by factors of age, gender, class and location" (Jarman, 2009, p. 12).

The population movements between 1960 – 1976 exacerbated existing segregation practices and led to the development of interface communities (Jarman, 2002; Rolston, 2002). That movement tended to be concentrated in the working-class areas of North, West, and inner-East Belfast, where the ethnic patchwork of Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods in North Belfast experienced the worst of the internecine conflict, population flight and starkest division of territory (Boal, 2000, 2002, 2006; Calame and Charlesworth, 2008; Gaffikin et al., 2016; Gaffikin and Morrisey, 1999, 2011; Morrissey and Gaffikin, 2006; Murtagh, 2002). The consequence was over ninety peace lines in 2012, where a physical barrier was used to separate communities (Belfast Interface Project, 2012). While some physical barriers separating the two communities were built in the early 20th century, they were never a prominent feature of Belfast's urban fabric until 1969 when a phase of extremely violent atrocities, known as The Troubles, began. Bombing campaigns, street battles and arson attacks against "25,000 households" (Calame and Charlesworth, 2008, p. 80) triggered the exodus of thousands of families from relatively mixed areas into the heartland of "their" community which resulted not only in collective trauma, deep-seated hatred and a seemingly hereditary mistrust but also in a staggering degree of segregation. In 2005, the percentage of Belfast's population living in severely segregated wards (whose population is 90% or more homogeneous by religion) was 55.4% (Morrissey and Gaffikin, 2011, p.881).

The consequences of division reduce the possibility for positive interethnic exchanges producing fertile ground for the emergence of 'negative inter-group stereotypes' (Rolston, 2002, p. 639). In addition, it sets up clearly defined and labelled areas that may be more readily targeted by paramilitaries and creates a need for duplication of community facilities (Rolston, 2002; Jarman, 2002; Jarman and Bell. 2009; Jarman et al., 2009) – people will not use a facility if it is in the 'wrong' type of

neighbourhood. As such, physical segregation as a process of placemaking is made possible through a series of peace walls, which provide a modicum of security, but also distorting patterns of travel. Besides, segregation and peace walls, according to Rolston (2002) in this instance, contribute to the maintenance of ethnonational segmented housing markets and contribute to freezing of the ethnic geography of the city (Bollens, 2000).

The process of segregation creates a struggle for reality construction – a reality for Catholics and one for Protestants - of different historical experiences which have formed their positions relating to the Peace Walls, as necessary, or as Rolston suggests, a 'modicum of security' (2012). The peace walls were intended to reduce or eliminate localised, neighbourhood versus neighbourhood conflict, when they were first constructed in September 1969 by the British army in response to the outbreak of the Troubles (Rolston, 2002). Initially, the walls were temporarily constructed, however not all of these walls are still around almost 40 years later. However, others were introduced into the urban fabric of the city, and as such, the historical experience of an individual's habitus. Rolston argues that segregation in Belfast reduces the possibility for positive interethnic exchanges, which in turn produces fertile ground for the emergence of new forms of dispositions based on negative inter-group stereotyping (Rolston, 2002). Ritual parading, sectarian graffiti, political murals, and the painting of kerbstones sustain a symbolic demarcation of the Protestant community and territory at a time when the material base of that community, was being eroded (Jarman, 2002; Jarman et al., 2009; Jarman and Bell, 2009). While the Catholic Nationalist Republican community does not parade as much, it also has extensive processes of symbolic demarcation in the form of political murals.

Beirut

Unlike Belfast, which had seen levels of communal segregation from as early as the nineteenth century (Connolly, 2012) and affected every field within its society, from separate education, and homogeneous neighbourhoods to duplications of services and housing, the communal segregation in Beirut was a relatively new phenomenon. Except for existing private confessional schools, massive internal displacements of populations due to the Civil War exacerbated communal segregation (Nasr, 1993). The placemaking processes of segregation and violence in Belfast existed in an interrelated, almost bedfellow relationship, and the placemaking processes of violence led to new spatial realities to the tune of more than 1.2 million Lebanese being displaced from their previous places of residence on a long-term basis (Nasr, 1993, p. 67). These shifts in the sectarian composition of the population were repeated throughout the country, radically transforming it (Nagel, 2002; Nasr, 1993; Khalaf, 1994; Harik, 1999). At the same time, the Muslim population of East Beirut poured into West Beirut with 45% of the Muslim population dropping to 5% by the end of the war (Nasr, 1993). Also, notable, was the movement of many Christians moving away from the city centre altogether and constructing what Nagel (2002) described, as hastily built concrete blocks of apartments in the steep coastal valleys of North Beirut.

Nasr (1993) argues that the traditional heterogeneity, which had long characterised the various ethnonational communities within the country, had been eroded because of what he calls inter-faction fighting (p. 66). The acute segregation of Lebanese communities caused by violence was caused by "each armed faction striving to create its homogeneous sectarian territory through intimidation, threats, and violence against political opponents within its community and members of other communities living within the borders of its sectarian territory" (Nasr, 1993, p. 68). The internal frontiers of Beirut, often perceived through the sectarian prism, framed their geopolitical dimension since "the city remains a site of struggle over the meanings of Lebanese identity and nationhood" (Nagel, 2002, p. 724). These sites of struggle suggest a relationship between different historical narratives of the ethnonational communities who strove to create their nation amid contesting realities (Makdisi, 1996, 2003). The social attitudes and values of street art communities frame their experiences, amid these different and diverging realities. Moreover, they are linked to, and maintained by, the vividness of memories of war or post-memory experience (Larkin, 2010) for the young population, and continuously renewed by the political conflict. The historical experiences for successive generations persist in the modern discourses of Beirut and Belfast "as normal, inevitable or natural, and thereby misrecognise the true nature of their social inequality" (Swartz, 2010, p. 48).

3.2.2 Ethnonational Violence in Beirut and Belfast

Nagle (2019) characterises the urban destruction caused by the conflicts in Beirut and Belfast as resulting from armed ethnic groups where the site of struggle is of diverging national aspirations and resulting in diverging and contentious realities for their inhabitants. For McDowell et al. (2017), "groups construct ethnic identities by endowing place with symbolic properties [that] contribute a sense of ownership among its members" (p. 194). In this sense, Nagle (2013) described the cities of Beirut and Belfast as characterised "by a violent conflict of national self-determination over the wider state, underpinning the fissure between ethnic groups" (p. 78). Since identity formation is inextricably linked to territory making and marking, such prolonged legacies of ethnonational violence have created a placemaking process whereby individuals perceive and form part of their experiences with armed ethnonational violence.

Belfast

The religious labels in Northern Ireland appended and attached political identities to individuals based on nationality. The contentious nature of this conflict is two-fold and exposes the reality of routine 'othering' of peoples. The social "reality" for some Catholics living in Northern Ireland means to be under the control of a British "occupation" of historic Irish-Catholic Ulster and, on the other side, a Protestant minority live in the Republic of Ireland while having been a majority in Northern Ireland. Conversely, the social "reality" for some Ulster Protestants living in Northern Ireland means to be under constant threat of the Catholic Irish who seek to unite with the Republic of Ireland. The routine othering exposes the urban landscape with the territorialisation of villages, towns, neighbourhoods under either the domain of Unionism or Nationalism made visible

by political murals, use of flags, and other symbols associated with either domain. Here we observe the linking of identity and territory as a form of reality construction; where one lives offers more about an individual's national aspiration and affiliation than it does about their well-being and access to services.

Another way to understand this othering process in Northern Ireland is to suggest that people can "tell the difference between a Catholic and Protestant in social interaction", as Burton (1978, pp. 36-67) notes in his study of a North Belfast enclave. He contends, "critical to an appreciation of both the mundane and extraordinary … is an understanding of the social relations which pervade the wider society" (Burton, 1978, p. 37). They find expression in Northern Irish clichés about Catholics for example "as being 'loyal to the half-crown' in that they take monetary payments from a State they do not wholly approve" (Burton, 1978, p. 48). The significance attached to language, nuance, gesture, demeanour, and general display contributes to the cultural reproduction of ethnic difference (Burton, 1978). "Telling" in these respects, serve as an ideological construction which "serves to order the experiences of a sectarian social division" (Burton, 1978, p. 66) in Northern Ireland. However, it also serves as a framing of the individuals' organisation of experiences through this lens, for example.

Beirut

According to Nucho (2016), during the Lebanese Civil War, various ethnonational factions fought in urban streets, drawing boundaries, "ethnically cleansing neighbourhoods, and setting up checkpoints to limit mobility and movement" (p. 22). It was common practice during the conflict for the ethnonational militias to use the national identity cards to identify and kidnap, torture, or kill members of "enemy" sects who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. All urban mobility was under the control of various factions, with losses and gains of territory the primary means with which to measure power. The war did not merely take place within the space of Beirut. Instead, it was a conflict over space itself:

"While the Lebanese state was technically still in existence throughout the war, it no longer managed the territories under the domination of different warring political groups within the disintegrating city of Beirut (Sarkis, 1993), for the most part, citizens were left to negotiate with the militias in control of various parts of the country. The array of armed factions provided access to services and a relative degree of safety that had different degrees of organisation and competence to provide these services and maintain essential infrastructure" (Nucho, 2016, p. 23).

Furthermore, "the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005 freed the public expression of partisan allegiances, both in print and in the broadcast media" (Merrimer, 2013, p. 382). Politics has invaded the public space with its slogans, portraits of leaders, its insignia, and its colours but also, although sometimes reluctantly, with its self-identification. Partisan and religious signs could be read in taxis or heard on radio broadcasts. It was at a point where some businesses posted at their entrances the sign "it is forbidden to talk politics," where one might have expected to see a sign refusing credit (Merrimer, 2013, p. 381).

A mosaic of ethnonational communities represents the microcosm of Beirut by which, since the mid-eighteenth century, have been consolidating their own and divisive national aspirations and grievances (Khalaf, 2006). As a result, either each community has employed similar processes of agency and contention at the level of reality construction for urban dwellers that have appropriated the cause's manifesto, or those who belong to other communities are not represented in the conflict fighting. One way this has played out is in the way that Beirut-based militias used the built environment to monitor and control the mobility of particular neighbourhoods close by, and with the creation of a new urban feature to Beirut's landscape. A major arterial route during pre-Civil War periods as a direct link between Beirut's Martyrs' Square and downtown to Damascus, the Green Line separated Christian East Beirut from Muslim West Beirut by warring factions. It created a physical and psychological border or line of demarcation, which urban dwellers living during the war period had to navigate with threats to their security. The various ethnonational militias who often securitised it with revolving checkpoints armed by the local militia, physical barriers, and visual reminders of territory with the use of sectarian graffiti to mark territory, similar to the political murals used in Belfast to mark ethnonational territory, routinely patrolled the Green Line on each side. Typically, in Beirut, these different events are also propagated by political and religious posters and used extensively as ideological territory markers throughout the city (Chakhtoura, 1978). After Hariri's assassination in 2005 and again after Hezbollah took over the capital's streets in May 2008, a war of posters broke out in the streets of Beirut. These posters are the city's visual barometer of the political situation at large (Haugbolle, 2010).

3.2.3 Securitisation in Beirut and Belfast

The third placemaking process concerns the discussion on how issues of threat and security shape the experiences with places and, produced by community discourses, practices, and community experiences themselves. From our discussions thus far, the processes of placemaking are ever-expanding, contracting, and evoking a response. Habermas argued that some of the very forces that account for its expansion (Khalaf, 2006) also threaten the public sphere. As market economics become unstable, the state typically steps in to enforce a more significant measure of control. With the expansion of the powers of the state into virtually all dimensions of social and everyday life, the securitisation of spaces dwarfs the public sphere. Habermas warns that the state can now seek to redefine problems as technical ones, which can only be addressed by technologies and administrative venues rather than public debate, open discourse, and augmentation (Khalaf, 2006).

In terms of Belfast, securitisation of spaces is discussed in terms of vigilance and surveillance of the ethnonational communities by localised paramilitaries, and the city centre by security cameras and store run private security guards. While the securitisation of spaces in the city centre has dropped back from what it used to be during the Troubles, it is presently not driven by official state forces. Whereas, in Beirut, the surveillance of neoliberal and governmental spaces is driven by official state forces. In earlier discussions, both official state and unofficial non-state actors who link territory and identity together

bind territoriality in Northern Ireland and Lebanon. However, there are other non-state forces which monitor, direct and guide inhabitants to act or behave in ways which respect the ethnonational communities.

Belfast

The word "security" also has a performative character – that not only describes the world but can also transform social reality (Balzacq, 2006; Balzacq et al., 2016). A material expression of securitisation in Belfast is interfacing. Examples of interfacing include rioting (used to mark or defend territory), the erection of walls or other dividing lines (used as a securitising strategy), the marking of spaces with graffiti, flag, and emblems, or the simple use of landmarks to navigate particular neighbourhood streets (Wilson and Donnan, 2006). The following discussion handles the material expressions of securitisation in Belfast by examining the process in which it takes place and how it shapes community discourses, practices, and community experiences in the urban fabric.

While the city centre encounters a form of downgraded securitisation of public spaces, "interfacing" is not only a tactic but also a powerful form of strategy, intended to separate groups whose contact might be perceived as a source of conflict or disorder (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010, p.14). The most obvious example of this strategy can be seen in the city's numerous "Peace Walls," large structures located in interface areas, which physically separate residents from various enclaves (Community Relations Council, 2009). However, there are more subtle forms of "interfacing" that form part of the strategies of development and securitisation. One of the best examples of the latter is the segregated communities of luxury flats built around the city in the early 2000s (see Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). Another example is the formation and strategic development of "Quarters" (such as the CQ or the Titanic Quarter) throughout the city, which are marked off by banners erected by the City Council as a mechanism for tourist promotion and urban redevelopment.

Interfaces directly challenge strategies of city planning, development, and even the provision of services, including policing, by bracketing off space and maintaining subtle forms of control over its use (Hughes, 2011; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010). For instance, expressions of interfacing mean that many people will drive for several miles around a perceived interface to get to a shop that is only half a mile away to avoid transgressing a boundary (McDermott and McAvoy, 2010; O'Halloran, 2010).

Hughes (2011) discussed how the Troubles introduced securitised techniques of regularly "cordoning, screening and searching" (p. 13) of inhabitants. The securitisation of many public spaces in Belfast "involved constant surveillance night and day by foot patrols, vehicle patrols, the use of helicopters, electronic surveillance, mass house searches and 'stop and searches'" in an effort by the British Army as forms of counterinsurgency (Hughes, 2011, p. 13). Security barriers, known as the "ring of steel," circumnavigated the commercial centre of the city centre with military checkpoints, which were taken down shortly

before the Good Friday Agreement came into effect in 1998. However, the presence of heavily fortified police stations around the city centre remains a continuing presence (Cunningham and Shannon, 2016).

Shirlow (2001) analyses "the ways in which geographical territoriality shapes communal sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, its social effects and how people in Belfast cope with associated fears in their everyday lives" (p. 1). Shirlow (2001) conducted extensive fieldwork mapping what he referred to as "spaces of fear" which discuss the socio-spatial causes and effects of violence in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork showed how (potentially) violent conflicts "are sustained by mutually reinforcing foundational discourses based on essentialist reasoning" (Shirlow, 2001, p. 9). The idea arising from his fieldwork is that essentialist reasoning among participants is "innate and irreconcilable differences," rather than being recognised as socially, spatially, or temporally contingent (Shirlow, 2001). As such, perceptions follow a "logic of practice" (Bourdieu, 1990) where an understanding of history (and memory) in which conflict and competing territorialities are represented as "inevitable" and "fated", rather than contingent and relational (Shirlow, 2001). This essentialism is exactly what Bourdieu wanted to problematise, which Shirlow discovered in his fieldwork.

Furthermore, Shirlow uncovered that "identities are products of practices and discursive production, and that space is a crucial sphere in which identities and differences are created and maintained" (Shirlow, 2001, p. 9). Shirlow's analysis highlights how these placemaking processes are played out and contested across several fields by different social agents. Indeed, it is the contestation over the right to govern that is often at the heart of social conflicts (Shirlow, 2001, p. 9). Jarman (1993) discusses the role of the security forces in Belfast in restructuring the urban environment, as the building of army posts, cameras, and observation posts in defensive planning indicated a willingness to settle for an acceptable level of violence (Jarman, 1993). This control and containment imposed on working-class estates are contrasted with attempts to normalise the situation in the commercial centre of Belfast. Another powerful strategy of securitisation in Belfast is surveillance, conducted mainly by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) used by securitising agents as a means of monitoring and responding to acts of violence, such as rioting or criminal activity while private firms avoid anything to do with public disorder.

Moreover, simple acts like refusing to use shared facilities or retail areas, scrawling sectarian graffiti on the walls of redevelopment projects, or merely existing in conditions of poverty in areas next to luxury developments transgress the shifting boundaries erected and maintained by the strategies of development. According to Mitchell (2012), graffiti may be an essential way of reclaiming or reshaping the spaces portioned off by walls. In a sense, the wall, intended to discourage violent expressions of sectarianism, provides a canvas onto which an opportunity for forms of contestation can be played out. In an ethnographic study conducted by Mitchell and Kelly (2010), the riots conducted by youths who live on the interface of Duncairn Gardens are tactics of occupation in the face of post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. Mitchell and Kelly (2010) suggest that the practice of rioting is a means for subverting the structures of power and order by using these structures (the organisation of space around interfaces or responses of police to rioting). Duncairn Gardens acts as an interface

segregating the North Belfast neighbourhoods of Tiger's Bay from New Lodge, and also serves as the location of many of Northern Ireland's volunteer organisations which, ironically, in a post-conflict Belfast, aids in the *ad hoc* attempts of social cohesion. For Mitchell and Kelly (2010), the acts of youths closely resemble what Lefebvre called "festival" or "play" as a sudden, temporary collective overturning of power which enables creative human action and resistance against systems of power by momentarily disabling them. In interviews conducted by Mitchell (2010), the youth mentioned how young girls would often provoke each other across a local interface to see whether and how their boyfriends might respond by fighting as a means of 'defending' their girlfriends (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010). Here, the young people test their social relations, their ability to gather a crowd, mobilise a riot, their capacity to stake, and defend space, and finally, their ability to undermine the local power structures that constrain their behaviour.

Beirut

Fawaz et al. (2012) map the anatomy of visible security systems in Beirut to examine the complexity of constructions that produce them. Based on extensive fieldwork in Beirut, their paper unravels "security" "as the accumulation of a set of constructed threats that bring together a multiplicity of forms and agents of securitisation, both public and private" (Fawaz et al., 2012, p. 173). Similar to Belfast, security, they argue, amounts to a "complex, overlapping, and contentious set of anxieties that materialise spatially in entrenching segregation and socially, by differentiating among urban dwellers along the lines of gender, class, race, or religious/sectarian belonging" (Fawaz et al., 2012, p. 174). According to Monroe (2011), "the city's architecture of defence, with its gates, bollards, and armed forces, made the use of public space more challenging for residents". Installations of security disciplined and interrogated mobility practice, thereby creating an active and highly sensitised civic body (p. 106), one where insecurity imbues everyday movement. In navigating security, in the zigzag around barriers, confusing mobility ensued, which created its own set of rules based in chaos (Monroe, 2011). Securitisation in Beirut "transfers a geopolitical status to these areas, combining local and external issues, trends in extra-territoriality associated with struggles for identity and marking their symbolic appropriation", making "Beirut a multidimensional and contested geopolitical site" (Merrimer, 2013, p.377).

The process of securitisation in Beirut brings to light hidden and latent political tensions during the period of the Civil War. The process also manifests "a fragmented, overlapping, and contested security system where the definition of what constitutes a threat is constantly negotiated and therefore changing, the monopoly of state agencies on security is openly challenged, and the boundaries between the public and private agents blurred" (Fawaz et al., 2012, p. 174). Likened to a Pandora's Box from which violent demonstrations emerge, the city contends with new emerging political and community territorialisation (Merrimer, 2013, p. 377).

A broader approach to the constitution of security offers insight into how political communities constitute themselves and how particular articulations of security come to capture the way that communities deal with those issues (McDonald, 2008). The placemaking process of securitisation offers a diverging pathway for analysis of Beirut and Belfast. Discussions on spatial segregation and ethnonational violence offered an insight into the process, which helps to uncover the motivations of inhabitants to engage with their city. The value of this insight might explain why there is a noticeable absence of street art in downtown Beirut's highly securitised city centre. At the same time, there is a noticeable abundance of street art in Belfast's city centre.

The following section examines the conceptual convergence of culture and commerce in the context of real-time urban revitalisation of the CQ in Belfast and urban reconstruction in the BCD. It offers a shorthand analytic lens into the uses of culture as a resource to propagate economic-related activities (Oakes and Price, 2008). We will then discuss how specific branding strategies create a 'creative city' marketed under forward-looking visions of nostalgia for the 'glory' days of Belfast industry and Beirut's commercial hub in the region. The power to enforce these activities is representative and reflective of the power and prestige, which politicians and businesspeople must convince most ethnonational inhabitants of these cities. *These dynamics are bound to create new urban struggles surrounding the right to claim that space.* Furthermore, it is essential to understand this convergence and how it manifests in polarised cities to grasp who is made visible to use and to create the space, i.e. who has the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991; Miles, 2007; Zukin, 2010, 1995).

3.3 The Neoliberal Geographies of the Divided City

The starting point of this section is to acknowledge concerns that political and economic restructuring in modern cities has negatively affected the enfranchisement of urban residents (Harvey, 2008, 2006; Purcell, 2003a, 2003b; Zukin, 1995). Changes in the institutions of urban governance now favour more neoliberal urbanism which pursues "the increasing functional integration of all people and places into a single, laissez-faire, and capitalist world economy" (Purcell, 2003, p. 99). Opponents of this form of globalisation fear that the growing power of capital and its pursuit of neoliberalisation will increasingly disenfranchise the mass of people, excluding them from the decisions that determine the course of globalisation (Zukin, 1995). Purcell (2003) suggests that "these changes have been complex and have led to a range of outcomes, the literature argues that overall, they have tended to decrease the control urban residents have over the decisions that shape their city" (p. 101).

In the city, which, as a theatre for social actions, depends on memories, signifying practices are regularly involved in the making and the changing of meaning (Neill, 2001). In terms of contestations, Harvey (1996) prescribes "spirit of place" as the meanings which places gather through experiences with social or urban contestations (1996, p. 308). Framing a city, then, as a dynamic place of rival contestations, is essential because it allows "a release of a different image concerning the past and releases a different image as to possibilities of the future" (Harvey, 1996, p. 309). As such, "the power of symbolic place in cities holds

major sway over the imagination, and, therefore, they can be sites of struggle in the same way that images representing the city as a whole can be disputed because of the power which they bestow" (Neill, 2004, p. 13).

The convergence of culture and commerce, in market-led strategies, explores the use of culture as an expedient resource to promote commerce "as a way of providing social welfare and quality of life in the context of diminishing public resources and the withdrawal of the state from the guarantees of the good life" (Yudice, 2003, p. 422). As Cunningham and Byrne (2006) remind us, "the role of urban policy in ethnically polarised cities is problematic because in governing, city officials must address both broad ideological imperatives that result from larger, often state-wide conflicts, and the particular problems and daily needs of urban life" (p. 47). City managers promote the championing of a service economy as it makes Beirut's and Belfast's economies competitive and able to 'catch up' with the rest of the world. It also transforms existing social and economic structures through the production and re-presentation of culture (Zukin, 2010, 1995) in a neoliberal discourse. This implication presents spatial consequences and concerns for social cohesion and national reconciliation within their deeply divided societies.

Zukin (2010) warns that culture-led strategies often act as a last resource for struggling economies looking for a quick fix to encourage inward investment. Notwithstanding the abundant critiques of the neoliberal economic model, the immediate task for the Northern Irish and Lebanese governments was to revive their capital cities and to repair the destruction of their economic and social structures through urban policies. The social and commercial life in the city centre is affected and restricted. Within years of the formal settlement of their respective conflicts, large-scale development projects began to regenerate blighted and destroyed sections of their commercial centres, with Belfast opting for site-specific cultural regeneration of 'quarters' of its city and Beirut rebuilding a nearly destroyed quarter of its historic commercial hub.

Culture is a "sum of attitudes, customs and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another" (Williams, 1981, p. 21). Historical experiences with strategies of the production of culture and commerce are "transmitted through language, material objects, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next" (Evans, 2005, p. 967). The use of culture as a tool for analysis helps to understand how new identities are socially constructed (Bourdieu, 1990). However, the production of culture and culture-related activities only exists within spatial constraints and is located within the boundaries of these quarters. Undoubtedly, culture-led strategies complicate research on placemaking processes within a deeply divided city, by encouraging an understanding of the city and different ideological cultures vying for their forms of legitimacy and identity-making, to shape the city around them. City managers choose to bridge this historical divide by creating new commodified 'places' which preside over the materiality of daily life. In this placemaking process, city managers, business improvement leaders, and local council members frame their cities with catchy slogans to sell their future-looking visioning strategies and to re-present their economies through new meanings and symbols (Evans, 2005). In doing so, they 're-market' places to change the perceptions of their war-torn countries with visible improvements and changes to the built environment, as well as a propensity to host global-scale events

and festivals, such as the Tour of Italy cycling race, Giro d'Italia (2014), in Belfast or one of the largest New Millennium's Eve celebrations in Beirut (2000).

The marketing of place, or commodification of existing spaces through large-scale property development, appropriates the arts and culture as accoutrements for this entrepreneurial project. Whether neoliberal urbanism co-opts culture (Künkel and Mayer, 2012) or produces culture as an expedient resource (Yudice, 2003) with which to lubricate economic development, is of interest here. Most of the street art in Belfast is found within the Laganside Development Corporation's (LDC) CQ and the funding, walls and permissions granted for the street art's placement comes from Belfast City Council and the CQ Trust. The main difference between the case studies is unlike Beirut, Belfast's street art exclusively exists within the city centre. The charge against street art and other forms of urban art and gentrification are that, by temporarily beautifying a derelict area, they transform a formerly disused area into lively places for squatters, artists, and urban dwellers. In doing so, the artists sanitise spaces for urban developers (Cathcart-Keays, 2015) in a process where street artists fulfil the role of being agents of urban change and agents of urban gentrification.

The usefulness of street art and other urban activities for urban development encourages what Grounds and Murtagh (2015) describe as sanitising an urban environment as observed in Shoreditch, a neighbourhood of London, and Wynwood Walls in Miami. In all examples, neoliberal urbanism co-opts the urban practice of street art as a resource to locate sites for easy development, i.e. location and sites where urban dwellers form and develop communities of hipster cafes, specialised boutiques and art communes, however ephemerally. Nevertheless, there are instances of resistance. The Italian artist BLU and the co-creator of the Kreuzberg murals famously destroyed Berlin's most famous street art called Curvy-Brache, the moment when property developers began gentrifying the once derelict neighbourhood of Kreuzberg. Additionally, the same artist famously destroyed all his artwork in his native Naples when art galleries promoted a show with the works of Banksy and other street artists. BLU's action brings attention to the tension with art galleries benefiting or commodifying the fundamentally urban practice of street art, known as the Banksy phenomenon, and its co-option within the art world. These examples bring attention to the various uses of street art as a resource to commodify places for neoliberal urban development and to commodify urban art.

The following section develops the notion of the symbolic economy where resources such as street art and culture writ-large operate within its boundaries. As the research's overall aims situate the practice of street art within the spaces of divided Beirut and Belfast, the post-conflict urban regeneration contains new socio-spatial realities in Belfast and Beirut.

3.3.1 Symbolic Economies: Marketing Culture in 'Post-Conflict' Beirut and Belfast

The processes of socio-economic placemaking will present new sets of relationships produced amid new material realities through the reconstruction within city centres, especially as city managers promote spaces for street art creation. Zukin (1995)

introduced the concept of the symbolic economy to describe a transformation of symbols or knowledge-based resources into three notions of a culture where ethnicity, aesthetics, and marketing reshape urban spaces and conflict over revitalisation. For Zukin (1995), the symbolic economy:

"features two parallel production systems that are crucial to a city's material life: the *production of space*, with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings, and the *production of symbols*, which construct, both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity. Every effort to rearrange space in the city is also an attempt at visual re-representation" (pp. 23-24, emphasis in original).

In cities which commodify culture as marketing strategies, would the sanctioning of street art as a cultural iteration of inhabitants practising their right to the city, help promote 'post-conflict' cities desperate to shake off associations with conflict while maintaining some of its identity with its past? The multitude of marketing strategies, which use culture as an instrument of consumption in Beirut and Belfast, is reflective of the political uncertainty and unresolved sources of conflict. Nagle (2018) suggests that the 'appearance' of a successful peace process is just an illusion where investment in cultural events and activities to attract investment or distract attention away from these instabilities. While the iterations of cultural production are different in both cities, due in part to the variegated social, political, and economic relationships inhabitants have historically experienced, a similarity presents itself regarding new urban struggles.

The extensive destruction and dereliction of the city centres of Beirut and Belfast, from deep societal and urban divisions, violent conflict, urban planning decisions and the 2008 global real-estate crisis, called for a regime of revitalisation and regeneration efforts. In Belfast, many of these interventions started decades before those in Beirut, with the 1969 Belfast Transportation Plan to create new urban transportation infrastructure (Gaffikin et al., 2016). The cities soon became sites of new urban struggle where neoliberal policies and visions of prosperity through the convergence of culture and commerce began to reformulate new understandings of power and control of public spaces. The scales and types of violence that differentiated Belfast and Beirut represent long-standing historical and social divisions. Disagreements over 'reconciling traditional ethnic loyalties within the framework of secular national identity' (Calame and Charlesworth, 2009, p. 43), were fought to determine whose social vision and narrative control the direction of the city. Correctly, the warring factions of Lebanon played out their claims to the idea of national aspiration with destructive consequences in the heart of Beirut's downtown area. Intermittent violence coupled with large population movements (Nasr, 1993) created self-contained communities of ethnonational neighbourhoods guarded with checkpoints, political flags, and allegiances to foreign regimes and ethnic ideologies. Beirut's experience, according to Calame and Charlesworth (2008), shows that the 'burdens of urban partition affect residents long after the violence and barricades have been officially removed' (p. 60). Whereas, in Belfast, the national conflict dealt with territorial disagreements over sovereignty and political participation.

The constitutional claim of sovereignty plays out in proxy disagreements over ethnonational segregation, and the institutionalisation of an Irish Language Act or support for social rights such as abortion, and same-sex marriages. These different visions manifested into distinct framings of national identities allied with the British State and the Irish Republic and influenced social practices and behaviours of inhabitants towards each other. Although the thirty-year fighting between the groups occurred across much of Northern Ireland, the responses to conflict took on material forms within working-class communities, such as localised interface barriers, walls, and political murals. Of the 3,600 conflict-induced deaths, one-third of them occurred in traditionally working-class neighbourhoods of Belfast, where many of the interface barriers still exist (Calame and Charlesworth, 2008, p. 78). The city centre was a zone of repeated bomb attacks by the Irish Republican Army throughout the 1970s and the 1980s and into the early 1990s. The bombings produced a chill effect in the area – people were more reluctant to socialise and shop there at weekends and night (Hamilton et al., 2008). The legacy of that evacuation of 'conviviality' – still echoes today and affected the centre's development (Caterall, 2011; Grounds and Murtagh, 2015).

Imagining an 'Authentic' Vision of Beirut through Economic Redevelopment

The deliberate destruction of the Beirut Central District (hereafter BCD) during the civil war and displacement of the communal mix of the area (Randall, 2014), "given the centrality of the area to Beirut and Beirut's geographical position, reconstruction was deemed as urgent" (Shwayri, 2008, p. 86). The Lebanese state abdicated authority for reconstruction under Law 117 of 1991 by allowing the Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth (Solidere), founded by billionaire politician, Rafik Hariri to acquire the ownership rights of property owners (Makdisi, 1997). As such, Solidere owns and manages the BCD, leaving all space to become private. "Solidere's role is divisive because in a post-conflict city reconstruction involves choosing what to keep and what to destroy" (Randall, 2014, p. 10). As such, "Solidere stood accused of levelling more building than were destroyed during the civil war" (Makdisi, 1997, p. 662). According to Makdisi (1997), "by 1993, as much as 80% of all structures in the BCD were damaged beyond repair, yet only a third of this was war-inflicted" (Larkin, 2009, p. 5).

Figure 1: Map of Municipal Beirut, *Source*: Kastrissianakis, 2015: OIS 3 – Diverrcities: Competing Narratives and Urban Practices in Beirut, Cairo and Tehran

The reconstruction of BCD "is characterised by the exclusion of most of the protagonists involved tenants, owners, and refugees, but also the former elites from politics, science and society were replaced by a group of newcomers, war-profiteers and investors" (Schmid, 2006, p. 365). Constructed as a grand project and heavily reliant on foreign experts (Charlesworth, 2006, p. 118), Beirut's new city centre detaches itself from the Lebanese context (See Figure 1). The following figure 1 depicts the municipal map of Beirut, with the names of prominent neighbourhoods in the city. As can be seen, the map has a key which delineates the different markings of the map and deals with the municipal borders of the city. This demarcation line historically split the city into East and West and the current land remit of Solidere in the Downtown area of the city. It is illustrative of a process of privatisation of the urban realm and the dominance of global economic trends instead of local social needs. Sawalha (1997, 2011) has written on how local groups have responded to the reconstruction of Beirut, as has Larkin's investigation of the youth of Beirut, which related to the new and exclusionary space of downtown Beirut. The conversation thus far on the regeneration efforts in Beirut has not included the participation of primary stakeholders: the civic society of Beirut. Solidere developed the BCD from the 'top-down' and prioritised economic and physical, and the production of private spaces (Randall, 2014) rather than social and cultural reconstruction (Charlesworth, 2006; Sawalha, 1997; Beyhum, 1992). "Planners and urban theorists have increasingly questioned the neoliberal model, in which city space becomes an arena for market-oriented economic growth and elite consumption practises, thus stripping the public sphere of its social and political dimension" (Larkin, 2009, p. 7), and their right to the city. Furthermore, the urban renewal strategy of Solidere prioritised "the global economy and tourism over local 'urban' renewal by creating a common shared space accessible" (Randall, 2014, p. 11). As such, the confrontation between local groups and capitalist investment schemes will engender new usages and meanings of space (Sawalha, 1997).

Research conducted by Larkin (2010) suggests, "The physical reality fails to reunite a divided city but disconnects the now exclusive Central District from the rest of society" (Randall, 2014, p. 11). Furthermore, Larkin (2013) explored how the

memory of the conflict is passed down to the post-war generation and restricts youth's ability to renegotiate Beirut as they have grown up living the divisions. While some show the desire to renegotiate familiar or unfamiliar locations, they bear the baggage of memory stemming from their co-ethnic predecessors (Larkin, 2013). The attempts of youth to reassess, subvert, or overcome the city's divisions for a more pluralistic environment often become, in and of themselves, a form of a re-enactment of an 'unresolved' past. Larkin (2013) argues that this development has created a new set of boundaries in the city negating and erasing many memories of that place while imposing new socio-economic and cultural restrictions. For Petti (2007), whose piece is more pessimistic in tone, the role of space is not necessarily benign but is at least as crucial. He describes the systems of inclusion-exclusion as spatial devices that are instruments with which the city is built and continues to be made (Petti, 2007). Petti's analysis can help shed light on Beirut's regeneration process in terms of these urban figures as reinforcers of segregation, to the detriment of the cultural mix and diversity that lie at the heart of good urban life. They also reinforce existing power relations, in that, they protect and safeguard the interests of higher and middle-income groups without considering the possible negative impact on disenfranchised groups.

The question of how a reconstruction project affects the reintegration of Beirut, given the centrality of Beirut to Lebanon, is posed by a multitude of researchers on the urban spatial relations of society to the newly constructed BCD in the attempt to understand these socio-spatial relationships to re-stitch the urban fabric of Beirut. Solidere has consolidated the process of 'spatial erasure' initiated by war destruction – by replacing public networks and historical spatial production with centralised impersonal relationships between private management, authorities, and individuals (Ghandour and Fawaz, 2012). In doing so, the urban reconstruction of Beirut through economic revitalisation programmes has served "to deepen the fragmentation of the city into autonomous zones operating independent of government, each with its distinct vision of history and territoriality. The displacement and sectarianisation of the civil war left a city divided mentally and spatially" (Randall, 2014, p. 16). Spatial and communal identities, "the attachment to territory and status within communities, have converged "means of escape from the trials and tribulations of war" and the ongoing uncertainties of political and social existence" (Khalaf, 2002, p. 307).

While in Beirut, faced with the near destruction of its city centre and the one-time hub of financial and economic life in the Middle East, the Lebanese government instituted the creation of Solidere in 1992. Solidere is a publicly owned, privately managed real estate company currently tasked with the development of downtown Beirut. The reconstruction of the BCD by Solidere can point to the fact that "division of sovereignty in Lebanon has given rise to new lines of united contestation and further division" (Randall, 2014, p. 4). According to many critics of Solidere, the development of the city centre served more to fragment than unite the city around a shared pluralistic vision (Harb and Deeb, 2013; Makdisi, 1997; Nagel, 2002; Randall, 2014). The Solidere post-conflict reconstruction project reinvented Beirut's historic core, transforming the war-era battleground for territorial sovereignty, into a separate enclave of high-end exclusivity. A new landscape of high-rise buildings and immaculately rebuilt streets stands in stark contrast with the visibly damaged ethnonational neighbourhoods surrounding it,

"abruptly severed from the rest of the city by a network of highways that constitute physical barriers" (Fawaz and Ghandour, 2010, p. 3).

Prioritising the financial and economic sectors over efforts for social cohesion and national reconciliation, the development of the BCD exacerbated existing fractured spaces, especially the surrounding areas. Not so surprisingly, the rehabilitated city centre preserved and perpetuated the isolation of the historic core of the city in abiding by the boundaries forged during the civil war. Solidere transformed the battle-zone of downtown Beirut from a dark space of military violence into a bright and non-sectarian space of free flow of capital without altering in any fundamental way the spatial detachment of the downtown core from the rest of the city (Ghandour and Fawaz, 2010; Hourani, 2012). Khalaf (2007) reminds us of Beirut's convivial society during the pre-war era where the downtown area of the city was a public sphere for diverse cultures and communities regularly engaged with each other in commerce, culture, or art.

Joseph (1975) and Nucho (2016) remind us that sectarian parties serve as "mediators of state resources" (p. 6), and are, in effect, more active in the maintenance of essential services and infrastructure than actual city management and administration. Deeb and Harb (2013) write about the relationship of culture to the politics of Hezbollah and the emergence of the Islamic Milieu in the locations under its control. One of the most recent appearances of street art is in Ouzai, which is in the survey of Hezbollah's control, but has not been part of the Islamic Milieu's development (Harb and Deeb (2010). Ouzai is still considered a slum within the perceptions of Beirutis (Fawaz and Peillin, 2003), public sanitation and sewage treatment are not extended to the remit of the area. Harb and Deeb (2011) examine Hezbollah's control of the southern Beirut suburbs as a dynamic where the "use [of] religious ideology define[s] and mobilise society" (p. 126). Harb investigates the relationship between space and religion to analyse the "the process of territorialisation of the southern suburbs, showing how Hezbollah has elaborated specific spatial strategies with the aims of controlling, securing and ordering public space and livelihoods" (p. 127). Here, the religious symbols in the form of flags, and urban interventions vociferously charge the landscape with territorial markings imbued with specific meanings for those who live in the suburbs. How Hezbollah inscribes meanings into the social and spatial settings of Dahiya (Harb, 2011) requires special attention to the section of South Beirut which many Lebanese perceive as "Shi'a, poor, backward, rural, peripheral, anarchic, illegal, and Islamist" (p. 128)—with the population displacement of Beirut after the Civil War, furthering the division of the city into what Harb (2011) describes as "homogeneous sectarian enclaves" (p. 129).

Moreover, in a study of increased spaces for leisure in the Dahiya, Deeb and Harb (2013) examine the history of the Islamic milieu as it relates to the "entanglement of physical spaces where ideas and norms are inscribed and negotiated, with the social environment constructed through those ideas and norms" (p. 37). The creation of ethnonational identities in the so-called ethnic spaces of Dahiya is based on spatial strategies which Hezbollah employ to "physically materialise the codes, values and norms of the resistance society and the Islamic milieu" (Harb, 2013, p. 139) and is implemented using urban planning tools

which attach religious symbol into, a "territory marked with a socio-political identity – that of the Islamic milieu and the Resistance society" (Harb and Deeb, 2011, p. 145). Further, Hezbollah attaches ethnonational identities to the Dahiya by,

> "firstly, produc[ing] attachment to al-Dahiye through the material production and dissemination of Shi'i beliefs and religiosity embedded in the social and urban fabric of neighbourhoods through everyday practice. Second, they rely on principles of organisation that model space – namely, the Party's holistic policy networks which are responsible for marking, ordering, and controlling space" (Deeb and Harb, 2013, p. 148).

Hezbollah's control and order space treat space as a site of public intervention where they can transfer their resources and services while also attaching identity to space, as a site of belonging (Harb, 2013) - extending this analysis of shaping of the Islamic milieu to the southern Beirut suburb of Ouzai, the Elissar project aimed at revitalising and reconnecting the southern parts of Beirut. It sheds light on the conflict dynamic on the discourses of government-led urban development within squatter settlements such as Ouzai (Fawaz and Peillin, 1993, p. 3).

Similarly, to the emergence of the Islamic Milieu in Southern Beirut, and the creation of non-governmental 'publics', power is reinforced not only by their patronage of these services but also by their role as both sectarian leaders and businesspeople. For example, sons of ministers of the Lebanese parliament own the only two Lebanese telecommunication companies and are also leaders within sect-affiliated parties and militias (Nucho, 2016; Sawalha, 2014). Correlating user subscription to sectarian party membership would be interesting. However, no reception analysis exists. Television channels and other media outlets act as official orators of the ethnonational community leaders or *zuama*. They are just some examples of the symbiosis of vision and power which maintain 'collective intimacies' amongst the Lebanese people, and those who subscribe to their sectarian ideologies (Migliorino, 2008; Nucho, 2016; Traboulsi, 2007; Yahyah, 1994). The fragmentation of the national narrative of what it means to be Lebanese, according to Merrimer (2013) is linked and maintained by "the vividness of memories of war or post-memory experience" (p. 389) for the young population (Larkin, 2010). The city of Beirut "remains a site of struggle over the meanings of Lebanese identity and nationhood" (Nagel, 2002, p. 724).

According to Leclair-Paquet (2013), the Beirut city centre detaches itself from the Lebanese context. Leclair-Paquet (2013) also suggests that the construction of the BCD "is illustrative of a process of privatisation of the urban realm and the dominance of global economic trends instead of local social needs" (p. 20). Sawalha (2011; 1997) has written on how local groups have responded to the reconstruction of Beirut, and Larkin investigates how the youth of Beirut relate to the new and exclusionary space of downtown Beirut (2010). All would agree that the conversation thus far on the regeneration efforts in Beirut has not included the participation of primary stakeholders: the civic society of Beirut. Larkin (2009) suggests in his study that "planners and urban theorists have increasingly questioned the neoliberal model, in which city space becomes an arena for market-oriented economic growth and elite consumption practices, thus stripping the public sphere of its social and political

dimension" (p. 7), and their right to the city. Solidere's "urban renewal strategy prioritises the global economy and tourism over local 'urban' renewal by creating a common shared space accessible" by all (Randall, 2014, p. 15), perhaps much like the convivial nature of everyday life during the pre-civil war era as remarked by Khalaf (2007). Khalili (2016) contends that the corniche of Beirut is the only 'shared' space across all socio-economic communities. As such, the confrontation between local groups and capitalist investment schemes will engender new usages and meanings of space (Khalili, 2016).

Randall (2014) contends that Solidere's role is divisive because, in a post-conflict city, "reconstruction involves having to choose which buildings to restore and how" (p. 5). The city of Beirut witnessed, "More buildings [being] demolished than in almost twenty years of artillery bombardment and house-to-house combat" (Makdisi, 1997, p. 662). The notion of heritage is problematic because it attaches meaning to physical architecture to support historical narratives and present-day concerns. Interestingly, in promotional documents, Solidere does acknowledge the importance of preserving and integrating archaeological sites into the city centre: "culture remains a dynamic and integral element of everyday life, just as it is central to the formation of the urban fabric, character, and economy of a city" (Solidere, 2011). For instance, Solidere "ensured that Ottoman and Mandate era buildings were carefully restored, along with mosques and churches central to communal life in the city" (Randall, 2014, p. 10). However, of the Phoenician and Roman artefacts unearthed during the excavation of downtown Beirut, the passer-by rarely comes across informational plaques signifying the relevance of the open-air pits beside Saint Georges Maronite Cathedral, or beside the luxury promenades in Beirut Souks. Although securitisation in Northern Ireland dropped back from what it used to be, it is not driven by official state forces, as was the case in the 1970s. While in Beirut, it is a familiar sight to see a ubiquitous security guard in front of many residential buildings to high rises, government buildings, banks and shopping security - private security or official security, checkpoints - with the highest concentration in the city centre. Sawalha (2014) leads the charge in criticising Solidere for not preserving these forms of archaeological heritage while co-opting the cultural significance of them.

Imagining Belfast: Lipstick on a Gorilla

The symbolically charged built environment is an arena of cultural conflict rather than a canvas of artistic contemplation. Boal and Royle (2006) trace the current urban geography of Belfast as a physically divided city back to the legacy of the rapid urban development and planning policies of the period between the 1960s and 1980s. According to Neill (2001), "the 1970s saw the start of a vigorous social house-building programme in Belfast which recognised the reality of people's desire for the security of residential segregation" (p. 42) through the forms of peace walls erected at interface zones where cultural differences could sometimes meet each other (Boal and Royle, 2006; Neill, 2001). Moreover, "between 1970 and 1975, an IRA bombing campaign destroyed" around three hundred establishments in Belfast city centre and over a quarter of total retail floor space (Neill, 2001, p. 43). In response, the British State erected defensive security barriers around the commercial centre of Belfast city centre, which monitored and searched pedestrians and entering vehicles (Brown, 1985; Catterall, 2011). The government's "Review of Transportations Strategy in 1978 recommended the construction of a high-grade motorway link running to the north and west of

the city centre" (Neill, 2001, p. 43), known as the 'Westlink.' This road acted as a virtual moat, cutting off the city centre from the Catholic and Protestant housing of the Falls Road and the Shankill Road. The spreading of rioting into the city was made extremely difficult since the construction of the 'Westlink' (See Figure 2). The following figure 2 depicts the Belfast City Council's map of the inner core of the city, which includes CQ (in blue) and the surrounding neighbourhoods, cut off by the M2 Motorway to the West and the Lagan River to the East.

Figure 2: Map of Belfast City Centre, *Source*: Belfast City Council, Inner North West Masterplan
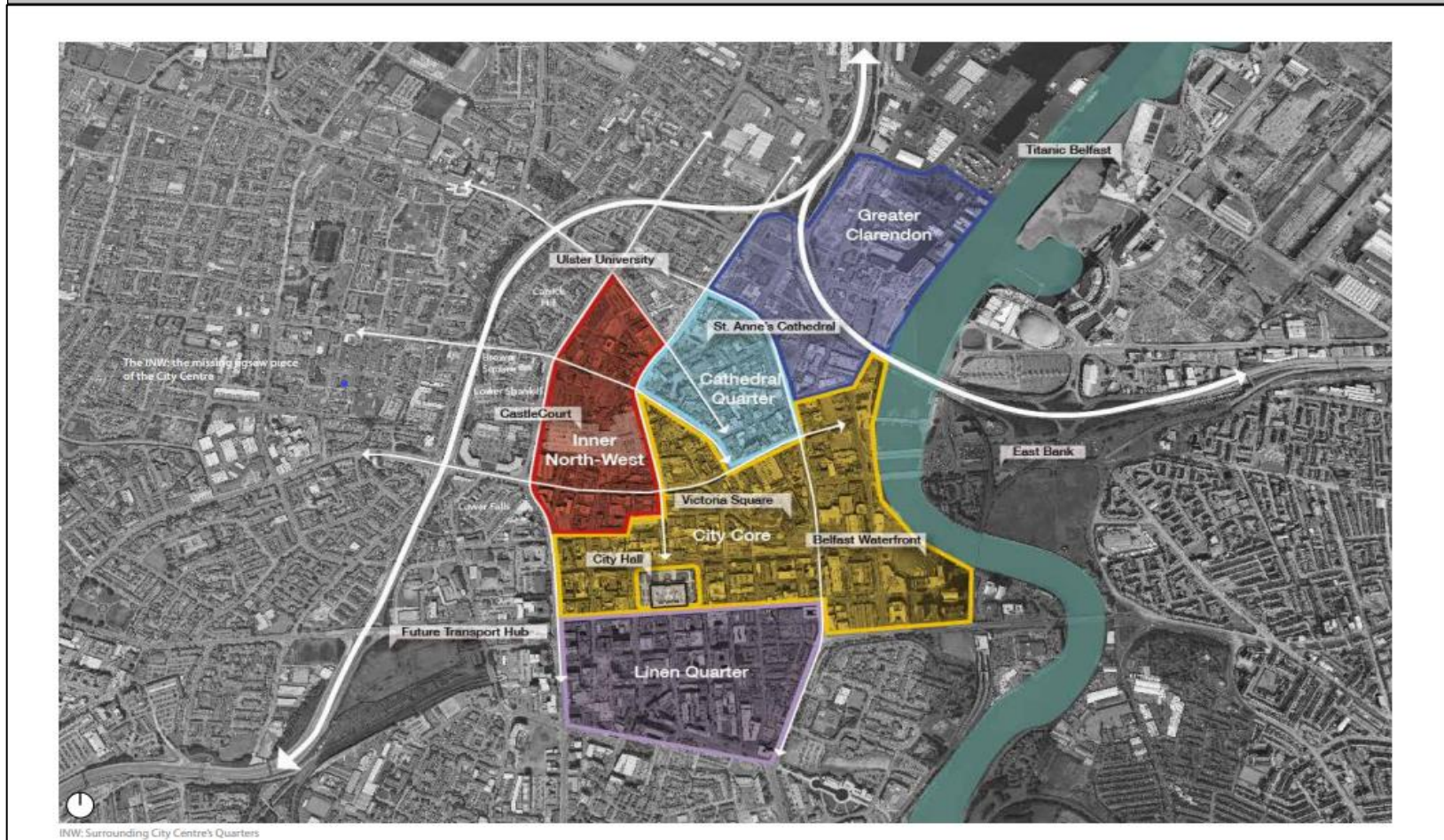
Dawe (2003) considers the physical, social, and cultural dissolution of Belfast during the past four decades to find a Belfast that is at the end of the day, "a city finished with ships and industry now open to new formations, its major landmarks, the two cranes of Samson and Goliath, the remains of a lost civilisation" (p. 15). Neill (1995) refers to this process of image-making, conflict management, and urban development as applying 'lipstick on the gorilla'.

The spatial transformation of Belfast's city centre since the beginning of the twentieth century has uncovered many layers of successive generation's experiences with peacebuilding and conflict management of diverse communities segregated along socio-economic, political, and cultural lines. In the most recent venture of peacebuilding and conflict management enacted with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (hereafter GFA), strategies of planning, governance, and development have positioned

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Belfast as a capitalist, market-led environment (Komarova and O'Dowd, 2013; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010). Positioning Belfast within this light encourages new iterations of the meaning of everyday life in a 'post-conflict' city, with the city centre as a performative epicentre of such strategies (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010). Boal (2006) classifies Belfast through a linear and temporal progression, from 'Post-Industrial', 'Troubles', and more recently, a 'Twin-Speed' city in transition (Murtagh, 2008); each city presenting a new tension for 'everyday life' for the individual to navigate and derive meaning from spatial arrangements around Lefebvre's trialectic of space. The fabric of a city is a palimpsest of meaning forged and laid down by successive generations experience with peacebuilding, spatial negotiations, and form where one layer has been obliterated "to make room for another, which in its turn has been covered by the next, even while the new is being worn away" (Brett, 2003, p. 22). The strategies employed in Belfast after the signing of the GFA are of 'building of a new city precursor to the new, post-cease fire, appealing to a more open city' (Brett, 2003, p. 23).

Since the GFA, Belfast has been subject to substantial regeneration, in the name of both modernity and the obliteration of the traces of the sectarian conflict. Pullan and Baillie (2013) see that "much of this development has been in the rebranding of Belfast as a global city: culturally plural, open to trade and tourism. Nonetheless, the shedding of the past in favour of a revitalised city has not been without its problems" (p. 11). Komarova and O'Dowd (2013) investigate the hardened residential division because of neoliberal urbanisation. Even though economic development is "seen as a means through which to dilute and transform conflict in the city, sectarianism has proven durable and flexible, accommodating both changing economic patterns and placemaking projects" (Pullan and Baillie, 2013, p. 11).

The stakeholders controlling the symbolic economy of Beirut and Belfast are entirely different. Whereas in Belfast, the stakeholders are made up of a broad coalition of regeneration corporations, arts and culture community organisations, local council members and business associations, in Beirut, reconstruction is managed by political and economic businessmen and mandated by sectarian politicians. These stakeholders influence the notions of urban policy configurations in deeply divided societies and allow for critical reading of any culture-related activity within the parameters of their city centres. As witnessed in the cases of Beirut and Belfast, these culture-led strategies sanitise and brighten up derelict places. This paradigm appropriates the arts and culture as accoutrements for this entrepreneurial project and, once again, arts and culture have become new sites of urban struggle. The following section examines the inescapable process of gentrification, which neoliberal urbanisation exacerbates.

3.3.2 Neoliberal Urbanism and Urban Shrinkage

Instead of spreading the reconstruction process throughout the metropolitan Beirut and Belfast areas, most efforts concentrate on the damaged financial and commercial hubs of the city. Komarova (2008) notes that one of the significant challenges facing the construction companies operating in deeply divided societies was "to eliminate religious bias from the

concerns of planning and to base it on objective and rational policy decisions" (p. 5). According to Grounds and Murtagh (2015), the Northern Irish state "distracts and at the same time commodifies and brands local patterns of segregation and territorial division" (p. 1), through "Troubles Tours" of the political murals or black taxi tours of the Peace Wall to hear directly from former combatants during the conflict. This sense of irony is not unusual as we learned from discussions of Lebaneseness invoking a contentious Maronite-Phoenician identity for Beirut. The partial co-option of culture for promoting city branding is at work with no real understanding or concern for the populations that may not receive help from the tourism monies (Boland et al., 2017).

Urban shrinkage, according to Haase et al. (2014), is a term to denote site-specific development rather than urban growth, favouring economic growth in quarters and centres rather than citywide development. While both cities have experiences with urban shrinkage, or, this process (Haase et al., 2014) and its far-reaching social implications in Belfast occurred at a much earlier period and for several reasons. Belfast's redevelopment was part of a longer urban policy, which started in the late 1960s with the 1969 Belfast Transportation Plan (Gaffikin et al., 2016). Many inhabitants were voluntarily or involuntarily repopulated, leaving behind an unevenly sparse city fabric with urban transportation plans and the securitisation of the city centre against intermittent IRA bombing campaigns. Segments of Belfast's inner-city core neighbourhoods were depopulated to make room for the M2 West Link motorway (Forum for an Alternative Belfast, 2008). Due to the ethnonational make-up of those neighbourhoods, Catholic or Protestant inhabitants moved to nearby towns and villages where their communities reside. The legacies of those plans and the West Link motorway are visible today as a more connected metropolitan Belfast exists as a 'doughnut city' (Forum for an Alternative Belfast, 2008), separating North and West Belfast's working-class communities from the city centre. The subsequent urban division of the rest of the city around cultural institutions such as Queen's University Belfast, St Anne's Cathedral, Smithfield Market and the Titanic Quarter created several mixed-use development projects each with their own "cultural" identity, linked to a new vision of Belfast; a city of cultural quarters (Murtagh, 2008).

Beirut

According to Randall (2014), Solidere stands accused of, firstly, trivialising heritage of its motto, "An Ancient City for the Future" as it relates to the development of the BCD while secondly, for neglecting the existing heritage outside the city centre (pp. 10-11). As maintained by Amaya-Akkermans (2012), Lebanese architect Bernard Khoury pours scorn on Solidere's motto, suggesting that it appeared to overlook the present entirely and to conjure up and create links between the past and the future, that is the city as Beirutis currently experience it. Larkin's (2009) study of Lebanese youth's attitudes towards the reconstruction of Beirut's city centre suggests "the next generation of Lebanese recognises that national reconstruction requires a rebuilt urban fabric and collective remembrance, which balances narratives of loss and suffering alongside those of recovery and redemption" (p. 17). Solidere rebuilt the Beirut souks "as a way of evoking the bustling social and commercial heart of the multicultural city before the war" (Randall, 2014, p. 10).

The following section seeks to explore the similarities and differences between Beirut and Belfast regarding the nature of the inhabitants who can use those spaces. The promotion of Belfast as a cosmopolitan city 'open for business', with the use of glossy material, signs, slogans and fanfare measured in local colloquialisms allows for the symbolic economy to retain its Belfast uniqueness. Symbolic images of the shipbuilding and linen industries, which earned Belfast the title of 'Athens of the North' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2016), are marketed to offer a constructed vision of prosperity. Ironically, the city offers conflict tourism as an option for the intrepid tourist who wants to take a black taxi tour offered by former paramilitary men of the Republican or Loyalist traditions through their communities and discuss legacies of conflict or a visit to the infamous 'Peace Wall' which separates the majority-Unionist Shankhill Road from the majority-Nationalist Falls Road neighbourhoods. While in Beirut, Solidere reconstruction of downtown Beirut epitomises commodification of place-identities (Nagel, 2000). The case of Beirut fits squarely with a growing trend in urban development projects to market ethnicity and 'national character'. It is not surprising that the regime has made little reference to the civil war in Beirut's rebuilt landscape and has done little to memorialise the destruction wreaked by decades of sectarian conflict (Makdisi, 1997; Salaam, 1994). In associating itself with a new-fangled non-sectarian Lebanese identity and in embedding that identity in the rebuilt capital city, the regime, moreover, gives itself an air of legitimacy that it would not achieve if it were to appeal to sectarian allegiances. The hardening of social and spatial boundaries and the destruction of mixed space was most visible in Beirut, which has been renowned for its relative openness and tolerance before the war (Khalaf, 1987). The framework provided in section 4.1 facilitates discussion of the implications of the production of cultural quarters and the control of commercialised space on urban struggles to contest these arrangements.

Belfast

Belfast city's imagination is comparable to many cities around the world that have suffered from the wraths of deindustrialisation, disinvestment, and prolonged periods of civil unrest. The material fabric of Belfast city, as a result, has rested on shaky foundations (Boal, 2006), which have produced dividing imaginations crystallising in various spatial manifestations with no unified vision for the future (Neill, 2006, 1995). As a reading of Lefebvre (1991, 1968) and Massey (2005) could claim, the construction of Victoria Square shopping centre, the MAC and spaces for the creative industries infuse the built environment with meanings, significance and narratives which are often reimaged to suit the urban form. However, as noted by Komarova (2008), "this kind of 'neutrality' has in effect (re)produced inequality and has met with little public appreciation" (p. 5). Neil (2004) criticises the "ultimately cosmetic nature of redevelopment" of the CQ, which fails to "deal at a deeper level with cultural identity" (p. 193). Besides, the unsuccessful ability for city managers and council members to tackle "other dimensions of urban deprivation" in segregated working-class neighbourhoods highlights the challenges of urban development in polarised societies. Instead, the new cultural productions create new identities based on the logic of capital production, thus sanitising or neutralising spaces to accommodate commodified places and identity formation.

The urban planning policies and subsequent gentrification of communities and businesses helped to develop adequate transportation infrastructure and the need to protect the service economy's hub and commercial area from the IRA bombing campaigns during the 1970s. The implications of these policies to develop and protect the city centre's commercial area have ramifications for the absence of an evening economy (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015). At present, there are no official or comprehensive mechanisms for dealing with the past or memorialising the conflict. The city managers of Belfast can capitalise on producing an awkward narrative for marketing the past. The awkwardness in this regard refers to the tourism opportunities for those fascinated with the Troubles and the divisive political murals in West and East Belfast as well as the interface barriers and 'peace lines' which symbolically segregated ethnonational communities from each other, and the city itself. The awkwardness is about the idea of the emergence of a dual city (Bradley and Murtagh, 2008) and the normalisation of conflict-related interface barriers, segregation, and intermittent occurrences of violence, paramilitary or crime-related, within mere walking distance from the CQ. The elephant in the room is the unresolved nature of the territorial and constitutional conflict, which the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) sought to manage.

Neill (2006) locates the history of urban policy in Belfast in on-going struggles to imagine the city as a healthy, progressive and, now, 'post-conflict' place. In Belfast, in the modernising of the city centre, new places are created such as Cathedral and Titanic Quarter while the notable absence of low-income groups and housing opportunities are "marketing tactics in their own right" (Murtagh, 2011, p. 1125) and the "coming of a new apartheid centred on class and consumption" (Yiftachel 2009, p. 88). These are contingent on local histories and worked through regional institutions, so in Belfast, the process has left in place an inherited, existing governance framework overlaid by a new 'institutional fix' (Murtagh, 2011). Grounds and Murtagh (2015) argue that Northern Ireland's troubled past has given birth to a unique species of 'variegated' (Brenner et al., 2010) neoliberalism. Here the Castlebrooke and local council members have sought legitimacy for the free market as 'therapy' (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015) to produce non-sectarian areas throughout Belfast city centre, and the CQ exemplifies this neoliberal project.

The social divisions of the people of Belfast are the enduring legacy of conflict within the twentieth century in Northern Ireland (Boal, 2006). Experience with generational ethnonational violence as well as residential, educational and employment segregation have left in its shadows 99 interface barriers and an empty city centre after shops close (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015). Of the purely material legacies of conflict, and failed urban planning policies (Gaffikin et al., 2016), the most prominent and pressing need for the revitalisation of a competitive economy is the absence of people in the city centre after the commercial district closes its shutters for business. The commercial district of Belfast invested over the years in television adverts to dispel safety concerns and attract inhabitants to fuel the consumption-based service economy. The urban regeneration policies bent on reimagining and presenting the city centre moved beyond the commercial centre and into the burgeoning and organic community art neighbourhood of Northside. The development of Castle Court shopping centre along Royal Avenue not only displaced

Smithfield working-class communities but also cut off many roads into the city, further separating working class and other residential communities from the "doughnut city" (Forum for an Alternative Belfast, 2008). As with many of the developments in the new CQ, their main entrances open inward to the commercial area, away from the rest of the city to the West.

Contestation over the design and use of public space in Belfast City Centre has a long history of urban planning failures (Bollens, 2000). Gaffikin et al. (2016) liken these failures to an often-misquoted definition of insanity, which involves "doing the same thing repeatedly, while irrationally expecting that the next time will somehow produce different results" (p. 30). The urban transformation of Belfast has developed in several periods and over several large-scale developments from the extension of the M2 West Link and the depopulation of parts of the city centre under the 1969 Belfast Transportation Plan to the erection of a security fence protecting the commercial centre from the IRA's bombing campaign in the 1970s. Also, after the collapse of the industrial manufacturing linen and shipbuilding industries in the late Victorian era, many of the buildings that housed the offices and living quarters were left to decay. One only has to walk around the city centre to marvel at the architectural heritage of previous generations from the Victorian era redbrick buildings to the Art Deco Irish Bank and façade of the North Street Arcade, to observe the richness bestowed on the built environment during these times. The mandate given to LDC tasked it to revitalise segments of the city centre and the Lagan River as well as to build the necessary infrastructure on encouraging competition and investment.

The 2008 global real-estate crisis forced many business owners to foreclose and litter the city with abandoned buildings, as evident on Royal Avenue, for example. Nolan (2014) describes the broader implications of the 2008 real-estate crisis in terms of the drops in house prices and the overall performance of the Northern Irish economy. Grounds and Murtagh (2015) further reason that "despite offering the potential to imagine neutral and non-sectarian spaces, it could be argued that emerging modes of neoliberal urbanism have just imposed new patterns of socio-spatial segregation that have just overlapped existing forms of territorial division" (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015, p. 8). New processes of placemaking suggest that commodified spaces of the CQ present new socio-economic barriers, which are increasingly re-orientated towards the needs of those who can afford the commercial experiences. Amid ongoing placemaking processes of sectarian segregation, the spaces of the CQ exist separate from the reality of those living in single-identity communities. The gentrification of the CQ reminds us how both the neoliberal and ethnonational "geography of Belfast continues to overlap and fragment the city is a pressing concern and will certainly demand further research in the future" (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015, p. 10).

3.3.3 Who Can Use Space: Similarities and Differences

Intermittently, throughout the decades after the formal cessation of conflict, new spatial realities are built upon the need for economic viability and competition and the encouragement of long-term foreign direct investment. However, the material consequences of these actions on polarised societies lead to further divisions among more marginalised communities without

historical representation in conflicts, such as the youth (Larkin, 2010) and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) groups (Nagle, 2018). This trend is more noticeable, in the short-term, when city officials promote specific cultural events and culture-related activities, rather than long-term development of the area. A shorthand analysis of the co-option of social and cultural issues to 'sell' or market cities as 'cosmopolitan' and open, offers a double-edged sword of transition. On the one hand, championing a return to normalcy and progress is beneficial if the economic and financial sectors increase revenue and long-term investment. On the other hand, the ability of groups to be visible, in the form of protest or civil action, is contingent on the need of the political elite to preserve the *status quo* through security and sectarian-led decision-making.

However, the reformulation of power relations vis-à-vis cultural production in the BCD and the CQ means that specific meanings are associated with those commercial spaces, as viewed by different segments of society. The contentious reality here is that whoever claims to control public space and does so convincingly, can manage who also uses, lays claim to and instils that space with memories to be associated with that space. Like the use of tangible symbols of interface barriers, political murals, and sectarian flags in Belfast, which demarcate sectarian territory, shopping centres, fashion boutiques and bars demarcate commercialised non-sectarian territory. The logic of capital production and space shares a similar process of demarcating who belongs to a specific area. If the fruitful interplay between the production and consumption of capital controls the city (Harvey, 1989) is made visible through the abundance of shopping centres and built environment dedicated to this circulation of capital, then this space's use and meaning are communicated through what activities are allowed to take place within the public sphere (Khalaf, 2007, 2004; Habermas, 1989). According to Massey (2005), places "are formed through the myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent 'identities' are also themselves continuously moulded" (p. 154). In other words, place "[changes] us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness), but through the *practising* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us" (Massey, 2005, p. 154, emphasis in original).

Specifically, the constituent elements of a public sphere according to Khalaf (2007) lies "precisely in its ability to transform closed or cloistered spaces into more open ones and thereby to facilitate the voyaging, traversing, and crossing over" (p. 247). Street art engages with this process by temporarily repurposing urban spaces as a canvas for their artwork while evoking a response from the passers-by because of its vivid and vibrant imagery within urban spaces. As this research heeds the call of notable geographers and critical theorists alike, the main concern is that while these large-scale redevelopment projects exist within the context of profound social and urban divisions, the question is raised of whose city has been overlooked by the economic strategies for the development of these public spaces. We will further reflect on the social implications of new urban struggles, and which contest the official rendering of public spaces within these cultural developments and processes of gentrification, which produce ghostly cities. These implications, while only a handful, reflect the contexts of regeneration with different outcomes, due to the distinct social, economic, and political dynamics in Beirut and Belfast.

The dialectic between the rule of capital and the right to access and democratise space produces urban struggles, centred on the ideas of inclusion and difference. It also gives credence to the notion that the urban in Beirut and Belfast is a continuous site of struggle between different aspirations and visions of who has the right to claim spaces. In the instance where the symbolic economy of globalised cities is understood to cater to exclusively middle and upper-middle-class consumers (Nagel, 2000), those on the margins are left out. All others – minority groups, immigrants, and the seasonal workforce – are marginalised in this hegemonic structure (Sassen, 1996). Noticeably invisible from the city centres of Beirut and Belfast are youths engaging in urban activities such as skateboarding or 'hanging out' in the public space. Even more noticeable in Belfast, is the absence of adequate street furniture and spaces to encourage interactions amongst non-shoppers. Likewise, in the Beirut Souks, the open-air markets or bazaars offer a wide selection of luxurious goods that do not meet all the needs of urban inhabitants. Once the stores close, the people who shop at them leave to return to their neighbourhoods across the city and the cultural quarters maintain an eerie aura of emptiness, with noticeable sounds of air conditioning units whirring in the background and the flickering sounds of neon lights of store signs.

The local and government stakeholders, who make up the CQ Trust, re-enforce the promotion of commodified identities or populations to the exclusion of others (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015). Given the prevalence of underlying ethnonational interests that exist on the edge of the CQ, the deliberate exclusion of nearby single-identity communities, such as Carrick Hill, from participation in the Trust signals a dangerous trend in area redevelopment. #SaveCQ notes that community consultation meetings for the planning process exist in name only and routinely exclude community groups (#SaveCQ, 2018). The rejection of residents demands that social housing speaks to the idea of inclusion in the grand narrative of regeneration. Excluding single-identity community groups from their right to mixed-housing, in favour of non-sectarian, money-making projects, represents a site of urban struggle, between social needs and prospects for investment by Ulster University's move to develop a new campus and student accommodation in the area (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015).

The reality is that the development corporations and a handful of wealthy individuals or consortia who managed them privately own the spaces. With the environmental crisis of garbage collection in Beirut in 2015, feminist collectives demanding equal rights in Belfast, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) Pride parades, or ongoing OrangeFest parades in Belfast, social movements that engage with the struggle over ideas that are not championed or acknowledged by the state take on an urban dimension. The urban is the site where there exist differences in vision and ideals. The city hosts urban struggles amid the shadows of more substantial urban transformation and political struggles, although they may be site-specific or citywide, or within specific neighbourhoods. While some cultural organisations have been co-opted to favour related economic events and benefit from their relationships with businesses, the question of who can participate in protests and who is not is an exciting field of inquiry.

The new identities for inhabitants of these two cities, entrepreneurial and commerce 'Phoenician' and cosmopolitan might be true in limited respects, based on new economic realities. However, in recent years, public engagement with the cities' centres suggests a clash with the use of these environments and the new memories sponsored by the respective governments. With the nature of the territorial conflict unresolved in either society, the processes of political ideologies examined in chapter two continue to reproduce divisive civil society engagement with state policies. Khalaf (2007) reminds us of Beirut's convivial society during the pre-war era where the downtown area of the city was a public sphere for diverse cultures and communities regularly engaged with each other in commerce, culture, or art. The disruption to this creative process is indicative of long-seated divisions but also new realities where the downtown area is purposely designed to encourage non-sectarian dialogues and discourage dissenting voices, with the use of armed Lebanese army and private security firms, which monitor these behaviours.

Ghostly Cities

Whereas urban struggles exist relating to heritage and the right to participate in an over-whelming commodified city, the city operates exclusively during the daytime. Except for nightly events of Culture Night Belfast or a late-night viewing at a movie theatre, the site centres remain empty. The residual energy from daytime foot traffic and the sounds of a busy commercial centre subside and mellow out at night. We find a consumerist city, void of residential life where the only inhabitants who remain in the city centre after the shops close for the evening, are empty buildings, rough sleepers, and seagulls.

While no memory of the Lebanese conflict exists in the city of Beirut, with the notable exception of Beit Beirut (Hallak, 2006), a bombed-out building which served as a sniper's nest along the contested Green Line during much of the Civil War, no museums or memorials have been erected in the city centre to commemorate the losses or the conflict. Shortly after the conflict ended and during the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut, while bricks and mortar were built and bombed-out buildings remodelled by architects and artisans alike, one major road linking Downtown Beirut to Damascus was cleaned up and widened. The infamous Green Line which separated Christian East Beirut from majority Muslim West Beirut was overgrown with trees, vegetation, and debris of old vehicles, discarded by inhabitants of the city fleeing the onslaught and destruction. Makdisi (1996) recalls the scenes of overgrown vegetation and crumbled buildings as he walked through the destroyed area shortly before Solidere received the green light to reconstruct. The city looks abandoned and ghostly. Like current accounts of Beirut's new city centre, critics also imagine the city of ghosts (Nagle, 2018) or a spectral city, except for security personnel guarding the shopping centres or high-rise towers in Beirut's downtown area. The same road, which haunted many Lebanese with memories of violence and trauma, continues to bring in people from all over Lebanon and the neighbouring countries to the city centre. Unless left to the imagination, one has to merely look up from the window of a moving car or stroll by the grand boulevard of Damascus Road to take stock of legacies of conflict, with the severely damaged building facades.

To understand the socio-spatial relationships which exist, Pullan and Baillie (2013), Bollens (2013) and Khalaf (2014) among others question the resolve of city planners and policymakers to do just that. City managers and planners offer a solution with the redevelopment of economic, financial sectors housed in new buildings and new identities for inhabitants to adopt. However, as is the case in Belfast, no one lives in the city centre. In Beirut, only the super-rich and rising creative class can afford the luxuries present in the Beirut souks. These cities remain empty at night and offer little room for urban movements to claim their right to the city. The co-option of conservation and cultural organisations into the logic of capital production and consumption and processes of gentrification through increased retail and rental prices exist alongside the marginal voices pushed to the side-lines.

When space is controlled, and when the public is unclear about what the legal and acceptable boundaries of spaces are, people tend to monitor and police each other (Arvidsson and Bengsten, 2014). The patterns of socialisation in sectarian societies mean that the street offers casual encounters or engagement for people from the same ethnonational community. Neighbourhood spaces, in Beirut and Belfast, are seemingly permanently appropriated by ethnonational communities and use political and national flags, symbols and graffiti and street art to demarcate their spaces (Chakhtoura, 1975; Jarman, 2004; Nolan et al., 2014; Rolston, 2002). This process directly engages with, and diverges from, the notions of the right to the city. The temporal nature of street art is dependent on the elements of city cleaning and other artists who might paint close by to it. The place of street art is a visual manifestation of an artist's social experiences and interaction with the street. The temporary nature of street artwork intervention means that once the creation of an artwork is complete, it belongs to the city and attaches new meanings to a place, in the act of adorning the space with vibrant colours, shapes, and images. From the moment of creation, the artwork might shift the mode in which people encounter the place where the artwork exists and might encourage a repeated pattern of socialisation within those spaces. The implications of this are paramount to understanding divided cities like Beirut, Belfast and elsewhere while questioning whether ephemeral acts like street art in the context can be seen as an expression of temporarily re-purposing space since they make no permanent claims to the space that they occupy. A definition of urban space helps people "orientate, navigate, frame, and define themselves, their city, and their communities" (Pullan and Baillie, 2013, p. 6). Sawalha (2011, p. 3, 10) argues that the top-down imposition of Beirut's reconstruction has prolonged the uncertainty faced by Beirutis. Sawalha (2011) asserts that space and debates over space influence political and socioeconomic relationships, and as a result, spatial memory and identity affect politics and the use of space. Deeb and Fawaz discuss the attempt of Hezbollah at spatial planning in the Southern Suburbs of Beirut as imparting the Islamic Milieu which attaches Islamic notions of leisure and pleasure to locations. Every day practises allowing communities to have emergent properties of their own because of their relationships to each other and their interaction with the segments of materiality and expressivity. The unit of focus is understood as physical and psychological boundaries or fault-lines (Pullan and Baillie, 2013) which remain from the periods of conflict; either manifested as de-territorialised "zones of interaction" with high permeability or territorialised 'spaces of division' with low permeability (p. 52).

Everyday life in urban spaces is a complex agglomeration of encounters and conflicts, work and violence, leisure, and loneliness (Khalili, 2016). The violence that divided the city of Belfast and destroyed the city of Beirut may appear only in memory, or from nightly news clippings as the physical landscape of the city centres dramatically and drastically change. Reflecting on urban planning in fragmented cities of developing countries, Balbo (1993) extends the definition of the city as:

"splitting into different separated parts, with the apparent formation of many 'microstates'. Wealthy neighbourhoods provided all kinds of services, such as exclusive schools, golf courses, tennis courts and private police patrolling the area around the clock intertwined with illegal settlements where water is available only at public fountains, no sanitation system exists, a privileged few pirate electricity, the roads become mud streams whenever it rains, and where house-sharing is the norm. Each fragment appears to live and function anonymously, sticking firmly to what it has been able to grab in the daily fight for survival" (Balbo, 1993, p. 24).

Cities are complex, intricate arenas, where multiple interconnected dynamics mould social and spatial contours. Bollens (2007) remarks on the need to decipher the interrelated process of planning and urban conflict on the fabric of Beirut and Belfast:

"Cities can be critical agents in the development of multi-ethnic tolerance. They are crucibles of difference, constituting a necessary and stringent test of whether, and how, group identity conflicts can be effectively managed" (p. 248).

Benjamin Leclair-Paquet (2013) explores Bollens' citation as a starting point in his working paper on the potential of urban design in reuniting a culturally divided Beirut. For Leclair-Paquet (2013), this citation outlines the potential role of cities in their capacity to reunite divorced societies.

To place the recent emergence of street art within an alternative or other reading of everyday life and practises within the ethnonational divided city, the research examines how the experiences of street artists within divided cities are constituted and maintained amid ethnonational and neoliberal urban structures of power and order. Alternatively, a different reading of this social interaction can be explored, one which employs Lefebvre's right to practise and participate in the city based on new aspirations of culture and art, independent of these conflict dynamics.

The fabric of a city is a palimpsest of meaning forged and laid down by successive generations' experience with peacebuilding, spatial negotiations, and form where layers are partially obliterated "to make room for another, which in its turn has been covered by the next, even while the new is being worn away" (Brett, 2003, p. 22). Who has the right to claim the city amid these ongoing and active placemaking processes? If Belfast and Beirut make spaces for non-sectarian identities firmly rooted in the logic of consumerism and capital, then can new identities flourish from the convergence of culture and commerce? The research aims to understand street art within a context of urban development and sectarian segregation. The physical places

of street art locations in Beirut and Belfast are reflective of the communities' historical traditions, which individuals learn through their experience of engaging with the territorial cityscape. Even the most seemingly mundane task of everyday life (De Certeau, 1984) like walking to a shop or gaining access to a public beach is met with rules of traversing which are negotiated and learned. As such, to understand how the street art communities understand and use spaces in the divided societies, the following section does two bits of work. It firstly surveys the street art locations in different neighbourhoods of East Beirut's Mar Mikhael, West Beirut's Hamra and South Beirut's Ouzai and the CQ in Belfast's City Centre. The section secondly discusses the forms of urban gentrification with discourses of Hezbollah control of generally Shi'a spaces and the establishment of an Islamic Milieu in *Ouzai* and the creative gentrification of Maronite controlled East Beirut in Mar Mikhael, West Beirut's Hamra and the CQ. The existence of street art within these locations highlight the vastly different social and urban conditions brought on by the complex conflict dynamics of ethnonational and creative gentrification and discourses which frequently overlap and creates a sense of hybrid spaces.

3.4 The Conflict Dynamics of Street Art Locations

Most of the street art in Beirut and Belfast exist across different neighbourhoods, each with their distinct social and urban conditions. The research study is interested in understanding the intentions of street art communities within deeply divided cities, and more importantly, to engage with the nature of the 'street' where the artists place their artwork. The following discussion locates the sites of street artwork within the various conflict dynamics and discourses of the ethnonationalist framings and neoliberal spatial elements. The meaningful consideration of street art locations in divided societies reveals the challenges or obstacles for the communities to provide meaningful consideration of these conflict dynamics on the motivations and placemaking practice explored in the study. While not distinct, the discourses and ideologies brought on by the emergence of the Islamic Milieu (Harb and Deeb, 2010) in Southern Beirut, the creative gentrification of the CQ, Mar Mikhael and Hamra, present complex modes of interaction which a study of street art help shed light on the creative process of these micro-scale interventions for future discussion on the positionality of the artist, in chapter 5.3.2.i. As the location of the street art cannot be divorced from the analysis of their intentions, these inclusions note the social, economic and residency difference between the participants and case study cities.

The locations of where the street art exists in Beirut and Belfast gives an understanding of the real-life in space, on the ground, and to proffer insight to the active and ongoing ideologies which seek to control the interactions practitioners have with that space. While the research does not claim that the street artists actively change the dynamics of the spaces where they create their artwork, this discussion will locate the 'street' and centralise the nuances of everyday life in these divided societies. Furthermore, the discussions of overlapping ideologies of the ethnonational and the neoliberal's influence on shaping urban geographies are based on these earlier ethnographies of Ouzai, Hamra, Gemmayzeh and the CQ. The relevance of these inclusions is to highlight the exclusionary nature of urban development which we find the locations of street art, on the ground,

and to problematise further, the logic of negotiating urban projects with the purported claims of reconciliation between the Lebanese and Northern Irish peoples and the "re-unification of a city fragmented in numerous community districts" (Clerc, 2008, p. 3). The lived experiences of peoples of Ouzai, Hamra and Gemmayzeh in Beirut and the visitors to the CQ, are quite distinct and reflective of the social, economic, and cultural disparities of the neighbourhoods. Moreover, in order to avoid any totalising generalisations of the manners in which the territorial ideologies of neoliberalism and ethnonationalism vociferously attach to the landscape, the research finds the street art within environments which are as diverse as the artworks themselves and adds to the discussion of urban struggles due to sectarian contestation and urban gentrification in Beirut's Ouzai, Hamra and Gemmayzeh and Belfast's CQ.

Figure 3: Street Art locations in Beirut Neighbourhoods (blue dots), *Source*: Kastrissianakis, 2015: OIS 3 – Diverrcities: Competing Narratives and Urban Practices in Beirut, Cairo and Tehran

Figure 3 depicts the municipal map of Beirut, with the names of prominent neighbourhoods in the city. The clusters of street art exist in the Hamra area of Ras Beirut, in the West of the former demarcation line, Gemmayzeh in the East, and Ouzai

in the South of the city, close to the international airport. While there is no official count of street art murals in Beirut, the origin of street art began at the very edge of the Municipality border with Bourj Hammoud in 2003. The origins of street art in Beirut first began as stencilled images and stickers of companies which support the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. They surfaced in Hamra around June 2005 to express solidarity with the Palestinian Civil Society's call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) against the State of Israel. While little remains of those original stencils, more massive and more noticeable street art murals appeared in Hamra, Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh starting 2012 and because of individual artists or art festivals. While in Ouzai, the emergence of street art came about in 2017 in an orchestrated 'invasion of colours' which is now known as 'Ouzville' by the organiser and developer, Ayad Nasser.

As such, the following ethnographies of the 'streets' give meaningful consideration of the conflict dynamics of the ethnonationalist framings of space and the urban contestations of neoliberal development. Interestingly, the ever-changing landscapes in Beirut give insight into the different types of urban struggles on the ground and reflect the complex dynamics between state-led initiatives and ethnonational development, on the one hand, and the creative and commercial gentrification (Krijnen and De Beukelaer, 2015; Gerbal et al., 2016) of Beirut's Eastern suburbs periphery like Mar Mikhael and Western Hamra., and in the southern suburbs of Beirut with the control and use of space to create an Islamic milieu (Deeb and Harb, 2013; Fawaz and Peillin, 2003). The following discussions of the conflict dynamics are intended to demonstrate the various workings of the ethnonational and neoliberal ideologies at play, and how these could impact the intentions of street artists to place their work within these locations. The creative interaction with the city through street art nuances the hybrid and overlapping nature of the street art locations in Beirut and Belfast are indeed not exclusive, but nuanced. This discussion extrapolates on these conflict dynamics of creative and commercial gentrification of Hamra and Mar Mikhael in Beirut and the CQ in Belfast and the establishment of an Islamic milieu in Beirut's Ouzai.

Hamra

The locations of street art capture the stratification of Beirut society and represent the socio-cultural and socio-economic geography of the city. Starting in Western Beirut, Hamra has been known as the "youthful, intellectual/activist cosmopolitan centre, also an attraction for bohemian, subcultural and artistic groups" (Sabry and Mansour, 2019, p. 52). Whereas Mar Mikhael and Ouzai might be dominated by one sect, Seidman (2012) argues that Hamra's "has nourished a robust public culture" (p. 3). Seidman (2012) goes on to describe Hamra's version of urban cosmopolitanism in contrast to 'urban communitarianism' which exists in the neighbourhoods of Dahiya (Shi'a), Tariq al Jadeedeh (Sunni) and Achrafieh (Christian) and "feature a majoritarian sect, which has enough power to plausibly project their aspiration for a sectarian-based public culture" (p. 27). Instead, Hamra ethnonational diversity and "culture of lifestyle experimentation and political dissidence bears a closer affinity with Manhattan's East Village or East London's 'Spitalfields' than to the rest of Beirut" (Seidman, 2012, p. 27). Moreover, the polarising context is drawn between the modernity and cosmopolitanism of Hamra and the traditionalism and provincialism of other Beirut

neighbourhoods to be misleading (Seidman, 2012). This division ignores the social diversity that exists in many of Beirut's neighbourhoods.

Mar Mikhael

Krijnen and De Beukelaer (2015) discuss the creative and commercial gentrification of the Mar Mikhael area of Beirut's eastern sections, which is historical "a mixed residential/commercial area where many villas from the 1930s survive, alongside more recent structures" (p. 295). Mar Mikhael joins a long list of neighbourhoods which have been gentrified from the impact of Solidere in the downtown area since the late 1990s (Gerbal et al., 2016) and that has caused many of the creatives in neighbouring Monot and Gemmayzeh to flock to the area with its cheaper rents. According to Gerbal et al. (2016), since 2014, Mar Mikhael "is just the most recent example of a cycle of urban change and gentrification that is transforming the city of Beirut, often in a manner that reduces housing affordability, dramatically alters the built environment and weakens long-established communities" (p. 9). In a study on linking economic change with social justice issues of housing and the displacement of long-time residents, Gerbal et al. (2016) best describe Mar Mikhael as:

"one of Beirut's most distinctive neighbourhoods, defined by a unique assortment of art galleries and car repair shops, a network of brightly-painted staircases and a long-abandoned train station, and a diverse mix of older, long-time residents and young newcomers. Yet on the issue of gentrification the case of Mar Mikhael is more familiar, as the neighbourhood has recently seen a rapid influx of new bars and restaurants, as well as real estate investors and high-rise apartments" (p.5).

Moreover, Mar Mikhael began its transformation in 2008, as nightlife from the bordering Gemmayzeh district spilt over (Lee, 2009), and with them a settlement of young creative entrepreneurs (Zouain et al., 2011) who were either "attracted by the area's low prices and village-like characteristics around 2008, and the second attracted by the area's developing cultural and creative industries around 2010/11" (Krijnen and De Beukelaer, 2015, p. 296).

Ouzai

While the locations of street art in the neighbourhoods of Beirut exist within formal and planned settlements, they take on either a historic (Mar Mikhael) or commercial (Hamra) nature. However, since 2017, street art interventions can now be seen away from these areas, to include slums of the city, such as Ouzai in the Southwestern part of the city of Beirut. Fawaz and Peillin (2003) describe Ouzai as a squatters refuge which existed before the start of the Civil War in 1975 and is "located in areas of contested land ownership, where conflicts over the establishment of land registries during the French Mandate, rising land prices, and different political rivalries paved the way for their development" (p. 19). "Ouzai is also home to many low-income

families, including a concentration of Sunnis who were displaced from the Karantina district near downtown Beirut at the outset of the Civil War" (Cammett and Issar, 2010, p. 411)

According to Clerc (2008), "the southwest suburbs developed on land that did not belong to those who built it and without the agreement of the owners" (p. 21). Historically, Ouzai has witnessed several 'slum clearance operations' which date back to the late 1950s aimed at displacing the residents of the area (Fawaz and Peillin, 2003). In the 1980s, another operation succeeded to demolish "a large section of the squatter settlements in the southern suburbs of Beirut and managed to bulldoze around 400 houses and stores in [neighbouring] Raml before the operation was halted due to social resistance" (Charafeddine, 1985, as cited in Fawaz and Peillin, 2003, p. 31). The government policy of destroying slums in sections led to the construction of larger projects such as the Beirut International Airport extension of a new runway which was "planned to wipe out 30 to 40 per cent of Ouzai in 1983 and the highway interchange planned in 1973" (Fawaz and Peillin, 2003, p. 32).

The informal neighbourhood of Ouzai, located in the Southwest of Beirut, lay in the remit of the Elissar Project, which was "designed to rehabilitate the southern suburbs of the city, displace squatters from the coast and build several thousand housing units" (Fawaz and Peillin, 2003, p. 5). Furthermore, the reconstruction of new buildings through private and public initiatives led to the "eviction of squatters in many areas, including the city core and the old green line" (Fawaz and Peillin, 2003, p. 5). Harb (2005) notes that since 1995, Elissar's investments had either slowed down or halted the implementation of its large-scale urban development of the area entirely. According to Harb (2005), space where the informal settlement of Ouzai lays takes on a strong political dimension, as the politics of Lebanon, is based on sectarian divisions. The dynamic between the Lebanese government's desire to redevelop the Southwest portion of Beirut with the population relocation of Palestinians and Southern Lebanese undertaken by Hezbollah and their Shi'a political ally, Amal, meant that the conflict dynamic between the two camps delayed the implementation of the urban planning project. Furthermore, while road infrastructure was eventually built to connect the Southern part of Beirut to the City Centre, the Hezbollah stronghold, a "place of extreme poverty and illegal trafficking – especially for car parts" (Domat, 2017), Ouzai was left out entirely and left to neglect in its physical form, but also in the public opinion of public officials and the imagination of many Lebanese residents.

More recently, the neglected Ouzai has witnessed a new form of urban interventions, not externally, but within its ranks. Ayad Nasser, property developer, and street art organiser of the Urban Dawn Festival, dismayed at the neglect of Ouzai and its associated negative stereotypes, sought to transform the neighbourhood with colours and paintings. While it not uncommon to see their artistic interventions in slums worldwide (see favelas of Rio de Janeiro or the Manshiyat Naser neighbourhood in Cairo) the primary goal of Ayad Nasser was to change the perceptions of the people living in these slums. In doing so, the neighbourhood project called 'Ouzville' invited Lebanese and international street artists to paint murals over the walls of Ouzai and clear the streets and beach of the trash. However, while some residents have applauded his work, many critics of the project range between the residents who complain that they prefer socio-economic benefits rather than art, and academics and urban planners who share

their perspective. Mona Harb argues that the project does not socio-economically benefit the dwellers of Ouzville who do not have the necessary infrastructure and services (Domat, 2017).

With a few exceptions in terms of content and style, the main difference between street art in Beirut and Belfast is its proximity to the city centre. While street art in Beirut exists across the municipal city borders and spills into Ouzai to the south of the city, it pulses away from the city centre and into the neighbourhoods where the street artists live or are invited to paint by the local neighbourhood. Solidere in Downtown Beirut is void of residential life. In a different sense, street art in Belfast exists within the city centre, and most prominently within the CQ area in the northwest part of the city's centre. The CQ, as with the case of Mar Mikhael and Hamra, has undergone a cycle of creative gentrification, and with it brought new layers of street art murals starting in 2013 until today. Except for majoritarian Christian Mar Mikhael, the CQ and Hamra do not have ethnonational attachments, per se, except for the clear distinction that while Hamra has historically been a multi-coloured hub across different generations of Lebanon's intellectual and cultural elite, the CQ does not have an active residential population. Furthermore, unlike Beirut's street art locations, the CQ is actively promoted by the Belfast City Council (BCC) as a city ready for consumption, visitors who meet these rebuilt areas will undoubtedly note many construction cranes (Brolly and Montgomery, 2017) next to highly developed consumer spaces for shopping, retail, and leisure. However, they may notice that these shiny areas are in proximity to areas of derelict buildings, empty parking lots and kitsch stores (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015). To claim space and control of vision strategies, one has to be successful in the power of persuasion. Within the ever-increasing consumerist and commodified world, our attention is veered away from the 'messiness' of post-conflict societies, towards the smart new developments boasting new memories and experiences to behold.

The Cathedral Quarter

The power of stakeholders in the rebranding of city centres is to re-inscribe the city in visual memory and manufacture place-identities. Zukin (1996) understood this phenomenon of the visibility and viability of a city's symbolic economy behind the creation of place, as follows:

> "By the 1990s, it is understood that making a place for art in the city goes along with establishing a place identity for the city as a whole. No matter how restricted the definition of art that is implied, or how few artists are included, or how little benefits extend to other social groups outside certain segments of the middle class, the visibility and viability of a city's symbolic economy plays an important role in the creation of place" (p. 45).

This process of re-inscribing the city with visual memories of artistic institutions, entertainment and shopping centres establishes a place identity for the city (Zukin, 1996), regardless of where this development occurs. The reconstruction of the BCD is far removed from the war-damaged neighbourhood of Khandaq Al-Ghamiq within a stone's throw from the newly

constructed downtown area. The infamous Green Line cut through the neighbourhood once known for its convivial mixing of many confessions is presently empty of it (Brones, 2010, p. 447). Similarly, in Belfast, the development of the CQ (1989-2007) by the LDC and, more recently, Tribeca Belfast (2018-2021) by Castlebrooke exists near the soon to be forgotten working-class and partially gentrified neighbourhood of Sailorstown, which has been slowly depopulating since the end of the conflict. More recently, however, supporters of the preservation of the CQ successfully lobbied the Belfast City Council (BCC) to force Castlebrooke to change the name of their development, as "the announcement of the Tribeca Belfast rebrand is a superficial naming exercise, a new way of window-dressing a development that is profoundly lacking in empathy within this authentic place" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2019).

By the end of 2007, the LDC had reached the end of its tenure as the primary regeneration agent tasked with the development of the CQ, one of Belfast's cultural quarters, and the predominant location of street art in the city. The stakeholders charged with overseeing the development of cultural activities in the CQ operate under the name CQ Trust (2012) and manage it under a 5-year Business Improvement District (BID) called Destination CQ. The members of this Trust include representatives from Tourism NI, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Sinn Fein, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Alliance Party, Arts Council Northern Ireland, solicitors, Ulster University, architects formerly associated with the Forum for an Alternative Belfast, as well as local creative communities such as the Community Arts Partnership, Belfast Exposed, The Black Box, Young at Art and the Belfast Community Circus School (Beta.companieshouse.gov.uk, 2018). Incidentally, many of the local creative communities form the basis of the #SaveCQ campaign, which lobbies against Castlebrooke's regeneration of the CQ[1] (#SaveCQ, 2019).

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[1] The researcher made this observation from sourcing the respective board members' backgrounds to the original creative industries created in the CQ.

Figure 4: Street Art locations in Cathedral Quarter, *Source*: **Omar El Masri, 2018**
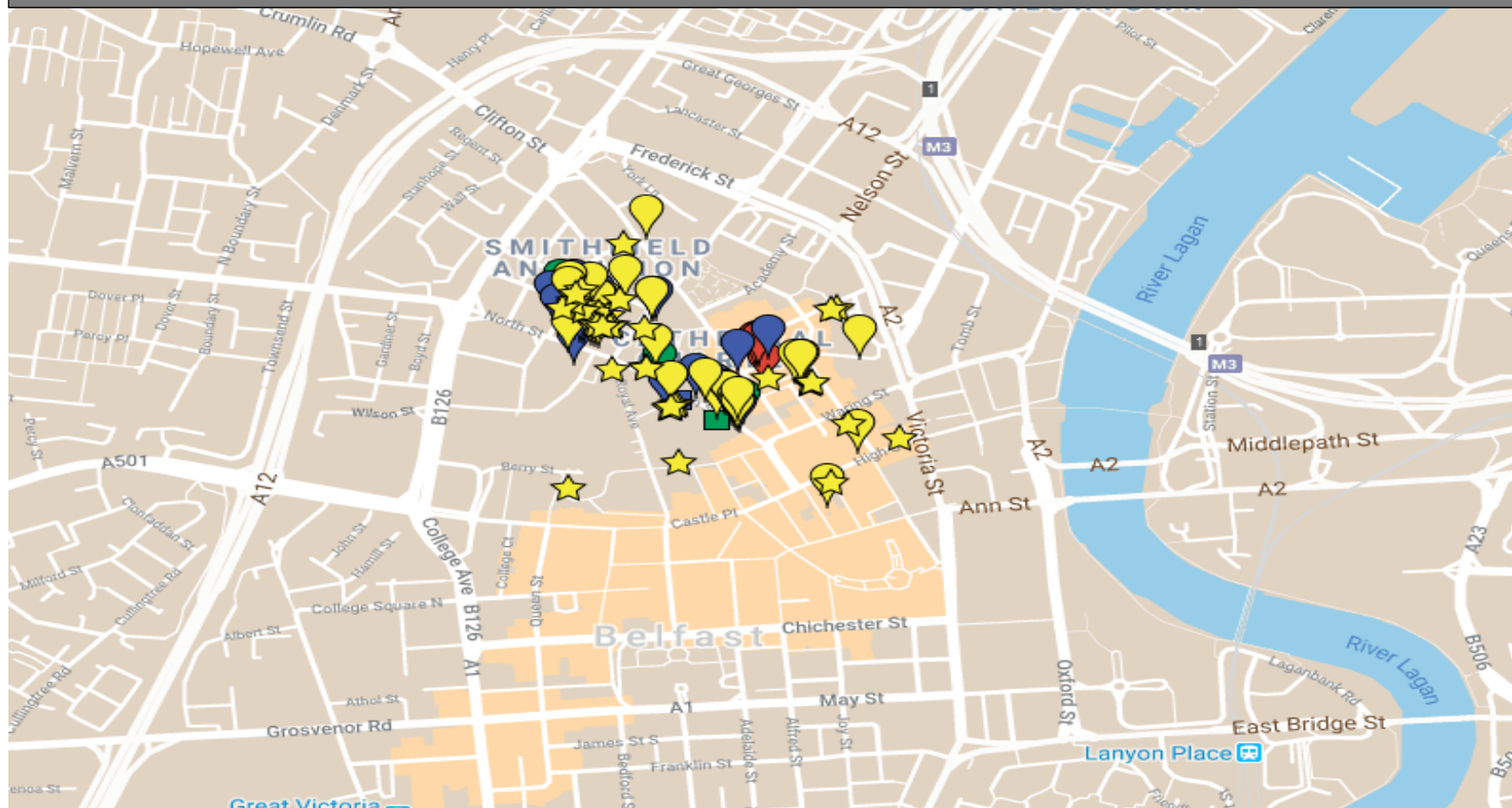
Figure 4 contains a snapshot of street art locations in Belfast which the researcher documented between 2015 and 2020, for a study of street art in his master's degree and PhD. The assorted colour pins on the map represent the years which street art appeared in the CQ, starting with green in 2013 and ending in yellow in 2019. Each year, the Hit the North street art festival invites artists from across the world to transform the derelict sites within the CQ with vibrancy and colour. With the spatial transformation and gentrification of former neighbourhoods surrounding the site, new sites for art and commercial institutions were built, with the quarter's namesake, St. Anne's Cathedral, at its core. The Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), Victoria Square and Castle Court Shopping Centres, as well as the placement of public art sculptures, outlines the perimeters of the quarter. The development of cultural tourism is a critical strand in the Belfast Tourism Strategy 2005. Under the patronage of the Department for Social Development, programmes are set up to "target social need through social, economic and physical regeneration of cities" (Department for Communities, 2018), any framework for urban regeneration is negotiated, firstly, by locally elected council members and foreign developers and then brought to the public in the form of community consultations. Curiously, as will be examined, the arts and culture groups who had initially benefitted from the culture-led regeneration of workspaces in the CQ are the same groups who are presently opposing Castlebrooke's retail-led regeneration efforts of the area. Mitchell and Kelly's (2010) and Künkel and Mayer's (2012) concept of co-option of art and culture by urban regeneration schemes is a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Gaffikin and other urban planners have noted, urban planning processes

in Belfast are susceptible to failure, as they do not engage local stakeholders in the pre-application community consultation processes (Gaffikin et al., 2016).

An urban renewal project for the CQ came about in 2006 with the proposal for the 12-acre development site known as the Royal Exchange around Royal Avenue, North Street and Donegall Street including around St Anne's Cathedral *(Belfast Telegraph*, 2017). In 2007, the BCC granted planning permission for the Royal Exchange, but this stalled in part due to the property crash of 2008. In 2016, the Royal Exchange was sold by Cerberus Investment fund, which had control of the loans underlying the properties to Castlebrooke, a Manchester-based regeneration agent. Involvement of the Department for Social Development is crucial in this transaction because it has the power to divide out the land and assemble all the property needed for the urban regeneration projects (BBC, 2016). It is also worth noting that Castlebrooke bought only 30% of the land needed for the properties of Royal Exchange as initially planned. Castlebrooke then changed the site's name from Royal Exchange to North East Quarter, to reflect the new area of redevelopment, which borders the CQ, Castle Court, and Victoria Square, 1.4 million square feet of retail-led, mixed-use urban regeneration. Mirroring the developments of New York and Liverpool, Castlebrooke then changed the name of the development to that of Tribeca Belfast as based on the acronym "the triangle beside the cathedral" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2019). Furthermore, many critics of the development from #SaveCQ and Ulster Architectural Heritage Society denounce the plans as not representative of the city's history, heritage, nor its people (*Belfast Telegraph*, 2019).

In response to Castlebrooke's plans for the Tribeca Belfast in 2017, a local coalition of architecture, urban planning, arts, and culture groups published a briefing document protesting and outlining their concerns. The organisation tasked with opposing the development projects of Castlebrooke, #SaveCQ is composed of activist and art organisations, which operate within the space. Interestingly, the same people who may have benefitted from the subsidies offered by the LDC between 1989 and 2007 and those who receive funding from Belfast City Council, charged with designating planning permissions, are also on the board of advisors of #SaveCQ. These groups include the Black Box, the MAC, Oh Yeah Music Centre, print workshops, Belfast Exposed Gallery, the CQ Arts Festival, to name a few.

This phenomenon offers an empirical analysis of how art and culture of artistic communities are used as a resource to support the development of cultural quarters. Likewise, the aims of art and culture organisations are absorbed into the mechanism of the symbolic economy to suit its purpose for promoting a cultural quarter, in a process called co-option (Künkel and Mayer, 2012). While Castlebrooke promotes a revitalised image of the CQ, following the 2008 economic recession, with the facelift of heritage buildings along North Street, hotels and boutique and luxurious stores (Castlebrooke, 2019), the original artist spaces, laid by the LDC, are empty. Ironically, in the last fifteen years, the gentrification and high rental prices in the CQ forced many of the creative class and industry to find cheaper spaces in East Belfast. Whether the arts or culture assists in promoting the branding of Culture Quarters in Belfast, the observation is precise that arts and cultural organisations and programmes are co-opted or used as a resource, as a temporary placeholder for the development of the symbolic economy.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

We have discussed the process which persists in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast and influences the framing of an individual's values and relationships with the divided cities. Given the socio-spatial dimension of this inquiry, we have sought to uncover the relationship of the construction of place the stratified social order found in both cities. We looked at ethnographic readings from a variety of scholars who empirically examine the daily challenges of individuals to use spaces. While these acts or tactics have been viewed as exercises or acts of resistance (Mitchell and Kelly, 2010, Nagel, 2002) or acts of pleasure and conviviality (Khalili, 2016; Khalaf, 2014), these examinations offer a part of the way people use space. The detailed, conceptually informed analyses of the construction of everyday life is relevant to the overall study concerning the motivations and placemaking practices of the quintessentially urban community of street artists in Beirut and Belfast. In seeking concepts that travel, the placemaking processes of spatial segregation, securitisation and ethnonational violence inform the conceptual framework of uncovering the motivations of street artists in their societies.

This critique of knowledge formation is aimed at "denaturalising" the opinion of the binary ordering to reveal the social and spatial constructions of difference as means of producing and reproducing systematic patterns of exploitation, and subjection (Soja, 1996). The chapter introduced how the processes of placemaking directly affect how individuals frame their perceptions and as such, their involvement in everyday life, namely in the public sphere. The chapter provided examples of youth engagement with the fields of surveillance and segregation, the legacy of violence, LGBTQ groups, and labour trade unions. Further, the chapter also provided alternative readings of life in divided societies. It also analysed how individuals frame their perceptions, what processes influence them, and finally, how they use the space around them, hardened by these processes. We have understood that the use of 'place' in divided cities, which acts as an environment for social interaction, is influenced by the production of power and its relationship with the construction of cultural articulations of particular stereotypes and historical experiences with the social fields of spatial segregation, ethnonational violence, and securitization. These processes are common to each city although being different on historical, social and spatial experiences with these fields, such as stereotyping of others as 'telling' (Burton, 1978), in Belfast, or self-sufficient spaces with their senses of sectarian, communal belonging as in Beirut (Khalaf, 2006). Ultimately, what is at stake is the very constitution of being – the ways we perceive ourselves and others, the modes of experiences that are made available to us, the women and men whose sensibilities are shaped by urban experiences (Olalquiaga, 1992, p. xi). The next chapter will use the same conceptual tools offered here and will examine whether the changes in the development of urban space are intended to create spaces of conviviality or fragmentation, how individuals might perceive these spaces and use them.

The contextual chapters on examining the placemaking processes of segregation, violence, securitisation, and urban transformation explore the divisive and active processes of placemaking which shapes and maintain identity formation in the cities of Beirut and Belfast. The territorial nature of these conflicts influences the organisation of everyday experiences. We have

understood how the urban, as a composite of various placemaking processes, helps shape the everyday experience of social groups and might affect how street artists engage with the city through the creation of street art as ephemeral and temporary interventions on the divided landscape. Wedged in between parochial discussions of citizenship within divided societies, we now turn our attention to how these groups have historically subverted strategies of neoliberalism and parochial identity formation. Where spaces for contemplation have been subsumed by market capitalism to commercialise, control efforts of memory/social cohesion, and instead offer a temporary space for the imagination to take pause and contemplate what Richard Park warns: that we have been made and remade without our knowledge (1967). By elevating discussions of art and culture in our next chapter, this research carves out space in tangent to these ongoing processes of placemaking where everyday experiences and negotiations of street artists and festival organisers take place within more massive struggles for the power to claim spaces. Approaching culture, this way, through the creation and production of street art, offers insight to the ongoing debate over the meaning and usefulness of analysing culture to resolve the tension between these material and symbolic dimensions of human behaviour (Williams, 1981).

Chapter 4 – Blended Case Study Design and Focused Ethnography for the Study of Street Art in Divided Cities

4.1 Introduction

The qualitative methods chapter outlines the research methods through which the researcher answers the research question and achieves the research aims. The researcher's investigation seeks to understand how nascent social subcultures create meaning of their everyday life in deeply divided societies. He conducts a social inquiry of street art communities in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast to uncover and explore further the placemaking processes in territorial and divided societies. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that a qualitative study is appropriate when the goal implicit is to understand the experiences of individuals in each location and to understand the relationships between variables. Further, the researcher designed an empirical study consisting of a focused ethnography to inquire about the phenomenon of street art as two case studies. The research study seeks to answer the research question, to reach data saturation and complete the research within a reasonable period with minimal cost (Fusch et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). The outcome of the exploratory research produces vernacular accounts of meaning-making through the interpretations of information gathered from semi-structured interviews, direct and participant observation of people, places and phenomena (Dowlatshahi, 2010; Fusch et al., 2017; Mansourian, 2008) of street art in deeply divided Belfast and Beirut.

This chapter outlines the researcher's design for addressing the research question and achieving the research aims. The first section, 4.2, demonstrates why the researcher chose to blend the case study design within a focused ethnography (Fusch et al., 2017) and how methodological triangulation can ensure a reliable and valid account of the research study. The second section, 4.3, describes the practical tools used in the investigation, namely, participant, and direct observation, field notes, reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews. The third section, 4.4, describes how the researcher managed the collected data and, after, interpreted the collected evidence through an iterative process of thematic construction and analysis. The concluding section, 4.5, presents the outline for chapters five and six, where the researcher discusses the overall findings and later analysis of the research question.

The following section, 4.2, presents the justification behind blending a comparative case study of street art in post-conflict divided cities with a focused ethnography to explore the motivations of the street art community, within the existing social and urban divisions of Beirut and Belfast, to engage with the urban environment. The following section also presents the data collection methods that are appropriate for the study, namely, the use of methodological triangulation strategies that mitigate researcher bias and ensure the validity of the research design (Denzin, 2012; Fusch et al., 2017).

4.2 Case Study Design and Focused Ethnography

The researcher chose a research design which is appropriate to "establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants to identify shared meaning, culture, and behaviour" (Fusch et al., 2017, p. 924). The niche study of street art in post-conflict cities (Sinno, 2017) presents an opportunity to conduct a focused ethnography and to engage with a group of individuals whose practices seem distinct to the existing and pervasive placemaking processes of sectarianisation, on the one hand, and the urban neoliberal developments in Beirut and Belfast, on the other. Further, this study explores whether experiences with sectarianism and neoliberal development shape the perceptions and motivations of individuals to create and produce vivid and vibrant images on the walls of their post-conflict cities. The placemaking strategies contribute to the production and maintenance of polarised spaces within Beirut and Belfast, demarcated by physical and psychological borders which influence everyday life for both communities, albeit in diverse ways. The phenomenon of street art is an urban practice of meaning-making (Armstrong, 2006). However, in the context of deeply divided cities, little is known about whether the street artist understands their practices within these divisions and transitions in post-conflict societies. The value of this research study adds to the discussion of how street art communities who use spaces to produce their work understand these transitions. The research design's primary purpose is to help the researcher avoid a situation in which the collected data does not address the initial research questions (Yin, 2009). In this sense, the research design for this study focuses on street art as a phenomenon to study; however, the research question explores the nature of street art practices within the context of the divided city, with divisive placemaking processes such as ethnonational sectarianism and neoliberal urban development. The research question of what does street art do in post-conflict cities, then, can only be answered if the information collected deals with the participants' understandings of other placemaking processes, and of their city in transition and how they understand their urban practice. The researcher does not present an ethnography of street art alone, because doing so does not produce trustworthy accounts of relationships to the city. The following two sub-sections present the blueprint of the multiple-case study design and the empirically focused ethnography conducted, followed by the triangulation method to produce an accurate and reliable report.

4.2.1 Comparative Case Study Method

The researcher opted for case study research in post-conflict cities of Beirut and Belfast to examine street art practices within their real-world context, especially as the boundaries between contemporary social engagement with the divided social and urban fabric may not be clear. In other words, the researcher uses a case study method to understand the real-life phenomena of street art in-depth. However, such an understanding encompasses critical contextual conditions (Yin, 2009) because they are highly pertinent to the phenomena of the study. The case study method is an empirical inquiry, which allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009). It sets up a framework for discussion and debate in the finding's chapters of six and seven. According to Yin (2009), "'how' and 'why' questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories and experiments as the preferred research methods" because "such questions deal with

operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (p. 9). Case study inquiry also includes data collection and data analysis strategies and "relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). There is excellent value in selecting two case studies to understand how the phenomenon of street art practices speaks to the social and urban polarisations persistent in deeply divided societies.

The researcher sought to blend two case studies with a focused ethnography in Beirut and Belfast to investigate the macro-level linkages of post-conflict sectarian normalisation and neoliberal urban development, with the micro-level motivations and implications behind the creation and production of street art in the deeply divided societies of Beirut and Belfast. The comparative nature of the multiple-case study design is analytically substantive because it avoids the vulnerability of having "all eggs in one basket" (Yin, 2009, p. 61). Yin (2009, 2018) claims that analytic conclusions arising independently from two cases would be more potent than those coming from a single-case study. The researcher deliberately selected the cases of street art in Beirut and Belfast precisely because they offer two contrasting socio-spatial relations and situations in their highly territorialised cities. If the subsequent finding supports the aims of the research, the results "represent a strong start toward theoretical replication – again vastly strengthening your findings compared to those from a single case study" (Yin, 2009, p. 61). The case study must also "judiciously and effectively present the most relevant evidence" (Yin, 2018, p. 246). The benefit of a comparative case study of the phenomenon of contemporary street art in post-conflict cities undergoing transition allows the research to examine how street artists understand their practices concerning existing divisive placemaking strategies in Beirut and Belfast. The focus of the comparison is street art in areas said to be experiencing conflict or emerging from it. Comparative case research does not privilege any data (Bloemraad, 2013). The differences in both settings in terms of studying street art concerning placemaking strategies in polarised and divided cities "permits generalizable comments" (Browne, 2013, p. 146) about the nature of the political climate of uncertainty upon the existence of street art in Beirut and Belfast.

However, the weaknesses and potential pitfalls of a comparative case study deal with the practical costs of collecting comparative data over a short period, and the analytical costs of comparing and contrasting different pieces of data (Blooemraad, 2013). Conducting a four-month focused ethnography across two continents with a limited budget necessitates the researcher to be resourceful and utilise acquired skills to mitigate any unexpected challenges. The comparative case study research also has several advantages, in that, it does not privilege any data, whether interviews, observational or archival studies:

"Comparative studies can challenge accepted and conventional wisdom and lead to innovate new thinking. Comparison makes most sense when it contributes directly to theory development, helps in the conceptualisation of phenomena under study, helps evaluate the limits of an existing theory, or, within a research project, assists in elaborating an evolving argument by considering other logical implications or undermining alternative explanations" (Blooemraad, 2013, p. 41).

Lloyd (1996) suggests that to understand relationships between numerous factors, the researcher compares similar cases in different contexts. The selected cases of street art creation and production in Beirut and Belfast share similarities in the form (mural art) and the staging (street art festivals). Another similarity of note deals, on the one hand, with existing image-making regimes of political murals (Belfast) and sectarian graffiti and stencils (Beirut), used to demarcate ethnonational territory and, and on the other hand, with commercial billboards advertising consumerism. However, a significant difference is a frequency of street art murals in Belfast that exist within the non-residential city centre (the Cathedral and Smithfield-Union Quarters) while in Beirut, the prevalence of street art exists outside the city centre and within adjacent residential neighbourhoods, such as in Hamra in West Beirut and Mar Mikhael in East Beirut. The backdrop against which the street art festivals take place provides an interesting point of differentiation, one that Browne (2013) suggests allows for a "greater exploration of the significance of the socio-political climate" (p, 147).

The research is designed to accommodate these 'framings' or learnings on vernacular accounts of meaning-making from the vantage point of those involved in the creation and production of street art and festivals. It also considers that participant observation in Belfast took on more of an immersive and active approach with community engagement. While in Beirut, participant observation was more *ad hoc* and relied on the researcher's cultural knowledge of existing processes of street art communities in Belfast (El Masri, 2016), Beirut (Sinno, 2017) and other divided societies living in post-conflict cities such as Cairo (Abaza, 2013) and Berlin (Novy and Colomb, 2013). The unique perspectives of lived experiences generate a variety of different interpretations of everyday life in both cities, which enrich the findings and discussions of chapters five and six. The researcher's strategy for data collection involved a focused ethnography of the locations where post-conflict street art exists.

4.2.2 Focused Ethnography

Ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process through which individuals make meaning about the phenomenon on the ground (Pink, 2015). The research attempts to explore the social dynamics *in situ* through the observation of and participation in, the creation and production of street art while maintaining a critical and ethical distance, what Ocejo (2013) and Low (2017) refer to as 'urban ethnography'. The researcher's decision to conduct a focused ethnography places the researcher *in situ*, or within the communities, they are researching (Borneman and Hammoudi, 2009).

For Low (2017), "the impact of competing claims to space and place and the ensuing territorial and cultural conflicts are transforming social relations among ethnic and religious groups, social class, regions, states and neighbourhoods" (p. 1). The research engages with the assertion Low (2017) makes by suggesting that street art is an appropriate lens of inquiry for future researchers interested in understanding everyday lives of people whose home, society and city are "disrupted by globalisation, uneven development, violence and social inequality" (p. 1). The field of inquiry into street art practices in polarised societies is a new one. However, existing ethnographies examine groups of unauthorised individuals who graffiti walls (Young, 2014), or

create situational and vernacular 'social diaries' (Evans, 2016), artistic fields (Bourdieu, 2003) or their right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991).

Fieldworkers who focus on socio-spatial phenomena "deal with data collection strategies of immersion, establishing and maintaining relationships with their participants by crossing social boundaries while balancing social closeness and critical distance and ensuring ethical standards through project design and prudent decision-making in the field" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 9). The researcher collected data over three years (2016-2019), encompassing four months of focused ethnographic fieldwork based in Ras Beirut and Mar Mikhael and Belfast's Cathedral Quarter (CQ), 24 months of direct and participant observation of street art creation in Belfast, and 24 months of researching the political economy and ethnonational conflict of Beirut and Belfast. The qualitative data gathered over three years included semi-structured interviews with key informants involved in the creation and production of street art in both settings and participant observation, engagement and volunteering during the production of two Hit The North street art festivals (HTN) in Belfast (2016-2017). The following section presents the methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2012), which the researcher uses for correlating data from multiple data collection methods. This consideration aids the researcher to extrapolate the meaning inherent in the data and thereby mitigating researcher bias to ensure a valid and reliable research design.

4.2.3 Methodological Triangulation

The benefits of the research instruments used to frame the three principles of data collection, are the use of multiple sources of evidence, creating a case study database, and maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009, 2018). Besides, the benefits of such a framework to help the researcher deal with "the problems of construct validity and reliability" (Yin, 2018, p. 113) by cross-examining the various sources of data accumulated. Fusch et al. (2017), Yin (2017), Denzin (2012) and Holloway et al. (2010) correctly point out that it becomes imperative that any interpretation of socio-cultural phenomenon represents the participants' perspective and not that of the researchers. Yin (2017) suggests that a failure of most case studies is the failure of the research to "develop a sufficiently operational set of measures and that 'subjective' judgements – ones that tend to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions – are used to collect the data" (p. 43). The researcher constructed the research design around the principles of construct validity and reliability of the data collected so that the findings are representative of the participants' perspectives.

Methodological triangulation implicit adds depth to the data gathered (Denzin, 2012). It ensures that all facets and viewpoints in the data can be made to accommodate findings that are the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon under study. The importance of triangulation is to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected and of the findings presented in Section 4.4 and further analysed in chapters five and six of this study. According to Roe and Just (2009), a research study has validity when the data is accurate and truthful. When the interpretations have a reasonable likelihood for occurring and can be

tied to the conceptual framework of the study, validity exists (Roe and Just, 2009). In this regard, validity in qualitative research consists of construct validity (Amerson, 2011) which is the ability of the study's conclusions to replicated in other studies (Asstrup and Halldorsson, 2003). The research study's approach can test for the construct validity of the interpretations which then can be analysed against the conceptual framework of the study (Fusch et al., 2017), found in chapter two and analysed in the finding's chapters five and six. However, the researcher mitigates threats to construct validity by not relying on a single measurement instrument. Also, the researcher constructed validity by using multiple sources of data triangulation, preserving the chain of evidence, and allowing participants to review the data (Yin, 2017). The researcher also increased the reliability of the study by making as many procedures as explicit as possible and by conducting the research "as if someone were looking over his shoulder" (p. 46).

Triangulation in Practice

The researcher used documentation triangulation with fieldwork and interviews. The study checked interview statements and answers to descriptive and explanatory questions by comparing interview statements and field notes from direct and participant observations. It seems from the interview statements that the participants interviewed do not agree with the statement of being referred to as street artists, contrary to what is written about the community in scholarly texts. The researcher checked with the participants by identifying and ruling out alternative explanations of the main patterns observed (Goodrick, 2014) during placement or regarding framing.

The following section explores how the researcher conducted the case study-focused ethnography through the first phase of data collection strategies, which consisted of participant observation, direct observation and the use of field notes and a reflective journal. The second phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with 22 street artists, festival organisers, and city managers in Beirut and Belfast over the term of the thesis. The organisation of the raw data collected begins the first level of qualitative thematic analysis and the stages discussed in section 4.4.

4.3 Methodology for Focused Ethnographic Case Study Design

The second component of the methodology chapter presents the data collection methods used to conduct the focused ethnography of street art in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast over four months (September 2018-December 2018): fieldwork, direct observation of participants and semi-structured interviews. For triangulation purposes, Appendix A presents the chain of evidence and consists of the research tools used during the duration of the fieldwork in Beirut and Belfast, such as the interview schedule and includes the ethic forms of the informed consent forms and the information sheets (see sub-section 4.3.5; semi-structured interviews). These instruments according to Fusch et al. (2017), Pink (2015) and Yin (2008, 2017) were guided by desired attributes which the researcher followed in conducting a valid and reliable case study. The attributes include the desire:

"to ask good questions and interpret the answers fairly and unbiasedly, to be a good listener not trapped by existing ideologies or preconceptions, to stay adaptive so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats, to have a firm grasp of the issues being studies and to conduct research ethically and from a professional standpoint, by being sensitive to contrary evidence" (Yin, 2017, p. 82).

4.3.1 Participant Observation

The researcher observed participants during the HTN in Belfast while assuming the role of artist liaison. During Belfast's HTN, the researcher performed their duties and capacity as artist liaison to more than 30 local and international artists, as has been done in previous years. The artist liaison entails helping some artists collect their spray paint cans and directing them to the allocated sites to paint, and providing manual support with scaffolding, ladders, cherry pickers, and giving other help needed to create their street art. When observing small groups of artists, like these, the researcher sought their approval by informing them of the following guidelines for voluntary informed consent. The researcher informed the respondents about the research aims and objectives, and that interaction with him would lead to the observations being recorded in a reflective diary and field notes afterwards. Festival organisers were made aware of the researcher's intent of participant observation, following the same parameters of transparency and consent. They were equally assured of confidential anonymity, and that they had the right to withdraw were they to change their minds about participation.

The researcher's introduction to street art began during a master's level research on street art in the CQ (El Masri, 2016). When the researcher expressed interest in including street artists as *foci* in his doctoral study, the festival organiser for the HTN allowed him to understand the process of street art creation by observing and volunteering during the three-day live-painting festival. It was during this interaction that the researcher received a unique insight into the process of street art creation while gaining access to all the local artists from Belfast and to international artists. Aside from sharing the philosophical assumptions in chapter two, the primary responsibilities included organising pre-ordered Montana spray cans for individual artists to use, taking them to their wall sites, securing ladders and scaffolding to scale higher walls while negotiating with businesses and property owners to provide us with walls for the artists to paint on. The researcher became part of the process as well as observing it. Before the launch of the festival, and during the opening of the festival itself, the researcher spoke to the artists of the study's intentions and rationale for volunteering during the festival. The researcher chose not to interview them during this process so as not to detract from their task. While some artists were keener to chat about the research study, or to collaborate in the creation of individual pieces, others were suspicious of the intentions, as Bourdieu (2003) warned could happen, and stayed away.

Observing the processes of street art creation and production afforded the researcher insight into the experience and situations of the community. The strength of this form of data collection and analysis is how it enables researchers to experience

social life in their field sites. Working with participants allows the ethnographer to see and understand the "embedded meanings in a setting and the constructed meanings of a group by doing what they do" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 79). As noted briefly, the researcher did not have formal training in how to use a spray can nor how to create street art, although he discussed the idea with the artists. A few street artists in Beirut and Belfast offered to teach the researcher how to use a spray can paint, while others offered to give him insight into their conceptualisation. Throughout, the researcher stayed a keen observer and took down field notes when the opportunity arose to observe the creation of street art in the public sphere, as well as to keep field notes throughout the thesis. The field notes capture annotations, and reflections of the application of theory in a social environment, especially during participant observation of street art festivals in Belfast.

As Bryman (2016) and others have suggested, participant observation enables the researcher to capture tacit knowledge (Iacono et al., 2009) of the street art creation process, and to introduce the viewpoint of the artists and festival organisers themselves. However, participant observation can be time-consuming in terms of the hours needed to observe participants (Yin, 2018). During the research study, the researcher amassed professional contacts with street artists and festival organisers in Belfast through volunteering with the HTN, where he worked as Artist Liaison for two years. The interaction with the street art community presented itself as a unique opportunity while mitigating the challenges of gaining access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to the study (Yin, 2017). Another opportunity in using this method is the ability to "perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone 'inside' a case rather than external to it" (p. 124). However, significant challenges inherent in participant observation relate to researcher bias, but also with the physical dispersal of street art locations in the festival and the requirements of the artist liaison to be at the right place at the right time, "either to participate in or to observe important events" (Yin, 2017, p. 125). While insight in terms of interpersonal behaviour and motivations are inherent in this type of observation, the researcher dealt with potential bias, such as informing the artists beforehand of the activity. The researcher observed the process behind the creation and production of street art during the HTN in Belfast. While in Beirut, the researcher was not able to engage in participant observation during street art festivals due to the constraint of living in Belfast and not being a permanent resident in Beirut.

4.3.2 Direct Observation

In contrast to being part of the observation and interacting with street artists during the HTN, direct observation was an opportunity to create a distance between the artist and the researcher. The case study site takes place in the real-world setting of street art and creates the opportunity for direct observation (Yin, 2017). The researcher is a direct observer during fieldwork and according to Fusch et al. (2017) becomes both "the research instrument and … data collection instrument" (p. 928). The researcher observed and interacted with members of the street art community to understand their culture and then to disseminate the researcher's interpretation of those outside the street art community (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The researcher observed the street art community first-hand during two street art festivals in Belfast, and then during self-guided walking tours of the

street art after the festivals to an academic and lay audience afterwards. This two-pronged approach of direct observation aimed to shape the researcher's understanding behind the production of street art, on the one hand, but also to engage with the community of street artists and participants during the first phase of observation. The placement of the researcher within the street art community during the street art festivals and as a tour guide is an example of the researcher as a research instrument and data collection instrument through the observations made and recorded in field notes, discussed shortly, where the researcher documented notes on theory and concepts about observations.

The limitations of direct observation, however, as noted by Marshall and Rossman (2016) are that the researcher might not be able to separate himself from the research, because of the unique perspectives and bias which emerge from this form of observation. Therefore, to enhance objectivity and limit researcher bias, the researcher always identified his position as a researcher upfront and was open about their perspectives. When the researcher made direct observations during the street art festival, for example, why artists choose particular locations to paint, the researcher encouraged the participants to validate their observations to ensure that the "researcher has correctly interpreted the phenomenon" (Fusch et al., 2017, p. 929). The researcher recognised his role in the study and mitigated any concerns during the data collection to ensure the information gathered from direct observation was as in-depth and vibrant as possible (Denzin, 2009). The researcher also noted the body language of street artists when passers-by engaged with them about their work. Pink (2015) encourages doing a sensory ethnography whereby the researcher is "more explicit about the ways of experiencing and knowing… to share with others the senses of the place they felt" (p. xii). In one instance, the researcher in his capacity as Artist Liaison discussed the differences between street art and political mural art to interested parties. In this instance, the researcher "sought to occupy similar places to those of their research participants and to acknowledge the process through which their sensory knowing as become part of their scholarship or practice" (Pink, 2015, p. xiii). The researcher examines the connection of repurposing spaces in chapter seven, where an exciting theme emerged about political murals and the repurposing of spaces. As there is no standard description of Beirut and Belfast street artists' world, it is important to record everything during the data collection (Denzin, 2009), as was done in the previous instance.

4.3.3 Field Notes

Field notes or direct observation notes are particularly useful during the brief period of the focused ethnographies and case study design (Fusch et al., 2017). The researcher collected field notes during the observation phase of the fieldwork of street art festivals and the guided walking tours of street art in Belfast, as well as during the semi-structured interviews with the street art community and city manager. The researcher designed a similarly focused ethnography in Beirut, but where the limitation existed in terms of active street art festivals, the researcher made field notes during the semi-structured interviews with street artists and festival organisers. The researcher took notes and linked them to theoretical concepts, hypotheses, and ideas that arose during the research (Fusch et al., 2017). The researcher used these methodological notes as memos to ensure that the observations made from the interactions contributed to identifying patterns and themes in the data, as well as the indigenous categories of

coding, presented in section 5.4 of this chapter. Similar to the limitations of direct participant observations, field notes must also consider that the researcher is the research instrument (Fusch et al., 2017) and cannot separate themselves from the research (Denzin, 2009). The researcher took copious amounts of notes, writing down everything that the research heard and observed, including thoughts about the study and interpretations to ensure the validity of the study (Fusch et al., 2017).

4.3.4 Reflective Journal

Sangasubana (2011) suggests that writing personal impressions and feelings from the researcher's perspective, as a free-writing exercise, would contribute to the researcher's awareness of personal bias that may influence the researcher's interpretation of the data. The researcher spent days away from the street art locations in Beirut and Belfast to allow for an understanding of perspectives and interpretations of the culture (Sangasubana, 2011) from a distance. The use of a reflective journal is not limited to extended periods in the field collecting data, but in the periods after ending the fieldwork in December 2018. Fusch et al. (2017) and Sangasubana (2011) suggest that a reflective journal is not linked to specific time frames and is especially useful for focused ethnographies and case study design where the researcher reflects on any data collected in a short period (September – December 2018). The researcher kept notes of the direct observation separate from the reflective journal notes because the journal is the researcher's reflection of all the data collected during the study and "contains the thoughts, opinions, musings, discussion and reflections om the process and participants" (Fusch et al., 2017, p. 930). Reflective journals are the written representation of the researcher's personal lens about the study and a synthesis of all the data (Fusch, 2013). The researcher wrote reflective journal entries in the reflection of the community studied, and not of the researcher's bias or personal lens (Marshall and Rossman, 2016; Sangasubana, 2011).

4.3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Fusch et al. (2017) and Yin (2017) point to the use of semi-structured interviews in both focused ethnographies and case study designs. In the design of semi-structured interviews, the researcher selects participants to interview and determines what questions need answering or clarifying (Wolcott, 2009). The semi-structured interviews sought to elicit the participants' perspectives, thoughts, and opinions on the phenomenon of street art in polarised social and urban environments of Beirut and Belfast. For qualitative research, member checking is a means whereby the researcher can validate meaning, not word choice, with participants by asking clarifying questions such as 'Is this what you meant?' to ensure that the researcher does not leave gaps in understanding the phenomenon (Carlson, 2010). In this case, either the participant would agree with the participant's response initially, or they would expand on their initial response. Member checking is a crucial part of enhancing the validity of the data collected (Carlson, 2010). Hearing and understanding the perspective of others, mainly when jargon and insider wording is used (Brett et al., 2007, cited by Fusch et al., 2017), can make the ability of the researcher to ascertain what the participant means difficult. Brett et al. (2007, cited by Fusch et al., 2017) encourage a participant review method of validation through

member checking. Moreover, the researcher made sure to interpret any interpretations with the participants as well as "filling in gaps to enhance understanding of the intent of the jargon" (Holloway et al., 2010, p. 56). Member checking also occurred when the participant during the interview spoke a different language or used a word or a colloquial phrase which the researcher did not understand.

Chenail (2011) pointed out that the establishment and implementation of an interview protocol (Appendices 1 and 2) are essential to mitigate bias. The study of "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context" (Yin, 2017, p. 88) compelled the researcher to ensure care and sensitivity towards the participants of the street art community. The researcher conducted interview questions, which resembled guided rather than structured queries (Yin, 2017). Although he followed social and spatial lines of inquiry, the actual stream of questions was more fluid and semi-structured rather than rigid, structured questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The semi-structured interview questions will seek to uncover new understandings of how street artists in divided cities encounter spaces, despite challenging political situations and general neglect of public spaces (Kraidy, 2013). The topic guide explored themes with their past with street art, the content of their work and their motivations for engaging in the practice. Moreover, the semi-structured nature of the questions allowed for subjective discussions on their experiences with the "confusion surrounding the ownerships of many walls or buildings and a lax police attitude" (Zogbi, 2011, p. 90). The value-added from fluid questions meant that new understandings through semi-structured interviews allow for a critical space for reflection (Park, 1967) whereby respondents can reflect on their practices in the context of transitional societies. The framework followed an interview topic guideline, which allowed focused, conversational, and two-way communication with the respondents. The questions shed light on how the participants use and understand the different spaces. Moreover, sub-section 4.3.5. i. explores further the design of question selection and drafting and refinement. The overall aims seek to uncover the socio-spatial understandings of the divided society by questioning how their conceptions of sectarian differences and urban change "shape their spatial practices and experience in the city" (Bou Akar and Hafeda, 2011, p. 10). The questions centred on themes to gauge the respondent's perceptions, motivations, desires, and experiences with creating and producing street art in the temporal context of transitional societies within post-conflict cities. As such, it would be vital to examine how street artists view their practice, whether they choose art as a mode of self-expression and whether their practices "allow their identities to be read through their recounted histories, experiences and desires" (Riggles, 2010, p. 30). The topic guidelines came from existing ethnographic studies of street art in general (DeNotta, 2012; Kraidy, 2013; Riggle, 2010; Schacter, 2013; Young, 2014a, 2014b), and in Beirut (Najjar, 2014; Sinno, 2017; Zogbi, 2011).

Notes from the researcher's observation notes of the HTN in Belfast, for example, also helped in formulating questions. Some of the questions posed to the participants included reflections of the research questions: how do street artists operate within deeply divided societies and urban transformation? How do the street artists themselves understand the changes around them, and does that affect why they create their work in the public sphere? Have they collaborated with urban redevelopments "as

beneficiaries, both developers of an aesthetic mode of producing space and investors in a symbolic economy" (Zukin, 1995, p. 23)? The emerging themes address a new understanding of street artworks as a set of relationships concerning the repurposing of space (Armstrong, 2005) as the "placing of situational art in public space is variously (heterogeneous), cultural, communicative, oppositional, aesthetic and affective" (Young, 2014, p. 26).

The researcher intentionally chose not to interview participants during street art festivals, for example, to ensure proper protocol of distancing the data collected from the researcher's perspective while "on the job" (Ocejo, 2013). Miscommunication between participants and researcher can especially arise from misunderstandings between the researcher's role as an artist liaison and the researcher's role as a research instrument. The need to distinguish the two roles was also made clear in the interview protocol, which consisted of an information sheet outlining the research question, aims, and the role of the participant in the co-production of knowledge (Amerson, 2011). The researcher also ensured the reliability of the data through member checking as already mentioned and "data saturation, and other strategies to mitigate the use of one personal *lens* during the data collection process" (Dibley, 2011, p. 50, emphasis in original). Braun and Clarke (2013) offer added insight to the development of a "double-consciousness or an analytic eye or ear" where the researcher listens intently and reflects critically on what is said, simultaneously. The process of being able to "focus both on the content of what is being said, and possible analytic ideas within it… helps produce much better – more complex, richer – data" (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 7).

4.3.5. i. Semi-Structured Interview Design

The research interests lay in understanding meaning-making and framing of everyday life from the vantage point of a niche community of street art creators and producers who live in the context of social and urban polarisation. As discussed in chapter two of this research, situating street art in the polarised societies amid ongoing urban regeneration and uncertain political futures is a new lens. Understanding the motivations and perceptions of individuals who engage with meaning-making practices necessitated a face-to-face interview for a few reasons. Interviewing provides an opportunity to generate rich data and from there to analyse data in diverse ways (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It also allows for an understanding of a 'social world' of a "large but indefinitely known population" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p. 112) which form a 'culture' of the unknown norm, conventions and hierarchies (Young, 2014).

Park (1967) states that spaces for reflection allow us for a moment to understand how the meaning-making process influences decisions and the maintenance of identities. Gomm (2008) describes the cooperative nature of the interview as a 'fact-producing interaction'. The implications of the interview method on producing a rich data set are that it is bound in empirical observations of a little-known social world of a niche of street artists situated in transition. As noted in chapter two, this angle of inquiry has not been explored widely for scholars interested in the intersectional disciplines of peace and conflict research and urban studies. In addition to producing empirical facts, another strength is that it is straightforward to capture data that cannot

be easily observed, such as feelings, emotions. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen as a format to harness information on themes of the artists' past work, the content of their work, their motivations for creating and producing street art and historical and spatial experiences with other artists and the festival organisers.

During September and December 2018, the researcher conducted twenty-two semi-structured sedentary interviews. Many of the interviews were face-to-face person while some were conducted by telephone with street artists, festival organisers, and city management officials in Beirut and Belfast. In Belfast, the researcher conducted seven face-to-face, one email-based, one telephone, and one interview *in situ* during the HTN. While in Beirut, the researcher met the street artists in their art studios, ateliers, museums, or cafes as convenient locations for the participants. The researcher interviewed eight local street artists and three festival organisers charged with the production of street art festivals, Ahla Fawda in Beirut (2016) and Aley (2017), Urban Dawn in Beirut (2015) as well as the transformation of Ouzai (2017), a derelict and working-class neighbourhood, into an open-air art gallery. The decision to include the city manager official's reactions, as Ross (2016) contends, enriches conversations of the area for the study of street art in divided cities. The researcher emailed the participants or read out the informed consent forms and information sheets before conducting an interview. The background, rationale, and aims for doing the research allowed for the process to be transparent and open for input from the participants. A discussion of emerging underlying data patterns from a thematic analysis is discussed further in the finding's chapters five and six. The researcher found it useful to meet with the participants before interviewing them to get a sense of their work as well as to clear the air of the 'helicopter' ethnographer and suspicions which artists may have of social researchers (Ocejo, 2013). The desire to connect with the street artists and festival organisers was primarily done to gain their trust but also to explain the research in a non-academic way.

The literature on street art and divided cities, as well as the field notes from observations during the HTN, helped frame the interview questions. The questions posed to the participants deal with their past creation of street art, their motivations for engaging in street art and their relationships with other artist communities. These lines of inquiry offer experiences of everyday life in post-conflict cities and situate the practice of creating and producing street art within the ongoing social and spatial processes of sectarianisation and neoliberal urbanism. Thus, the researcher asked three sets of interview questions to the creators and producers of street art in the context of post-conflict transition and to the city management official in the context of culture-led development and support for art initiatives. As such, the first set of interview questions for street artists sought to understand how they understand their practice and how they respond to ongoing sectarianism and neoliberal urban development in their respective cities. The second set of interview questions targeted festival organisers who help with the production of street art. The first two sets of interview questions elicited the artists' and organisers' perceptions of the social and urban transformations within their post-conflict cities. The third set was to gauge the responses of city management officials to street art in Belfast's CQ and whether they perceive street art as a cultural resource to fuel the local symbolic economy (Yudice, 2003; Zukin, 1996).

Immediately after conducting an interview, the researcher listened to it in its entirety, each on average lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, and made brief notes about thoughts, ideas, and linkages to theoretical concepts to analyse. As well, the researcher transferred voice files from the digital recorder to the OneDrive account and promptly deleted the original file in the interests of data protection (see 4.3.6).

The principles of rigour in qualitative research, data analysis, and reflexivity in the research process complemented and guided the researcher's considerations. In addition to making notes about annotations, pauses between responses. At times, any moments of self-awareness or introspection by both the researcher and the participant were also written down. As is typical with qualitative interview research more generally (Braun et al., 2014), the researcher digitally voice-recorded 22 interviews and prepared for analysis through a process of transcription using Microsoft Office Word, then uploaded the transcript to the Ulster University OneDrive. The researcher labelled each interview with a series of letters and numbers to protect participants' anonymity and to label the transcription document as either Beirut (Beirut SA1, 2 ...8) or Belfast (Belfast SA1, 2...8) for the street artists, festival organiser (FO1 … 2) or city manager (CM1). For ease of access, the researcher divided the transcriptions into folders named Beirut and Belfast to distinguish the anonymous responses. The researcher used a variety of data capture devices to record the creation, production, or destruction of street art and to record discussions with respondents during the interviews. In all instances and following Ulster University's ethical guidelines and strategies of voluntary informed consent, interview records were destroyed shortly after that.

The researcher is proficient in the local Northern Irish and Lebanese vernaculars, and in some instances, interviewed in Levantine Arabic or French to ease the language constraint of the participant. The researcher noted that interviewing in another language did not pose an immediate problem in terms of transcribing the semi-structured interviews. At the beginning of every interview in either city, the researcher made clear that the interview could be conducted in a language in which the participants felt comfortable. He asked, on some occasions, for the respondents to explain a term that he did not understand, as a process of member checking. During transcription of a spoken Levantine Arabic or French, the researcher translated the digital recording into English.

4.3.5. ii. Purposive Sampling

The rationale for selecting participants and the process of locating them reflects the goals of the study and allows the researcher to find "representative individuals who have the characteristics being considered by the investigator" (Arcury and Quandt, 1999, p. 128). Abrams (2010) suggests that a sample is one that "represents the particular participants who have knowledge, skills, and expertise to answer the research questions" (cited by Fusch et al., 2017, p. 933). The researcher chose a sample size that was most likely to reach data saturation (Abrams, 2010). Fusch et al. (2017) suggest three useful parameters to achieve data saturation, namely, "when there was enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional

new information has been attained and when further coding was no longer feasible" (p. 933). Keeping in mind methodological triangulation (see 4.2.3), the researcher achieved data saturation by using multiple sources of evidence, creating a case study database, and maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 2018, 2009).

To understand how street art operates in divided societies, the researcher's strategy was to select participants who are directly involved in this process: the artists themselves and the festival organisers. The researcher also included a city management official tasked with improving the business district in the CQ to understand how city administrators understand street art practices. In Beirut, however, the researcher was not able to find city administrators willing to discuss the research. As a result, the researcher interviewed property developers who also happened to be festival organisers in Beirut and create spaces for street art in their development projects. The decision was to include Beiruti and Belfast persons who grew up during the transitional period from the formal cessation of their respective ethnonational conflicts, but who also live in those polarised cities. The operation of street art is notably associated with a dialogic process of social diaries (Tsilimpounidi, 2015), allowing for the democratic exercise of art critique based on social relations (Bourriaud, 2002). Armstrong (2005) suggests that street art repurposes spaces which, within divided territorial societies such as Beirut and Belfast, requires insight as to why they repurpose walls of buildings. However, as this research claims, little is known about how their framings of the world influence their work. The blended focused ethnography and case study research design, analysis and ethical considerations and safeguards were in place to address the responses and changes of the different findings in chapters five and six.

The definition of street art as an urban practice where temporary aesthetic images appear on walls, where the wall is intrinsic to the meaning of street art, served as a useful parameter for selecting participants. The research interests lay in the experiences of individuals who create temporary interventions in ethnonational and neoliberal urban territories. The researcher at the outset decided to interview those who are directly involved with the creation and production of street art, the artists and festivals organisers who negotiate with, and 'get', walls for the artists to paint on. Including street artists and festival, organisers ensure that the niche community of street art sheds light on a nascent culture with its conventions, norms, and hierarchies. Graffiti writers do not seek permission from building site owners as the practice of inscribing names of the artists is an anti-establishment act. Therefore, for this specific lens of critical inquiry, they were omitted from the research. Street art, according to Armstrong (2005), is less about claiming ownership of spaces and more about repurposing them. According to Armstrong (2005), "if graffiti is territorial by nature, then street art is re-territorial. Where graffiti is concerned with an occupation, street art operates on a model of coexistence and hybridization, blending with the city and quietly existing in its hidden corners, acting in subtle ways to breathe art into the deadening grey of the city" (p. 2). The researcher does not argue against the validity of graffiti as an art form, but as an 'aesthetic means of occupation' (Armstrong, 2005). The researcher did not want to encounter problems with accessing the artists, who are naturally suspicious of outsiders researching their world. Schacter (2017) gained access to the graffiti world by embedding himself in the practices of writing on walls for several years before researching a graffiti community in Madrid. While the researcher wanted to focus on unauthorised individuals and their perceptions toward the notion of 'legality',

it is outside the scope of the research and, as such, the researcher excluded the participation of graffiti writers. He wanted to interview street artists and festival organisers who grew up in both cities during the transitional period after the formal cessation of their country's respective conflicts in order to gauge how they understand their practices in response to local issues governing everyday life.

Following a case study approach to the research design, the participants were recruited using two methods: (1) through established contact with street artists and festival organisers and (2) chain referral sampling using a local gatekeeper (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Using several recruitment methods enables a more diverse sample of participants on the basis that they will be able to provide "information rich" data (Patton, 2002, cited by Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 55) on the topic of interest.

Beirut

While in Beirut, the practices of street artists' involvement with urban struggles such as the Garbage Crisis in 2015 and the unfolding political crisis (Makarem, 2012, 2014), suggest that street art may be akin to a social diary as temporary as the social struggle may have been. However, there are some traces of graffiti sprawled alongside blast walls encircling governmental and corporate interests in Beirut (L'Orient Le Jour, 2016). The researcher recruited street artists and festival organisers who presently live in Beirut and have quite different interpretations of the Lebanese Civil War. He also received contacts from professional relationships formed while in Beirut during the fieldwork. At all times of interactions with the Beirut and Belfast street art community, the researcher carried information sheets and consent forms for those who wanted to 'gift' the research with their contacts. Indeed, there are challenges while collaborating with local gatekeepers (Lavrakas, 2008), such as street art festival organisers. However, there was a courteous relationship with the participants, which allowed for an ethically informed data analysis (see section 4.4).

Belfast

The presence of street art in post-conflict Belfast is a new undertaking (Bush, 2013). Some have lamented that it encourages a process of sanitising derelict neighbourhoods (El Masri, 2016), however, as this research claims, not enough is known about how everyday experiences with very divisive placemaking processes of segregation and urban neoliberalism influence the motivation of street artists themselves. The researcher worked for two consecutive street art festivals in Belfast and maintained professional relationships with the small street art community. Since 2016, the researcher has cultivated an understanding of various aspects of the creation and production processes of street art to deepen the approach of locating the Belfast street art practices in social science and human geography. He also dedicated time for organised public-street art engagements such as panel discussions and taking interested persons on walking tours around the street art sites in the city.

4.3.6 Research Ethics

Ulster University's Research Governance Filter Committee approved the researcher to begin fieldwork in August 2018 after he showed ethical considerations to protect human participants from risk or harm. The researcher's strategy to mitigate any harm or risk is based on the principle of informed consent. Before any scheduled interview, the participant read over an informed consent form and had the opportunity to ask questions concerning it. Likewise, before the actual interview took place, the participant had a second opportunity to review it and sign it, before beginning the interview questions with the participants. Informed consent facilitates good ethical practice and highlights that research "is bound by the principles of beneficence, justice, and more collective and evolving notions of community engagement" (Israel and May, 2016, p. 79). The semi-structured interviews presented an opportunity for the respondent to discuss sensitive issues while allowing the researcher to ask about them (Pool, 2017). However, the research participants were not considered vulnerable populations and to minimise risks and harm to them, the researcher transferred the data to on-campus private storage facilities, in line with Ulster University's data protection protocols. The researcher followed Pool's three suggestions concerning "the prospect of public storage, verification and potential re-use outside the control of the researchers and their respondents" (Pool, 2017, p. 285), especially by Ulster University's ten-year data storage policy. Therefore, the researcher privately stored hard and soft data to an Ulster University-sponsored OneDrive, which is accessible to peers, professional organisations, and the research ethics committee, should verification of the data be required. The researcher plans toward "increasing the accessibility, verifiability and legitimacy of their data in their publications" (Pool, 2017, p. 285).

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) provide a helpful framework, which identifies two dimensions of research ethics to ensure the reliability of the research design process and validity of data. The first dimension, conceptualised as 'procedural ethics' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004), refers to how the researcher abided by the formal regulatory systems that guide research at Ulster University. The University's Research Governance Filter Committee granted research approval after the project met the procedural ethics for human research. As part of these procedures, the researcher provided a detailed research protocol covering such things as how he planned to recruit research participants and how meaningful voluntary informed consent was obtained, in order to gain approval to commence data collection (Warr et al., 2016). This process of 'procedural ethics' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) requires the researcher to identify in advance, and be prepared for, ethical issues that are likely to arise. To mitigate these issues, the research interview questions, informed consent form and information sheet employed an appreciative inquiry framework as a "model for building collaboration and increasing levels of trust" (Guevara, 2016, p. 3) during data collection strategies of interviews and participant observation (p. 3). One of the main aims of this research is to gain an understanding of the street art community in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast, their experiences and their relationships to stakeholders such as festival organisers and city management officials, where applicable the latter proved to be only the case in Belfast. The researcher, over time, developed professional and personal relationships with the Belfast participants but did not develop formal communication with the Beirut-based participants before the ethical approval.

In some cases, the interviews would last for one-hour meetings with each interviewee. To overcome this deficit, the researcher would have to obtain "detailed and more intimate information" (Michael, 2005, p. 224) by designing interview questions to encourage "an environment of narrative-rich communication" (p. 224). For example, potential questions reflected the researcher's desire to understand the implications of street art creation and production in deeply divided societies and the relationship with the notions of citizenship, identity formation, and maintenance and relationships within their community.

The other dimension of research ethics is conceptualised as 'ethics in practice' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). It refers to the unanticipated and contingent ethical issues that arise in the process of researching in real-world settings (Warr et al., 2016). Responding appropriately to emerging ethical issues when conducting and disseminating research is enhanced through a shared understanding with the participants; before interviewing them, the researcher employed the strategies of requesting informed consent and, secondly, establishing and maintaining relationships with participants. Specifically, to address arising ethical issues while conducting research, he made readily available to the respondent, an information sheet outlining the project's aims and rationale. Before the interviews, the researcher introduced the philosophical assumptions of the research in proper lay terms and encouraged opportunities for questions before commencing the digital recording of the interview.

Informed Consent

When designing the research project and in the field, the researcher considered four sources of ethical standards of conduct: the standards of Ulster University, the disciplines of peace and conflict and urban research, the researcher's ethical standards, and the ethical standards of the participants (Ocejo, 2013). Ethical challenges arise at all stages of the research process from research design, recruitment of individuals or collectives, data collection, analysis and presentation, and dissemination of research findings (Warr et al., 2016). While not considered 'vulnerable participants' by the researcher and the Ulster University's Research Governance Filter Committee, the researcher understood the responsibility to his participants by minimising the harm caused to them with their specific needs in mind. The researcher remained conscious of these sources of ethical standards and alert to unexpected events and situations while in the field.

Commentators also point to "the failure of researchers to engage with communities to build more meaningful understandings of how a process of informed consent might operate" (Molyneux and Geissler, 2008, p. 79). Most guidelines for ethical practice require participants to agree to the research before it commences (Israel and May, 2016) to avoid noted issues associated with informed consent – comprehension, coercion, and deception, and to ensure that the research is valid and reliable. However, informed consent implies two related activities – participants need first to comprehend "and second to agree voluntarily to the nature of the research and their role within it" (Israel and May, 2016, p. 79). Ellis (2007) argues that consent should not be limited to the beginning of the research project but, instead, "should be dynamic and continuous" (Israel and May, 2016, p.

82). In Belfast and Beirut, for example, participant familiarity with the researcher outside the scope of the research, created dilemmas of sharing insights into their practice while not being interviewed. To deal with this, the researcher brought copies of the informed consent form when meeting with the artists in less formal social settings. In some instances, as discussed during the conversation of credibility, any time the participants sought background information or gossip about other artists, the researcher kept the confidentiality of his informants. With the need for the participants to understand and comprehend their role in the research, the second element of informed consent is on the basis that their decision to take part is fully informed and voluntary. As part of the consent process, the researcher developed a range of tools (See Appendix 1 for the information sheet, Appendix 2 for the informed consent form and Appendix 3 for the interview schedule) for consulting and communicating with participants and for checking that participants understood the implications of the consent process (Israel and May, 2016).

Participants can also have their reputations damaged (Ocejo, 2013), such as in the case of individuals who engage in illegal or 'unauthorised' creation of street art on walls without seeking permission from the building owner, for example. Negotiating the safety and reduction of harm to the participants, the researcher selected participants who create street art in sanctioned and authorised interventions, such as commissioned street art pieces by businesses and festivals. In instances where the participants shared information, which crossed legal boundaries, such as trespassing on private land or defacing privately owned spaces, the researcher asked whether they would want to go 'off-record'. However, as Ocejo (2013) explains, the harm from participating in an ethnographic research project could be the "psychological and emotional damage from discussing certain topics or from having one's life analysed" (p. 209). Therefore, with these issues in mind, the researcher maintained that all communication with the participant would be framed to answer the research questions only. As the research's interests are to understand the practices of street art creation and production in the context of social and urban division, the semi-structured interviews and participant observation did not engage with their personal experiences with conflict or loss. Mitigating this further, the researcher followed strategies of assigning a combination of letters and numbers to signify their responses instead of their real names and actively communicating the purposes of the research, the sensitivity and dissemination of the information, and the level of participation that the researcher planned to reach (Ocejo, 2013).

Community Relationships

The researcher developed many types of relationships with the participants, some stronger, closer and more intimate than others, while in the role of the ethical field researcher, as referenced in the example given about the artist liaison position at the HTN 2016 and 2017, in Belfast (see section 4.3.1 Participant Observation and section 4.3.2 Direct Observation). Unlike the small, tightly knit community of street artists, which exists in Belfast, those in Beirut hardly knew each other. Upon learning of the researcher's arrival in Beirut, one of the participants organised an intimate gathering between the researcher and street artists as a 'meet and greet' and networking opportunity for future collaborations. Ethnographers are attentive listeners and take a keen interest in "hearing the details of people's personal lives, thoughts and experiences" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 210). The opportunity to

meet artists in a social setting posed exciting dilemmas for the researcher. Street artists in Beirut, unlike their counterparts in Belfast, do not have the opportunity of meeting outside festivals. To manage an existing relationship according to ethical principles, the researcher explained to the artists the principles of informed consent, which prohibited the researcher from divulging confidential information due to ethical considerations. Researchers remain the final authorities over their research, its presentation, and dissemination (Ocejo, 2013). They also have the "professional duty to consider the potential consequences their work could have on others and make every attempt to prevent and minimise them" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 210).

The following chapters five and six offer more space for participants' responses to the questions posed and offer a rich and nuanced vernacular account of street art practices concerning transition. The following section presents the iterative process through which the researcher managed and analysed the data and produced the blueprint of the overall findings.

4.4 Data Organisation and Analysis

The chapter thus far has described the case study design and methods used to explore the motivations of street artists to claim space and the perceptions towards their practice within the post-conflict transition of their societies and cities. The data collection tools amassed an extensive portfolio of 22 interview digital voice-recordings and one note pad with annotations from the research process. The strategic design of what raw data to include or discard, relied heavily on whether the piece of empirical data contributed to answering the research question. There was also an understanding that a researcher must recognise that qualitative research is not about giving a complete, final, absolute, and total picture of everything about the research topic and the data sample. The research is interested in telling a meaningful story about it.

To "get to know the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2014, 2006) and explore the iterative process of qualitative thematic analysis, the researcher broke down the next sections into four phases. The first phase began when he became familiar with the data by organising the raw data into appropriate OneDrive folders, transcribing the interviews, and reflecting on the field notes and reflective journal made during the 22 interviews, participant observations during street art festivals and ongoing community engagement. The second phase shows how the researcher constructed codes, developed indigenous categories to reflect different understandings of street art in Beirut and Belfast. The third phase presents how the researcher defined and named vernacular accounts of meaning-making for the two case studies. The researcher further developed the vernacular accounts from the iterative process of matching the frequency of codes. During the fourth phase, the researcher set out the assumptions made in coding the detailed data, on the theoretical assumptions, research questions, and observations.

Phase 1: Process of Familiarisation with Raw Data

Upon returning from the 'field' in December 2018, the researcher became familiar with the raw data collected (Braun and Clarke, 2006) from the immersive urban ethnography conducted in Belfast (September and December 2018) and Beirut (October 2018). The researcher collected raw and extensive data from transcribed semi-structured interviews (see section 4.3.5), field notes from participant observation and years of community engagement. Its later organisation required the researcher to transcribe interview questions into a Microsoft Office Word document, read and re-read data and note down initial ideas. This "interpretive act" (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999) allows space to create meanings or codes to be discussed in the second stage. Besides, the researcher amassed a photographic archive of street art pieces and locations in both cities throughout the research itself. The archive includes the location (street address or proximity to landmark), photograph capture date (the date the researcher captured the photograph). If applicable, the date on which it was found to be removed or destroyed), date of creation (during a festival or independent intervention) as well as the artist who was involved in its creation. The researcher decided not to include the archive for thematic analysis but instead account for 'seeing' the city from the vantage point of the street artist. Furthermore, the researcher will contribute empirical data, which was not used in this research, to Ulster University for future researchers interested in visual and sensorial methodologies (Pink, 2008, 2007) and those interested in the street art's content, style, symbols, and colours.

The beginnings of the iterative process mark the start of the systematic part of data analysis and involve generating initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The researcher presents the second phase of the making sense of the data, with the use of an example to illustrate how the researcher generated codes, which correspond to the research question. These themes influence the empirical outcomes and offer framing of whether they answer the research questions and overall aims of the research.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes and Creating Categories

The second step of the thematic analysis is generating initial codes through a process of "examining and organising the information in each interview and the whole dataset" (Green et al., 2007, p. 2). The 'first' systematic part of data analysis allowed the researcher to think about initial themes informed by the methodological perspective, revision of transcribed interviews and the annotated observations in field notes. The first phase presents the richness and depth of the data because of the iterative process of thematic analysis. The composition of the data set is 22 transcribed audio recordings of interviews, written field notes from participant observation and community engagement and notes from the researcher's active reflection and writing of thesis chapters related to the theory and conceptual framework (see chapter 2) and contextual chapters (see chapter 3).

Codes are a useful tool to "identify a feature of the data that expresses importance for analysis" (Zhao, 2013, p. 3). Codes also refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be addressed in a meaningful way

regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). The researcher avoided one-word code names, allowed for a rereading of the data, and referenced field notes to add annotations. He coded for patterns of essential features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to the code. The researcher used the NVivo software to offer a visual representation of the codes allowing him to "see" the themes emerge, based on the frequency of mentions of ideas associated with the research.

The following example illustrates how a code related to the idea that street artists provoke thought or feeling which could have a political nature which is worth exploring concerning claim-making processes; specifically, the expressed intention of the artist to create work which is deliberately visible to the passer-by. The following code, in Table 1, appeared significantly in the transcriptions and with observations recorded in field notes. However, the code for 'gift giving' did not appear as a repetitive word. The 'key-word in context' in which the researcher inferred from their intentions for creating street art:

Table 1: Coding of "Provoking thought or feeling."		
Raw data excerpt	Preliminary Codes	Final Code
"But when you write something that contradicts what you see, it makes people think and this is what I like in art. This is my motivation in art. To make people think and to feel but not have an answer, so my motivation to do art is to make people pose questions"	Dialogical relationship between art and an audience	The artist provokes thought or feeling of the artwork to the spectator, neighbourhood, and the city
"Sometimes you do something for one intention and you just leave it out there, and it will start doing things you never thought it would do. Maybe I am thinking that it will make people think that art is accessible. It may also make a conversation between two people who never met and maybe this interaction will change things in their lives, or maybe it will do nothing"	Indicates new attitudes of social arrangements	
"It's about reaching out to people who don't ordinarily interact with art or don't	Street artists wish to connect with those who are not usually exposed to	

feel like they can go into a gallery to view art. It is about giving them intervention in their day through art"	art. The creation of the image is a primary aim	

Interestingly, the code alludes to street art's relational, or even an exciting aspect of its ability to challenge existing narratives or the political nature of street art (Riggles, 2010; Young, 2010), discussed in detail in Chapter 6, where generosity is the driving force behind the act of creating images.

Phase 3: Generating and Reviewing Potential Themes

The end of the coding process marks the beginning of the third stage of thematic analysis, where an active process of theme development occurs (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Generated codes with shared patterns of ideas, concepts, and meanings add nuance and richness to the data and allow for a coding process, which is thorough, complete, nuanced, and captures micro-levels of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The helpful techniques employed by the researcher include an analysis of words such as word repetitions, key-indigenous terms, and 'key-words-in-context' (KWIC) (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

The first 'word' analysis technique the researcher used to identify potential themes was using word repetitions. Some of the most apparent themes, according to Ryan and Bernard (2003) involve the topics that occur and reoccur in the interview texts. D'Andrade said, "Anyone who has listened to long stretches of talk knows how frequently people circle through the same network of ideas" (1991, p. 287). The researcher coded themes around the repetition of the concepts, which appear in the texts. Many Beirut participants during the interview repeated their primary motivation for creating street art as an attempt to 'resist', 'deal with', 'create spaces for' 'the normalisation of conflict'. The researcher concluded that these ideas were significant themes for the participants. He displayed the relationships among these ideas by highlighting repetitive sentences around these concepts using NVivo and connecting them with the lines to their verbatim expressions.

The second technique the researcher used was to look for *in vivo* terms that participants used to describe their experiences of creating street art in Beirut. The experience and expertise of street artists and festival organisers are frequently marked by a specific vocabulary to describe their tools or motivations. The unfamiliar term of 'relic' and 'ruins' for example to describe bullet-ridden buildings or 'gift giving' as a term used to describe the practice of creating art on walls are understood as "indigenous categories" (Patten, 1990, p. 306). The researcher scrutinised the recorded material and field notes to look for verbatim statements made by the participants about the topic of 'gift giving'. On analysing these terms further, he found that most of the statements could fit into sub-categories of ways to 'give gifts', kinds of 'gifts', forms of 'gifts' and ways 'to present gifts'.

The third technique, which the researcher looked at, was for 'key-words-in-context' (KWIC). Here, the simple observation is that if to understand the concept, it is essential to look at how it is used (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The researcher deliberately did a couple of 'sweeps' of the data to ensure that the coded data 'communicative' works, producing insightful latent data. 'Latent' codes (Braun and Clarke, 2014; 2006) are codes that capture underlying ideas, implicit meaning, assumptions, and ideas that more surface meanings rely upon. Evans (2018) succinctly defines latent analysis as:

"a significant element of data interpretation; it enables the researcher to move from merely describing the data to interpreting it through consideration of the broader assumptions or ideas that are at play in informing the explicit content (i.e. what respondents say). It thus addresses the ever-present question that any discerning researcher should ask of their data, which is, 'So what?' Or, in other words, 'What does my data actually mean?'" (p. 4).

Concerning the responses, "latent analysis reveals an underlying assumption" (Evans, 2018, p. 4) about identity formation and maintenance and the associated discourses about the enduring importance of 'tribal' identities, even if they are modern, secular, or 'cosmopolitan'. The interview questions reflected ideas that creating street art in spaces clusters around the following variables: communicative, cultural, oppositional, aesthetic, affective and various (2014). Similar variables were noted and highlighted in the field notes or on the transcribed documents.

The researcher put all the codes and the ideas that related to them together in a similar fashion like organising Lego pieces based on shared colour, size, or shape to find common meaning. Sometimes the codes were quite big and captured a broad range of ideas behind the motivations for creating street art or perceptions of the 'normalised state of conflict which persist in post-conflict' Beirut and Belfast while sharing the attitude that their craft is a 'right' to use the city wall to create gifts for the passer-by. However, like Sawalha (2010), more complex interactions were "how the social construction of space and place play a decisive role in determining the shape of the future urban landscape" (p. 456). In Beirut, for example, the majority of street artists paint in neighbourhoods they perceive to be safe. Sawalha (2010) links the perceptions and the assumptions inherent in post-conflict inhabitants to ethnonational and urban neoliberal construction of space.

The researcher created a mapping exercise whereby links were drawn to find relationships between different sets of data extracts and the codes. Of the 30 codes created, these were filtered into 11 initial themes, which spoke of their histories with creating street art, motivations for placing their work in the public environment and their experiences with other artists, collectives, ethnonational communities and the city management officials.

In the fifth stage, the ongoing analysis refined the specifics of each theme, and the overall story, which the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. One test is to see whether the researcher can describe the scope and content of each theme in a couple of sentences and if not, then further refinement of that theme may be needed. Exploring street art in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast requires that the data speak to the transition from conflict to normalisation of unresolved conflict-related issues and the urban transformation and struggles. Any data which pushes against or brushes aside the political climate or post-conflict transition, speak to old forms of territorialisation, either by the ethnonational struggle to reterritorialise exclusive space or neoliberal urban claims to commodified spaces. Street artists are motivated by gift giving, which could be understood as a small- 'p' political understanding of which street art challenges two facets of image-making of the art market and regimes of advertising (Zukin, 1996). The researcher also explored this political act in the context of the ethnonational act of political murals and graffiti creation, which were used to territorialise ethnonational communities around common causes. However, the economy of the gift, as noted by Zukin (1996), is rare in consumer cultures and is not based on a propagandistic relationship.

The refinement of the 11 initial themes led to the five overarching themes that needed to be classified and named. The overarching themes contain more than one single manifestation of the central organising concept of the social production of space. In the case of Belfast, the city centre is a prime example of the tense relationship between commodified spaces and the perception of the cities' communities of ethnonational groups and neoliberal consumers. The communities of street artists re-purpose the darkened place further by visually promoting their ideas for representation on the walls. Importantly, they shed light on the research question and explain why the participants chose street art as a tool to 'repurpose the urban environment' (Armstrong, 2005).

4.5 Conclusion

The method chapter presents the researcher's rationale for answering the research question and achieving the research aims. The chapter firstly presented the research's blended case study and focused ethnography on understanding the motivations of street artists to engage with the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast. This section also examined the strategies of construct validity and reliability, which guided the research's instruments and ensured that the data produced a reliable chain of evidence. The second section described the empirical research instruments the researcher used to inquire about the motivations, histories, and experiences of 18 street artists, three festival organisers, and one city management official in Beirut and Belfast towards the contemporary urban and social changes in their cities. A combination of the participant and direct observations, semi-structured interviews and the use of field notes and a reflective journal produced in-depth data from which the researcher extrapolated and examined the meaning-making practices of the street art community who engage in shaping each divided city. Throughout the

social inquiry, the researcher guaranteed the research's ethical conduct by following the guidelines of informed consent and maintaining community relationships with street artists and festival organisers in Beirut and Belfast. The third section presented the strategies for managing the data using NVivo to visualise and construct themes. Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis informed the data's organisation and subsequent analysis. The researcher modelled this process after Braun and Clarke's approach to analysing, firstly, describing how the researcher organised the raw data and, secondly, outlining the stages of thematic analysis which frames and presents the rich data into two exciting and overarching themes of vernacular accounts of meaning-making and claim-making within post-conflict Beirut and Belfast. The empirical data obtained is not merely the outcomes of research, but an opportunity to contribute to knowledge for those interested in the perception of inhabitants who animate and temporarily intervene in post-conflict societies and cities.

This research study, however, does not present an ethnography of street art and those behind it, but rather an "ethnography of the city and its spaces of cultural production" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 1). The implications of street art practices on the fabric of the post-conflict city frame the creation of these practices as meaning-making exercises within divisive spaces of placemaking processes, and, as such, form the basis of the next two chapters on how the data addresses the research question and the existing scholarship. Indeed, the research's aims seek to uncover whether social and urban division brought on by persistent and unresolved tensions with ethnonational sectarianism and ongoing neoliberal urban development, directly influence the framing of everyday life for street artists in the two locations, and as a result, their motivations to engage with the city. The following chapters five and six present the two key findings with their analysis and discussion, with a reflection on the way street art engages with the two case studies' sites in their period of social and urban transition. The presentation of these chapters provides the evidenced analysis that relates to the research question. The researcher also recognises that qualitative research is not about giving a complete and absolute picture of everything about the research topic and data sample. However, it supplies a triangulated account towards producing an accurate and reliable analysis.

Chapter 5 – The Motivations of Street Art: Gift Giving

5.1 Introduction

The fifth chapter of this thesis analyses and discusses that the intentions of street art communities to practise their craft is not a claim to the right to the city. However, instead, they intend to gift small-scale interventions, which temporarily engage with alternative social interactions. There is a compelling value in comparing the experiences of inhabitants within these divided cities. The comparative nature of the research study examines the intentions of street art communities in Beirut and Belfast who artistically intervene in divisive ethnonational and neoliberal environments. The borders of sectarian neighbourhoods and commodified city centres in Beirut and Belfast limit alternative forms of social interactions and significantly reduce opportunities for social cohesion and national reconciliation. The visual reminders of propagandistic political murals, flags and symbols and urban neoliberal development projects, texts and advertising are indicative of the deep divisions in both cities. In chapter two of this thesis, the study presented a brief overview of a divisive mix of social, urban, and economic conditions, which maintains forms of social exclusions, and in some instances, further fragments society along ethnonational and neoliberal lines. Insight from the participants' social understanding allows for a reading of their practices to imagine social interactions based on temporary interventions with the city.

Conviviality is a state of being about the "normative concerns with how to make spaces more positively interactive, or conversely how spaces might become more convivial through the everyday practices and routines of people inhabiting them" (Nowicka and Vertovec, 2013, p. 10). Through the staging of temporary artistic interventions in informal settings, street art in this regard is a "performed element of everyday convivial interactions" (Chambers, 2019, p. 777) based on connecting sectarian communities which generally do not interact. Their desire to encourage interactions is not based on a desire to create spaces, but instead, their artworks do that. Street artists' intention to place their artwork within the urban environment engages with a performative element of creating convivial interactions as a desire to "play out within shifting configurations of marginalisation and connectedness shaped by economy, sociality and space" (Chambers, 2019, p. 777).

At the social and communal level, conviviality is a source of solidarity, which the participants exhibit towards their practice and for the city, where street art is a "venue for vital socio-psychological and economic support" (Khalaf, 2006, p. 236). Moreover, street art becomes the mechanism to mark sites as visual examples of how the participants vividly and vibrantly express their solidarity with the inhabitants of their cities. The finding uncovers that while the artistic interventions of the street artists are indeed small, their social actions reflect significant attempts to redefine the use of social space. The street art communities of Beirut and Belfast understand their practices as meaningful ways to temporarily enchant and gift the inhabitant of the cities with gratuitous work. The insight also demonstrates that street art evokes a compelling lens to imagine everyday interactions, which are different from experiences with social and urban polarisation. In cities where social exclusion from

decision-making processes weaves into the fabric of everyday life, and where sectarian and political allegiances influence mundane interactions, the implications of unauthorised individuals who transform the city's walls with colourful and vibrant work, requires special attention. Furthermore, these insights examine the social processes of street art communities in different social and urban conditions, which temporarily and collaboratively contribute to the novel ways of inhabiting and using social spaces within sectarian and commodified societies.

The first part of this chapter, in section 5.2, analyses the development of three themes which deal with the motivations behind why the participants of the blended case study and focused ethnography engage with the production of street art in their respective cities. The first theme, in sub-section 5.2.1, shows how street art re-introduces a place for new cultural and artistic identities in Beirut and Belfast. The second theme, in sub-section 5.2.2, depicts street art as providing opportunities for non-tribal and non-commercial group solidarity amid political and socio-economic uncertainty of everyday life in post-conflict settings as a form of convivial everydayness. The third theme, in sub-section 5.2.3, the intention of street artists reveals a process of imagining new social spaces whereby street art enchants the inhabitants and beautifies the city in temporary acts of gift giving. Throughout the first level of analysis, the researcher draws out the similarities and differences in the participants' motivations for making street art in their respective post-conflict cities. A visual analysis of selected images of street art links the artwork to the concept discussed. Field research notes weave into the analysis to bolster the researcher's observations made during the semi-structured interviews and from the Hit the North street art festivals (HTN) in Belfast. 5.3, then discusses how the experiences of street artists in Beirut and Belfast motivate the participants to produce their artistic interventions. The discussion, in sub-section 5.3.1, firstly re-presents the theoretical framework of the significance of gift giving to nuance Lefebvre's (1996) notion of the right to claim the city. The discussion then proceeds in three parts. Sub-section 5.3.2, secondly, critically analyses the nature of the gift with a review of the street artist' positionality, followed by the examination of the participant's intention of gifting and ending with an exploration of the nature of the spaces they which to create, involving their imagined possibilities for space. The third part, in section 5.3.3, gives special attention to ethnographies concerned with how communities encounter and experiences tribal and neoliberal spaces, to show how the street artists use of art as a gift contrasts with attempts to co-opt their art as part of gentrification. The third part of the chapter, section 5.4, offers concluding remarks and presents the outline of the second finding, analysed, and discussed in chapter 6.

5.2 The Intention of the Street Artists is to Gift the Social and Urban Environment

The following themes present the intentions behind the participants' motivations to engage with the production of street art in Beirut and Belfast. The section sets out and analyses the three most repeated patterns of themes, which emerge from the interview data, combined with reflection from field note observations and framed within theoretical underpinnings. The questions posed to the interviewees dealt with their recounted memories, desires, and experiences relating to why they create street art and how they understood their practices within the divided social and urban environments.

The individual is the focus for analysis where the quality of being a street artist in a territorial environment suggests new values and relationships, which require examination. The participants from Beirut and Belfast are from diverse demographic backgrounds and live across the sectarian and class divides. Some of the participants are festival organisers with professional backgrounds in urban planning and development, finance and event management. In contrast, other participants are artists who engage with street art to practise with new textures, tool applications and within constrained times and places. The participants spoke mostly about how street art introduces a place for their unique forms of individualism, how they construct collectivity and collaboration based on new conventions and norms which translate to new relationships with their audience and the urban environment, and, finally, how their desire to intervene artistically suggests an element of enchantment and communication, which the researcher understood as a small-scale process or an alternative economy (Crawford, 2011) of gift giving with the city.

5.2.1 Theme 1: The Hybrid Identities of Street Artists

The existing contexts of social and urban polarisation frame the subjective identities of the participant who live and work within the deeply divided societies of Beirut and Belfast. While street art introduces the participant to a culturally subversive and fiercely individualistic practice, experiences with differences and divisions of everyday life continue to influence their sense of identity. In promoting new cultural identities, they frame the discussion of their motivations against the backdrop of the enduring legacy of tribal identities which permeate everyday life in Northern Ireland and Lebanon in the form of "hybrid identities" (Bhabha, 2004; Fregonese, 2012). Hybridity refers to the capacity to access two or more identities, which interact differently or divisively, depending on the situation. The analysed data reflect personal memories, desires, and experiences with the social and territorial arrangements of sectarian and neoliberal divisions. The data reveals that in both cities, street art re-introduces a place for the individual who values independence and self-reliance, where the quality of being an individual is a tendency towards self-creation and experimentation in sectarian societies. The following participants provide insight into how the hybrid sense of possessing individualistic artistic and cultural identities differs from the more divisive sectarian and neoliberal identities.

The participants spoke about the qualities and values of being an individual within divisive social and urban environments. Their recounted histories and experiences with choosing street art as a practice produced various accounts, which occasioned discussion of their individualism. They associate their practice with values and qualities of being "unique," "self-directed" and "self-reliant" where many associates their practices with a desire to create something new. However, the following participants discuss the qualities of being cosmopolitan, modern, and secular while developing cultural identities separate from the enduring legacy of tribal identities. Georgiou (2016) suggests that these qualities can be read as the participants having a "strong attachment to the world of multicultural conviviality" (p. 19) which the participants occupy. With notable social and urban differences between Beirut and Belfast, participants from both cities resisted the identification of being labelled as a "street

artist" which is a value and a quality of being an "individual." The practice of street art then re-introduces a place for the promotion of individualistic, secular, modern, and cosmopolitan identities, which differ from the enduring legacy of ethnonational and neoliberal identities.

5.2.1. i. Resistance to Identification

The process of identity formation in Beirut and Belfast, as discussed in chapters three of the thesis, suggests that socialisation extends from schooling and familial values and attitudes to include sectarian, capitalist, and other ideologies. The participants reveal that the tensions of self-identification as a street artist are based on the differences between the form and nature of their craft as a 'stencil artist' or a 'portrait artist.' From participating in the HTN in Belfast and from observing street artists in Beirut, the values and attitudes towards members of the community are based on the classifications and types of street artists, on their technical skills and prowess, colour palette, and street art forms. Most of the participants would agree with Riggle (2010) and DeNotto (2014). They argue that because of the artistic freedom of the subculture, with no regulations from a central art authority, it is challenging to categorise street art under one genre. Instead, the participants demonstrate that street art is an umbrella of various and heterogeneous artists who agree to values of mutual respect regardless of their craft. While there are more puritan visions concerning the sanctioning of the artwork or whether the street artists received permission, the credibility and stature within the art world are more consistently valuable, attitudes to aspire to, than material wealth and gain. The relationships between the artists within the street art world differ from the more exclusive forms of sectarianism and capitalism and produce societal and economic inequalities, respectively. The tensions which arise between street artists and the inhabitants of the urban environment are more about suspicion and curiosity. While it is relatively easy to discern the identity of the artist behind the artwork, either because they left their coded name as a sign of their work or because of their known style, the constitution and maintenance of their identities are more transient and subject to change in the evolution of their work, than perhaps more complex and hardened sectarian identities. The participants from Beirut and Belfast reveal the tensions between the more rigid identities which strive for their ideologies, their vision for everyday life and the cultural identities which form constant and ephemeral change of street artwork, concepts, styles and colour palette.

Although most of the participants understand their practice as producing artwork in the streets of Beirut and Belfast, they identified with street art either simply as a part of their overall identity. In contrast, others identified firmly with being a street artist. The nuances in responses represent an insight into the diversity of historical experiences with sectarian and neoliberal social and urban arrangements, and the new experiences which transcend the divisions and offer insight about changing the status quo, which continue to influence identity formation in both cities. The general resistance of being identified as a street artist re-introduces a place for their cultural identity, while also revealing the hybridity of identities associated with the practice of street art - a mix of artistic, modern, secular, and cosmopolitan in hybrid and overlapping spaces which mirror the conflict dynamics.

Beirut

For Beirut SA5, their interaction with the public shapes their identity whereby "people labelling me" causes discomfort with being called a "street artist." Although Beirut SA5 acquiesces with the label, their discomfort reveals a tense relationship between the desire to create artwork in the streets and resistance to identification or interference by the public. By insisting that they are also an "illustration artist," they carve out a place for their interpretation of their action in an environment, in the act of self-creation where they are "an illustration artist and a street artist." Beirut SA5 notes, "Before I did not consider myself a street artist, I never said I was. It is people labelling me like that because they know I did this piece. Once it was out there, I decided I needed to own it because it becomes annoying at the end to not know what I consider myself. I am an illustration artist and a street artist."

Whereas Beirut SA5 advocates their sense of identity and resists identification from the public, Beirut SA4, however, reveals a sense of indifference towards the ways the public might interpret their work. In other words, the placement of their work in the public gaze is more important to them over whatever attitudes the public might ascribe to them. In this instance, they also advocate their interests for creating their work and are not at once concerned whether the public understands their work. They note that "When it is something abstract the nice thing about it is that you see what you need to see, as someone who is viewing the art – I don't care that you see what I see in it because I did it for myself for a certain reason [but] I would like you to see something that would make you feel better" (Beirut SA4).

While the identities of Beirut SA4 and Beirut SA5 suggest that they oppose society labelling or that they produce artwork as a representation of their creation and experimentation, each is reluctant to identify strongly with the label of being called a "street artist." The mere suggestion of interference by the public within the street pushes back on their ideas of their practices. It is indicative of the struggles other participants have with the framing of their work as a street artist. Recording these tensions during participant observation, the participants who painted in the public environment were asked whether they considered the label of "street artist" was appropriate to their practice. The myriad of responses and general unease with being labelled as such complemented their identification of being conceptual artists who use the city walls as experimental urban canvases, and usually would treat their art in that regard. Only those participants who were at one-point graffiti writers felt comfortable with the label of street art because of their knowledge of the street art's evolution from written worded graffiti into pictorial and graphic representations of mural and stencil art.

Belfast

While exhibiting similar tensions between the public's attitudes and perceptions of their work, Belfast SA4 explains that they do "a lot of other things", by way of resistance to public perceptions. Their identification as a street artist reveals their

motivation towards a tendency for self-creation and experimentation with "walls as being my canvas." In this instance, the artist seeks to employ the city walls as a material to create their art, where the motivation to produce art is to make visible for the public to "see, critique, love and share." They note, "I do lots of other things and creative outlets. Street art is just the most visible one for anyone to see, critique, love, share... it is... well. I do not label myself as a street artist, and I do not want to sound wonky about that. That is how people label me. I like to think of it as walls as being my canvas" (Belfast SA4).

Belfast SA8 does not identify as a street artist not because they resist identification, but because they value financial independence or self-reliance. However, they invite a critical understanding of the nuances of what it means to be an artist in a society, which might not consider art as a viable means for self-reliance. In this critical insight, the participant creates street art "for a living" while acknowledging that their work is a form of employment where they know how to monetise their craft by "making money out of culture." Belfast SA8 suggests, "I do not like the term street art either - it seems like all I do then as street art is to paint something on a wall. There is no nuance about the artist. You can pick up a book and do street art. Whereas, I do it for a living. I am guilty of making money out of a culture, but would I rather be doing something else? No, because I like painting on the street and getting paid for it. Although I have a sporadic income, and it is sketchy, and I would never get a loan or a mortgage, but I do not know any better" (Belfast SA8).

Figure 5: "Split the problem, not your personality" by Visual Waste, *Source*: **ExtraMuralActivity, 2017.**

The original image of Visual Waste's piece was of Tyrion Lannister, a Game of Thrones character. When the production company, HBO, learned of the artist's creation, they were told that they could not reproduce images of the show without the written approval of the company. Visual Waste then turned it into Harley Quinn (in her more recent incarnation by Margot Robbie in the *Suicide Squad* movie) within a few days. The title of the piece is 'Split the problem, not your personality', figure 5, giving the work a mental health message. The mural was then quickly "enhanced" by members of the graffiti collective TMN who are known within the street art community, to be critical of street artists who use their craft for commercial gain. As can be seen in the image above, the collective sprayed "no payday" on the mural, signifying that every piece of work which Visual Waste works on, will be destroyed of its value (completed piece). Regardless of the attempted censorship, the artist received from within the graffiti community for making money, or from the production company which trademarks all images made in the public environment, the artist refuses to identify as a street artist, but instead, as a commercial artist.

For Belfast FO1, an awareness of the value of producing street art while working "within the belly of the beast" led them to create opportunities to support the street art community by "get[ting] them all work." Tying into the concern that Belfast SA8 possesses that the public might not understand that street artists also make a living from their work, Belfast FO1 creates festivals and designates them as opportunities to harness the artist's self-reliance as they try to "establish an anti-establishment art form." For Belfast FO1,

> "I started doing street art events when I worked for the Council. I was trying to establish an anti-establishment art form within the belly of the beast, so those two things were always held in tension. I understand the politics of it, which allows me to pull the reins in if I feel like... I get them all work. They all know that if I have a budget, that they would get their cut of the budget."

The participants in Belfast respond to introducing a place for their individuality within their societies with varying degrees to reflect their diverse motivations to produce street art for artistic and financial needs. Belfast SA4 uses the city's walls as a canvas as inspiration for their self-creation and experimentation. Belfast SA8's motivations to produce street art stems from a need to be financially independent and rely on the sporadic income received from commissioned jobs. The motivations for Belfast FO1 reveal the tension for advocating the interests of presenting the artists with the opportunities to create artwork and to financially benefit from it while noting the need to move away from political tribalism.

While the participants from Beirut and Belfast collectively agree on the need for places for artistic individuals and discuss the need for self-creation, experimentation, self-reliance, and artistic and financial independence, their responses reveal another tense relationship, which distinguishes their experiences from each other. Whereas most of the street art in Belfast exists within a highly commercialised and neoliberal space of the city centre, the street art of Beirut exists across diverse neighbourhoods of the ethnonational city. The notion of hybrid identities shows the importance of historical traditions of identity-making in Beirut and Belfast. The general resistance to identification reveals the inherent tensions between the emergence of new cultural identities among a community of artists who seek to distance themselves from the post-conflict conflict dynamics, but also who have no recollection of the history of the conflict and refer to the buildings where they paint as the *atharat* or relics of conflict. In Beirut, the general unease of being labelled a street artist sees the formation of their cultural identities of modern, secular, and cosmopolitan. The mix of new cultural identities describes the contemporary social and urban divisions in Beirut, which the participants from Belfast, similarly show. The motivations for Belfast-based artists are to carve out a place for new cultural identities that want to separate themselves from historical sectarianism, as Belfast FO1 suggests, "celebrating a cultural identity that does not have a place in the establishment and does not want a place in the establishment". With varying degrees of success, they advocate a sense of independence and self-reliance, which they show as one of the many motivations for producing street art in their divided cities. Additionally, while some of the participants exhibit modern and secular identities demonstrative of individualism, others point to the enduring legacies of sectarian disparities that continue to influence subjective experiences.

5.2.1. ii. Enduring Legacy of 'Tribal' Identities

Although the individual is the focus and reflects qualities of independence and self-reliance, the data reveals that identity in Beirut and Belfast is also shaped by the enduring legacy of sectarian identities, even if they are secular, modern, or cosmopolitan. The motivations of the participants to produce street artwork also reveals modern discourses of rejecting sectarian identities and political tribalism within tribalised and neoliberal space.

Beirut

Beirut SA1 reveals their motivation "to let my work have a link to my culture" in a way which attaches their cultural identity to the subject matter of their work. In this instance, the artists introduce their sense of individualism not tied to their interests, per se, but as providing a platform to communicate modern and secular identities through the poetry of a famous poet. Beirut SA1 note, "When I went to Croydon, I wanted to let people know that I am Lebanese and asked Beirut FO2 to bring people from Lebanon, I took a quote from Eli Abu Madi's poem. I try to let my work have a link to my culture" (Beirut SA1).

However, when explicitly asked about what they view as a Lebanese identity, their response reveals the enduring legacy of having "always been tribes, and this strengthens us." The identity of the street artist in this instance shapes their interaction with the artistic intervention and the public and their notion of being Lebanese. The challenge the participant sees is to create a new "cosmopolitan" identity, which reflects the diversity and differences of Lebanese society, such as the response "Oh, you are from London? I am Chinese [from] London." Indeed, Beirut SA1 notes,

> "Here, I am observing our identity of ourselves – the Lebanese identity. If we go back to where I am from, *min wein ana*, originally in history, I can go back to Yemen or something like that, like tribes. We have always been tribes, and this strengthens us. We no longer refer to ourselves as tribes, but 'cosmopolitan' – it is like people coming from various places, different meeting. The idea here is 'Oh, you are from London? I am in Chinese London.' So, we must find this."

Beirut SA1 speaks directly to ethno-sectarian identities with the following passage. The researcher asked about more traditional and single-identity neighbourhoods, specifically the traditionally working-class and Muslim Shi'a stronghold of Hezbollah as a place where the reception of their work would be divisive. Beirut SA1 notes,

"When we go to the Dahiya, and we see how the young men act like *shabeb* [tough guys], how because we are stronger than others, so they have weapons and corruption, there is enough corruption where the police will not enter. Hierarchy, families, parties. I can, for example, beautify Hamra but go to the Dahiya to do something provoking, this would be ultimate, but do I dare to do it?" The passages allude to the differences between their artistic identity and the reality of ethno-sectarian identities which represent more traditional and parochial identities in the divided society.

Figure 6: "One day we will become what we aspire to be. The journey is yet to start, and the path has not ended yet" by Ghaleb Hawila, *Source***: FiftyEditions, 2018.**

Beirut artist, Ghaleb Hawila, created a mural that represents the culture of street art in Beirut. In his unique Arabic calligraphy form, the artist painted the words of Palestinian Poet, Mahmoud Darwich, in the topic of migration, whose words travelled beyond borders (Figure 6). The words translate to "one day, we will become what we aspire to. The journey is yet to start, and the path has not ended yet" and is not a coincidence, according to the artist. The artists' artwork tries not to use the colour palette found in graffiti culture, and instead uses colour choices which blend with the textures of the wall itself. The artist does not disturb those who pass by his art because of the respect for the built environment, and heritage of the idea of migration.

Artist Karim Tamerji began painting in graffiti collectives before leaping into mural art, from an early age. Hailing from the Sunni-majority area of Tariq Al Jadeedeh, he often listened and observed to the children playing in the streets outside his home and listening to the older generation complain at the lack of social services. One telling piece of artwork and his social commentary is based on the frustration felt by many Lebanese during the summer of assassinations of politicians and public figures. In Figure 7 (below), the artist created this piece to signify their frustration with the current state of assassinations and the turning point of graffiti as a tool for social commentary. In a simple pictorial representation of Darwin's evolution, the artist

Figure 7: "Where's the Evolution?" by Karim Tamerji, *Source*: Omar El Masri, 2017.

comments on the many assassinations which were taking place at the time. The artist's age and residency background gives credence to the generational memory gap felt among the youth of the country, who never witnessed the Civil War, but still, feel the effects of it. For the artist, the scale of assassinations was new to him, although he would have heard about them. The piece nuances the psychological impact of war on the Lebanese psyche where the striking image of the evolution of humankind leads them toward a naked man carrying an AK47 assault rifle while strapped in a suicide belt with a detonator. Karim then informed me that the fear he felt was palpable enough for him to have anxiety when he paints or visits a friend at a café. The piece is a message of self-expression about the situation and the enduring legacy of the conflict which has yet evolved.

While Beirut SA1 speaks to the tensions of carving modern secular and cosmopolitan identities within tribal societies, Beirut SA6 discusses the enduring legacy of neoliberal identities by which they link to "the garbage crisis, water shortages, electricity [outages]". They draw attention to a relationship between an existing intergenerational and class-based "mentality [which] is making things worse." Although they cite that the "youth are more passionate about change," which is shared by the majority of the participants, Beirut SA6 contends that change will occur when "high society… starts feeling what we feel."

Beirut SA6 makes this clear, "Yes. Especially with the youth, because I am not sure if you noticed this in your interviews, but the youth are more enthusiastic about change. The older generation will always say that they tried to change the situation, but it will not work, and the situation will remain the same. This mentality is making things worse. I think the actual revolution in Lebanon will happen when the high society has the same problems as the garbage crisis, water shortages, and electricity. As long as it exists on the level (lower class) socially, the change will not occur; once they start feeling what we feel, there will be a change" (Beirut SA6).

Beirut SA7 notes the enduring legacy of "tribal" identities within the context of traditional power structures of "a very patriarchal system" which persists. While the decision-making apparatus in Lebanon is predominantly male-dominated, the participant chooses to paint the female form in their street art practices carving out a place for their identity as a way to delineate the tensions inherent in Lebanese society. They suggest

"Yes. I do, and this is why there is a woman on the walls during the protests because it is a very patriarchal system. You only see men being violent on TV, and of course, some women were beaten up, but it is exactly what you said, and I am very conscious about it. I draw the female form, the woman because I do feel that we live in a dominant male society. Although I do not have any pressure at all in Lebanon, as a woman compared to other social classes and other deeply religious classes in Lebanon, I have no pressure. I have always done what I wanted, studied what I wanted, travelled with boyfriends, so no problem for me being a woman, but I feel it — being in contact with other people, seeing politicians, mostly male politicians making decisions for us. This is why there is a woman in my drawings" (Beirut SA7).

While the participants demonstrate their need to introduce a place for their contemporary cultural identities, they discuss them in light of the enduring legacies of tribal identities which are steeped in discussions of social fragmentation along neoliberal, intergenerational and patriarchal lines. Street art for the Beirut-based respondents carves out a place for their individualism within their tribal society, whether it is a way to remark on the existing tribal nature of groups for Beirut SA1, the class struggle for Beirut SA6 or the lack of space for women in decision-making as Beirut SA7 depicts. However, although most of the participants in Beirut attended art colleges or universities in Beirut or foreign cities and treated their civic engagement within a modern and secular sense, they juxtaposed their artistic interventions against an environment populated by existing sectarian and neoliberal forms of engagement. During the field research stage for Beirut-based interviews, the researcher noted that, except for two individuals, most of the participants had grown up in middle to upper-class households and went to public schools for education. The most critical of the participants of the Lebanese societal structure was the most vocal in producing street art, which reflected what they saw as a tribal society experimenting with western ideals of art. On occasion, when the researcher asked whether the participant considered their Arabesque writing form of urban art as "calligraffiti," they refused the mere association with it. In the end, the researcher agreed to the participant's request to define their practice as "Arabic calligraphy." Interestingly, the reason behind their refusal is due to contemporary and modern urban artists who do not respect the written rules of Arabic for it to be considered calligraphy, i.e. it has to be understood when read. In contrast, the majority of Lebanese artists who use calligraffiti do not conform to the stylistic rule. Such were the tensions with the terms associated with street art, and forms associated with calligraffiti, which the researcher found more commonly among the Lebanese participants than their Northern Irish counterparts.

Belfast

Belfast SA5 places their artwork within the public domain to favour their version of individualism while rejecting a form of political tribalism. While they acknowledge the human necessity of expression as a "fundamental way like our ancestors," they introduce a place for expressing themselves and what they think while rejecting political tribalism expressions, which continue to sequester the population and political engagement between "green or orange" camps. Belfast SA5 makes this clear,

"I suppose in my head you are putting marks in the public domain and you are trying to tell society who you are and you are expressing yourself in a very fundamental way like our ancestors back in the times in the cave; food was fundamental to them, and so they would celebrate it with art on the walls. You are expressing who you are, how you think, and how other people would think and that is not green or orange."

Belfast FO1 notes the purpose of organising street art walking tours as a method to demonstrate the quality of the "transient, transforming, liquid" nature of street art in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter (CQ). They also advocate their self-interest of "celebrating a cultural identity" which differs from the establishment's promotion of neoliberal identities; the controversial regeneration of the CQ which seeks to create more neoliberal spaces while crowding out artists and cultural organisations. Moreover, they acknowledge that their street art walking tours introduce places for modern and secular identities, which "do not want a place in the establishment." Belfast FO1 notes, "What we are doing is meantime use; what we are doing is transient, transforming, changing, and liquid, celebrating all the transience and valueless of so much of this shit. In a sense, yes, that, but of course, since we have started the tour, there is a clear narrative around celebrating a cultural identity that does not have a place in the establishment and does not want a place in the establishment, actually" (Belfast FO1).

The participants from Belfast reveal that the enduring legacies of tribal identities in the neoliberal city centre motivate them, noting the importance of establishing non-sectarian identities within those spaces. They also comment on the disappearing nature of spaces, which they memorialise in the meantime to accommodate non-political forms of social engagement and commentary. The interaction with the public and the ethnonational and neoliberal environments shape their identities, and the experiences then permeate into their sense of selves and their practice. Street art in Beirut introduces a place for the individual where the enduring legacy of tribal identities persists in influencing the formation of their new cultural identities. Street art places the hybridity of modern, secular, and cosmopolitan identities in paradoxical tension with sectarian and neoliberal influences and is reflective of the diversity and differences in Beirut. There is a relationship between how the participants understand themselves by the interaction the public has with their artwork. The similarities, however, between the two cities, is that street art also re-introduces a place for the individual in neoliberal environments where the need for self-reliance responds to the lack of accommodation for non-neoliberal identities. The social process or understanding of the participants towards their practice re-introduces a place for the *individual* in divided and ideological spaces. The next theme examines the types of relationships which the street artists possess with their social environment as values for constructing collaborative and collective experiences of everydayness. The practice of street art by a multitude of individual participants in their environments influences the emergence of new group formations based on collective and community preferences to facilitate convivial interactions and encounters with the city.

The second theme draws on the type of relationships the street artists want to have with their urban environment. The data analysed dealt with the participants' value and relationships towards creating opportunities for interactions with their respective cities, where the participant reflects on the social conditions of their society. In many instances, the participant's decision to place artwork alongside buildings serves as a platform in which they can communicate with and entertain the public. The recounted past and present memories of the participants' social interactions frame the basis of collectivity and communication, as the foundation for a convivial everydayness between the artists, their audience, and the urban environment. The questions relating to the affective and cognitive expressions behind the process of producing street art uncovered inquiries into the ideas of a derived pleasure and empathy towards the inhabitant and the urban environment. The empathy towards their fellow inhabitants is, for Amin (2008), a by-product of their pleasant experience with being situated in the everyday. As such, the street artists remind us "that conviviality – as aspiration and as ideal – is socially located" (Nowicka and Vertovec, 2010, p. 349). Many participants possess a common desire to share their artwork as something that they derive pleasure from, and that street art is a platform to communicate with a broader audience by building a temporary community for themselves and, as such, a situated form of conviviality.

5.2.2. i. Street Art Communicates with the Audience

While many participants express their sense of individualism through street art, their memories of social interaction serve as a platform for non-tribal communities to form, however ephemerally. The participants employ memories of previous social interactions within a community setting, while they are on a bus, playing as kids in the streets, or engaging with inhabitants as they paint, as their inspiration for reproducing those memories into visual images in the public environment. An inherent relationship between their past interactions with the audience and their ongoing experiences with the city form the nexus for their motivations. In this sense, the placement of street artwork comprises a platform through which a temporal social relationship between the artist, the audience, and the city exist. Many of the participants in Belfast and Beirut consider their practice as a platform to entertain and to communicate with the audience about the conditions of the city and display empathy with the people who live within it.

Beirut

For Beirut SA6, they take inspiration for their artwork from their earliest memories of listening to people in their community, thus noting a form of empathy. They view their work as visual translations of what they heard, and visually created images associated with those memories. Beirut SA6 communicates those earliest memories of hearing "people's thoughts, opinions and feelings" with their surroundings where an interest in art, is to create visual expressions of those moments. For

example, Beirut SA6, commented "I used to take my inspirations from *haki al aalam* [people's talk]. I spent a lot of my childhood in a populist area and played in the streets. I would hear a lot of people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings while also having an interest in art. So, I wanted to translate this thing into something visual. Most people are visual, and they relate more to visuals than to speech perhaps" (Beirut SA6).

Beirut SA6 and Beirut SA4 use the memory of social interaction within a community as their inspiration for reproducing visual images that reflect the community. Beirut SA4 created a mural to represent the young people of Lebanon who emigrate for employment abroad. The participants' responses suggest that street art is intrinsically against superficiality and seeks to inscribe forms of authenticity on the cityscape.

Figure 8: "Single Man" by PotatoNose, *Source***: Omar El Masri, 2018.**

The large-scale mural is part of a series dedicated to communicating the emigration of Lebanese youths where the image of a figure dramatically stands alongside the more massive mural to communicate what they observe of society's bubbles and those who live inside it. In 'Single Man' (Figure 8), the artist draws a cut out of a figure to represent the choice the artist feels to isolate himself from society, and in rejection of the society. The artist perceives the rules which have moulded, restricted, and birthed with "innate hate of others" comes from the result of the Civil War. Once the 'single man' removes himself from the bubble, the cut-out character takes a step back to see the bigger picture of the chaos of the conjoined images pressed against each other. The individual in this regard, observes the congestion and traffic of Hamra, from the vantage point from the top of the building, watching the other characters idle by. Like many of his fellow artists born during the post-war generation, there is a distinct sense that the relics of the war remain and causes him and others frustration which influences their work content. Potato NOSE observes their own experiences of leaving the country for employment opportunities in Kuwait, only to return a few months later.

The communicative aspect of street art for the participants' matters in the placement of their work in public space as is the importance of those who view it. In a sense, street art for the participants from Beirut partakes in conversation with the city by making marks with it to connect their grievances with their audience. Zed40 recalled a memory from a bus trip they took to Tripoli when they noticed a young girl sitting on a bench next to a bag of apples. The artists recall feeling anguish for the girl who "looked like she was sleeping, but she wasn't moving, she looked like a block of wood", a typical sight of young children selling goods on the sides of busy highways in parts of the country (Figure 9). The artist was at the time experimenting

Figure 9: "Untitled" by Zed40, *Source*: **Zed40, 2016.**
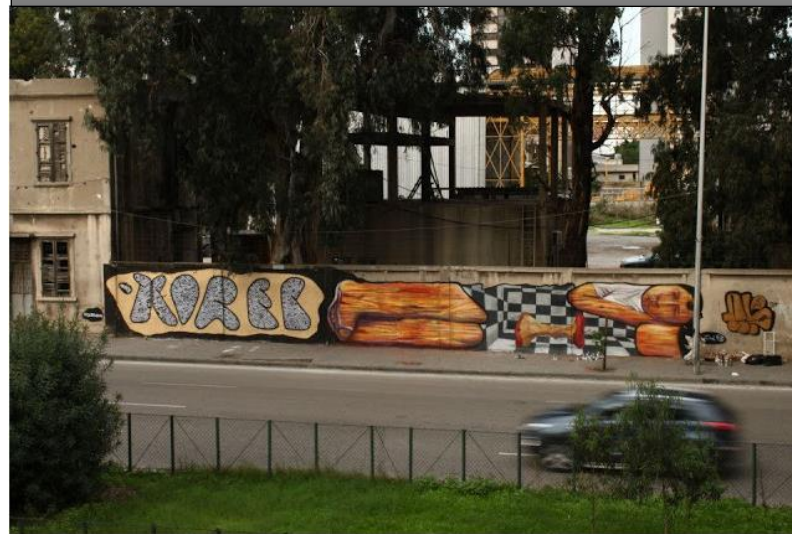
with the concept of iconography in their artwork and decided to memorialise this experience with a large mural on the side of the bridge, next to where the artist initially spotted the girl, see figure 9. The artist produced a large mural "to depict a direct interpretation of what I felt. I understand that I was working on a concept of icons and made the small girl sleeping under the bridge as an icon on a big wall. I put a big portrait of a small girl on a big wall to make her like an icon, the concept of iconising. And that was my subject for a couple of years, to take people from the streets and make them like icons."

Moreover, the participants use the memories of social interaction as the setting for their artwork where social issues such as emigration, children workers and the "people from the streets" (Beirut SA2) capture those everyday moments.

Belfast

Many of the participants from Belfast agree that street art is a form of bringing people together, with Belfast SA2 describing street art as a form of mass communication as a "television in the room where people come and stand around"; "Being part of that urban art scene or whatever it is that is happening. It is almost like a television in the room when people come and stand around, I think when the piece is done, and it is left there, then I think a little of that kind of stays" (Belfast SA2). The temporary nature of their intervention has long-lasting effects, in that, once a piece is created, it remains in the urban environment, for both the artists and other artists and inhabitants to visit when they want.

For Belfast SA9, street art communicates to a broad audience, from different communities as a form of entertainment - which brings people together "like sport; music" – "This whole street art and graffiti movement, as I was mentioning earlier, like music and hip-hop, it is something that brings people together, so it is almost like sport, music. It brings people together from all different communities, backgrounds regardless of social norms" (Belfast SA9).

In Figure 10, Belfast based street artist, KVLR, depicts the evolution of music and social norms as a place of contention but also communicates it is a total reaction to the environment. KVLR's massive (four-storey high) work for the Red Bull Music Academy live music festival, painted just before Culture Night Belfast 2014, shows a boy sitting serenely on a speaker listening with headphones to a single-reel tape player plugged into a flue on the side of the building. On his knitted hat is the logo of the British Phonograph Industry's 1980's campaign against cassette taping. The depiction is a commentary on music and history of hip-hop artists who recorded the amen break, which is a drum loop of 17seconds. The amen break spurred a genre of music, which incorporated drum and bass, hip hop, and breakbeat. KVLR says that the amen break is the most heavily sampled loop on the planet. The idea of 'home taping is killing music' is a satire of the essentialist narrative in music which is against sampling from other musical genres. Where taking music from other genres and sampling it, makes music more vibrant and more durable.

Figure 10: "Home Taping is Killing Music" by KVLR; *Source*: ExtraMuralActivity, 2014.

Belfast SA4 understands their artwork as leaving marks with the city. Street art encourages the inhabitant to adjust their gaze and see the artwork the artist has left behind:

> "It's like, yeah, it leaves a mark if it is a large-scale mural. Like I was saying, people get complacent with place and like to go from A to B but for me, even if they glance up and connect with something, especially street art is quite transient in that new stuff gets created every day, it definitely leaves its mark on the city and might take people out of what they're doing for just a second because it is there and is accessible. It's not in a gallery, and it is out there" (Belfast SA4).

For the participants from both Beirut and Belfast, their artistic interventions create an urban "gap" where memories of social interactions, inform convivial forms of entertainment and communication. The messages that street art conveys whether commenting on social issues like brain drain, or memories of pleasurable social interactions, are part of the modern discourses in Northern Irish and Lebanese societies. In a sense, then, the communicative and entertainment aspect of street art acts as "talking walls" where it perhaps acts as a platform or a focal point around which the formation of new communities can contribute, however ephemerally. The consistent theme for the participant is that their artwork is left in the urban environment

for those who happen across them, also revealing a sign of street art's most obvious residual effect. Once the piece is created, it belongs to the city.

Street art becomes a tool for communicating non-conformist views where the "activity and product of art can create and open up lines of communication, connections that are otherwise levels of reality kept apart from one another" (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 8). Moreover, street art is a process and methods of not only artists' creation but of "fostering specific human interactions" (Murphy, 2018, p. 97) and "forms of conviviality" (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 16). The participants demonstrated that their works "are enacted cooperatively, and experienced through the multiple senses, they are localised and impermanent and involve only a small number of interlocutors or interactants or collaborators" (Murphy, 2018, p. 101).

In addition to carving out platforms and opportunities for social interactions whereby non-tribal communities can form, the street artists suggest a new form of social relationships with the urban environment based on constructing collectivity and collaboration with the audience and the artist. The experiences for participants from Beirut and Belfast are similar, in that, they take the opportunity to portray the everydayness of human interactions they have with the city and the social issues pertinent to their urban environment. It is within this nexus between street artist, the audience, and the city that street art inscribes a sense of conviviality into the urban landscape.

5.2.2. ii. Street Artists Build Temporary Communities

Street artists in Beirut and Belfast often engage in the collaborative production of street art or, on a larger scale, with festivals. These temporary opportunities give artists time and space to meet and discuss techniques and new methods for projecting their images onto the side of a wall. With the context of community-building, the temporary street art gathering is a useful means to explore the nature and function of convivial everydayness, precisely because the "different motivations, styles and approaches" (Schacter, 2013, p. 9) within the community are more important than personal values and norms.

The many observations made from volunteering with the HTN in Belfast and encounters with street artists and festival organisers in Beirut revealed the empathy for inhabitants that also extended towards each other. The researcher did not have the same opportunity to observe festivals in Beirut. However, the participants recalled similar experiences with the formation of networks and artistic exchanges they had with other artists as positive and non-sectarian. They often remarked that festivals served as a platform for them to share their work, meet with other artists and plan future forms of collaboration.

Beirut

Beirut SA9 stages festivals in Beirut's Mar Mikhael neighbourhood to bring people together and escape the complacency of everyday life. The artists recreate the sense of bringing people together and community, which are usually felt in Lebanese villages or other cloistered neighbourhoods. During the live painting performances, they often remark that the gathering would bring an exciting mix of people from diverse social and community backgrounds, who do not regularly interact. They seek pleasure in knowing that the physical traces of their artwork left behind added to the urban environment of the neighbourhoods commonly found "summer salons", where neighbours typically leave chairs and sofas in front of their homes during the summer times. Beirut SA9 notes that an artwork they painted amid these summer salons in Mar Mikhael was a shared moment where:

"it was a participatory project where audience and neighbours alike would paint and colour and complete the drawing. The fact is that it is somehow protected and maintained. No one came to tag it on the top. There was something nice and organic that happened there because there is a real process to achieve something beautiful and not doing something whatever. There is an approach where we invite everyone to take part in the project and to have ownership of the result. This is how the festival, not only in the painting, but the whole festival is about ownership of the people of the neighbourhood. It is the only way to create together, rather than importing an activity that people don't feel it belongs to them or belong to it."

Additionally, placing the street artwork within the summer salons allows for a more collaborative and participatory project where the audience, the artists and the passers-by can temporarily contribute to this season-specific event. The temporary community built during the summertime extends during other parts of the year, and in other cities beyond Lebanon.

Belfast

While observing and volunteering during the HTN in Belfast, the researcher reflected on the building of temporary communities. The street artists understand their participation to belong to a community of cultural practitioners. In this regard, street art is not merely a cultural practice, but a subculture in itself where individual artists become aspirational figures motivating others to emulation, and where they exchange conventions and norms with other artists within the community, albeit transiently. The observations draw out two distinct phenomena and relationships between the artists communicating with their audience, on the one hand, and between the artists communicating among themselves on the other. As in the case of Beirut's street art festivals, the Belfast participants consider an empathetic relationship between themselves and their audience. These festivals supply a much larger temporary platform and an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, techniques, and skills. The festival also provides an opportunity for the artists to communicate their norms and conventions with the passers-by in everyday routines, during the small window of live painting.

Belfast FO1 and Belfast SA2 recognise that street art offers a form of communication through dialogue and inscribes a form of authenticity whereby the gathering of artists both locally and internationally produce a festival-like atmosphere. Belfast FO1 and other participants recognise the community of artists which exist in the city that require platforms to provide them with the walls to produce their work. Doing so provides a platform, then, for the artists to engage directly with their audience. Moreover, the following data shows that street art festivals, as in the case of creating temporary summer communities in Beirut, is a valuable means to form non-tribal social and political orientation and values in Belfast. Belfast FO1 notes that their main intention for producing festivals for street artists is "not just for street art, but am interested in trying to provide platforms for them to make a living, to highlight their work, to talk about how important it is to have that shit go down" (Belfast FO1). The two-directional function of street art is to provide a platform for exchanges between street artists, as Belfast FO1 suggests in the preceding passage. However, as Belfast SA2 indicates, festivals are also a "focal point for conversation. There is something there for them to engage with, whether it is young people or old people, as you said, people from different religious backgrounds" (Belfast SA2).

5.2.2. iii. Street Art Creates a Sense of Conviviality

The sense of everydayness which the practitioners capture in their responses suggests a desire to form group solidarities between the artists based on their crafts, and to provide temporary opportunities for their audiences to interact with the artwork as well. In this regard, and from the perspective of the street artists, their practice creates temporary and informal moments for "human modes of togetherness" (Nowicka and Vertovec, 2014, p. 341) whereby the everyday practices and routines produced during festivals allow street art practitioners to bridge the different experiences for inhabitants and themselves in everyday life within neoliberal urban and sectarian societies.

Beirut

Participants in Beirut recognise the importance of collaborating with other artists to make the impact of their art "more powerful." Beirut SA6 and others recognise a relationship between making art and having a more powerful impact on the city "as a collective of artists". While the data suggest a convivial form of group solidarity based on the social action of creating art, they also examine the conditions of everyday life in divided Beirut as "always at a distance from each other." In this instance, Beirut SA6 demonstrates that collaboration and collectivity make art and its impact on the city a more powerful, collective process or understanding whereby "everyone has an input" and serves as the motivation to create such collaborations. For Beirut SA6,

"Here, you have to work as part of a collective. You cannot work as an individual here... it is hard to do so, especially in the art field. That is why I was happy when [Beirut FO2] invited such and us all together to chat – it is a rare thing to

have. We were always at a distance from each other. As a collective of artists collaborating – when you collaborate on art, it is more powerful. Everyone has an input, so it should not be about ego... like I should do it this way because I see it this way if you want to create art that changes the environment".

Figure 11: "Earth Sucks Ass" by Romy Mattar, *Source: Romy Mattar, 2015.*

Figure 11 is of a paste-up created on the wall of a now-demolished heritage built during the garbage crisis of 2015 in Beirut. Lebanese illustration artist, Romy Mattar, who has a design background from college, has only recently placed her artwork in the city. Before venturing out of Monot, the Christian East Beirut neighbourhood known as a former pubbing district, but also a prominent middle-class neighbourhood with schools and churches. Since an early age, the artist would leave small stickers and paste-up illustrations on the walls of neighbouring Gemmayzeh on nights out with friends. As is the case with many of the participants, the artist *chose* to create an illustration which they can use to make commentary on the nature of things where they live. The artist created the image of an astronaut with a speech bubble returning to Earth explicating his dismay with the continued degradation of the natural environment, and waste management during the 2015 Garbage Crisis which saw the street of Lebanon littered with uncollected trash. Only when her piece became politicised in the context of the gentrification of Gemmayzeh, with the bulldozing of the old Laziza brewery, did the artist's piece become the mouthpiece of a generation of Lebanese dismayed at the haranguing of their future. The artist has acknowledged that the piece made a buzz for the wrong reasons. In this instance, people perceived the work to be about the casual urban gentrification of Gemmayzeh Laziza brewing company into an exclusive apartment complex by a renowned Lebanese architect, Bernard Khoury. However, the piece was a commentary for the ongoing Garbage Crisis in Beirut. While the location of the artwork took place amid fiery debates of the changing nature of the once sleepy neighbourhood of antique stores cum premier pub and nightclub venue among the post-civil war generation of majoritarian Christian East Beirut, the artist's work was perceived as a commentary of the deliberate vanishing of the neighbourhood's old features. The artist notes that it was not her intention to comment on the nature of the space, regardless of whether people took it as such or not. In this instance, the artist did not seem bothered because she thought it was funny. She could have put the astronaut anywhere in Beirut, and the political discourses of whatever social change were occurring would contextualise her art, whether that was her intention or not. Here, the artist resists the identification of her artwork, in terms of its politicisation, but also in terms of her identity as an artist whose concern is for the built environment, as well.

Beirut SA5 creates images with the assertion of doing it with colours was as crucial to the secondary communicative elements of "add a message to it as well"; "I think to beautify a location, and as I said, I would like to draw something that can make a change. I have the power to do that now. I feel the pressure, and I have this pressure, do not waste this wall because you want to do it in these colours. Do it with those colours but add a message to it as well". Likewise, Beirut SA9 shares a similar revelation to Beirut SA5, where their motivation to communicate is vital to their engagement in street art. Here, Beirut SA9 constructs and values conviviality and community by describing the importance of "see[ing] a lot of beautiful things dying after a few years" and a resolve to do something about it. They also reveal their sense of agency, and their practice motivates them to engage with street art. Beirut SA9 understands that their work creates opportunities for a "kind of organic shared space," however temporary they might be:

"I do not perceive our initiative as a bunch of friends doing nice stuff. We see many beautiful things dying after a few years. We do it to plant a seed in [the] mind and just to remind people that it is possible and that we are all the same. The festival was a kind of organic shared space because de facto, by inviting different kinds of people, students, artists, partners, amateur groups from the North and South, it happened that people were gathered without knowing where they were from" (Beirut SA9).

Moreover, providing a platform for people of diverse backgrounds is essential for Beirut SA9 where the insistence of creating a space for those who can gather, "Without knowing where they were from", suggests that existing forms of interaction may be superficial. When asked why they choose specific locations over others to paint, Beirut SA9 described the tightknit neighbourhood of Mar Mikhael where predominantly working-class areas, home to Indian and Syrian workers often exist along with the same spaces of prestigious and expensive cultural events and festivals taking place. Noting the inherent incompatibility of communities sharing spaces, they construct, and value conviviality based on increasing the opportunities for different communities, which do not usually meet or interact, to share spaces. Like other participants, Beirut SA9 believes that street art also inscribes a sense of authenticity for social interactions based on non-tribal identities. They also speak against the superficiality of the "cultural elite who are ok to pay for big festivals", and about the free events they create for the diverse inhabitants of the community, within that space:

"Communities are not trying to share spaces, so we are in a divided space. This place is one of the rare places where a free event in the public space, where Syrian and Indian workers who live in small little rooms in buildings which you pass by to get to the public spaces, while at the same time next to the cultural elite who are ok to pay for big festivals and attend performances and concerts. This is the place where it is interesting" (Beirut SA9).

The prevailing concern for the participants is to create shared opportunities for diverse communities to interact and meet one another. Beirut SA9 actively engage in promoting arts by creating and starting projects in public spaces within Mar Mikhael,

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where they are based. They showed that their primary concern for placing their work in the public realm was to create social commentary and questions about the different experiences many inhabitants of Beirut have. They also suggest that their motivations create convivial attachments with the city that bases itself on providing opportunities for encounters of different communities to engage with each other.

Belfast

Contrasting the experiences of street artists from Beirut, the participants in Belfast produce street art within the neoliberal city centre's CQ, where existing social interactions are consumer-based and encouraging of places for neoliberal identities to interact. The sole participant who was not part of the street art community is a culture-led business improvement organisation in Belfast tasked with promoting the CQ through annual festivals, business ventures and tourism. The study of street art in Belfast occasioned a conversation with Belfast CM1 to understand how private creative industries such as the CQ Business Improvement District (CQ BID) perceive the emergence of street art within the CQ BID's zone of influence. In earlier conversations with Belfast FO1, the desire to create a platform for cultural identities outside the sphere of governmental influence routinely receives funding from Belfast City Council and, at times, from the creative industries within the city. The conversation with Belfast CM1 revealed a perspective of the CQ as a space undergoing funding strain, with the 2017 collapse of the Northern Irish Executive, and existing large areas of the city centre affected by the 2008 financial recession. The conviviality which the street art communities possess towards each other had to be manufactured in the CQ by the CQ BID, to maintain a consistent revenue stream to keep the vitality of the quarter. Zukin (1995) and Sassen (1996) argue that during times of economic recession, city managers often seek quick fixes such as culture and arts-led events and initiatives to promote tourism as an alternative source of funding. The CQ's promotion as a creative centre for artists is less accurate today than it was when the neighbourhoods underwent a first-round of gentrification for the creative industry in the early 1990s, with Laganside Development Corporation (LDC) extending its remit to redevelop the area. Many participants left their studios and ateliers in the CQ for more affordable spaces in East Belfast, leaving the HTN the only time when the street artists return to the CQ to create their temporary communities within the space. The present forms of 'group solidarity' in the CQ exist in a truly commercialised sense where most social interactions are transactional and where people "pay for everything." Street art, in this way, creates a sense of free interactions between the artist and the bar-goers, the shoppers and shop keepers in the CQ, where making places for neoliberal identities Belfast is preferred (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015). Belfast CM1 echoes the observation that "Cathedral Quarter remains a creative centre for artists; you need regular money to come in to pay for everything. The way the arts and culture are funded in Northern Ireland is a complete shamble. We are not funding it from a sustainability perspective. Rents are going up in the CQ and arts, and culture organisations are getting squeezed out because of that" (Belfast CM1). Furthermore, the participants' responses suggest that conviviality from a neoliberal urban development standpoint is not an organic feeling, but one that needs to be sustained using manufactured events and experiences.

For Belfast SA8, their motivation to produce street art is to make their work more visible, accessible, and attractive for the populations and potential visitors to their city. They also show how future generations can make an impact on the city based on non-tribal and non-neoliberal ways. The efforts of unauthorised individuals also transform the city – activists writing their beliefs on walls; graffiti writers' taglines and piecing along train lines; skateboarders carving up the street; and street artists placing stencils, paste-ups and other objects on the surface of the structures of the city. For Belfast, SA8, street art,

"shows a city that cares about what people have to say, and it wants people to discuss what is being said, and to get people to engage in that conversation. It also shows value to cities, new art forms and what the new generation is looking to do. It seems a lot more cultured when you know that there is an art district in the city or a good gallery scene with public walls. It makes me want to visit those places. I have a few friends who travel just for street art. They all have favourite cities to go to."

Belfast SA1 understands the need to paint in other parts of the city based on the idea that many inhabitants who do not frequent the city centre might not see the concentration of street art in the CQ. The proliferation of street art in the CQ does not mean that the participants do not place their street artwork in other areas. The artists place their artwork in environments that can create interactions while extending the excitement which inhabitants feel when they encounter their work in the CQ to the rest of the city. Belfast SA1 notes,

"I try to do it everywhere, so there is that interaction of people who may not see it on a daily basis so someone might go 'why have they done that? Why is that there? When did that appear? How come I didn't notice that? Has that been there a week, a month?' So, I prefer outside the city centre because it is quieter as well and it does more of an impact because it's not something that people see every day."

Belfast CM1 views the existence and promotion of street art as a necessary tool for the promotion of art and cultural industry in Belfast's CQ. However, the reality of increased rental property prices caused a crowding out of the culture industry elsewhere. While they might define conviviality as linked to constructing large-scale event spaces like CQ, they maintain that neoliberal identities can only support such spaces. Belfast CM1's interpretation of the presence and "function" of street art in the CQ sits in contrast with the participants' assertion that their practice should be made accessible to anyone living in the city. Indeed, while the three participants assert that collaboration and collectivity make art and its impact on the city more powerful, Belfast SA8 and SA1 suggest that their practice makes for a more visible city to anyone who inhabits or visits the city. The main difference between the community building, which neoliberal spaces create versus street art is based on the nature and the value of the relationships. The sense of conviviality for Belfast CM1 reflects the transactional nature of exchanging consumer goods and services within commodified spaces leaving little room for alternative economies of producing street artwork based on making their art and impact on the city more powerful, and more accessible for those who want to participate.

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The intentions of the street art communities in Beirut and Belfast to communicate between themselves and their audiences, to build temporary communities within public spaces and to introduce norms and values for the practice of social life are based on making their art more visible and impactful for those who are willing to access and participate in its production. Street art acts as a form of mass communication and entertainment based on the participants' memories of earlier social interactions, and as a focal point and platform around which non-tribal and non-neoliberal communities can form, however impermanent.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Gift Giving Imagines Social Space through Enchantment

The third theme reflects a surprising outcome where the intentions of street artists imagine a relationship of social space by attaching artworks with the hopes of creating temporary cultural exchanges. In the act of gifting, the street artists reveal their intentions for enchanting the inhabitants who encounter the artwork and challenge the usual transactional exchanges of the divided city. The exchange between the street artists "produces and affirms social bonds and passionate feelings" (Jacobson, 2017, p. 1) in the form of enchantment. Jacobson (2017) states that the "exchange of gifts is total phenomena that pervade all of society and establishes social cohesion" (p. 30). Due to the ephemerality of creating temporary artwork, street art "creates environments that are constantly changing, thus presenting unexpected encounters with art that challenge the expectations of the inhabitants of the cities" (Jacobson, 2017, p. 11). The encounters with street art result in enchantment (Bengsten, 2014; Young, 2014), leaving the inhabitant with an opportunity to challenge the perceptions, or as Belfast SA1 suggests, "it might lift them out of their walk to work and say, oh, I have not noticed that before". Enchantment entails lightness, surprise, and aesthetic transformation, which help overcome the liminality and dissatisfaction arising from the social void of city lives (Bauman, 2005). "Public art says the human spirit is alive here" and thus stimulates vitality and enjoyment (Smith 2007, p. 14).

Gift giving appeared as a consistent theme and motivation for street artists. In contrast to the transactional nature of neoliberal space and the territorial and propagandistic aspects of ethnonational placemaking, street artists envisaged their work as gifting the city and its communities. Street artists visualise urban space "taking [their] cues from the possibility in cities and everyday life" and "becoming the entry point in the everyday urban experiences in reawakening our unconscious routine and patterns" (Tunnacliffe, 2016, pp. 11, 23). The participants' responses characterise urban space as "a space of delight which encapsulates serendipitous encounters and meanderings: sitting, watching, being, chatting in spaces that may be planned, designed and monumental, but more often may be barely visible to the inattentive eye, on the margins of planned space, or even imagined" (Watson, 2006, p. 3).

This artistic intervention is not merely a form of individual self-expression. However, it is also distinctly social in its purpose, in ways which contrast with other forms of placemaking in the two cities. It is less about contesting social arrangements

or showing new attitudes to public space and more to do with communicating an aesthetic vision for the city and the neighbourhood, enchanting and animating a place where people walk past and do not notice it.

5.2.3. i. Communicative Aspect of Street Art

Street art creates an urban gap or, more correctly, identifies new spaces where margins have a voice, and communication is based on the formation of new communities and the inclusion of the Other. According to Manco, "communication has become a modern mantra: the city streets shout with billboards, flyers, posters and corporate advertising, all vying for our attention. They almost invite a subversive response" (2007, p. 7). The intention behind placing the artwork in the public environment is about beautifying a place. Street art does not describe an identity for the Beirut or Belfast neighbourhood but responds to changing urban environments. In highly territorial cities, the identities for many inhabitants become attached to ethnonational aspirations, where some inhabitants such as street artists possess the ability to prompt an alternative reading of everyday life (DeNotto, 2014). Moreover, the participants possess a desire to connect people to a broader sense of collective agency (Riggles, 2010). The artist does not merely want to oppose, belong, or communicate with the passer-by in public space. Style, code, colour choices, and wall texture are some considerations when creating their artwork in a public sphere. While acknowledging how street artists' remark on enchantment and communication, their interconnections are treated separately in the interest of clarity.

Beirut

The beautification and self-expression may not contain specific messages to be uncovered. However, it seems to be about changing the nature of the place, which is undoubtedly a social act. The desire to beautify a location for the creation of street art contributes to the desire to communicate with inhabitants of the city. The following participant seeks to connect the inhabitants with a broader sense of agency, "How our societies today are more and more, killing the potential for imagination in each individual. It is our necessity to keep giving opportunities to ignite our imagination again in an artistic sense in each one of us" (Beirut SA9).

Beirut SA1 frames this concern with a diminishing imagination as the changes that are taking place with the changing urban environment caused by economic decline and gentrification of traditional working-class communities. While Beirut SA1 remarks on the changing identities a place has: "Hamra is losing its identity again, it is now all restaurants and *aragheel* places, *shawarma*. Hamra was never like this. There is nothing with changing your identity of a place. Gemmayzeh changed its identity, Mar Mikhael has changed, and Badaro has changed its identity. Change is not wrong, but you can change it for the better."

Zed40 created a mural on the side of the road in front of Karantina to provoke the enjoyment and curiosity along throughways where people are stuck in road traffic (Figure 12). The artist routinely is impressed by observations he makes in

daily life and seeks to preserve those memories through a still life representation. In this mural, instead of painting cars stuck in traffic, he orchestrated the sounds with the use of a colourful image of a maestro conducting music to the soundscape of honking cars commuting on their way out of the city. The artist suggests that the content of their work was as though they were conducting the cars stuck in traffic while hoping that it would animate discussions for people to forget their task and to discuss art instead. Zed40 explains the rationale of this artwork: "It was a maestro conducting music with the notes, as though he was attempting to synchronise the beats of the cars, with music. These are small examples, simple figurations, or making people think while they are waiting in traffic 'what is a maestro doing, who put this maestro here?' It is a kind of interaction" (Zed40).

Figure 12: "Maestro" by Zed40, *Source*: Zed40, 2015.

Belfast

The participants possess a sense of responsibility for engaging with public space in a way that makes it more civic and interactive. Low (2017) suggests that the role played by social actors to interact with symbols and languages gives form and meaning to physical space (p. 12). While many noted their sense of frustration with the lack of political accommodation, the social actions of the participants are to embellish the existing built environment by making marks with it and to forge spaces for interactions. In a sense, beautifying a neighbourhood is interaction and not merely mere entertainment, but given the context of the city, the artist acknowledges that it is in part an act of rebellion,

> "I think generally I saw it as having a bit of fun to what I saw as… you walk up, and down the streets, you don't notice much, so if you put something up there, for that one second that someone glances at it, that might brighten up their day, from their 'ah shit I have to go to work' or 'why did some arsehole stick that there?' So, it challenges the public slightly. The spread the love stuff – I do not see that as an act of rebellion, but it is an act of rebellion" (Belfast SA1).

Figure 13: "Spread the Love" by FGB, *Source*: Omar El Masri, 2016.
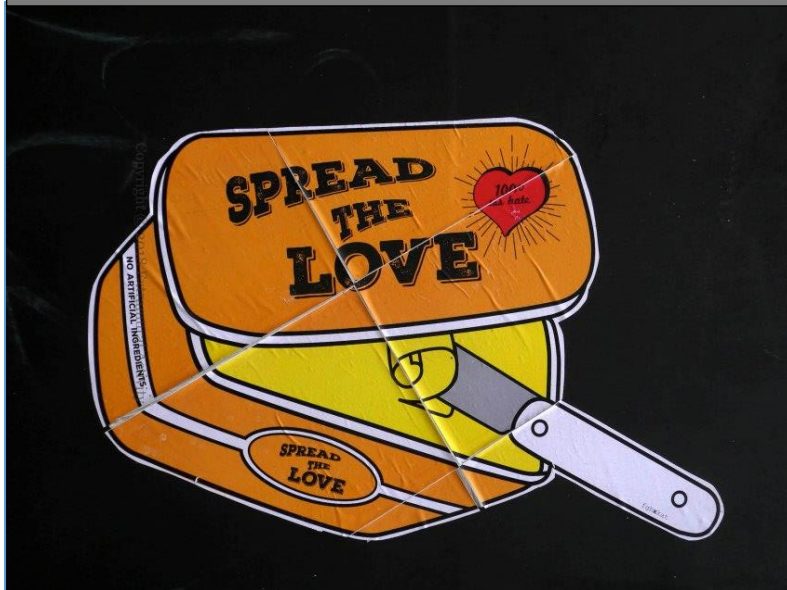
Heavily influenced by cartoons, FGB has always had an interest in characters, which is why he never fitted into the graffiti/lettering world. FGB started introducing his creations into the streets as stickers, then paste-up and on to painting when his creations had outgrown the limitations of paper. FGB deliberately places his stickers, paste-ups, and paintings of a series of images of vernacular sayings, such as "Spread the Love, with no artificial ingredients" (Figure 13). FGB deliberately places his stickers in visible settings to encourage interaction with passers-by. The artist notes that they are trying to 'sell' something that with a positive message. In some instances, the artist recalls someone thinking that he was trying to sell butter. The artist is taking local puns and rebelling against the corporate desire to sell products.

The artist wants to leave the artwork in a public environment in the act of giving, which is free and non-transactional. Belfast SA2 notes,

"I think, if I want to do a piece, I do not want to spell it out in. It depends on where the piece is. If it is something you are going to pass traffic, you only have a small window to communicate something. You need to make it big and bold, but if it is a small place, where someone wants to take a wee look at it, you want to give them a bit of room to kind of work out or figure out or read into. I do not like to spell things out. I like to leave, I suppose, layers of what is going on" (Belfast SA2).

The following passage refers to Belfast SA6's concern with providing a suitable opportunity to place their artwork in someone else's space. The care in placing artwork in locations is something that other participants share, as many of the sites are often within residential areas.

Belfast based artist, and co-founder of the arts collective in East Belfast, Vault Arts Studios, E'OK, perceive the protection of civic space as their duty. Images of houses in the public realm are routinely introduced into their murals invoking an idea that many of the public spaces within Belfast are either administered by ethnonational or neoliberal urban practices (see Figure 14). The participants contribute to the interactions sought after by the street artists; ones who will create a civic sense of joint ownership and responsibility. The classically trained artists often using abstract images and vibrant colours to represent sentiments of home, and the nature, and form of public spaces. In the figure below, E'OK invokes the use of houses amid buildings as dwelling places and places them in a landscape which represents the different 'I's who live in these spaces and make up a community of I's. Through it, E'OK creates an urban utopia where the dwellings are happy places to live with good people in it. The artist turns up the volume of her colour palette to invoke a festival-like atmosphere with the intent of creating joy and being alive with the joy in that space. The artist attempts to change the perspective that some have of Belfast, as grim, wet, and post-traumatic.

Figure 14: "Untitled" by E'OK, *Source***: Omar El Masri, 2017.**

Street art for Belfast SA6 pushes up against the tensions of making interactions where the viewers are pleasantly surprised and not upset. When pressed to expand their response, Belfast SA6 pleads, "Because you are taking up valuable space, civic space – this is someone's environment, someone might walk by it every day, twice a day on their way to and from work, they don't want to look at something that's going to make them depressed or freak them out - that is what I mean about responsibility" (Belfast SA6).

The typical responses for participants in Beirut and Belfast occasion a form of interaction based on offering pleasurable encounters which beautify spaces for the inhabitants of the city. In an entirely different form of social interaction to the neoliberal and the ethnonational, artistic interventions value interactions which are associated with pleasure and beautification. There is also power in the ephemeral nature of their work in that they temporarily occupy space only to give it back again to the city. In other words, once they create their artwork, it belongs not only to the city but to the inhabitants who change their gaze and see it within their environment.

The sense of belonging which street artists seek with their audience is "to search out sites of magical urban encounters, hidden in the interstices of the planned and monumental, divided and segregated, or privatised or thematised, spaces that more usually capture public attention" (Watson, 2006, p. 1). The sites where street artists locate their practices have the purpose of drawing the inhabitant's gaze from their daily routine and peer into the alleyways where a burst of colour might divert their attention for a brief moment. Many participants discussed the pleasure of placing their artwork with the distinct desire of giving the inhabitant "something unexpected or new or out of place" (Young, 2014b, p. 149). In the divided cities, where inhabitants avoid places informing them of space's exclusivity, such as ethnonational political murals, sectarian graffiti or inaccessible city centres, the desire for street artists to gift their artworks is for the express purpose of enchanting the local population. Enchantment, in this regard, helps alleviate the drabness of everyday life (Bauman, 2005). Further, Willis (1990) observes: "Being human-human be-in-ness—means to be creative in the sense of remaking the world for ourselves as we make and find our place and identity" (p. 11).

The participants similarly frame their practice in terms of enchanting a place for the express interest of engaging people. The desire to beautify a place and to animate it, ties to the experiences of the participants with placing their artwork in the urban environment. For them, beautification changes the mood of inhabitants and how they physically interact with the city (look up) where, in many instances, the participant invites the inhabitant to change their 'gaze.'

Beirut

The following participants leave free markings on the urban landscape for inhabitants through re-enchanting the urban landscapes with aesthetic experiences (Visconti et al., 2010). Beirut SA1 acknowledges that the everyday experience of living in a sectarian society makes the artist angry and intends to "awaken physically numbed dwellers and reconnect them with a pleasurably consumable environment" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521). Beirut SA1 places their artwork as a process to "help others forget about these externalities just to work on this small moment, just this reflection of this artwork, at this moment". The artist seeks to "create moments of 'lived space'" for the inhabitant by briefly allowing them to forget the "externalities" or distractions of everyday life in divided cities and to live in the "here and now" (Begg, 2011, p. 63).

Street art beautifies but does not describe an identity for the neighbourhood; instead, their communities and cultures do that. For Beirut FO2, beautification changes the mood of the inhabitants and suggests new ways for the public to interact with the artwork, by changing their gaze:

"When I walk the street, I was looking at this big, empty and dull wall and people when they walk; they generally look down. They do not look up. Now, with the artwork on the wall, they are looking up. It changed the mood of the people on the street. The decision should be that wherever you go, you should have art here, and there … and between them, we should have greenery, flowers, and beautiful zebra crossing … life!" (Beirut FO2).

The street artists in Beirut "deploy enchantment to awaken the collective consciousness of sleepy dwellers and acknowledge the various reactions (from strong support to open contestation) that the same intervention may evoke from different audiences" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521). Interestingly, many participants adjust their practices to respect the norms of more traditional neighbourhoods. Street artists paint with an audience in mind. Nowhere is this more apparent than in more traditional parts of Beirut, where Beirut SA1's gut feeling says more about his awareness of cultural sensitivity of traditional neighbourhoods when deciding what image to place on the walls in *Dahiya*. The example provided below addresses their intention of placing street art not to provoke the inhabitants of that community in a traditionally conservative Muslim neighbourhood in Beirut. Beirut SA1's process entails thinking about

"how do I produce an image/voice in a way which is obvious to you but allows you to think more? Not to be too provoking. For the simple reason, which being too provocative or provoking; there would be aversion. If there is an aversion, for example, if I did something in *Dahiya* – a nude on a building, ok? What did we achieve? The people will be enraged, but I may become famous as a result."

The desire to enchant and beautify a local environment for the inhabitant is demonstrative of the cultural sensitivities of more traditional communities.

Belfast

The intention for Belfast SA2 is to provide a platform whereby they can enchant a passer-by with a piece they create. Belfast SA2 explains the process behind placing their work on walls which are sanctioned, and where they received permission from the building owner to paint their pieces on it. As they progress through the stages of creating their artwork, they note the importance of the encounter of their artwork with the passer-by with an expressed desire to enchant them. The following participant 'stages' and plans their urban encounter with the desire to facilitate the experience of "stumbling across a street-based artwork" (Young, 2014b, p. 148). However, to do so, there are norms and conventions about getting permission from the City Council, or a building's owner, to paint on much larger surfaces. Belfast SA2 reflects on the need to follow their gut feelings, as they note:

"The viewpoint of the wall is of importance to me. So, if the wall is in a suitable location, where the best place for foot traffic is, interact with it or photograph it. I suppose the next would be the surface, the texture, the next thing would be to acquire permission who could help me get it, with my work. I do not do illegal pieces because it takes so long to do so I need a few days if there are cherry pickers …, you just cannot work illegally with that sort of thing. The bigger walls need to be allocated to you; you cannot just take what you want" (Belfast SA2).

Belfast SA2's experiences of growing up around the political murals in their childhood neighbourhood suggest a point of similarity with the expressed cultural sensitivity of Beirut SA1's gut feeling about painting images in Dahiya. There are rules or norms which the street art community profess to follow in locations in which they do not know the local inhabitants. The context behind these and other conversations with the participants from both cities dealt with the permission many artists receive from the local community as a green light to paint on city surfaces.

Street art is a positive and progressive message, which they hope people can feed off. However, as with similar encounters with the participants during the HTN, and during the interviews, there was a defined sense that whatever the participants created in the urban environment, there should be a positive and progressive message attached to it. Unlike the propagandistic messages, which are associated with political murals and political posters, the relationship with the city is one for which street art acts as a conduit for the provocation of enjoyment. For the participants, the wish to do something positive through their relationship to the city implies a generosity. The artist intends to provoke enjoyment and some reflection which is gifted to the city, but we do not know the impact it has. The street artists from Beirut and Belfast "feel that they enchant public space by leaving free interventions in the space that surprise the community" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521). Enchanting the urban environment is another form of generosity where "enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us, but it is also a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies" (Bennett, 2016, p. 4). Reading street art through the prism of enchantment can also tell us something about the participants' motivation to engage with space. Whether it is to establish an identity for the neighbourhood or to enchant the passer-by to change their gaze, the participants' messages challenge the usual messages of the divided city. Street art offers alternative ways of seeing space where aesthetic consumption of gratuitous artwork, gifted to the inhabitants, challenges the consumption of public spaces by the logics of neoliberalism and divisive community and sectarian attitudes.

5.2.3. iii. Challenges to the Usual Messages of a Divided City

The participants' desire to gift the city with positive and progressive messages challenge pathological symbols in the divided city. The normalisation of political murals, sectarian graffiti, and overall political and economic uncertainty contributes "to the narrative of disenchantment that dominates" (Young, 2014b, p. 148) everyday accounts of segregation and uneven neoliberal urban development. In a sense, the motivations to engage with the practice of street art are evocative of how the

participants themselves experience the ethnonational and neoliberal city. Within Beirut and Belfast, the participants break with the norm, challenge the static images of texts and signage of the typical consumer and segregated city, by adding more diversity in styles, where street art does not attempt to communicate informational or commercial messages. However, there are nuances in responses which artists possess towards the sectarian images which they grew up seeing in Belfast. Instead, the placement of different images in the public environment is a social action which may motivate, or which artists intend to motivate, the participants to counter the superficial selling of images or the propagandistic nature of ethnonational or neoliberal art in post-conflict societies.

Beirut

The social act of placing artwork within the public realm can function as a marker of "social recognition, perceptual satisfaction, psychological reward, or delight" (Brett, 2005, p. 4). Here, the wish to do something positive through their relationship to their city implies a generosity, an attachment to this city. Beirut SA6 places their artwork in the public environment as a marker to counter the dominant sense of negativity with the deteriorating financial situation in the country. Beirut SA6 notes:

"It is both; it is a combination of being rebellious – even with my family, they were very against this thing (street art). I was rebellious, that I am putting my work in messages and that I am investing my money in *mahal ghalat* - this mentality. This is something that is reflective of a family, but the overall situation in the country, I wanted to be positive. You always encounter negativity everywhere you go. Even if, as many say, the financial situation or the overall situation *mish zabet* (is not working well), I feel there is fulfilment here."

Similarly, for Beirut SA4, the experiences with the deteriorating political conditions lead them to consider their artwork as a form of protest, regardless of whether they had intended it or not. The participant reveals the tension between activism arts while challenging the nature of the divided city, by beautifying it and giving it life, while it is undergoing protest:

"Regardless, I start the idea with beautifying and giving life to the city and to allow Beirut to be more beautiful for us to live in. However, Beirut, by itself, is allowing me to turn to activism art; it is not because I wanted it to be that way. By itself, my art is becoming activism art" (Beirut SA4).

For Beirut SA2, the practice of street art offers different images associated with decoration and embellishing, which they perceive as giving the city, which had undergone the 2008 Israeli invasion, some energy. In a way, they challenge the war-related imagery of Beirut with colourful alternatives, which are gifted to the population, with little resistance from the police. Beirut SA2 notes,

"Some people were using political messages, and some were decorating the walls to make the people happier, embellishing a bit, the energy of the city. After the war, everyone was down, and it was good … what we found, in the end, was that the media is following us, directly as if something very new happened in the city… like the explosions! It was more colourful, the explosions that were happening in the streets. That is why even really, we did not have problems, even with the police, or the army – nothing. They were busy; maybe they were thinking that 'we are not going to stop kids painting something colourful.' So, it was like that."

Belfast

In Belfast, however, the range of responses about challenging the pathological symbols of political murals and sectarian graffiti varies from engaging directly with them and ignoring them completely. A few participants create their work to counterpoise the political murals they encountered in their youth by linking their practice as an act of protest or an attempt to challenge the usual messages of Belfast's 'Troubles' imagery or the deterioration of the financial sector. Others challenge the pathological symbols in the neoliberal city where they counter the text and signage of the typical consumer city. Belfast SA5 discusses how their art is a direct counterpoise to the political murals. Belfast SA5 notes,

"The more we dilute that paranoia with images that we enjoy, the more the conversations are stimulated. If you are putting beautiful things in the public domain, people would be more drawn to them than the traditional imagery. That stuff is dying off in lots of communities because people are sick of looking at it. People do not look at it anymore, how many crests on gable walls you look at in your immediate area, you become oblivious to it. Moreover, because we are all living in the urban environment, if you look outside the window here, you have text and signage everywhere, and you have gone blind to it. You have to put images in the public domain which catch the eye."

Belfast FO1 is challenging socially conservative values, the glorification of violence, which they consider repressive. Belfast FO1 notes, "Any artist worth their salt is not going to fuck with you on those – sexism, the glorification of violence, and if they do those, you will not invite them. One thing I did do this year was ban female portraiture because I felt we had too much of it – three people did anyway, well no, one of them it could have been a boy it was androgynous" (Belfast FO1).

The artist seeks to make a gift of the artwork to the spectator, the neighbourhood, and the city. The two facets of image-making (art market and vast regimes of advertising) make the economy of the gift rare in consumer culture, as it is not based on a transaction relationship. However, as the researcher's understanding of the role of the artists developed, so did the realisation that their social process uncovers a facet of image-giving as an act of generosity (Armstrong, 2005; Irvine, 2012; Young, 2014) rather than a right to paint in the divided city as an act of resistance.

The following sections discuss the experience of street artists in Beirut and Belfast and their motivations within that environment; importantly, their primary motivations are not to be perceived as attempting to claim an individual level 'right to the city', as several researchers in different contexts have argued (Nagle, 2018; Zieleniec, 2016). Instead, we can see their artistic interventions as small but significant attempts to define a different urban space, one of enchantment and gift giving, and which is a collaborative interaction between artist and audience. In embedding this art in everyday urban spaces, they hope to enhance social interaction in post-conflict cities, in ways which are quite different to ethnonational or neoliberal forms of interaction.

5.3 Discussing the Social Engagement of Street Artists

The research study sought to explore the social understandings of contemporary street artists towards their practice in the deeply divided societies of Beirut and Belfast. The data analysed suggests that experiences and memories with ethnonational and neoliberal urbanisation forms of social interactions frame the motivations of street artists to intervene artistically within those environments. The street art community represents a nascent culture of individuals who enhance social interactions based on gift giving, whereby they redefine social space through collaborative interactions between the artist, the audience, and the city. A significant theme relates to the nature of beautifying and enchanting public spaces in a social process of gifting the artwork to the cities.

The following section, 5.3, explains how the small-scale interventions of the street art communities describe a social understanding of gifting, which nuances and reworks the concept of claiming a right to the city. The first sub-section, 5.3.1, represents the theoretical framework used to analyse and discuss the intentions of the street art communities in Beirut and Belfast. The notion that street art communities practise a form of gift giving, rather than a claim, presents a reworking of the concept to the right to the city framework (Lefebvre, 1996). The second sub-section, 5.3.2, further discusses how a social understanding of street art communities contributes to a life-enhancing environment for the artists themselves, not as a claim of a right to the city, but as a process of gifting artwork to the city. In doing so, the study nuances the right to the city framework by examining the micro-level practices of an urban subculture. The creative and collective participation for street artists sheds light to their intentions for imagining a different social relationship. The positionality of the artist to gift their artwork requires critical reflection. The discussion critically examines their social and political background by reviewing their educational background, socio-economic class, residency, funding, and gender. The subsection discusses the positions in the social structures of artists which contributes to the critical questioning or challenging of their intentions for gift-giving without compromising their anonymity. The third sub-section, 5.3.3, then relate the case study results to similar studies of social processes in Beirut and Belfast. The comparison and contrasting of the evidence of other ethnographies supports the overall importance of the finding, and, highlights how and in what ways the blended case study and focused ethnography research design and the study of the street art phenomenon in Beirut and Belfast differs from prior research about the topic.

5.3.1 The Right to Gift the City?

The initial research interest sought insight from the social actors. They actively engage in placing small-scale artistic interventions in urban spaces of the post-conflict cities of Beirut and Belfast. The research study emphasised that street art communities' experiences of their everyday life in sectarian and segregated societies influence their practice. The central importance of Lefebvre's (1996) "right to the city" framework to the research study is "to highlight the strategic importance of the urban in the social struggle" (Kipfer et al., 2012, p. 15), and, in turn, how the power relations within those social processes create new social spaces. Upon further analysis, the participants do not view their social role as claiming their right to the city through the appropriation of space, as the right to the city framework suggests they would (Lefebvre, 1996). Instead, their intentions to leave artwork in the urban environment signify a desire for gifting a "life-enhancing environment produced by creative and collective participation" (Crawford, 2011, p. 35).

The research suggests that the right to the city framework is useful to study communities who engage in the production of temporary social spaces. However, the street art community does not purposefully and collectively take part in claiming a right. Instead, the diversity of the community's actions take part in the "oeuvre" (Lefebvre, 1996) where street art gifts the city with life-enhancing environments (Crawford, 2011). Moreover, a collective action frame, while beneficial to study the purposeful actions of social movements, served to capture street art as the practice of many individuals who seek to gift their cities with remnants of their artistry. As such, the agentic qualities of street art encourage a reading of the artists as 'authoring' their interventions and transcending more rigid identities, in what Purcell (2002) refers to as the "urban politics of the inhabitant" (p. 103). In examining the "urban" environment, which the street artists use to stage their artwork, the street art community "assert inhabitance" as an exercise in a struggle to imbue the cityscape with their "authority in the city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 944).

Street art is a localised practice (Samutina and Zaporozhets, 2015) which the artists use to communicate with the inhabitants of the city. Street art, when applied to the right to participate in the creation of city's oeuvre, "[stands] for a more expansive understanding of the city, placing it as an unintentional and collective work of art, richly significant yet embedded in everyday life – beyond the realm of commodified space" (Stickells, 2011, p. 214). In Lefebvrian terms, the polarised social and urban environment of Beirut and Belfast influence street artists' intention to create their art as a "need for creative activity … (not only of products and consumable material goods) … but the need for information, symbolism, the imaginary and play" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 147).

The street artists use their respective cities as a canvas and offer "a similar understanding of the city as an oeuvre" (Chabbert, 2015, p. 3) or a continuous collective work of art that encourages the participation of the city's residents. The street art community's experience with producing art in their respective cities signals a collaborative and creative form of providing opportunities to engage with the city. Street art engages the participation of not only the city's inhabitants, through the artists'

expressed intention to communicate, but also builds temporary communities which base their interactions on an act of gifting artwork to the urban environment. The promise of introducing places for new cultural and artistic identities in socially polarised spaces is both an act of self-authoring, of inhabiting the urban environment and of the continuation of the economy of the gift.

5.3.2 Explaining the Significance of Gift Giving

The social practice of street artists in the divided city does not make a right to claim. Instead, they temporarily re-purpose social space (Armstrong, 2005; Visconti et al., 2010; Tunnacliffe, 2016) by manifesting the right to the city in creative terms where "it is the right to participate in the perpetual creative transformation of the city" (Stickells, 2011, p. 53). Furthermore, the significance of gifting is more than an individual right (Lefebvre, 1996), and less than an exercise in collective action, as Harvey suggests (2008). Instead, the social engagement of street art within the urban environment is an exercise in reconceptualising the relational process with urban space (Zieleniec, 2016). Their social relations with the city and their audience suggests a reconceptualisation of the right to the city for these artistic communities, not as a right to claim, but as a gift which their artwork does by itself. The small-scale intervention of street art interacts with the ephemeral city, through the temporary artistic interventions they leave behind as markings of temporary group formation based on their creative and collective participation between their art, their audience and their urban environment. Street artists from Beirut and Belfast "engage with the politics and pleasures of space in the city" encouraging inhabitants to "see the city as a space for creative experimentation" (Stickells and Begg, 2011, p. 5), which not only challenge the usual pathological images of the divided city but, also, engage in the act of generosity which defies traditional propagandistic and divisive social interactions.

Examining the intentions of street artists, not only demonstrates the social process of creative and collective participation of the street art community but also gives nuances to how urban subcultures interact with their post-conflict cities. The urban politics of the inhabitant then means that other forms of civic engagement which promote the economy of the gift challenge the Lefebvrian claim of a perceived right to "transform and renewed right to urban life" (Purcell, 2002, p. 102). As such, the following discussion presents the various positions of the street artists concerning their various social and political backgrounds. With reflection on their educational background, socio-economic class, residency, generational divides and gender, their hybrid identities better frame the second discussion on the nature of their gift in the divided city and proffer limitations to the idea of gifting their artwork in contested environments.

5.3.2. i. The Hybrid Identities of Street Artists: A note on positionality

Where the artist intends to gift their city with their artworks, a critical reflection about the nature of this gift, to be discussed in section 5.3.2. iii., considers the artist's social and political backgrounds. The reality is that not everyone visits the CQ, or the locations in Beirut, due to perceptions of inhabitants, and the influences of ethnonational and neoliberal ideologies to

further overlap and create tensions between who has access to these areas. In short, street art might not influence creating new civic spaces, and while that might be their intent, it indeed rests within their imaginations. Further, the nature of their gift is based on their perceptions of those spaces, which in the divided city, limits the access of both the artist and their intended audiences. The possible extent of their interventions depends on their intended audience who might not realise or interpret it as a form of gift-giving—connecting the artists to their social and political context aids in critically questioning their positionality, and reflected by their socio-economic class, generational divides, educational background, residency, and gender. All these variables influence the perceptions of the artists to engage in their practice and can offer limitations to the theory of gift-giving. Furthermore, the style and use of imagery of individual artists can also reveal insight into their social and political backgrounds of surveying their artworks during the presentation of the findings in Section 5.2.

Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of how the participants choose to self-identity concerning the social and political context of the study. Expanding Harvey's (2011) definition of positionality, the positions in which the street artists inhabit among their community is changeable. Harvey (2011) suggests that the social and political background of an individual's position is based on their "ability to exert influence [through their] social networks, social capital and strategic positions within the social structures" (p. 433). As such, the participant's educational background in the arts, socio-economic class, residency, generational divides, funding and gender, can influence not only their position within the community but also how they move across or change their perspectives towards their craft. The interview questions dealing with the participants' backgrounds provided an opportunity for the participants to highlight those aspects of their cultural background, which makes their work unique and how their life experiences tie into their artwork. The artists indicated that the inspiration behind the nature of their work was informed by their upbringing, educational background, socio-economic status and where they lived or were raised. In conversation, it became clear that their educational background and their experiences contributed to their evolutions as artists, and why an artist developed techniques and adopted the spray can as a tool to illustrate their ideas.

Educational Background

The educational background of all the artists gives insight into their intentions for the idea of gifting artwork. The artist's position for placing their artwork in the milieu of the city comes because of the time and relevant experience of examining distinctive styles, techniques, and canvases which they experimented while in art school. The questions posed to the artists about

how they started painting murals in the street, led to discussions of their educational background and the impressed ideas of creating socially engaged art by their art teachers. All the artists possess art degrees from higher education institutions and possess qualifications in graphic and illustration design, fine arts, interior design, and architecture. Central to the disciplines is the notion of giving their art for observers to reflect and ponder, and part of that experiment is to employ new canvases. In employing the canvas of the street, the artists learn to create site-specific artwork employing features of the sites such as telephone poles, wall textures and existing colour palettes to bring their work to 'life'. Friz from Belfast created an artwork called 'Galaxy Paws' (See Figure 15) as part of the HTN street art festival in 2015. The image is of a fox stretched out over a bed of roses and its body curves over the doorway, which is bolted, locked and sealed, with the watchful CCTV camera and a sign warning of guard dogs. The fox's eyes are the exposed vents, and its paws are galaxies which the artist says is where we live, on the left hind leg. In using the sites exposed furniture, such as the door, the artist creates their work around the site, rather than knocking the CCTV camera, or painting over the bolted door. The respect for the built environment is a principle which many artists are taught in higher education, and can be seen from the image, and classify this work as being site-specific.

Figure 15: "Galaxy Paws" by Friz, *Source*: Omar El Masri, 2015.
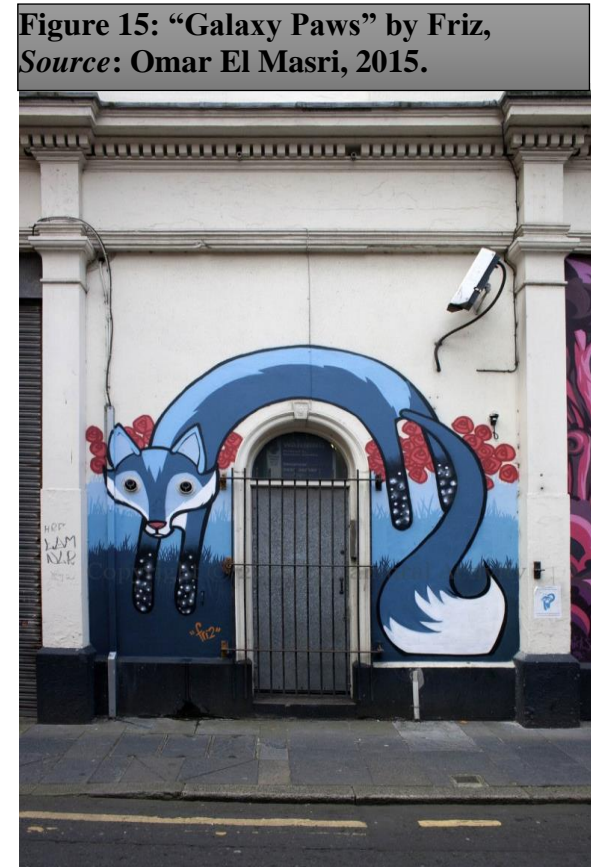
The medium for their artistic interventions is the same throughout, regardless of the style and technique they choose. The artwork differs in terms of artistic skills and styles and is reflective of the artists' artistic development and is demonstrative by their use of stickers, stencils, paste-ups and graffiti. Their educational attainment serves as a base for the artists' ability to move across the distinctive styles of mural art, and experiment in portraiture, abstract art, or illustrations. In the case where the artist can move across these assorted styles, their social capital and networks widen and are deemed to be 'jack of all trades.' Another exciting feature of the artists is linked to the ongoing debate among art curators about the distinction between 'high' art found in museums and collections and 'low' art found in the streets. The artists spoke about their desire to bring art into the streets, and are noted with encouraging the proliferation of city art as an open-air art gallery, and can explain why some artwork is indeed portraits or larger scale murals similar to what is found within these 'high' art institutions. The focus on portraiture for several artists is about preserving an individual and their identity at a point in time that if not preserved, be lost forever. In this instance, Friz paints portraits of female chieftains and princesses from her Irish heritage in a way to preserve something that is missing in the modern discourse on Irish identity. Likewise, Beirut SA1 uses calligraphy to highlight the increasing homogenisation of the English and French language in contemporary Lebanon, and the need to preserve the Arabic script.

Socio-Economic Class

Another factor which reveals the intention of the artist is their perceived socio-economic class, and the information shared about their training, work experience, creative processes, and studio practice. Notwithstanding whether they intend to transcend their socio-economic position in the social structure, their responses suggest that they use their art as a strategy and determined effort to better their social situation. The questions posed dealt with how they seek out opportunities to have their artwork noticed. All the participants recalled important lessons from their time in art schools, where they were told to promote and market their work to cultivate a collector base to seek out opportunities to sell their work. In environments where a city's arts funding is low like in Belfast or negligible, like in Beirut, the artists seek private individuals to support their craft. In these instances, and a similar fashion to their studio shows, and on a more public scale, street art festivals played a huge factor in gaining recognition for their work. With the popularity of finding street art murals in cafes, restaurants and on the sides of businesses in Beirut and Belfast, artists who were not part of an artist collective or association soon became the go-to artist for companies seeking to market their brands. Belfast SA8 started as a graffiti writer, who soon was contracted by local businesses to paint his distinctive stencils of famed people from Belfast on the walls of their locations. In addition to participating in street art festivals and art fairs, artists sell their work through their websites and online marketplaces.

Most of the participants indicated a vital distinction which spoke inadvertently about their class concerning museum and art gallery attendance. The Beirut artists often spoke about how most Lebanese do not attend art gallery shows or go to museums, citing that the institutions are for the upper-class and are too intimidating for the working classes. Of the participants who revealed their class background, they learned about art through earlier interactions in classrooms, as opposed to receiving formal training in visual arts as other participants. One particular social divide was central in shaping these artists' experiences in Beirut and Belfast and linked to the notion of a socio-economic position. The artists adopted a set of practices which they took as a theoretical point of departure for the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space (Bourriaud, 1998). The artists engage in social practice to seek a more direct impact on their communities and challenging social issues, where art becomes the vehicle for change, not an end to consuming. They learnt to paint from what they observed in their neighbourhoods political murals and graffiti, from what they heard from the mouths of their political and religious leaders and the social cues they learned about other places that did not have similar symbols of sectarian flags and political posters. Furthermore, we see this trend appear in both North and West Belfast's working-class communities and with artists from Beirut's working-class communities of Tariq al Jadeedeh. Class in this regard informs the position of the artist to make art based on, or inspired by, human relations and their social context.

Residency

Residency plays a key role in the perceptions of the artist towards their craft, their city and can play a significant factor in the style and content of their work. While most of the artists come from the cities of Beirut and Belfast, each with its distinct social and political geographies, discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.4, some artists come from more rural areas and secondary cities across Lebanon and Northern Ireland. The rural and urban divide plays an essential role in the motivations of many artists across a spectrum of accessing funding, arts educational attainment, social acceptance of their work, and the availability of empty walls for the artists to paint on. It is not uncommon for the artists in both cities to paint in the neighbourhoods they reside in. However, permission or access to those tight-knitted sites is generally attributed to the perceptions of the artists toward their safety, and whether their community members would frown on their artwork.

The area of Mar Mikhael is the 'birthplace' of graffiti in Beirut, where the majority of the work dating back to 2007 can be found next to the old Train Station, and along the bridge from Mar Mikhael to Bourj Hammoud. Except for two artists in Beirut, the remaining six artists do not live in Hamra. While all the artists presently live and work in Hamra, Beirut, two of them grew up in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre, and the remaining across the social and political divides in East and West Beirut. There are four who grew up and resided in majoritarian Christian neighbourhoods of Monot, Achrafieh and Mar Mikhael and one who lives and is from the northern suburb of Beirut of Jounieh. All the artists from Beirut presently reside in Beirut, either choosing to live at their family home, or in their own houses and work in or around Beirut. Beirut SA2, originally from East Beirut, lives and works in his atelier located at the edge of Mar Mikhael, neighbouring the Armenian Beirut suburb of Bourj Hammoud. Within Beirut, Beirut SA6 is from a working-class, and the majoritarian Sunni suburb of Tariq al Jadeedeh, Beirut SA2, Beirut SA5, Beirut SA7 and Beirut SA4 grew up in majoritarian Christian areas of Beirut including Mar Mikhael, Monot, Achrafieh, and Jounieh respectively. Beirut SA3 and Beirut FO1 presently live in Hamra. From the secondary cities of Lebanon, Beirut SA1 and Beirut SA8 hail from the southern Lebanese city of Tyre.

Most street artists reside in the Belfast neighbourhoods they grew up in, except Belfast SA4 and Belfast SA6 who came to Belfast from the Republic of Ireland, Belfast SA3 and Belfast SA2 artists who grew up in neighbouring towns close to the city, and Belfast SA1 artist who grew up in Londonderry. The CQ does not boast an active residential population, and so, the main difference between Beirut and Belfast in terms of residency, is that Belfast artists do not paint and reside in the same location. With one or two exceptions in Inner East Belfast, most of the artists do not paint in the neighbourhoods where they presently reside, due to the ethnonational discourses of space which limit their access to locations. Belfast SA7 has collaborated in the past with Loyalist and Republican muralists, and because of the community's knowledge of them, they have been granted permission to paint within nationalist and unionist communities. However, artists are not permitted to paint within ethnonational communities without direct approval from the leaders of those neighbourhoods. Moreover, the artists lookout for signs of ethnonational symbols such as political flags, political murals, and coloured kerbstones before planning an artistic intervention.

While there are instances of street art within neighbourhoods which are perceived to be associated with different ethnonational factions, the artworks are often commissioned by local charity organisations or art centres. However, they are rarely painted on the walls of residential estates. The intended gift of the artwork is then only limited to the CQ with no residency populations and where no ethnonational attachment exists.

The street artists who reside across Beirut paint in the communities where they are from, but to paint in different areas because of the abundance of 'empty' canvases. The street artists' perceptions of various locations and communities sometimes deter them from planning their artwork there. Moreover, there is no street art within the city centre, due to the securitised spaces of the Lebanese government and private companies, and the noticeable absence of residential populations. Whereas in Belfast, many of the artworks exist within the city's centre, with the CQ as the highest concentration. The general limits of painting within ethnonational or neoliberal spaces in Beirut and Belfast brings attention to the notion of gifting artwork within locations where they are allowed while noting places they are not allowed. The nature of the gift, then, is not suitable for all to see, and dependent on the perceptions of those who visit or avoid certain areas of the city.

Generation

The Belfast street art community grew up during the Troubles and started painting in the streets in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s. Several artists had encountered each other upon invitation to a workshop on street art organised by FO1 in 2008. These in-group social networks began to develop over the years, where the artists were able to home in on their skills while learning from each other. Many of the artists had begun as graffiti writers and collaborated with local graffiti crews such as TMN before leaping to mural art. Their ateliers were close to each other, and within the North Street Arcade showing just how strong the desire to continue to exist as a The community at the time was quite small, with a handful going on to create the SPOOM collective of artists based in Belfast and Dublin and placing small scale interventions on North Street in Belfast during the late 2000s.

The Beirut street art community were mixed in terms of where they grew up and whether they grew up during or after the Civil War. Except for two street artists and two festival organisers, most of the community are of the post-conflict generation and do not remember the ravages of the conflict. While some of the artists do attempt to deal with the legacy of the conflict on contemporary social and political issues, such as brain drain, political representation and women's rights, they discuss them in terms of *atharat* or ruins of the war which permeate into everyday life. The topic of *atharat* influences the colour palette, subject of their content and in some instances, the technique of depicting their artwork onto the walls. As discussed, the notions of unresolved conflict very much exist within the psyche of the participants if not explicitly, in terms of their description of the canvases of their work. They describe the walls of their city as grey, darkened, decrepit and filled with dangerous low hanging electricity wires. Placing these works on the street is part of Art for Change's plan to get more people in Beirut interested in art

as well as to put Hamra in the international spotlight as an arts capital. "Growing up in Beirut, I didn't have this education of going to a gallery or visiting a museum," Tamerji said. "Now, when we are painting, small kids are passing by, and they're having this wow moment ... Maybe when the kids hold a brush it will spark something." In a similar narrative which spans the generation of artists seeing murals, Belfast artists also recall seeing political murals for the first time and having a similar reaction.

The Belfast street artists are closer to the street art traditions in England and the rest of Europe with one important distinction. Most of the artists from Belfast either grew up during or grew up with memories of hearing about the Troubles. While most of them are keen to remove themselves from exiting discourses of ethnonational ideologies and identities, one artist seeks to bridge the divides and does so by painting along the peace lines between the Falls Road and Shankhill. With this exception, the rest of the participants formed artists collectives where they collaborate with local organisations to create new artworks within communities which do not have a strong political presence. Similarly, most Beirut participants grew up during and after the end of the conflict. While they do have their memories or are reminded daily by the conflict's present-day manifestations, or *atharat*, other artists say that they inherited memories of conflict from their parents. Within the community of Beirut artists, the idea of generation exists in a constant state of tension between creating new memories and living with the aftermath of an unresolved conflict. The notion of gifting is a paradox whereby the enduring legacy of conflict and the memories of places influence their intent to paint. However, at the same time, it allows the artists to share their art and provoke cultural critique (Pabon, 2016). In other words, their artworks "expand aesthetic diversity of the writing on the wall" (Pabon, 2016, p. 79),

Funding

The notion of gifting free and ephemeral gifts needs to be problematised, further in terms of the funding received by the artists to create their work. The discussion of the artist's position and funding is a double-edged sword because, on the one hand, the lack of municipal financial support in Beirut or a government body to promote urban art interventions such as festivals and a lack of trust for sectarian politicians means that corporate or commercial sponsorship, regardless of the scepticism towards them, is the only viable means for the production of the artwork. Most of the artwork in Hamra, for example, comes with sponsorships from banks, charitable organisations or independent individuals who want to cash in on the popularity of street art in the city. In Mar Mikhael, the street artworks exist with less financial support from corporate sponsors, but from the pockets of the artists themselves. Indeed, all the artwork which comprise Ouzville is privately sponsored by Beirut FO2 and his Urban Dawn festival. The fear and mistrust are still present among the perspectives of the street art community, regardless of their best efforts to imagine new social arrangements. Whereas in Belfast, all artists except for Belfast SA7, receive funding for their artwork from the HTN street art festival, from corporate sponsors of the festival, or the Belfast City Council. This is not surprising given the low funding made available from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and other art funding bodies. While there are fellowship opportunities made available from the British Council, the artists do not know about it. In essence, while

the artists intend to gift their artwork, the production of their work require some form of funding, be it from corporate sponsorship which has an artwork theme in mind, or from charitable organisations. Another problem with the position of funding is related to the recipient of the artwork, the inhabitants. The second edge of the dilemma of funding is that while artists are being paid to paint in shantytowns like Ouzai, the local population are not benefitting from the influx of tourists or the monies being generated as a result. Fawaz (2017) recently remarked that the people of Ouzai would much rather have better sanitation and improved health conditions than art, which only encourages 'outsiders' to come. The fear in this regard is that with street art bettering derelict sites, they end up sanitising places like Ouzai and encourage the creative gentrification of sites, such as what was observed in Mar Mikhael, Monot and Gemmayzeh in East Beirut. Similarly, with little analysis of the visitors' perceptions of the CQ in Belfast, and of the street art locations, the intention to gift requires a reciprocal relationship with the inhabitants who attend the HTN festival, or who happen by the local pubs and businesses along North Street. A significant difference between the street art locations in Beirut and Belfast is that there are residents, across the socio-economic classes, living in Ouzai, Hamra and Mar Mikhael. The CQ is void of consistent and regular residents, outside the local businesses, day shoppers, night drinkers, and tourists staying in the hotels.

Gender

When performing a survey of the various street art in Beirut and Belfast, the question of who is behind the artwork reveals interesting changes in the gender makeup of the male-dominated world of street art. In a male-influenced craft, street art has more female representation in the milieu than male-dominated graffiti (Pabon, 2016). This is not to suggest that street art is more equitable or consists of more females than males, but to bring attention to the gendered nature of female representation in a masculine and male-centred world. Moreover, the street art viewed typically is assumed to be the work of a male who is a member of an urban, economically disenfranchised, ethnic minority, an assumption which makes women and girls invisible as participants (Pabon, 2016). The artworks of female artists challenge the conventional field of vision by demanding to be seen. Friz from Belfast and Diana Halabi from Beirut are two artists who create artwork for a purpose that is different from the proliferation of an induvial or the social recognition of their presence in the subculture. Instead, their oeuvres extend beyond the individual and the subcultural by broadcasting their commentary, they respond to their personal, political, social, and cultural environments. While all the women are established street artists in their own right, in a predominantly male influenced scene, they tend to pull their creative energies to deliver street art inspired by raising awareness to issues such as celebrating womanhood, but also sharing what it is like being a woman in a traditionally conservative society.

Out of the 18 artists interviewed for the study, six of the participants are female across both cities who focus their artistic energies on women's issues and youth development in Northern Ireland and Lebanon. While at first, their male counterparts might paint images of women, the question of the male gaze begins to bring insight to the 'why' we see increasingly female painters emerging. Moreover, growing up female in a male-dominated political and social culture is similar for artists who come

from different hemispheres. For example, they often incorporate the politics of Irish or Lebanese identity to counterbalance the existing images used by ethnonational groups around national identity and instead use images of Irish mythology, or strong female representations from Lebanese poetry and arts, to demonstrate alternative ideas. While the choice of those images is political, it brings light to the gendered narratives of image representation which has only been explored recently with the work on female graffiti writers by Pabon (2016). A difference between the way the different sexes represent women in street art brings attention to the male gaze and the production of images of women by male artists.

A lady in a red dress sitting, serenely, on a coloured bench is oblivious. Her only focus is her book, a copy of Hannah Arendt's "On Revolution," upon which her eyes are permanently fixed (see Figure 16). The lady is at the centre of an untitled work by local artist Diana Halabi, part of a new series of murals unveiled in October 2019, within this Cairo Street parking lot. Halabi remarked that she would love for every woman in Lebanon to reach to the point where she feels "really equal from the inside and is not only fighting for her rights" (Diana Halabi). The artist remarks on the rising demand for placing art in the public sphere because of the prevalence of street art. Her artwork and her intention mirror Hannah Arendt's penetrating observations on the modern world, based on a profound knowledge of the past.

Figure 16: "Untitled" by Diana Halabi, *Source*: Art of Change, 2019.

The nature of their gift is reflective of the street artist's intention, but also made up of their subjectivities explored in the previous section as an amalgamation of educational background, socio-economic class, residency, funding, and gender. The framing of the gift, in other words, is as complex and diverse as the locations where they place their work. Gifting relates to the interactional exchange between the artist and their audience, the people who live in the locations where street art exists, and those who venture to different areas such as the CQ over Culture Night or HTN, and in Beirut to Mar Mikhael for Collectif Kahraba's *Nehna Wil Amar Jiraan* or Ahla Fawda's street festival in Hamra. The perceptions of the artists to Ouzai before the production of Ouzville, mirrors the fear of the other, as explored by the artist's position of funding, which allowed them to venture into the shantytown. Further, the limitations of the concept of the gift is without a reception analysis from the people living and visiting these locations; we would not know whether it is having an impact on the ground and their perceptions of the locations in the divided city. The artist's positionality in terms of their educational background, socio-economic class, residency, generation, funding, and gender can have profound impacts on their gifting intent and practice. While the artists intent is to gift their art for all the inhabitants of their city, there are limitations to who will perceive it as such, and who will be able to see it, as

well, is that their artworks are within a handful of locations peppered in Beirut and within the city centre of Belfast. The lack of funding for the public art interventions in Beirut and Belfast prevents the artist from reaching a wider audience and limits their artworks to specific locations. The perception of the Ouzai or Dahiya as a conservative and backward neighbourhood, for example, or the limits of painting within ethnonational neighbourhoods in Belfast, prevent some of the artists from venturing and thus limiting the remit of their 'gift'. The artist's subjectivities can frame their understanding of their practice, on the one hand, and limit our impact upon their gifting intent and practice, on the other. This is based on their ability to cut across the social hierarchies present in perceptions of educational background, socio-economic class, residency, funding, and gender, and across the different geographies within their cities. Pabon (2016) reminds us that "street artist construct, deconstruct, and subvert the social mechanics of representative identity through their ephemeral artworks, - sometimes consciously, and sometimes not" (p. 79).

5.3.2. ii. The Intention is to Gift the City

The new cultural identities which proliferate with street art in Beirut and Belfast introduce insight into how the street artists themselves "find ways to engage publicly with the unjust city as it exists by asserting our equality, not just transferring its order" (Iveson, 2013, p. 945). This is their intention, but they do not have an impact on how people might view it. The paradox here is limited to the perceptions of the street art locations of both the street artists and their intended audience of 'safe' environments. While this discussion fits better in the following chapter, the small- 'p' political act of producing alternative narratives is also a social enterprise and should be viewed as such. The finding accommodates a discussion on how individual artists view their practice as a mode of self-expression and representative of their modern, secular, and cosmopolitan identity while noting the enduring perceptions of tribal and neoliberal identities as distinctly 'other', 'foreign' and distant. The paradox of which was explored in chapter three, where locations of street art are indeed sites of complex dynamics of ethnonationalism and neoliberal development and the conflict between them. As such, it is difficult to say that the street artists intention for gifting the city is indeed impacting the perceptions of inhabitants of the divided cities to visit their artwork. Chancing an encounter with their artworks depends on the perceptions of inhabitants towards Ouzai, Hamra, Mar Mikhael and the CQ. The mix of identities which the participants possess reflects the hybridity associated with different and divisive identities which are prevalent in post-conflict Beirut (Fregonese, 2012; Kassir, 1998) and Belfast (Graham and Nash, 2005; Rumelili and Todd, 2018). Through promoting diverse identities and the value of inter-communal relationships, non-sectarian movements provide valuable alternatives to the politics of division prevalent in divided societies (Nagle, 2013).

While it is premature to suggest that all artists contribute to these environments, the criticism lobbied against the community historically is that they are the "inconsequential products of 'arty-types' or 'inner-city creatives' or 'hipsters' (or 'slum-dwellers' or 'vandals') who are just playing their ascribed role in the existing urban order, or to commodify and reinscribe those practices within the existing city of inequality" (Iveson, 2013, p. 955). Street art, despite its ephemerality, is intrinsically

against superficiality and seeks to inscribe some authenticity on the cityscape. Culture-led regeneration does not always allow the artists to be part of the decision-making, and there is evidence to suggest the challenges street artists have with private interests over the co-option of their work. The research encourages the importance of not dismissing the small-scale experiments of street art, but instead, to examine their practices further, and in environments where they push up against the co-option of art and culture as a resource to lubricate economic development. The question of the artist's motivation to gift their artwork to the city reveals more about their intention, to generate an emotional and social relationship with the city, and less about the nature and reach of reciprocity (Osteen, 2002) which the "the primal concept in gift theory and one of its most vexed" (p.30).

One idea that relates to this notion of reciprocity is when the artists give their artwork unilaterally and do not want anything in return. While this may be the case for some of the artists, there is a degree of notoriety received from placing their artwork in the public environment, from other artists. In a second-order, they also receive adulation and followers on social media sites such as Facebook or Instagram. What kind of intent must the street artist have in order to make a gift of their artwork (Salib, 2015, p. 2301)? According to Salib (2015), gifting artwork requires "a more specific intent that picks out some individual or a class of future owners" (p. 2301). In other words, the artists do not merely gift their artwork to no one; they give it to someone (Salib, 2015). In works, like FGB's "Spread the Love", show a special connection between the artwork and the property on which it is placed. In this manner, the artists intend to "create social bonds and cohesion based on reciprocity, prestige, emotions, aesthetics and excitement" (Jacobson, 2017, p. 7) and their works are discussed in the prism of gifts to the public (Young, 2014). In other words, the intention of the artist's gift should be viewed in terms of "offer[ing] opportunities for meaningful human connection that market exchange cannot provide" (Fennell, 2002, p. 99). Although gifting artwork has a clear social utility for the artists, the potential for facilitating conversations forms the basis of the next section where we critically evaluate the notion of the 'gift' in the locations of street art in Beirut and Belfast. Moreover, what is known, from the data collected and analysed, is that leaving artwork in the public environment is a necessary emotional and social processes for the artists, alone, regardless of who gets to see them, or who has access to the sites of street art in Beirut and Belfast. Young (2014a) and Zukin (1995) both agree that while the economy of the gift is rare, Mauss (2002) argues that, unlike buying and selling in a market economy (where a personal acquaintance is immaterial), the giving of gifts tends to forge relationships between people in a community, producing reciprocal ties. In a gift economy, there is no concept of a value-based exchange, only reciprocity-based exchange.

That participants from Beirut cope with the hybridity of identities also reveals tensions between carving out places for modern, secular, cosmopolitan identities through their practice while contending with common and neoliberal conditions. They re-purpose spaces, not as a right to claim the city, but as individualistic attempts to carve out a place for their self-creation and experimentation with the different walled textures of their city and their nascent understanding of modernism. In a distinctly urban way, the social understanding of Beirut SA1 and Beirut SA7 of their practice brings their artwork closer to the modern discourses of their city and away from the tribal identities which persist to plague modern discourses. Beirut SA1 reveals the

hybridity of identities prevalent in post-conflict Beirut whereby street art allows them to "let people know that I am Lebanese" as a cultural identity. At the same time, they experience a tense relationship with the enduring legacy of "always been tribes" (Beirut SA1). In this regard, a right to the city approach does not explain their practice because they are not trying to claim the city for their artistic individualism. Instead, street art practices reflect the tensions the participants have with introducing a place for their cultural identity and why they carve out spaces to portray their modern and secular identities. Beirut SA7 and SA6 carve out a place for their identity based on their experiences with a patriarchal system and class struggle, respectively, which they perceive as outdated. For Beirut SA7, the visibility of male-dominated images in politics and society encourages them to carve out spaces for their forms of self-expression. Beirut SA7's ability to practice street art, however, seems more about the socio-economic class they belong, which ties into Beirut SA6's concern that many spaces in Beirut are accessible to those who can afford to be there. The artist decries that those changes in Lebanon's socio-economic classes will not occur unless most of the population begin to feel the same concerns as those from the lower working class. It is through their work that the artists can express themselves more visibly and creatively and, can comment on the need to change or challenge the tribal and neoliberal conditions.

The participants from Belfast understand their role closer to the European traditions of street art, where artists employ the material use of the walls and its varied textures as tools of self-representation and expression. Many of the participants do not engage with the legacies or remnants of the conflict. Unlike the young people in Mitchell and Kelly's study (2010), the placement of street art is not intended to challenge the securitisation of spaces in the CQ. However, instead, their practices bring attention to the limits of social interaction. The street art in Belfast seems to function as a temporary placeholder to beautify the derelict and transient surrounds awaiting regeneration. Except for Belfast SA7 who regularly paints with political mural artists and along the interface walls of West Belfast, the remaining artists distance themselves from the legacy of the political murals similar to how other inhabitants distance themselves from conflict legacy issues that 'are stuck in the past'.

A more in-depth search of the participants' comments reveals that street art enables "identity work." The practice of placing artistic interventions in the city allows the participant to define themselves as different from people living in the area. The personal or private practice of street art is dependent on the social and urban conditions of the "street." The implications for resisting identification are framed by the societal discourses in which street art is a culturally subversive activity, one which encourages the artists to impress and inscribe spaces with conversations about the nature of the divided city. This theme considers the broader discussions and assumptions at play and provides insight into the cultural identities of unauthorised groups of individuals engaged in the practice of street art. Instead, participants possess a social understanding of the legacies of dominant ideologies which reveals their motivations to attach non-sectarian and non-commercial identities to places. The participants' actions depict new social understandings and relationships based on gift giving and the enchantment of places of the city where artistic interventions function as temporary reminders of convivial attachments, which differ from ethnonational or neoliberal forms of interactions.

Moreover, street art uses the built environment as a canvas which often becomes "a palimpsest, in the sense that even the original is overwritten, traces of it remain, restoring private to the public and engaging hitherto passive passerby, galvanizing them into an active interaction" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 515). Street artists from Beirut and Belfast "acknowledge the sharing of public space in the common interest [and] aim to defend the collective ownership of space while striving for its meaningful restitution" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 516). Belfast SA1 and Belfast SA6 deliberately place their artwork into encouraging a sense of responsibility about the nature of dwindling public spaces in the CQ. Belfast SA1 suggests they hope inhabitants will begin to question the banality of everyday life by thinking about the placement of the artwork on the side of their walk to work. Belfast SA6's concerns with the nature of public space suggest that, unlike the political mural artists or sectarian groups who place their symbols without concern for the inhabitants, Belfast SA6 actively considers the needs of their co-inhabitants before placing their artwork in the 'middle of the road' or creating something that is going "to freak them out or make them more depressed" (Belfast SA6). Whereas in Beirut, the absence of spaces to discuss the status quo prompts Beirut SA9 to remark on the rapid changes of neighbourhoods at the hands of economic decline and the gentrification of traditional working-class neighbourhoods. The artist's responsibility for creating art seems to be about temporarily creating places where the nature of the space is more inclusive to the different populations living in the area. This "frame" suggests an alternative social and cultural relational process between public space, the street, and art.

The participants from Beirut and Belfast explore the tensions inherent between how individuals and collectives,

"situate themselves and negotiate their identities at the individual, local, regional, national, and even supra-national levels, where the same nominal identity is subject to very different degrees of opposition. Such differences across social levels may function as a way in which the oppositions are negotiated and transformed (Rumelili and Todd, 2018, p. 9).

The participant's artistic interventions introduce a place for non-sectarian and non-commercial identities into the urban environment, which reveals another way of engaging with post-conflict everyday life. Instead of actively changing or resisting the enduring legacy of tribal politics, they seek to establish a cultural identity outside of the established order (Riggle, 2010, Belfast FO1).

Moreover, the researcher perceives street artists within Young's definition of situational art as, actors who "create illicit work every day and thus demonstrate their agency and their ability to self-commission, to authorise their action" (Young, 2014, p. 145). The social process which they uncover sits in contention with the enduring legacy of tribal identities while negotiating a place for their modern and secular perspectives of the city based on temporarily engaging through their small-scale artistic interventions.

In explaining the significance of the social practice of gift giving, the intentions of the participants from Beirut and Belfast become clearer. Street artists seek to multiply their different imaginations of what kind of spaces they wish to live in, where artistic interventions enchant and beautify places. The finding also nuances the larger emancipatory project (Lefebvre, 1991) by promoting a perspective of gifting, rather than claiming a right, to participate in the 'right' of creating new social spaces of the city. The practitioners view their practice to challenge the usual messages of the divided city by promoting positive and progressive interactions between inhabitants through their artistic interventions. In gifting the city with their artwork, their practice re-introduces a place for the creative individual. Their transformation of the urban environment is also a *collective* exercise (Harvey, 2008) comprised of many individualistic interventions, which depicts a sense of convivial everydayness through collective participation. The inherent tensions of constructing conviviality through collaboration and collectivity do not diminish the individualistic aspect of street art. Instead, it is the formation of diverse actors whose cultural and artistic identities introduce new sets of relationships with the city.

The ability of street art communities to challenge the status quo of suspicion and fear of the other suggests an alternative interpretation of civic engagement based on convivial encounters with the divided city, witnessing the urban transformation by aesthetically marking imagined places and enhancing the urban drab which keeps communities separate and confined within their neighbourhoods. The city constitutes an imagined environment (Donald, 1992) which street art practices in Beirut and Belfast present as "the discourses, symbols, metaphors and fantasies" of diverse interactions, through "which we ascribe meaning to the modern experience of urban living" (p. 427). The combined forms of individual interactions of enchantment transform the urban environment as well as relationships between the artist and their audience. In embedding this art in everyday urban spaces, they hope to enhance social interactions in the post-conflict city, through nascent forms of group solidarity, which mirror their own and to suggest new convivial representations of living in post-conflict cities with social polarisation. In contributing to life-enhancing environments through their individualistic and collective practices, the participants construct new forms of creative everydayness through their work. In turn, another communicative aspect emerges whereby there is an attempt to combat or challenge existing violence-invoking or advertising images produced by existing ethnonational communities or commodity regimes, respectively.

Conviviality emerges through collaboration between street artists and festival organisers, which leads to a greater sense of group solidarity. The researcher argues that while no artist ever does their work on their own, they are "reliant, directly or indirectly, on a whole series of other people to do what they are doing" (Inglis, 2005, p. 17). Most participants' artistic processes reveal a shared sense of community, where the social and urban conditions of Beirut and Belfast, at the time of the creation of the artwork, mark a temporal collaborative encounter with the city. The researcher considered the factors that need to be considered to review the collaborative element behind the placement of the work, namely its,

"location; nature of location; ease of installing the work; ability to see the work, ability to see (if installing after darkness); manifold risks (injury from falling, arrest, assault); the vagaries of the weather; the nature of the surface; the presence of other pre-existing artworks; the nature of the property and the specific rules governing its ownership and use" (Young, 2016, p. 133).

The convivial everydayness which street artists register operates differently than the neoliberal and sectarian view and use of space. Unlike street art production in Beirut, the participants in Belfast mainly produce street art within the neoliberal city centre, where existing social interactions are mainly consumer-based, the design of the city centre facilitates communications and encounters with large-scale staging events such as Culture Night and the CQ Arts Festival to promote tourism. The diverse responses reveal the different processes which many participants employ for the creation of their artwork. Beirut SA4 learned the particularities of abseiling to install their artwork on a 30-storey building. Belfast SA5 learned to have friends serve as lookouts to evade police capture when he used to put up artwork in the city centre.

Street art can prompt a counter-narrative to the hegemonic operation of power and social control and can connect people to a broader sense of collective agency (Riggles, 2010). The street art communities in Beirut and Belfast build temporary communities with the placement of the work. In a break with traditional street art norms, the placement of the street artworks in Beirut is not to communicate with other artists. However, it serves as a brief reminder in the form of a gift to the local inhabitants, that another world is possible, outside of sectarianism and political uncertainty (Beirut SA9). However, from the discussions with the participants, it is more likely that the Beirut street art community is bound by a mutually-held desire for an attachment to their city, rather than an explicit wish to belong to a community who collectively produces artworks, such as their counterparts in Belfast. It is more likely that the social actions of placing artwork itself produce public space whereby inhabitants can form convivial relationships with the artwork or with each other, however temporarily. The main difference for the artist in Belfast is an expressed desire to encourage inhabitants to encounter the city's artistic side (Belfast SA9), while also distracting them from the sectarian images and murals they may have grown up with (Belfast SA7). The main similarity, of course, is the tool the participants use to encourage these forms of interactions, based on the gratuitous and ephemeral nature of street art.

In the context of divided societies, and a break from traditional norms and conventions of street art, the Beirut and Belfast participants connect their own human experience and cultural identity. In Belfast's neoliberal city centre, street artists imagine a landscape for art, which is temporary and subject to change by nature, city council cleaning or other artists who take over their walls. While in Beirut, the need to engage the inhabitants in discussions of lingering social conflict remains a stronger motivation for the participants to practise their craft, than to hone their skills and techniques. The discussion now examines the intentions of gifting the city with gratuitous art, which differs from the attempts to co-opt their art as part of gentrification.

5.3.2. iii. Street Artists Imagine Enchanted Spaces

While the artists intend to gift their artwork, what is not known is whether they think their artwork makes an impact on those who receive it. It is in their imagination of the way they want space to be – the way they see their city, and it is this desire which influences their intentions to place artwork and engage with ideas of civic spaces. The desire for street artists to gift the city's inhabitants with a life-enhancing environment (Crawford, 2011) contributes to their intentions for speaking to the nature of space they hope to see, one that is based on economies of giving. Street art is not a claim-making exercise, but instead reveals the tensions between the social and political practice of engaging with pervasive territorial ideologies of the ethnonational and the neoliberal which limit public interactions. The social understanding of the participants of street art indicates a desire to lift out the inhabitants from their everyday life and reinvigorate their interactions with pops of colour. The street artists help inhabitants overcome a sense of dissatisfaction with existing social arrangements by stimulating vitality and enjoyment and reminding the urban inhabitants that "the human spirit is alive here" (Smith, 2007, p. 14).

The street art community in Beirut and Belfast engage with the ephemeral city by leaving traces of their artistic engagement in a collaboration between their art, the inhabitants, and the urban environment itself. They do so by encouraging inhabitants to interact with the city as possibilities for creative experimentation. Beirut SA9 highlights the temporary nature of street art to imagine social interactions in an artistic sense and draw attention to "how our societies today are more and more killing the potential for imagination in each individual". In a similar outlook, Belfast SA2 considers street art to be a "focal point for conversation. There is something there for them to engage with." Belfast FO1 best summarises the motivations for the participants in Belfast who understand their practice to carve out spaces for "celebrating a cultural identity that does not have a place in the establishment and does not want a place in the establishment".

Street artists do not demarcate territory or make exclusive sites for a class or tranche of inhabitants. The artwork produces vibrant and colourful visual representations in the public sphere, not associated with consumerism or sectarianism. Through an act of generosity, the motivations of the street art community to place their artwork in the public sphere represents what Young (2014) suggests is a form of active participation where "art partakes in conversation with the city by making marks with it" (p. 26). The production of street art often exists because of partnerships with city businesses, charities, and other civil society actors. Their forms of visual and image techniques are considered heterogeneous or varied in their forms. However, the production of the image is more important than secondary commercial or informational aspects of its placement in the urban environment. For example, Belfast SA1 suggests that "if you put something up there, for that one second that someone glances at it, that might brighten up their day". While Beirut SA6 understands that instead of communicating through speech, they place visual images in the public environment because "most people are visual, and they relate more to visuals than to speech perhaps." The social actors who understand their agency through this active participation with the city, imagine the divided city as visual platforms, whereby placing their work in the public sphere remarks on the need for a public city in which there exists an aesthetically driven cityscape (Young, 2014a).

The main goal of street artists is to gift the city with a diverse array of images as more artists descend to the city streets and add their forms of aesthetic self-expression. They have an affective quality and produce a sensorial moment of interruption as a form of urban enchantment, revealing a social understanding of street art as one where the artist makes a gift of the artwork to the spectator, the neighbourhood and the city (Young, 2014). There are two facets of contemporary image-making in Beirut and Belfast, worth briefly noting: the propagandistic and the neoliberal.

The first facet of image-making deals with the significant differences between propagandistic art and street art as the functions of the practices, where the former divides, territorialises spaces and communicates messages to a specific community, and the latter unites, produces positive images and communicates with whoever has a chance encounter with it (ExtraMuralActivity, 2017). Street art practices in Belfast depart from the consequences of division which reduce the possibility for positive interethnic exchanges producing fertile ground for the emergence of "negative inter-group stereotypes" (Rolston, 2002, p. 639). Another important distinction concerns the content of the work, although not the focus point of the overall study. Whereas political murals in Belfast and sectarian graffiti and posters in Beirut contribute to the glorification of violence and remind the various ethnosectarian communities of the visual nature of their unresolved conflicts, the content of street art overwhelmingly rejects the male gaze and violent images in their work. While the Belfast-based participants do note the legacies of growing up among the murals, they appreciate the skill and labour taken to produce them while denouncing the content of the work. As such, the positive images of themes dealing with unity, connectedness and other diverse issues are more likely to be found as a selling point with the image-making regimes of neoliberal economies. Because street art engages in gratuitous forms of giving, the street artists' use of art as a gift sits in contrast with attempts to co-opt their art, as part of gentrification, and introduces the second facet of image-making.

Street art is also a social process which encourages interactions by challenging the usual messages of neoliberal consumption, by demonstrating how the street artists use of art as a gift contrasts with attempts to co-opt their art as part of gentrification in the post-conflict city. Likewise, Zukin (1995) reminds us that, "artists collaborate with urban redevelopments "as beneficiaries, both developers of an aesthetic mode of producing space and investors in a symbolic economy" (p. 23). City managers promote the championing of a service economy as it makes Beirut's and Belfast's economies competitive and helps them 'catch up' with the rest of the world. It also transforms existing social and economic structures through the production and re-presentation of culture (Zukin, 1995; 2010) in a neoliberal discourse. This implication presents consequences and concerns for social cohesion and national reconciliation within their deeply divided societies. Zukin (2010) warns that culture-led strategies often function as a last resource for struggling economies looking for a quick fix to encourage inward investment. Notwithstanding the abundant critiques of the neoliberal economic model, the immediate task at hand for the Northern Irish and Lebanese governments was to revive their capital cities and to repair the destruction of its economic and social structures through urban policies. The social and commercial life in the city centre is affected and restricted. Within years of the formal settlement

of their respective conflicts, large-scale development projects began to regenerate blighted and destroyed sections of their commercial centres, with Belfast opting for site-specific cultural regeneration of 'quarters' of its city (Grounds and Murtagh, 2015) and Beirut rebuilding a nearly destroyed quarter of its historic commercial hub (Makarem, 2014).

Additionally, it is also essential to further distinguish street art from the co-option of art and culture as resources for the expansion of neoliberal societies (Künkel and Mayer, 2012). The motivations of the participants indicate that their interventions, while temporary, engage in the act of giving which can be argued, is an alternative economy where the artwork is gifted to the inhabitants without the need for a commercial exchange in return. Street art's collaborative nature across differences involves a new group of practitioners rather than a pre-constituted grouping (Crawford, 2011). Street art engages in a range of social practices which are most closely related to the transactional nature produced in neoliberal urban economies and requires further attention. The convergence of culture and commerce, examined in chapter 3, looks at the use of culture as an expedient resource to advance market-led strategies for development. A co-option of culture regarding economic-related activities suggests that any related city council or municipality approved cultural event must serve to increase capital production (Künkel and Mayer, 2012). In other words, promoting the city economy must come first with extra and temporary benefits to the inhabitants. It also suggests that for cultural groups to receive state funding or permission, the groups must conform to the logic of what cultural programme can be implemented to increase revenue.

Moreover, neoliberal projects routinely use culture as a resource to promote tourism, events and experiences which aim at maximising profits, and securitising spaces with guarded shopping centres and making once public spaces, private. The advertisement billboards found on the sides of the built environment and the roads have also found clients within the street art world. In the absence of government-funded arts programmes and little to come by visual arts grants, street artists in Belfast and Belfast routinely work with corporations to develop branding, or to promote the urban cool of street art within the neoliberal spaces of shopping centres. There are many critics of the co-option of these street art practices within the community and among social and urban scholars, suggesting that street art is another commodity ready to be sold. Absence of arts resources and foundations suggests that other proprietary organisations will step in and fund the arts, in this case, property developers such as the ones leading Urban Dawn in Beirut who advocate for street art to be designated to sites of new builds. The transformation of the Ouzai suburb of Beirut, into an open-air art gallery called Ouzville has come in for considerable criticism (Fawaz, 2015), calling the project merely a facelift without responding to the grave social and economic problems of the neighbourhood. Ironically, in the last fifteen years, the gentrification and high rental prices in the CQ forced many of the creative class and industry to find cheaper spaces, in East Belfast. Whether the arts or culture assist in promoting the branding of Culture Quarters in Belfast, the observation is precise that arts and cultural organisations and programmes are indeed co-opted or used as a resource, as a temporary placeholder for the development of the symbolic economy. No one is immune to the logic of the symbolic economy (Zukin, 1995).

The following sub-section, 6.3.3, now considers comparable research on how urban subcultures encounter and experience the post-conflict cities. The existing literature on street art practices might not capture the street artists' lived experiences, and, as such, the data reveals gaps in current understandings of street art and identity formation, and suggest that it is a useful means to examine social processes in post-conflict cities. Street art in post-conflict cities is a powerful tool to understand the subaltern experiences of the street art community towards the transition of their cities.

5.3.3 The Experiences of Everyday Life in the Post-Conflict City

The phenomenon of street art, as this research argues, reveals the alternative ways in which inhabitants participate in imagining the production of social space within the divided city, each with their own social and urban conditions. The intention to gift artworks reveals that street art is a valuable means through which the participants' social orientation and values enable new forms of identity work, where the act of gift giving builds notions of collectivity and temporary communities and binds a nascent community to their city, in imagined ways. Instead of claiming a right to the city, the participants intend to gift their artwork which says a lot about where the participants position themselves as social actors, and how their motivations and their placemaking differ not only from the neoliberal and the ethnonational.

The following discussion compares the finding to similar ethnographies of non-sectarian communities conducted in Beirut and Belfast to demonstrate the significance of gift giving for social communities who engage with tribal environments which limit social interaction. Throughout, the sub-section will compare the two case studies to see how well the finding travels (Della Porta and Diani, 2006) in different contexts.

Beirut

Larkin (2010) found that a sense of alienation from the city centre influences the post-conflict generation youth population's perceptions toward downtown Beirut. However, the enduring legacy of tribal identities persists in oral narratives captured from the ethnographic study, which permeate into how the young interviewees frame their everyday life. The overall research uncovers a similar tension between the enduring importance of tribal identities and the formation of nascent cultural and artistic identities in Beirut. The sense of "Lebaneseness" is very much a hybrid identity married to religious affiliations, even the contemporary phenomenon of street art produces modern, secular, and "cosmopolitan" identities among the participants. In agreement with Larkin, most participants' responses serve as a barometer for the challenges of introducing places for individuals in tribal and neoliberal Beirut. The participants' responses also reveal that the street art community within Beirut possesses diverse opinions which are suggestive of a myriad of individualistic attempts for introducing places for artistic interventions in highly territorial societies. Street art is a useful tool to examine the tensions between individualistic notions of modernity, secularism and cosmopolitanism, and the enduring legacy of more collectivistic tribal identities. Indeed, while the interventions

are small in scale and temporary in not leaving permanent marks on the cityscape, they signal an incipient desire of gifting the local inhabitants with ephemeral representations and acts of gratuitous generosity.

As Larkin (2013) notes, little attention had been given to how the next generation of Lebanese envisions and encounters their reconstructed city, with "its remnants of war, sites of loss and transformed urban" (p. 95). The study agrees with Larkin's enquiry where street art reflects the everyday experiences of the participants who vie for "social integration and civic participation" (Larkin, 2010, p. 436). Furthermore, Larkin (2013) later explored how the memory of the conflict is passed down to the post-war generation and restricts the youth's ability to renegotiate Beirut as they have grown up living the divisions. While some show the desire to renegotiate familiar or unfamiliar locations, they bear the baggage of memory stemming from their co-ethnic predecessors (Larkin, 2013). The youth's attempts to reassess, subvert, or overcome the city's divisions for a more pluralistic environment often become, in and of themselves, a form of the re-enactment of an 'unresolved' past. Larkin (2013) argues that this development has created a new set of boundaries in the city negating and erasing many memories of that place while imposing new socio-economic and cultural restrictions. The research for this thesis suggests that street artists employ the memories of previous social interactions as a creative resource for the content of their work, by imagining convivial relationships with the city for the inhabitants to take notice.

The people of Lebanon have internalised decades of social conflict into different notions of Lebaneseness, where the "subjective frontiers move according to the spatial insertion of the individuals" and their changing status (Bromberger and Morel, 2001, p. 17). Distinct senses of Lebaneseness manifest themselves in numerous forms, from the social to the sectarian, as well as the political, and which may or may not intersect. The participants contend that while the enduring legacy of political tribalism exists, they do not seek to challenge or change it. Instead, they temporarily make places for their cultural and artistic identities, but not as reactions to political events, as Saleh (2011) describes. Instead, street artists place their artwork to diversify the visual landscape by contributing new images to the public space and by enchanting the local population in the act of gift giving. In other words, street art is not oppositional, but it is different and additional and is an attempt at broadening social and cultural horizons. Street art, in this sense, offers a set of resources for non-tribal and non-neoliberal inhabitants to coalesce, however briefly, and are less confrontational.

While the overall finding agrees with the Saleh's description that the positions of street artists in Beirut are indeed "technical and artistic", they diversify the space of images which circulate along with the ethnonational and neoliberal images rather than act as a response "to political events in Lebanon and the region" (Saleh, 2011, p. 85). The generalisable posit which Saleh (2011) also makes is that the street art community reaction is not "divided […] patriotic, localised and colloquial" (p. 85) which does not correspond with the motivations of the participants. There are divisions based on style, technique, conventions, and norms, where some participants attach their cultural identity with the notion of patriotism. However, the researcher diverges from Saleh (2011), in that, the street art communities' artistic divisions do not prevent convivial interactions with the audience

and the city. The finding more readily agrees with Salti's (2008) description that street art in Beirut consists of "individual, non-political expressions" (p. 8).

Moreover, the participants' hybrid identities are linked to and maintained by the vividness of memories of war or post-memory experience (Larkin, 2010). The participants use the memory of previous social interactions as their motivation to engage in street art practices. The participants' perceptions of their roles and actions allow them "to construct different stories which contradict and provide an antidote to normative discourses" of the ethnonational or the capitalist city writ large (Nagle, 2009, p. 327). Nagle (2018) discusses how the "space of Belfast City centre provides an arena for non-sectarian movements to perform memory work that generates alternatives to divisive politics of ethnic remembrance and neoliberal amnesia" (p. 16). The various actions and experiences of street artists and festival organisers in post-conflict cities are informative about altering power relations inscribed in diverse social institutions and cultural practices (Reed, 2005).

Belfast

Nagle (2016) studied the stage of Belfast as the site whereby communities engage in the form of a right to the city. Nagle (2016) examined three acts of collective participation, May Day, Gay Pride, and the Beat Carnival in Belfast's public sphere which sought to "transcend the ethnonational cleavage" by refusing to "conform to lineal trajectories of singular ethnonational narratives of community belonging to underpin space in Belfast" (p. 335; p. 345). Apart from merely becoming visible in a constricted space, Nagle (2016) suggests that the groups make use of tactics such as street performances of parading and carnival or festival as "salient memories rooted in specific locations and alternative identities embedded in ritualistic performances" (p. 342). While Nagle refers to social movements who engage in non-traditional forms of civic engagement, the social practice of street art parallels the point in this research that street art in Belfast embeds cultural and artistic identities as part of their artistic interventions. Their practices denote a temporary act of intervention which represents memories from pre-existing social interactions. Applying the small-scale interventions of street art practices as alternative readings, then, occasions a similarity with communities who engage in alternative performances as "a particularly potent way of demarcating public space because of traditional unionist and national commemorative parading traditions [which] often attain a sectarian, territorial functioning" (Nagle, 2016, p. 342).

In a sense, unlike Beirut, Belfast had seen levels of communal segregation from as early as the nineteenth century (Connolly, 2012) which affected every field within its society, from separate education and homogeneous neighbourhoods to duplications of services and housing. The attachment which the participants construct with the city remark on new social practices which Riggle (2010) suggests is a common trait and theme among street artists which aims to make the city "more habitable, inviting and friendly" (p. 256). The participants from Beirut and Belfast register an alternative way of forming temporary gathering sites based on convivial interactions of cultural and artistic identities. The finding also corresponds with Nagle (2017),

where the social understanding of the participants generates new understandings of post-conflict societal engagement (Nagle, 2017).

The participants of the research experience the social and urban transformation witnessed by other subcultures in Beirut and Belfast, and which act as their motivations to engage in their practices. The notion of gifting, in this regard, is but one of many attempts at contributing to a life-enhancing environment of post-conflict cities, where the street art communities and other movements engage in non-traditional forms of civic interactions for "a transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Purcell, 2002, p. 102).

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The chapter presented, analysed, and discussed the motivation of street artists in Beirut and Belfast towards an understanding of their practice in the context of division. The participants do not practise a right to the city by claiming space, as such. Moreover, the intention behind their practices is not an individual claim to appropriate or to participate in the production of urban spaces in Beirut and Belfast. Instead, the participants understand their artistic interventions as small, albeit significant attempts to gift a sense of identity to a place, through an act of generosity which is different from commodified logic of neoliberalism or the propagandistic logic of ethnonational territorialism. The research study uncovers the practices of contributing to the "oeuvre" of the city through an alternative economy of gifting where street art practitioners intend to enhance the everydayness of post-conflict inhabitants. The ephemerality of the intervention does not discount its significance, but instead, demonstrates new forms of social interactions based on enchantment and gift giving which temporarily blur the lines of seemingly permanent social arrangements of the divided city.

While the researcher's initial inquiry into the study of street artists in post-conflict cities, sought to examine how they navigate and negotiate the re-purposing of space in highly territorialised environments, the majority of street artists in both cities chose not to paint in sectarian spaces. The study discovered that their practices are not motivated by a perceived 'right to the city', but by a desire to engage directly with inhabitants of their city, and to contribute to the creative and collective production of life-enhancing environments through their artwork besides, and unlike street art practices in Berlin, where street artists engage in active resistance against property developers and anti-establishment (Henke, 2014), the street artist in societies with deep social divisions engage with repairing the social fabric by remarking on the social conditions of those divisions. While not a cohesive social movement, but a fluid community which resists categorisation into distinct social groups, street artists are social actors. They imagine the city through visual platforms and suggest that the cultural capital of the street art community in Beirut and Belfast is their ability to re-purpose space.

Instead, street art is a temporary means to gift inhabitants of their city with artworks, where their intentions are based on a social understanding and need for beautifying the urban environment and for participating in the broader social project of civic engagement in post-conflict cities. In doing so, the street artists suggest alternative forms of interaction with their audience and the city, in a very different way than the ethnonational and neoliberal, and one which is based on creating temporary, gratuitous, and non-commercial interactions with the inhabitants of the city regardless of their political, ethnonational or socio-economic background.

The experiences with the production of street art in divided societies might teach us about how subcultures transform the routine everydayness in divided societies, by challenging the social impact of more pervasive ideologies. The small-scale artistic interventions in fragmented and divided societies produce temporary communities during street art festivals which animate, enchant, and beautify urban spaces while leaving their artwork in the urban environment in the act of gift giving. The research study argues that by uncovering the intentions of art and culture practices in divided societies, scholars can begin to understand the motivations of subcultures who artistically intervene to create new social spaces. The analysis of social spaces through street art gives insight into the usefulness of framing street art practices as producing temporary and alternative 'economies' of gifting, which engages both in the right to participate in the oeuvre of the city and by further problematising existing uses of other 'street art' practices by the neoliberal economies.

As discussed in chapters two and three of the thesis, the socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts in the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast offer a rich body of similarities and differences through which to examine the intentions and motivations of the developing street art community of their engagement. The term street art is a portmanteau of a spatial designation of 'street' in the urban space and of an 'artistic' and visual intervention which creates ephemeral impressions on the passer-by, and a relational process with the social dimensions of perceptions by temporarily 'invading' existing negotiations with tribal and neoliberal space. The following discussion briefly explores the commonalities and differences between Beirut and Belfast.

Street art in Beirut and Belfast introduces a place for the individual where the enduring legacy of tribal identities persists in influencing the formation of their new cultural identities. Street artists represent the hybridity of modern, secular, and cosmopolitan identities in overlapping and hybrid tension with sectarian and neoliberal influences. They are reflective of the diversity and differences in Beirut and Belfast.

The street art communities in Beirut and Belfast share perspectives in their intention to gift the citizens of their cities with their artwork. The street art communities possess similar perspectives of their practice regarding styles, techniques, norms, and conventions, but also concerning the need for new cultural identities. The similarities between the two cities are because street art also re-introduces a place for the individual in predominantly neoliberal urban environments where the need for self-reliance responds to the lack of accommodation for non-neoliberal identities. Whereas the city of Belfast does offer arts and

cultural grants to the HTN, many funds for the street art community come from fundraising initiatives of the festival organisers, their friends or from their own pockets. Their respective arts and cultural sectors in major cities actively develop street art in Dubai (Petti, 2007), as opposed to emergence as a mode of socio-spatial resistance as a right to the city, such as Berlin Kreuzberg, Miami Wynwood Park or Lisbon (Henke, 2014). The communities both share similar perspectives about creating art for social commentary on the objectification of women and the symbolic use of violence.

Like other urban subcultures, the different social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds and affiliation of the street art communities indicate an alternative form of group attachment, based on a shared preference to express their social perspectives through art. Moreover, the participants from Beirut and Belfast exhibit a common concern or responsibility to,

> "reaffirm bonds and relations of trust associated with culturally, socially and linguistically familiar media and long-standing community attachments. As well, face-to-face communication in the street supports momentary and selective togetherness. It reassures urban dwellers that unfamiliar others are not threatening and do not necessarily present new risks" (Georgiou, 2017, p. 275).

The practices of the community allude to collaborative power of street art to reflect on "the ongoing creation and transformation of place through the elaborately intertwined work of people" and the "life-giving creativity and transformation that is constantly proliferating from the intricate association and interaction between" street artists, festival organisers and their city (Given, 2013, p. 3).

While the participants from Beirut and Belfast collectively agree on the need for places for artistic individuals and discuss the need for self-creation, experimentation, self-reliance, and artistic and financial independence, their responses reveal another tense relationship which distinguishes their experiences from each other. The similarities in their creative process occasion a discussion on the main differences about the nature of the social space which they hope to redefine through gifting. The participants from Beirut note the lack of adequate public spaces for dialogue on issues of national reconciliation and social cohesion. The majority of responses indicate that their practices are about lending their artwork to spark such discussions, from the legacies of collective amnesia and memories of the conflict (Larkin, 2010) to the corruption which takes place within Lebanese governance on environmental issues and the preservation of the built environment. The Beirut artists remark on the rapid changes of their neighbourhoods because of economic decline and the gentrification of traditional working-class communities. In the meantime, and until those discussions can take place in Beirut, the participants create temporary opportunities for civic engagement through the creation of their work. In Belfast, the participants want to encourage a sense of responsibility about the nature of dwindling public spaces in the CQ, and within the neighbourhoods where they live. While they remark on the gentrification of the CQ, they do not associate their art with that process. The participants from Belfast reveal that the enduring legacies of tribal identities in the neoliberal city centre motivate them, noting the importance of establishing non-

sectarian identities within those spaces. They also comment on the disappearing nature of spaces, which they memorialise in the meantime to accommodate non-political forms of social engagement and commentary.

The following chapter will discuss the placemaking practices of these temporary urban communities by examining how the street art communities of Beirut and Belfast read and use spaces. The second finding suggests that the placemaking practices of these communities are pragmatic and rule-based, democratic, transient, and transformative, comprise a small-'p' political act which not only differs from the ethnonational and the neoliberal but offers an imaginative glimpse into what kind of space they hope to achieve. In doing so, the perceptions of street artists help identify new possibilities for taken for granted spaces of the city, while re-purposing alienated spaces. These myriads of urban practices reveal the ability of small-scale and temporary communities to reveal non-traditional mechanisms of civic engagement.

Chapter 6 – The Small- 'p' Politics of Street Art: Engaging with Space

6.1 Introduction

The research presents the political dimension of street art placemaking practices in urban environments as s a small-p political act (Kennedy et al., 2017), which designates new spaces for engagement within the divided city, however fleeting those placemaking practices may be. In the street art worlds of Beirut and Belfast, the themes to emerge, inform the participants' underlying engagement with pragmatic and rule-based, transformative, democratic and transient forms of placemaking, which "culminate in a particular form of everyday action" of small-'p' politics (Kennedy et al., 2017, p. 1). Additionally, how street artists understand the need for creative spaces in Beirut and Belfast involves an iterative co-production process "through which social and political negotiations result in strategic sharing of place" (Pierce et al., 2011, p. 61). Regardless of the degree to which the street art communities understand their socio-spatial actions to be socially constructed or agentic, the emerging themes from the iterative process of data analysis reveal their roles in temporarily re-purposing urban spaces with their artistic interventions. Their distinct forms of placemaking also encourage a reading of the city as "a site for counter forms of existence, rather than focusing their political activity on distant utopias" (Begg, 2011, p. 63). This chapter presents the nascent culture of social actors who deliberately use strategies of street art and festivals to create spatial and temporal distances from traditional political practices and trace different zones of civic engagement. The presentation of findings discusses the contents, styles, or techniques of placing their images, in response to how they adjust their practices to create new zones for interactions amid the social realities of the divided cities of Beirut and Belfast.

The first part of this chapter, in section 6.2, analyses the development of three themes dealing with how participants understand their placemaking practices in the modern, post-conflict city. Throughout the presentation, visual analysis of select images links the concepts uncovered to the artworks, the artists, and the surveyed locations of street art. The first theme, in sub-section 6.2.1, examines the pragmatic and rule-based outlook of placing street art within the tribal spaces of Beirut and neoliberal spaces of Belfast. The decision-making processes which influence the creative process of the street art community reveal a collaborative understanding of the design and use of space which informs the second theme on the democratic nature of street art forms of placemaking, in sub-section 6.2.2. i. The third theme, in sub-section 6.2.2. ii., then reveals the transient nature of the places which the street art community sees transforming around it. Throughout the first part section, the analysis compares the transcribed data quotes and field note observations of the participants from Beirut and Belfast. The analysis will reveal the significance of what was said, and the critical points of data that help uncover the spatial process, or understanding, of the interviewee at work. The investigation also reveals a process of experimentation, from the ground up, where communities of

street artists seek out spaces to aesthetically transform, amid the broken political fabric. While they do not appropriate spaces in the act of purposeful claims to spaces, their practices represent a small, but significant, attempt to imagine possibilities for urban experimentation. The second part of this chapter, in section 6.3, discusses the overall finding of how the street art communities understand the nature of space in their divided cities. The first sub-section, 6.3.1, discusses the significance of the overall finding by describing the creative process for transforming taken-for-granted places through their artwork. Secondly, in sub-section 6.3.2, the spatial engagement of street art is then compared to similar research on how urban subcultures and communities encounter and experience the same ethnonational and neoliberal space in Beirut and Belfast, and how the placemaking practices of street art communities aid in the re-defining of the use of urban spaces. The value of comparing the experiences from Beirut and Belfast brings further insight into how non-traditional forms of political engagement help to attach new meanings and symbols to places within the divided cities. Finally, sub-section 6.3.3 will offer explanations of street art within neoliberal spaces, where culture is used as a resource to lubricate urban economic development and acts against the interpreted motivations and actions of the research participants.

6.2 Uncovering the Placemaking Practices of Street Art

The production of space, as noted by Lefebvre (1991), is a contested process where various power structures engage in "the shaping and reshaping of urban spaces as a product of complex power-geometries, as different actors seek to determine who and what the city is for" (Iveson, 2013, p. 942). The possibility for imagining the post-conflict city, through street art, each with their distinct social and spatial realities, illustrates a set of contemporary urban practices. The following themes culminate in the overall finding of street art as small- 'p' political actions including a sense of identifying poor environments which restrict their use, and a sense of identifying new possibilities for alienated spaces of the city (Crawford, 2011). In doing so, the placement of their artistic interventions demonstrates the tense relationships between the limits and directives of the ethnonational and neoliberal placemaking regimes, and the desire of non-traditional communities to carve out new zones or spaces for interactions.

The themes to emerge from the first round of data and thematic analysis examine how developing communities frame their spatial practices and how they practise those spaces, with direct negotiations (Pierce et al., 2011) within existing spatial demarcations of ethnonational and neoliberal territories. The ethnonational and neoliberal urban organise space into spheres of influence and demarcate territories which are made distinctive by their occupants (Soja, 1971). The placemaking process of the street art community presents opportunities and access to places based on non-sectarian and non-commercial social relations. The study of street art is a useful frame to explore non-traditional political engagement practices which seek to temporarily re-purpose space in non-confrontational ways (Kennedy et al., 2018). The placement of street art in divided cities, then, generates new ways of thinking about the co-production of space and the practice of (i) pragmatic and rule-based, (ii) democratic, (iii) transient and transformative forms of placemaking.

6.2.1 Theme 1: Street Artists Adjust Practices to Reveal Pragmatic and Rule-Based Forms of Placemaking

Interviewees discussed their attitudes towards the spatial realities of the places of their artistic interventions and what they think they are achieving with the placement of their work. Their responses reflect on a series of themes such as "being in opposition to something", or "creating something new" where they consider their work as a bringing attention to a "critical awareness" of increasingly new forms of socio-economic divisions along with ongoing socio-political fragmentation. Street artists respect the "hierarchy of street artists" in normal circumstances where they see the artwork of experienced and recognised artists (Young, 2014a, 2014b). It is true, however, that the norms and conventions of street art allow for a reading of space which searches for pre-existing symbols and signs of other artists and graffiti writers (Riggles, 2010; Young, 2014b). The production of street art in urban environments with long histories of ethnonational tension informs the existing pragmatic and rule-based forms of placemaking which the participants use, to further adjust their practices, so as not to jar with sectarian identities. In doing so, they note what is possible and how to achieve the placement of their work, through negotiations with local inhabitants, or by avoiding tribal areas altogether. Moreover, given the field notes from the participant observation during the Belfast 2016 and 2017 Hit the North street art festivals (HTN), these insights might signify a conscious awareness of situational social and urban conditions, and factor into their spatial approach.

Beirut

According to Entrikin (2003), people affectively and cognitively experience the actual material dimensions of place. Everyday life in Beirut is based on "social bonds of cohesion found in tribal, kinship and communitarian solidarities" (Larkin, 2010, p. 42), inherent in its sectarian society. The pervasiveness of sectarianism means that it takes on a geopolitical dimension "and despite corporate efforts to recast Beirut as a stable, unified place, the city remains a site of struggle over the meanings of Lebanese identity and nationhood" (Nagel, 2002, p. 717). The participants' sense of identifying places to intervene in the urban environment artistically represents a set of rules and a spatial understanding of spaces, which are available for repurposing (Lefebvre, 1991).

The following participant speaks to the precautions they take. Beirut SA5 prefers not to paint in places which are perceived by others to be dangerous for their safety. In response to a question about experiences with other artists who paint in precarious sectarian areas, Beirut SA5 recalled,

"We have traces of political parties that have - I have a friend who was starting a piece, I don't know where exactly – but he got stopped by a political party at night, and he was super scared. He did not know that this wall belonged to a specific area, region or religion or political party. He got really scared; people proceeded to harass him."

The reality of painting in Beirut is that while areas might not be marked explicitly with sectarian graffiti or political posters, the street art community can run into trouble with local groups or gatekeepers who monitor the use of spaces for "troublemakers". The artists pass on information to each other about areas to avoid and, in turn, forms their pragmatic approach to painting in Beirut. Beirut SA5 sheds light on the areas which are challenging to paint because of the ethnonational control of neighbourhoods, each with their enforcers. In a practice shared among the participants, and even in Belfast, Beirut SA5 asks locals about the informal rules of the area, where they will not encounter a political party or gatekeepers who monitor the streets. In instances where a parking lot or a building owner deems the street artist's sketches appropriate for the area, the artist has been given the approval and safety for them to proceed with their work. However, in instances where those informal negotiations do not take place, most of the participants shared first-hand experiences which also inform pragmatic precautions, as they encountered unwanted attention by curious inhabitants. Beirut SA5 notes that,

"If someone comes by me, it's always something like this "S*hu ya hilwe? Shu aam taamli*? [hey sweetie, what are you doing?]" I'll respond with "I am beautifying Lebanon's streets." I always say that in case he tells me that I am not allowed. They always ask me "*inti min wen*?" [where are you from?] and this is when, you're like ok, "hold on, buddy. What are you trying to say? What is happening? This is not meant to be part of the conversation." If I am alone, the conversation evolves, and I am like ok, I am taking my shit and I am leaving. You need to take your precautions. Now I don't go alone at night because of that one incident."

The stream of consciousness, which the artist shared, reveals two lines of questioning relating to their sectarian affiliation and whether they received permission to paint. While the artist reveals how they divert concerns away from the permissions to paint, the experience of harassment informs their pragmatism to avoid areas or unwanted attention from men, on the one hand, and the series of questions about her sectarian affiliation, on the other. Beirut SA5 reveals a pragmatic view commonly held among the participants in Beirut that they have to be alert to gatekeepers who monitor the streets of tribal communities, but that the most effective way of dealing with those people is first to accept that "you need to take your precautions." The artist then shifts to what is possible, where they make the personal decision to leave when the conversation with the local inhabitants gets too dangerous. The decisions about the placements of street art "according to the norms of the street" (Young, 2014b, p. 122) brings insight to show how Beirut SA5 adjust their practices to avoid confrontation with sectarian gatekeepers. In this instance, the artist assessed the aesthetics of the space to determine whether they should place their image. When confronted with a gatekeeper of the space, the artist packed up their belongings and left.

Figure 17: "Burj Al Hawa" by Potato Nose, *Source*: Culturetrip.com, 2018.

Potato NOSE brings attention to the limitations of specific spaces in the Central Beirut District (CBD) for social interactions while communicating the reasons behind its exclusion. The artist installed over 400 brightly coloured curtains to transform a concrete shell of an infamous building known locally as the "sniper's nest" (see Figure 17). The artist brought inspiration from areas in Beirut that have life, specifically the suburbs of Beirut, and "not the empty downtown". The colourful curtains found on the balconies of many Beiruti homes inspired Potato NOSE to add them to the 400 blackened windows of the building. The name for his piece, the tower of wind, came initially from hanging the curtains from one façade on one windy day. When the wind blew, the curtains seemed as though it was 'dancing' with the wind, as though it was breathing. The installation gave life to the building and the surrounding, and suddenly it became alive because of all the colours and all the movements in the wind. Potato NOSE describes his piece as a response to what he says as a monster standing in the middle of the city with 400 black windows "spreading evil all over Beirut". For Potato NOSE, and man of the Lebanese street artists interviewed, there is a rejection of the sense of being 'stuck' in the current political climate. The artist, like many others, cannot leave Lebanon for various financial and familial reasons, and these decided to transform his situation by livening up the tower building. Potato NOSE drew inspiration from the miniature scale of Burj Al Murr that famed Lebanese artist, Marwan Reshmaoui created for the Tate Modern in London. The smaller scale of the building struck something inside the artist who felt larger and more durable than the memories associated with the building. The location of the artwork is also important, given its centrality to Solidere and near the Green Line. The artist charges Solidere as an empty place for the people from the Gulf countries to enjoy, and the building site itself is associated with bad memories from the Civil War. The artist decided to give it a positive spin and breathe life to it in a way.

A significant contention among many of the participants from Beirut, during the interview, is the forgetfulness of the war, which features strongly behind their intentions. Beirut SA4 echoes the famous charge against Solidere of "sanitising of the traumatic past" (Larkin, 2010, p. 436) through the urban regeneration of the city centre. The participant frames the installation of their artwork as to mirror the macro-scale social reality of the "contradictory impulses of remembering and forgetting, erasure and recovery" (Larkin, 2010, p. 415) in the post-conflict city. When Solidere removed the artwork from the side of an infamous

building site at the western edge of Downtown Beirut, the popular reaction to the removal of Beirut SA4's installation achieved the goal of the installation which was to give a sense of new possibilities for the taken for granted space. It was noted that,

> "suddenly, the installation's goal which was to give a dead part of Beirut … a different dimension, and it began to be activism art because a lot of people hate Solidere as a result of what it did to the downtown area and showing that the Lebanese no longer have a place there – you know *Souk al Barghout* was for all and now only those who have money can go – so if you see the comments or the way the media wrote about it – how Solidere removed the curtains – they were all with me. I was delighted and was able to be vindicated from this dimension" (Beirut SA4).

Beirut FO2 refers to the rules of highly securitised spaces in the area which prohibits other forms of unauthorised interventions. The participant demonstrates an acute awareness of cultural traditions of an area which guides the placement of artwork. They note, "on a long-term basis, it will hit negatively, respecting spaces, traditions, it is a community that lives there with the artwork and has to appreciate the artwork that you are designing in that location. If I had drawn Sabah in underwear, I would have been in much trouble. Whereas in Paris, or Achrafieh, it would not be a problem" (Beirut FO2).

In some cases, some participants directly engage with sectarian affiliated political blocs through their participation in civic society - sponsored protests such as YouStink (Nagle, 2016) and the recent protests in Beirut over political representation, while others distance themselves entirely, but contend with the legacies of social division around the perceived role of women in society. While other participants, such as Beirut FO2 and Beirut FO1, avoid the sectarian blocs entirely. Beirut FO2 categorises Solidere as "a place that does not have a soul", they also note similar limitations for social interaction. Similarly, Beirut FO2 reveals a set of directives which prevent a sense of interactions, but which are different from Beirut SA4's socio-economic assertion. For Beirut FO2, the "different streets, different rules" refers to the directives of state and private security guards which prevent unauthorised individuals from intervening artistically. The presence of security guards protecting a soulless place presents a big challenge for them, to imagine the area with art as they associate the lack of art in places as soulless. Beirut FO2 notes,

> "… if you tell me Downtown, Downtown does not have a soul, so how can you express art in a place that does not have a soul? That is a big challenge because there is no soul, and because it is an exciting challenge. You cannot do graffiti in downtown. Different streets, different rules, there should not be complete freedom. There should be designated art places."

Beirut FO2 determines that while the Downtown's absence of street art is an "exciting challenge", it is a poor environment for the achievement of community and thus conviviality, for them to place street art due to the guarded spaces by the prevalence of private and state security monitoring the area.

The street artists recognise the possibility for imagining the city centre but note the directives of "different streets, different rules" of Solidere, which restrict their use of that space. Moreover, their practices reveal a sense of identifying the pragmatic and rule-based approaches to spaces which limits social interactions. Like Lefebvre's (1991) optimism about the realities for transforming urban environments, Belfast's street art is an experimental re-purposing of spaces within the neoliberal urban environment of the Cathedral Quarter (CQ) and draws out the precariousness of post-conflict civic engagements.

Belfast

The significant difference between the two cities is that most of the street art observed and placed in Belfast exists within the neoliberal city centre's CQ. While the participants understand the need to re-purpose space for their own cultural identity to form (see chapter 6), they similarly recognise with their Beirut counterparts, how specific spaces offer a reduced number of opportunities for human interaction. The following participant discusses the rules-based forms of conventions and norms which are upheld within the street art community. While not explicitly remarking on which spaces prevent community or social life in public space, they make a distinction between art by well-known and established artists and art painted on the contentious Peace Walls, which prevent interaction between ethnonational communities. However, Belfast FO1 remarks on two rules for the placement of artwork in Belfast: transience and aesthetically pleasing art, which follows the norms and conventions of street art:

"Equally, should there be designated areas? No, there are designated areas, they are not legal, there are alleyways, locations where people rock up and paint. If you are into that sort of thing, then you know – like the Peace Wall... you can go and paint the peace wall. They exist, but … part of what I do is get... there to almost two kinds of artwork; you have the artwork that is Connor Harrington, MTO, SMUG piece you expect them to last because no wee hood is going to go at them even if they wanted. They can get to the bottom of it, but that is about the height of it, and then you have street-level pieces that are just kind of – just as good – but it is harder to make an argument – they are more transient. It is like this" (Belfast FO1).

The participant reveals the complex problems of designated areas where artists should or can paint in by suggesting that there is no easy solution to the question. Belfast FO1 believes that while there is no easy solution to where artists should paint, be it in alleyways or the Peace Wall, they shift their argument to what is possible – making the distinction between famous artists like Connor Harrington, MTO and SMUG and other street-level pieces which are just as good.

The artists also keep an eye out for potential urban dangers, such as loose power lines from electricity poles, which might endanger the life of the artist while on the job. In addition to searching for walls that are visible to other artists and inhabitants, the participants search for walls which will not expose them to risks of electrocution by loose power lines, while they scale a

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wall, electricity poles, and street furniture to create their work. During the festivals, the researcher and the artist would search for visible 'danger lines' which might put the artist's life at risk. In this instance, the researcher would survey the wall, and surrounding street furnishing, to see whether there are visible power lines, electricity boxes, open sewer maintenance holes or faulty ladders and equipment. The precautions add to the pragmatic approach while keeping a lookout for any unwanted attention, such as was the example with Beirut's SA5's concern of personal safety from marauding ethnonational gatekeepers and finding places which are not dangerous for their safety. In response to whether there is a specific environment where they would not paint, the artist says, "I have never turned down a wall that I have been offered or been able to paint. I have painted. I suppose if it is dangerous – if power lines were running behind it, but there would not be a specific area that I would not paint" (Belfast SA8).

However, some artists do paint along the peace lines in Belfast, which have historically separated two ethnonational communities, the loyalist Shankill neighbourhood from the Republican Falls Road neighbourhood. While other artists pragmatically avoid these areas, classically trained fine artist Paul Doran, gravitates to these highly charged areas, to invite the public for further expression. The image depicted two babies laughing entitled "Chuckle Babies" which allows the locals to find their inner voice and express themselves freely through art. The performance piece sees a collaboration with the prolific political mural artist, Mark Ervine, to paint a mural of two babies chuckling (see Figure 18, below) close to the lower gates of the Peace Line on Northumberland Street. The mural was then covered in French publicity posters from the 1970s which represent the socio-political and cultural perspective of the 20th Century's western society and covering the 12 years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The artists invited locals from both sides of the divide, and visitors to sign and leave messages on the artwork, on the 22nd of September 2017, which coincided with the International Day of Peace. Afterwards, the artists ripped the posters off the walls and used them in the second act of the exhibition.

Figure 18: "Chuckle Babies!" by Paul Doran and Mark Ervine, *Source*: **ExtraMuralActivity, 2019.**

Street artists "create illicit work every day and thus demonstrate their agency and their ability to self-commission, to authorise their own actions" (Young, 2014, p. 145). Within the context of the divided city, the participants' pragmatic, and rule-based forms of placemaking allow them to adjust their practices while also noting places which offer a poor environment for the placement of their work. In Beirut, most of the participants do not paint within the neoliberal heart of Beirut's city centre precisely because of the limits of social interaction presented by the gatekeepers of security guards and the ghostly (Nagle, 2017) appearance of a soulless city. In Belfast, however, the community paints in places within the city centre, which are considered transient because of the ever-changing redevelopment of the CQ. Moreover, the pragmatic and rule-based orientation of small-'p' politics "is exemplified by an individualised approach to change and a focus on problems that can be solved" (Kennedy et al., 2017, p 14). The desire by the participants to solve a problem by adjusting their practices influences what is possible for the street art community: "a concern for broader issues and active engagement in civic life exist alongside a sentiment that doing *something* is better than doing nothing" (Kennedy et al., 2017, p. 15, emphasis in original). The politics of inhabiting the city which the micro-scale intervention of street art engages with "is something that is declared and verified in practice" (Iveson, 2013, p. 945). The street art thus makes its own space not as a partitioned, permitted, semi-tolerated activity, but as a new practise which is informed by seeking out spaces whereby informal rule-making with local inhabitants and pragmatic precautions for personal safety is taken into consideration to guide their practices.

Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city interacts with the intentions of the street art community in Beirut, and in Belfast, concerning "reframing the arena of decision-making in cities" (Lefebvre, 1996, 158) towards a "radical form of enfranchisement based on nothing more than the inhabitance of the city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 945). Furthermore, while the street art communities do not directly contest or oppose the authorities of neoliberal spaces in Beirut and Belfast, their experimentations with the city demonstrate a micro-scale empowerment of those who inhabit the city to engage in an urban politics (Purcell, 2002). At the heart of the right to the city is a small- 'p' politics which emerges out of diverse artistic practices and is not an automatic or resultant process (Iveson, 2013). Instead, the process of placing street art within divided cities reveals a set of pragmatic rules, informal negotiations with local inhabitants, businesses and, at times, sectarian blocs, to achieve the street art communities' goals of aesthetically contributing to the cityscape. However, as Iveson (2013) notes, "there is no guarantee that a range of practices which appropriate urban spaces for unintended uses will pose a political challenge to the authority of the authorities" (Iveson, 2013, p. 945). The participants from Beirut and Belfast demonstrate an understanding that their practices do not have an immediate or long-lasting impact on challenging the ethnonational or the neoliberal authorities which maintain spaces. Instead, their practices do something entirely different and uncover the second theme of the finding. They bring attention to the participatory design and use of space through the process of producing their artwork. While many artists view city walls as canvases to design their art pieces, the social and urban polarisation exacerbated by tribal and neoliberal politics influence the communities' placemaking strategies. Instead of directly confronting or opposing, the street art community brings attention to places which refuse the single appropriation of spaces and highlights the diverse opinions using colours and images. They re-purpose spaces with the knowledge that they temporarily, design and use space by creating a very different type of zone, where the forms of placemaking are democratic, transient and transformative, and where "politics is not made up of power relationships [rather] it is made up of relationships between worlds" (Rancière, 2006, p. 42). The vision of space for street artists promotes a sense of active and collective forms of participation in the production of temporary spaces for civic engagement, whereby their transformative and transient forms of placemaking reveal these sites as temporary meeting grounds for social worlds which may not meet otherwise.

6.2.2 Theme 2: Street Art Interventions Comment on the Nature of Space

In addition to the pragmatic rules of placing street art in the divided cities, the responses of the street art community also reveal a set of decision-making processes in the way they consume spaces, for how long, and to what end. The democratic, transient and transformative forms of making places for their artwork creates an entirely different type of urban practices which not only differ from the ethnonational and neoliberal, but also are more conducive to forming relationships between social worlds within the city. However, what is not known is the kind of space they are creating within the space of the existing city. The sites where street art exists in the divided cities is a declaration of an urban experiment which carves out spaces for a new power dynamic based on democratic notions of participation in the design, and use of space (Rancière, 2006; Lefebvre, 1996). Lefebvre advances the notion of democracy to the right to the city framework, whereby "the use and shape [of] the city should belong to

the people on the basis of their inhabitance in the city" (Iveson, 2012, p. 946). In placing street art in areas which are derelict or darkened, the micro-scale urban practices of street art connect the practices with inscribing a notion that inhabitance gives a "part for those who have no part" in the making of the city, echoing Park's (1967) assertion that inhabitants have no voice in the design and use of the city.

6.2.2. i. Democratic Form of Placemaking

The perceived democratic nature of street art advances a notion that the ability to participate in the production of cultural spaces and to inscribe temporary relationships is a practice "for those who have no part in cities" (Iveson, 2013, p. 946). The general ease of finding a spray can, learning from other street artists, and searching for a street art community allows for the creation of multitudes of public encounters across space and time. The participants note how certain spaces offer poor environments for the achievement of a sense of active and collective participation in the use and design of a place. The production of street art is a collaborative feat, frequently between the artists themselves about skills, techniques, and colour choices. At other times, the artists are briefly interrupted by inhabitants who are curious about what is happening in their neighbourhoods. During the Belfast 2016 and 2017 HTN, the researcher observed with great interest the interactions between the artists and members of the public. The observations contributed to enhancing relationships the artists had with each other, and with the curious members of the public who are fascinated by their work, and, at times, compare it with that of Banksy (Belfast SA1), or act as lookouts for police or unwanted attention (Beirut SA5). The perception gleaned from most literature on graffiti, and urban street art suggests that while some artists do, indeed, prefer to paint in neighbourhoods with limited foot traffic, the prevalent feeling among the participants is that they intentionally want to provide collaborative opportunities for the public to engage with what they are creating. It was common for an artist to discuss with members of the public the piece which they wanted to create. On separate occasions, the researcher observed similar interactions where the artist and a passer-by were examining the intended sketch for the artwork, where they both agreed on its colour scheme and overall style. The artists always carried a sketchpad or a portfolio of their previous pieces with them, to share with interested inhabitants. In other instances, passers-by would help prop up a ladder for the artist or ward off unwanted attention from overzealous photographers and reporters who were distracting the artists from their work. The desire to engage collectively in the ownership of public space helped construct this theme, as also did the political elements which might prevent the production of the piece altogether. In Beirut, the artists oppose the neoliberal use of space and the emphasis on private property controlled by single individuals and gatekeepers, whereas, in Belfast, the artists perceive the placement of their work as possessing forms of civic engagement. In the process of vying for non-tribal and non-neoliberal spaces to place their artwork, the decision for many street art practitioners is informed by a set of "rights and duties that refuses both the excesses of the appropriation of public space by single individuals and the lack of conscious consumption" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521).

Beirut SA9 festivals bring together Lebanese from diverse backgrounds, who would not have met in other ways in which spaces can be used. They reveal their intentions for conceiving of performance spaces which are accessible in terms of quality cultural events and,

> "our neighbours would question and are a bit curious so since they don't have the habit of going to a theatre and attend our performances when we would invite them, we decided to offer a performance in the staircase. It created a first evening where we recognised in the audience. We had an interesting mix of people that would have never gathered otherwise, from different origins and contexts and communities and social backgrounds. As it was for free, in a public space, with a performance that was at the same time, quality and accessible on a popular level" (Beirut SA9).

The artist perceives that their work allows those who would not have met; otherwise, a sense of attachment and belonging to urban space. Street art for Beirut SA9 facilitates the notion that street art in itself is a means to raise questions about consuming "public space as a collective good" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521) while encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to share in the responsibility and planning for aesthetic moments.

Over a three-day festival, Collectif Kahraba's *Nehna wel Amar wel Jiran* (Us, the moon and the neighbours) is a collection of theatrical, dance, puppetry, storytelling and murals performances where residents and neighbours are asked to host and plan the events (see Figure 19). According to the artists, the free of charge event's rationale was to share moments through live art and to demonstrate how creating a place for encounter and living together through art and culture can be two ingredients for human dignity. In this sense, the presence of street

Figure 19: "Nehna wel Amar wel Jiran" by Collectif Kahraba, *Source: Collectif Kahraba, 2006.*

art alone does not guarantee street democracy, but instead, marks the location or the site where inhabitants and artists engage in creating cultural spaces.

Beirut FO2 similarly brings students from diverse schools in Beirut to convert the plethora of newspaper kiosks on Hamra Street into "beautiful artwork and to put the names of their schools on them." The project ended abruptly because the owner of the kiosks turned out to be the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, who, according to Beirut FO2, is complacent with corrupting the Lebanese political system with the enduring legacy of tribal politics. The participant acknowledges that the gatekeeper prevents the different consumption of space, away from its intended use, and prevents the project from going further (Beirut FO2). The participants refused to work on the project citing their desire to challenge the excessive appropriation of public space by Berri, and other gatekeepers, while demonstrating other uses for space. The participant's pragmatic outlook of tribal politics enabled a swift adjustment to the project to avoid interacting with tribal politics while ensuring the collective participation from non-political communities could continue to design and use Hamra Street's other street furniture and features.

In their efforts not to confront tribal politics, the street art communities in Beirut brought insight into the trialectic process of conceptions, perceptions and lived experiences of the community with their interaction of space. Here, Iveson (2013) argues that "the conceptions or 'representations' of the proper uses of urban spaces that are authored by urban authorities are powerful but not all-powerful" (p. 944) and draws attention to their political orientation. Beirut FO2 intended to demonstrate to the school children how they can participate in giving back to the community. Beirut FO2 understands the need to establish a set of duties which citizens can possess in promoting active and collective participation based on a vision of "turning Hamra into a beautiful cultural street" (Beirut FO2). They turn a garbage collection area, for example, into a green space, adding flowerpots to lamp posts, adding signs on sidewalk ramps for accessibility by wheelchairs and changing the colour of zebra crossings to accommodate the visually impaired inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In these instances, they bring attention to the different uses of spaces while challenging the ways inhabitants consume these spaces and how their intended design and use can be altered.

Belfast

The perceived democratic nature of street art also means that anyone can pick up a spray can and create work. Belfast SA8 discusses this point by suggesting that their work is "a rebellious art form, it is unfiltered and [there] is no one standing over you and telling you how to do it. It is a kind of thing that if you do it for yourself, and if other people like it then great" (Belfast SA8). The right to the city, "is founded on an urban politics of inhabitance is suggestive of how a democratic urban politics might emerge from appropriations of the city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 947). The participants in Belfast, like in Beirut, co-produce a democratic politics of the city by declaring a shared inhabitance of the city where the norms and conventions of street art inform a desire to create artistic spaces but not to transgress or destroy existing historical, cultural or sites of artistic interest. Belfast FO1 notes,

"The idea that artists – only little fucking dickheads think that artists should be able to paint wherever they want to. Should they able to paint on the front of the city hall or other listed buildings? Of course, they should not. Should they be able

to put their shitty tag on a business that does not want their tag on their shutter? That is an almost integral part of street art subculture – tagging shutters - I still think that this is probably the biggest negative thing that comes back to me all the time... when people do that. It is not people I work with so much."

The active and collective participation which artists project, constitute a relationship between the space in which they find themselves, the artwork they create and the range of effects flowing from the artwork, through space, and encompassing both the spectator and the city itself. Most of the participants find ways to engage publicly with the city by engaging in discussions about asserting their sense of authority to participate equally in the production of civic spaces (Lefebvre, 1996).

Figure 20: "Eden Vale" by E'OK, *Source*: **Omar El Masri, 2018.**

For E'OK, a co-founder of the arts collective and space, Vault Arts Studios, the foray into street art is relatively new, and as a result of wanting to try something new, with the encouragement of her co-founder, Adam Turkington, Hit The North cofounder. The piece entitled 'Eden Vale' captures the story of a family picnic that ended up with soaking in a waterfall (see Figure 20). This painting speaks of family bonds and fleeting moments that should be cherished. Moreover, consist of her remembered journeys through the landscape, drawing narratives from personal and cultural memory. Her approach to painting is to mirror her practices within her gallery and locate them on new surfaces, such as the wall shown in the image above. While she draws on an experimental medium, her intuitive approach influences the production of her mural art spontaneously and draws upon her unconscious as the source. Like her other work, her murals are "active engagement with the idea of landscape, a journey with no departure or arrival point" (E'OK). The artist is inspired by how humans form an understanding of their surroundings, how the chaos of the real world can turn into an abstract expression where personal experience overflow. In so doing, the artist's memory is skewed by whatever is meaningful, remaining a living morphing atlas, encoding time, space, and experience. Important places are emphasised, and distances between them can shrink by the elemental experience.

Similarly, the following quote represents Belfast SA6's vision of civic space where street art makes marks with the city to connect civic space over the commercial spaces. Belfast SA6 notes that,

"I see space as civic space, as in civic areas for people to go and hang out. I don't mean pubs and shops, is the city accessible for the people living in it. If I am walking in Ballyhackamore, it does my head in that there is nowhere I can sit my kids down – there is no green space, there are no benches, the city is bad at providing civic space, civic amenities. Then we have CS Lewis Square eventually and that has changed East Belfast – families have somewhere to go now. That's how I see everything – through the guise of civic space – how people interact with the city. I love going to the galleries but for me it is about the network of how people are using the space around them. I don't really see shops."

Although an area might appear forgotten or in decline, there may still be ways of using it that could provide social and cultural value for residents or passers-by. As an example, street artists in Belfast's HTN often select abandoned buildings, derelict spaces and buildings awaiting demolition for the placement of their work. Where inhabitants might assume that an area is struggling or unsafe, or in decline, street artists see aesthetically appealing textures and ready-made surfaces for open-air art galleries. Such liminal places have led to them being characterised as non-places (Augé, 1995) which offer a reduced number of opportunities for human interaction taken to constitute a community or social life in a public space.

The democratic form of placemaking, which street artists in Beirut and Belfast engage with, is to diversify the participation of the use and design of space. Unlike social movements which purposefully appropriate spaces for their uses, street art communities introduce inhabitants to practical ways of community service through the beautification of spaces. The similarities of experiences in Beirut and Belfast in this regard are that they refuse the appropriation of public space by single individuals and gatekeepers while drawing attention to the community service of showing how space can be used outside its intended use. Street art engages with the city by taking the concept of the public sphere, quite literally. As members of the public, "they [have] as much right to use public space as a medium for communication" (Iveson, 2013, p. 949) as the existing power authorities of the ethnonational and the neoliberal urban which restrict their use of spaces. Street art engages in experimenting with the possibilities of having a more open city (Young, 2014a) where their practices are a small but engaging way of contributing to existing with discussions on non-traditional urban politics. While they do not outrightly challenge or oppose existing power structures, the practices of street art communities in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast stage and politicise alternative forms of co-producing a democratic society. Their practices fit into the broader political context of the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996) and empower inhabitants to participate in urban politics. Unlike the existing power structures of neoliberal urban and the ethnonational, street art practices for their purposes do not necessarily constitute a "democratic urban politics", but they do "have the potential to establish democratic rights to the city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 954). The finding reveals the schema of the participants' spatial engagement which guides the placement of their artistic interventions. As Burnham (2010) argues, the dialogical form of street art can be read as a "new street-level language of design",

"if we were to consider the dialogue of design in the same way we do the linguistic development of a culture's language, then just as street-level vernacular has innovated and filled in the gaps of a culture's formal language, the street has as

well developed its own vernacular to fill the gaps in the city's formal design. This new street-level language of design – non-commissioned, non-invited interventions in the urban landscape – transform the fixed landscape of the city into a platform for a design catalogue." (Burnham, 2010, p. 137).

6.2.2. ii. The Transient and Transformative Forms of Placemaking

The do-it-yourself attitudes of the participants evolve from the notion that street art is not permanent, nor do its creators intend for it to be idle. There is a sense among the participants of two directives which influence the placement of their work and is directly linked to the way they understand the transient nature of their craft and thus, how they transform places. While acknowledging how street artists' practices remark on the transience and transformative forms of placemaking, their interconnections are analysed together in the interest of clarity. The location of street art marks the passage of time and the subsequent transition of neighbourhoods and non-places into places (Augé, 1995). Over a few days, the visual landscape of the wall can be transformed by vibrant colours, shapes, and textures, adding new meaning to a place. The creativity of transforming taken-for-granted places, such as backways, derelict storefronts, and abandoned buildings, produces a temporary art gallery for inhabitants and diversifies the image of a forgotten space, into a socially vital place. As street art is temporary, with no conventions within the community to enforce its destruction or its preservation, sometimes the urban changes, environmental erosion or low-level vandalism or censorship dictate how long a piece of art remains on the walls. While there is no immediate link between the idea of social protest, opposition or active anti-establishment, street art is a community response to the transient changes of everyday life in Beirut and Belfast.

Beirut

Street art is becoming part of the city's urban transformation (Arab et al., 2016) since not only does the city transform its use but also the artists transform the cityscape with new visuals and uses. For many participants in Beirut and Belfast, the intention behind placing artwork within the urban environment is to transform the aesthetics of an area. Street artists witness the alienation of urban life brought on by increasing communalisation, boundary-making and territorialisation in deeply divided societies. The participants respond to the transformation of the urban environment by placing their temporary interventions:

Figure 21:Ouzville Before and After, *Source*: **Saide Tawk, 2017.**
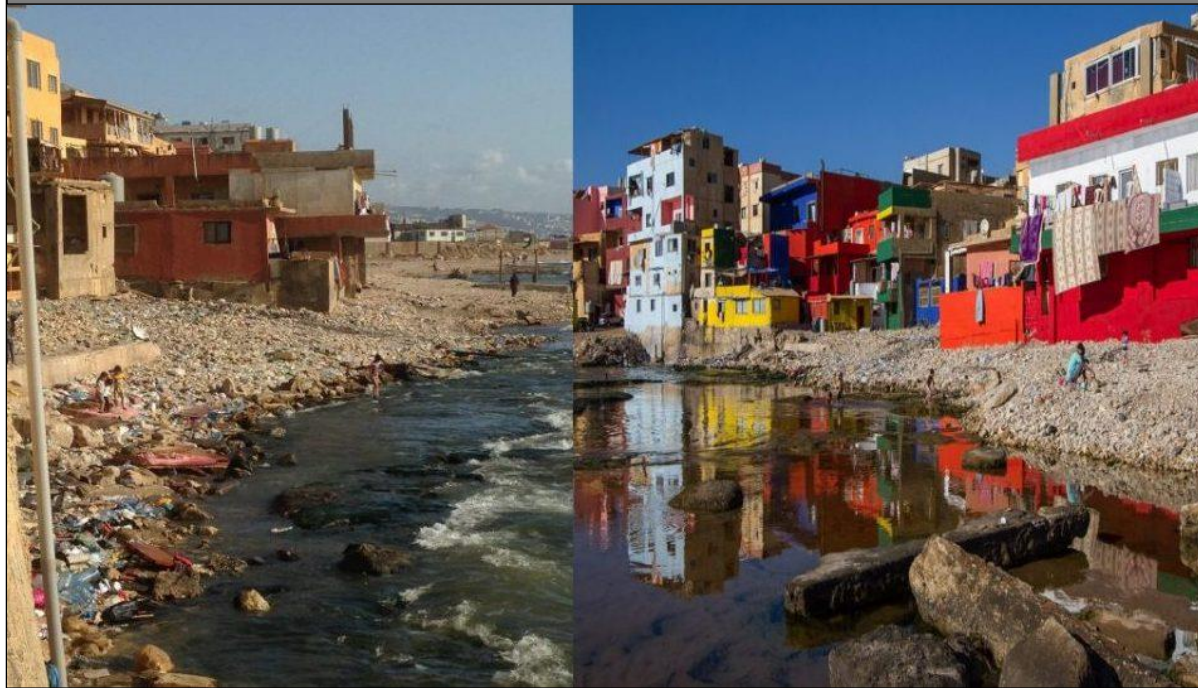
"There is a shared acceptance that one's actions may not have a radically transformative impact, but such action involves a commitment to wield one's (minimal) power nonetheless, developing experiences that are pleasurable, relational and sustainable" (Kennedy et al., 2017, p. 18).

The participants prefer not to paint in the neoliberal city centre. Beirut FO1 chose Ouzai to stage a street art festival that changed the landscape of the shantytown into an open-air art gallery known locally as Ouzville (see Figure 21). They seek out places which have not been affected by state directives for redevelopment and invite artists from Lebanon and abroad to intervene artistically. The forgotten neighbourhood is historically associated with being a working-class area for the adjacent Golf Club of Lebanon, which in the last few decades became better known as a famous and darkened shantytown. Interestingly, most participants shared similar perceptions before being asked by Beirut FO2 to participate in re-animating the neighbourhood. In the previous theme construction, Beirut FO2 formed a relationship to the city centre by drawing attention to the limits of interaction based on the quality of soullessness which prevents non-neoliberal communities from repurposing spaces. Likewise, Beirut FO1 constructs their relationship to space based on the absence of art, where they trace new zones for social interactions. In doing so, both participants challenge the perceptions of specific areas by noting whether they are poor environments for interactions. Beirut FO1 notes,

> "you can have a conversation, you can fix everything through art, and that is when I decided, let us use this art and urban planning. Exactly and to create a message to tell people to that, it has been 42 years that Ouzai has been neglected. After 42 years, people still live, eat, pray etc. in a shit hole. How is that acceptable? Why have they been left like that?" (Beirut FO1).

Interestingly, the absence of street art from the Ouzai poses an opportunity for Beirut FO1 who looks for neglected spaces and walls in Beirut to paint on. Indeed, spaces which offer poor environments or "a shit hole" for the local inhabitants are on the radar for Beirut FO1. Upon inviting Beirut SA7 and Beirut SA3 to visit Ouzai, the social associations with space as being rejected and run by a small mafia, changed. Beirut SA7 notes,

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"I showed them what I did, and Beirut FO1 told me why I don't go down and paint in Ouzai, and we will give you the paint. So, I went there. I was the second Lebanese to go there. The artists would not accept to go there because they have a vision of Ouzai... you know this, right? That it is a slum, it is a very... small mafia there and the *zaaran* [thugs, criminals] here. Of course, I went there, and it was cool. It is only families living there, and people in need. I am sure there is stuff behind those walls, but basically, it was beautiful."

Figure 22: "I protect" by Marie Joe Ayoub, *Source*: Sayde Tawk, 2019.

The artist reflects on the reception of her artwork, "I Protect" (see Figure 22) in Ouzville and her perceptions of the area. Mary-Joe Ayoub worked with local children to create a big, colourful artwork that sought to reclaim Beirut landmarks long associated with Lebanon's civil war. Ayoub said she disregarded warnings the area was dangerous but confessed that although she lived "15 minutes away" she "didn't expect we could really communicate with people here. But, we're very similar as we have the same aspirations for Lebanon, and we all seek happiness at the end of the day". In the artwork, Ayoub draws icons of a woman holding an old house that bears the traditional architecture of old Beirut houses to stand for the protection of households from the world of destruction. In the character's blue hair, the artist paints the words "I protect" inscribed in Arabic. Ayoub chose the site in an old building that was being torn down to make her point clearer while remarking on the transient nature of her work, and the destruction of architectural heritage. At one point, the artist recalls, there were rocks all around the painted woman, holding on tight to the house, and people took pictures of it and shared it on social media, which shows that they relate to the pain and frustration we feel upon witnessing the destruction of the architectural heritage. Ayoub's last project in Jiyeh, southern Lebanon, also bears a woman who seems to be protecting elements of nature and reflects the traditional identity of the area.

While Beirut SA3 sees,

"I have been part of Ouzville. I did one mural there, and I think what is happening there... *ooff*. It is life-changing for people around. This is one of the areas that was most rejected in Lebanon, one of the most deprived areas. The idea of making it livelier, more colourful has given people hope. Especially like it was not just working on walls, but giving people workshops about cleanliness, about keeping the sea clean, the streets clean. It was a social intervention in a way, and I think, that while painting alone is not enough, even... regardless of anything that has to do with my art, I am active in a place where [there is] social stuff. It is not enough [to paint and not deal with the real social issues at hand]."

The following artist, Beirut SA4, remarks on the physical boundaries which split Beirut along the Green Line and still serve as a metaphor for separation between Muslim West and Christian East Beirut. Many artists place their work on one side of a wall in their attempt to communicate with the inhabitant, or simply to aesthetically transform the site. Beirut SA4 finds walls of bullet-ridden buildings and envelops all four sides with paint. In the context of the following passage, the artist chose to paint the sides of the building which "faced" the metaphorical and urban divisions of West and East Beirut. The artist notes,

"Yeah. In terms of the location, this is on the Green Line, Bourj al Murr is also on the Green Line so whenever I work, I keep in mind – because during the war, we were divided between *Sharqiyah* [East Beirut] and *Gharbiyeh* [West Beirut] – until today, we may not say those terms, but we are divided. An example of this was the Bourj Al Murr, I could have chosen to create an installation from one side of the building and not do the other one, the façade that peers on the highway is the important one. If I wanted to think about who would be able to see it. The installation of Bourj Al Murr was completed on both sides because I could not just do *Sharqiyah* [East Beirut], I also had to do the *Gharbiyeh*. As one direction is towards Achrafieh and the other towards Hamra. I was very mindful of this idea so both sides had colours" (Beirut SA4).

The participant also highlights the disparities between the memory of spaces and the Civil War and what they think they achieve with the placement of their work. The infamous Green Line not only divided the city with a series of checkpoints which guarded ethnonational territory, but it also serves today as a mental diversion for inhabitants to delineate spaces of their city. Khalaf (2006) noted that the road to and from Damascus, Syria brought workers, travellers, tourists, and locals to a vibrant and sociable downtown Beirut. Upon walking around Solidere, those memories of social cohesion have been replaced with the reality of spatial divisions. The artist reflected on this division between the past and present and created their work to bridge the divides. In doing so, Beirut SA4 intended to highlight the possibilities of transforming the built environment through the installation. Brand and Fregonese (2012) discuss the controversies in Lebanon, noting that the "memory of the Civil War has also prevented shared historiography of that period" (p. 62). Consequently, this has led many artists to discuss the "absence of a unified

understanding of the city" (Fawaz and Pellen, 2003, p. 1) to which they hope to draw attention through the transformation of these remnants of the conflict.

The participants actively seek out spots in which they can create their interaction and improve the area for those who live in it. The participants noted that they received immense pleasure from discovering a suitable location, and more contextually, Ouzai offered a better fit for their artwork and the local inhabitants within the neighbourhood. Once Beirut FO1 found the location, they planned the placement of their work, monitoring the site for pedestrian traffic, security guards, CCTV, accessibility, and so on. While their memories and frustrations frequently influence the content or the inspiration for their artistic interventions with social issues, artists often take inspiration from the history of the location, in consultation with the public sphere. At times, the artwork is created on a grander scale, such as Ouzville and Ahla Fawda (AF), with the help of collectives of artists who tackle more extensive projects and resort to learning new skills such as abseiling, drone operation and, in some instances, negotiations with private security guards or police officers for access to building off-limits sites. Beyond the pragmatics of site selection, artists seek locations that will assist in having an impact on the city. The participants enjoy "the serendipity of discovering a good spot" (Young, 2014, p. 91).

Beirut SA6 sees street art as creating a temporary public space where something temporary can spark the imagination and disrupt mundane urban activity. Street art gives meaning to space and, for the artist, activates the potential for inhabitants to notice that "space exists and can stop you/interrupt you" (Beirut SA6). Interestingly, it is these interruptions which refer to the notion of transience to spaces, which have not been used or are what they refer to as "residues." The artist says,

"The spaces that are not available but have potential. There are many spaces which have potential – abandoned houses, streets which do not receive the importance they deserve, like Hamra, should be given more public space. The next stuff is looking into that – how to reactivate spaces through architecture and my spaces. I don't want to limit myself in terms of art or architecture. I don't see architecture as just constructing a building. I see it as a responsibility. You have tools which enable you to think about things within this environment" (Beirut SA6).

Likewise, Beirut SA7 remarks on the residues of war which exist in the bullet-holed buildings where the artist chooses to place their artwork. They suggest that while the urban environment has changed since the ending of the Civil War, there are still urban traces of the conflict about which the artist wants to remind the inhabitants. In choosing these locations, the artist wants to "shine a light on them so people can come to terms with the fact that this is not normal, and after 30 years, it's time to move on" (Beirut SA7).

Beirut SA8 remarked on the concept of time in a recent paste-up they created to mimic the death announcements which are plastered on the walls of the recent deceased's neighbourhood. The artwork, entitled "Body List", comprised of a series of

A4 sized paste-ups which consisted of the names of people found in the local newspaper's obituary section. The black inked text on each white paste-up had the following text: "I once was named a dictator, then they named me a girl; I ran into a name that lost its body last night, it seemed like a memory that is not mine, it introduced itself through a paper, human waste." While other participants in Beirut link the notion of transience to space, Beirut SA8 attaches the notion of transience to human life, and how the walls of their artwork become temporary places which bring meaning to the existence of very personal moments in an anonymous person's life. They note,

> "After all the necessary information of who the person was, who he has left behind, where the donations should go to, there is the marketing line of the person or company that printed this obituary – which I find, as well, so interesting that you are not finding any other document to print on or to promote your coffin shop but on obituary papers. So, you're marketing is on the obituary paper for free. People dying so you have marketing. I find it interesting, there is time, there is space there is relationships and there is religion and so you see an abbreviation of a person's life … the only sentence of grief is that the person might have died young or left loved ones behind. Its copy pastes and you always find it on the streets" (Beirut SA8).

The artist remarks on the micro-level nature of time as it relates to human life, and in doing so, comments on the transient nature of places which these death announcements seem to animate. The artwork itself depicts the private and intimate details of an anonymous persona in the public space as a form of condensing someone's life. The artwork is a sombre reminder of the people that an inhabitant will never meet again, in an environment where posters describe concerts, exhibitions and film festivals in a future of more lively meetings.

Belfast

Whereas in Belfast, within the neoliberal city centre, street art transforms derelict areas within the Cathedral and Smithfield-Union Quarters. In some cases, "without [the] consultation or planning permission" (Belfast FO1) and with a knowledge that it is "broadly illegal" (Belfast FO1). However, street art is designed to be "on edge" and transient in nature, and as such, street art readily transforms places. In response to the urban regeneration of the CQ, Belfast FO1 and many of the participants strongly indicate that what they "are doing is mean-time use, what we are doing is transient, transforming, changing, liquid, celebrating all the transient and valueless parts of so much of this shit."

Moreover, the relationships the participants have with each other and with their city suggest a new form of placemaking solidarity based on creating places for good street art while celebrating the transient nature of the changing cityscape. Belfast FO1 notes, "Since we have started the tour, there is a clear narrative around celebrating a cultural identity that does not have a place in the establishment and does not want a place in the establishment, actually."

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Belfast SA4 reveals that street art is a body of transient work which "gets created every day." Depending on the size and scale of a large mural, for example, to a smaller piece like a stencil on the side of an electricity box, there is a chance street art will be noticed by the inhabitant. The transient nature of street art might not get noticed by the inhabitants who are complacent with their everyday routines of getting from one place to another. In the off chance that someone "glances up and connects with something", street art briefly interrupts the everyday by "[taking] people out of their what they're doing for just a second because it is there and is accessible. It's not in a gallery, it is out there" (Belfast SA4).

Belfast SA1 brings attention to the mutability of space in the sense of how a location can change in a matter of a day. They note,

"I think there's also part of it where you are trying to challenge the public in a way that is maybe getting them to go 'that wasn't there yesterday.' So, between when I walked past this place and 5 o'clock yesterday and its 5 o'clock today, someone is putting something up, I can imagine them saying 'why' it is trying to challenge them 'look outside. It's here. Enjoy'" (Belfast SA1).

Belfast SA6 discusses the directives of transience and creating aesthetically pleasing artwork which does not want a place within the establishment while distancing their artwork from the political murals of the ethnonational placemaking. They note,

"that was all illegal and was considered unaesthetically pleasing, anti-establishment, and now look at where we are. Now it is mainstream. I think within reason that needs to be happening, and we need more of it. This is telling of street art transcending existing ideology of art as anti-establishment or in critical reflection of real-life contexts but becoming more mainstream" (Belfast SA6).

The context of these conversations with the Belfast participants was to determine whether they distinguished street art from the norms and conventions of the political murals' quasi-legality and permanence. Street art and political murals are vastly different in terms of message and the type of politics they engage with. While many political murals are illegal, nobody dares to challenge the paramilitaries' and political organisations' territorial claim to them. Many participants make a clear distinction between their art as being naturally transient, susceptible to weathering by nature, removal by the city council, or being tagged over by another artist. Both Belfast FO1 and Belfast SA6 frame the placement of artwork as being different from the permanent nature of political murals while at the same time noting that for any art to be placed in the public environment, there needs to be a level of public and aesthetic consideration. However, in contrast to political murals, festival organisers and street artists seek permission from business and building owners to paint.

The participants from Beirut and Belfast deliberately place artwork in neglected environments, while adjusting their practices so as not to confront or jar with sectarian and neoliberal spaces. Instead, most of the street art which does exist in Beirut and Belfast traces new zones which are more conducive for convivial encounters. The participants display a critical awareness of their ability to negotiate and navigate the limits and directives of ethnonational and neoliberal space. The political nature of street art in Beirut and Belfast does not seek to engage in traditional forms of activism outwardly. Instead, their experiences with placing their artistic interventions imagine new spaces for engagement within the divided city, however ephemeral those placemaking practices might be.

6.3 Discussing the Spatial Engagement of Street Artists

This section discusses the spatial engagement of contemporary street artists who artistically intervene in the cities of Beirut and Belfast. Through this discussion, the implications of the themes become more apparent for the practice of street art as a placemaking process which infers an act of giving the inhabitants free and ephemeral encounters with their city (Kennedy et al., 2017). In response to the research question on the spatial understandings of the placement of street art in highly territorial societies, the finding discovers that street artists temporarily re-purpose divided spaces to trace new zones for social interactions. Although they imagine spaces which are conducive for these new social interactions, the nature of space on the ground remains unchanged. Instead, street artists in Beirut and Belfast pragmatically adjust their practices so as not to confront or jar with tribal politics and territories. The spatial realities of painting on walls in or around sectarian and neoliberal territories mean that street artists are pragmatic about which neighbourhood and what images they can paint. These considerations contribute to the norms and conventions which already inform their rules-based outlook of content, techniques, styles, and colours they can use. Street art also takes part in the form of street democracy whereby a co-production of the artwork with local inhabitants, businesspeople, and other denizens, give meaningful experiences to a place.

Albeit temporary, the placement of street artwork within these spaces both mark a transient form of placemaking which demonstrates how non-tribal communities of actors can trace new zones for social interactions. The first part of this section, 6.3.1, explains the significance of the overall finding by applying the right to the city framework's emphasis on spaces for representation to understand what the process of street art can reveal about non-traditional, political forms of civic engagement in post-conflict cities. The second part, 6.3.2, examines how street art communities' placemaking practices, then, imagine an understanding of urban spaces by comparing it to existing research on how communities in Beirut and Belfast experience the divided city. The third part, 6.3.4, highlights the parallel neoliberal process of using culture and creativity as a resource to lubricate the urban development and acts against the interpreted motivations and actions of street artists.

Politics, as theorised in geography, are the processes of negotiation over the terms that govern the use of space and place (Harvey, 1996), and can "include contestation over discursive representation, scalar conceptualisation or the terms of participation" (Pierce et al., 2010, p. 55). Moreover, the study frames these forms of placemaking practices as non-confrontational (Kennedy et al., 2018), temporary and ephemeral, but not purposeful or deliberate. Instead, the placement of street art generates new ways of thinking about the design and use of space and the practice of making places which reflect the meaning of everyday life, from below. Unlike more purposeful forms of appropriating spaces, the street art community imagine how spaces can be used and designed. The communities do not seek to confront or outwardly contest existing spatial arrangements; instead, they seek to distance themselves, from and refuse, the private appropriation of space by single individuals or ideologies. Their placemaking practices reveal a set of innovative ideas for micro-level civic engagement, trickling from the ground up (Burnham, 2010). The study of street art in Beirut and Belfast uncovers a nascent spatial process whereby street art places reveal traces of artistic encounters of non-traditional civic engagement and produce transient acts of generosity, very differently from the ethnonational or the neoliberal.

The following discussion presents the placemaking process of the street art communities in Beirut and Belfast as an example of urban experimentation with the politics of creating places in the divided cities. The discussion is broken down into three parts. The first part, in sub-section 6.3.1. i., briefly re-introduce the theoretical framework which aims to frame the urban practices of the street as spaces for representation which seek to re-socialise urban space. The finding reworks Lefebvre's claim that a purposeful appropriation of space is the only way for communities to participate in their right to design and use the city (Lefebvre, 1991, 1996). The second part, in sub-section 6.3.1. ii., highlights the creative process behind the production of street art which entails the pragmatic adjustment of practices, from the private appropriation of tribal spaces within Beirut and neoliberal spaces within the CQ of Belfast, respectively. In doing so, we can understand how the street art communities democratise the use of space, although the ideologies of control and power are different in each city. The third part, in sub-section 6.3.1. iii., illustrates how street art identifies new possibilities for taken for granted spaces by examining how their transformative practices remark on the transience of space.

6.3.1. i. Street Art Re-Purposes Spaces for Representation as a Right to Urban Life

Central to the right to the city, Lefebvre argued for the empowering of inhabitants to "participate in the use and the production of urban space" (Stickells, 2011, p. 53). Applying the conceptual framework to street artists' intentions to produce street art in Beirut and Belfast means that they employ two associated "rights to urban life" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 158) which included the right to access and influence decisions that produce urban space and the right to use and create new space that meets the street artists' needs. The design and use of space are central to how Lefebvre frames the right of inhabitants to participate in

the appropriation of spaces from its intended design and its perceived use (1991, 1996). Lefebvre imagined a spatial response to combat social inequalities by encouraging a reading of the city as an open concept to "describe an arena of struggle rather than a precise political program" (Purcell, 2002, p. 99). Through their interpreted motivations, Belfast SA6 discuss their intentions to respect the sharing of space with ordinary inhabitants, by suggesting that ", it does my head in that there is nowhere I can sit my kids down – there is no green space, there are no benches, the city is bad at providing civic space, civic amenities." The arena of struggle is of inadequate civic spaces, which guides the placement of their work, "through the guise of civic space" in the hopes that their artwork will encourage a place for inhabitants to interact with the city. Beirut SA9 challenges the nature of "public" space, by providing opportunities for a "mix of people who would not have met otherwise." In both cases, the street artists reveal the struggle to create spaces for the public good, and the responsible consumption. However, the right to the city is more of an emancipatory project whereby political movements claim territory which allows them "to be seen (and heard)" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 129) and "to project alternative possibilities for urban life freely" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 132). In the milieu of the divided cities, the street artists clarify how context-specific forces in Beirut and Belfast influence their motivations to place artworks. Many Beirut participants note the unresolved legacies of the Civil War which they factor into their perceptions of their artwork, where "it is not enough [to paint and not deal with the real social issues at hand]" (Beirut SA3). For the artist, the machismo society in Lebanon prevents perspectives of other sections of the community, notably women, from participating in the role of decision-making within the public sphere. Beirut SA4 repurposes war-torn buildings for similar reasons but brings attention to how the lack of social life and cohesion is an important impediment to dealing with these social issues. The participants focus on the possibility of alternative urban life through their artwork, as is the case with Belfast SA4 who encourages inhabitants to "glance up and connect with something", and with Belfast SA1 who hopes their artwork will challenge the inhabitants to "look outside. It's here. Enjoy."

The discussion applies the urban element of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1991; 1996) framework to identify the relationships of street artists within their urban environment more clearly. The small- 'p' political act of street art encompasses the power relations which restrict their use of art, and how they intervene to create new civic space. The micro-scale urban interventions of the street art community engage with Lefebvre's imagination of a right to the city whereby street art re-purposes existing spaces to create "new kinds of urban spaces tailored to the need of their inhabitants" (Crawford, 2011, p. 37). Crawford (2011) expands on the kind of politics needed to accompany any attempts to realise these rights, which results in an understanding of spaces produced for use rather than exchange values. In other words, the small-'p' political act of street art "emphasises the need to project alternative possibilities for urban life freely" (Crawford, 2011, p. 35) and, importantly, which is different from the restrictive possibilities of transactional relationships with the city, based on cloistered and exclusive spaces.

The political outcome for Harvey's (2008) 'right to the city' is one of a global struggle between "finance capital and an organised and coherent oppositional movement" which could then have a focused impact on the right to shape urban spaces (p. 13). However, as the finding shows, street art communities are not an oppositional movement, nor do they have an impact on

the existing power dynamics of the neoliberal urban and ethnonational spaces. Instead, their artistic interventions "encourage reading the creation of experimental utopias" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 151) by providing alternative urbanisms and ways of collaborative interaction. Moreover, the micro-scale spatial practice of street art is not in tandem with Harvey's macro-scale call for the need of reshaping urban space, but instead, is more aligned with creating non-traditional political approaches which include tracing zones outside on-going urban struggles.

Moreover, "Unlike Harvey who focuses primarily on the actions of capital in producing urban space, Lefebvre described the city as composed of two interdependent and equally important elements, one, 'the city' consisting of the existing physical and material reality, and the other 'the urban', as a social reality made up on concepts and relationships" (Crawford, 2011, p. 35). The street art community's response to urban environments, which restrict the placement of their artwork, is to seek out alternative spaces, or spaces for their representation. Beirut FO1 and Belfast FO1 actively seek out these spaces, and stage festivals as temporary sites for the representation of communities who reject the present social conditions of divisions. The interpreted frustrations of the participants influence the re-purposing of "one of the most deprived areas… the idea of making it livelier, more colour" (Beirut SA3). The idea that street art transformed *Ouzai* also brings attention to the desire of transforming it by "giving people workshops about cleanliness, about keeping the sea clean, the streets clean which has been neglected for so long" (Beirut SA3). In doing so, the presence of their artwork frames the urban environment as an experimental and temporary space for the possibility of non-tribal communities to form. The social reality of the street art community living in deeply divided cities inspires them to understand the cities based on co-producing emancipatory moments with the inhabitants living in those spaces. Begg (2011) suggests that micro-interventions shape the city, "creating moments of 'lived space' and the seeds of a new city within the codified spaces of the existing one" (p. 63). The micro-scale interventions of street art in the two cities project an understanding of these moments. While these artistic interventions may be small, "their significance lies in the ways they help us imagine the city differently" (Begg, 2011, p. 63).

The street art community stages brief, temporary and colourful 'experiments', placing a strong emphasis on creativity and play. Many street artists produce their artworks with other artists, local community organisers and collectives who often engage in spaces where the absence of art is the main reason for the selection of sites. The creative experimentation with urban life which street art facilitates is like Lefebvre's notion of the moment which seeks to "create non-mediated forms of agency and cultural activity" (1991, p. 52). Beirut FO1, Beirut FO2 and Belfast FO1 facilitate the production of large-scale murals over a short period, and with the expressed interest of creating spaces for the representation of communities who do not want a place within the established order, but, who aim at transforming the here and now through street art. Within the spaces of the CQ or Hamra Street, street art leaves a brightly coloured mark and alternatives to contemporary, neoliberal urban societies which seek non-tribal and non-commercial relationships to produce their artwork. Street art helps a tense and temporary collaboration between the artistic need for experimentation with colours, skills and techniques within an urban environment imbued with the macro-politics of material capitalistic and sectarian ideologies. Street art captures the generation of Lebanese and Northern Irish,

who seek to distance themselves from tribal politics while contending with the urban and social implications of the neoliberal urban development. The small- 'p' political practice of street art encompasses the power relations in their intentions to create new zones. Moreover, Lefebvre once asked, "what is an ideology without space to which it refers, space which it describes, whose vocabulary and kinks it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?" (1991, p. 52). Street art communities seek out and create their own spaces to participate. Their political activity is to engage in the use and design of an alternative way of being, for the existing spaces of the city which are encoded with divisive ideologies.

While a useful framework to accommodate a reading of street art as a visual practice of placemaking and an attempt to re-socialise divided spaces, the right to the city is more applicable to purposeful actions of social movements. Moreover, the practices of street art in Beirut and Belfast are evidence of the response of their communities' need to beautify and enhance the urban environment with the placement of their artwork. As such, the experiences of the street art communities in Beirut and Belfast deviate from the condition for the appropriation of space or call, whereby their placemaking practices can be read as small-'p' political acts which denote places of struggle, for alternative visions for their respective cities. The finding deviates from the second condition or call, which Lefebvre (1996) suggests comprises the right to the city. The central tenet of the right to the city framework examines a relationship with the production of space whereby there is a need to "assert new forms of authority" in order for the micro-scale urban practice to generate or to coalesce into larger-scale change (Iverson, 2013, p. 940). And, "the assertion of inhabitance as the basis for authority inscribes a part for those who have no part in cities where authority is based on wealth, or birth, or technical expertise, or national citizenship, or some other non-democratic source of authority" (Iveson, 2013, p. 946). The street art community in Beirut does not assert new forms of authority (Iverson, 2013). Instead, they show a democratic understanding of space and reject the appropriation of it by single individuals, as with the case of Beirut FO2 or single ideologies as with the case of Belfast FO1. They also note the co-production of their art places with the help of local volunteers (and the researcher), building owners and suppliers of spray cans, cherry pickers and scaffolders. Beirut FO2 aesthetically transforms the buildings along Hamra Street into large-scale murals by a dedicated handful of artists. They illustrate the many rules for the various places in Beirut as a pragmatic awareness of how individuals and ideologues control space in Beirut. Street artists do not understand their practice as being in opposition to or challenging of the forms of authority which produce space. Instead, the ever-changing nature of painting and repainting street art in diverse locations across the cities can be seen as the result of a pragmatic and a democratic process of creativity, which remarks on the transient nature of their practice and alludes to the transformative nature of places. Their practices are based on artistic skills and techniques, across diverse social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds, who "do not want a place in the establishment" (Belfast FO1). Belfast FO1 reads space as being bound by the politics of the conflict and further restricted by neoliberal urban development policies. Within these controls of urban space, and with the help of local organisations and artists, the festival organiser's pragmatism concerning the status quo allows for a vision of what is possible for the time being. Belfast SA7 alludes to the legacies of sectarian images they grew up with, as the desire to participate in the collective design of spaces based on their experience with being ostracised as a young person.

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The first part of the discussion claimed that street art placemaking practices are an 'open concept', or an arena of struggle, rather than a deliberate political strategy (Purcell, 2002) which invites an understanding of street art as Lefebvre's (1991) spaces for representation, or, more correctly, places where these communities can attach their diverse visions and meanings for their city. The finding suggested that street artists read space in the divided cities in an analogous way which does not deviate from their communities' norms and conventions. Instead of confronting tribal and neoliberal ordering of space, the remnants of their artwork demonstrate the possibility of imagining ways for non-traditional political forms of civic engagement with the modern, post-conflict city. In doing so, the discussion will now situate the significance of the small- 'p' political act of street art in Beirut and Belfast as spaces for representation where non-traditional forms of pragmatic and rule-based, democratic, transformative and transient placemaking practices take place.

The second part of this discussion applies the theoretical model of the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) to bring insight to how the street artists' use of space differs from the ethnonational and urban neoliberal placemaking practices, and what their small-scale interventions can teach us about urban subcultures whose use of the street is intrinsic to their practices. The investigation of the non-traditional forms of political engagement, produced from many hours of field observation to inquire about their creative process, and from the second round of data analysis, reveals the nature of their practices which are concerned with the promotion of civic spaces, which identify new possibilities for urban life in taken-for-granted spaces. The experiences with placing street art in Beirut and Belfast shed light on micro-level struggles to imagine the design and use of urban space as a collaborative process, delineated by organic forms of placemaking which are pragmatic, rule-based and democratic. Street artists in Beirut struggle with the appropriations of space by political and tribal ideologies, while street art in Belfast exists within spaces designed and used by neoliberal urban development. The Belfast street artist venture into the CQ because the participants find it challenging to paint in other areas, because of 'ethnonational' control reasons.

6.3.1. ii. The Creative Process Behind Street Art

Street art helps us to see space and place as aspects of "a dynamic process, produced through intersecting activities of individuals and groups, some with more, and some with less social capital" (Young, 2014a, p. 131). In the contestations of social groups laying claim to the right of the city, 'placemaking' becomes highly significant and street art practices offer a visual representation or repertoire of that claim. Young (2014b) further states that street art makes its own space by re-purposing public or private space as a performance which "exposes the multiple boundaries and borders of the propertied cityscape" (p. 145). Despite the restrictions of the ethnonational and the neoliberal demarcations of territory, street artists "create illicit work every day and thus demonstrate their agency and their ability to self-commission, to authorise their own actions" (Young, 2014b, p. 145). While the enduring legacy of tribal identities and social divisions exist, the participants temporarily re-purpose the existing urban environment and encourage non-commercial encounters with the inhabitants, through the placement of their work.

Visconti et al. (2010) suggest that "the urban landscape of street art provides the opportunity for authentic participation to flourish beyond the institutionalised political arenas" (p. 512).

Festival organisers and street artists seek permission from business and building owners to paint. Rolston (2002) documents that paramilitary organisations sometimes impose their murals on the gable walls of houses within the territory they control where the images relate to specific political messages depending on the community. Also, there are usually a handful of sanctioned artists who paint political murals. In contrast, within the street art subculture, the perceived democratic nature of street art allows anyone to pick up a spray can and create work. Belfast SA8 discusses this point by suggesting that their work is "a rebellious art form, it is unfiltered and [there] is no one standing over you and telling you how to do it. It is a kind of thing that if you do it for yourself, and if other people like it, then great." The idea of street art not possessing rules or directives (Bourdieu, 1984) from their co-producers is likely a break from sectarian and political murals where the artistic license is limited to the specific ideology, and to the power of the paramilitary or sectarian leaders who commission the work that is being promoted (Jarman, 2004).   Instead, the practice of street art is bound by the norms and conventions of temporality and ephemerality, in that, once artwork is created, it belongs to the city. The conventions concerning street art are more aligned with skills and technical ability. For Belfast SA7, street art is a "platform for dialogue" which motivates their engagement for working with young offenders in Hydebank prison. The following participant from Belfast does not paint in the CQ for reasons which are more like the Beirut participants. For Belfast SA7, the city centre does not offer a social environment and, thus, does not motivate them to place their artwork because "it is developing fast, but it's not my vibe" (Belfast SA7).

The location of street art represents a dynamic interaction between the artist, the festival organiser, local businesses, and the inhabitant. In each case, street art places are co-produced and are motivated by gifting art for the inhabitants of their cities. In that respect, Jacobs (1993) noted that the boundary between social reality and representations of that reality collapses with the introduction of artworks to the public sphere. In other words, while the city manager, festival organiser, business people or the inhabitants have different perspectives of the value which street art adds to space, Belfast CM1 contends that street art should be part of the culture and arts sector in the development of the CQ. At the same time, Beirut FO2 believes that street art and property development should exist hand in hand. Each community of political actors engages differently with the city in which each community contributes differently to the co-production of street art. As Sennett (1992) describes, the city is a space of difference:

"The inscription of difference into the urban landscape and into urban space is no easy matter; it cannot simply be an enactment of different cultures, the merchandising of subcultures, a simplistic democratic conception of one vote/one space carried onto the group level. It needs to be rooted in the constitution itself of urban space" (Sassen, 1996, p. 41).

The urban places within the ethnonational and neoliberal spaces of Beirut and Belfast are limits and directives, which hinder cross-community interactions and political engagement to common causes. Street art is not rooted into urban space, as its

ephemerality is temporary and dependent on the weather, the monthly city council removal team, another street art or a "wee hood [hoodlum]" (Belfast FO1) who paints over it. Street art is more of a temporary layer where the artist is convinced of its transient nature. However, in some cases, it ties the city together, where street art locations become more salient points of meeting and departure for the participants themselves (Belfast SA6).

The street art participants' understanding of place speaks to their notion of temporarily attaching an identity to a place as the carving out of 'temporary permanence' from spaces (Harvey, 2001). Following "Harvey's attempt to relate together the processes of time and production of space" (Scott, 2003, p. 159), street art is a temporary practice which is more suited to describing the temporary practices of an urban subculture. The street art community diversify the notion of the passage of time, as a metaphor to denote the length of time for them to produce their artwork. The temporary actions of artistic interventions by the street art community suggest a non-traditional political orientation which looks to carve out and renegotiate the boundaries or territories and re-designate the rules and norms of segregated and commodified spaces.

The street art communities imagine social interaction by placing their ephemeral and non-commercial images in the public sphere. Most artists from Beirut and Belfast believe that the motivations of their placemaking practices contribute to an open-air art gallery. Belfast SA6, Belfast SA7 and Beirut SA5 understand the need to create more civic spaces while respecting the limited spaces the public has. They create images which are mindful of the deluge of sectarian imagery and advertising consumption, and instead, invoke a sense of humour, satire, and solidarity with the urban and social changes. This form of gift giving is a political function as it challenges three facets of image-making of the art market: regimes of advertising (Zukin, 1996), political murals and graffiti. The production of images associated with sectarian communities targets the tribal communities around common causes. However, the economy of the gift, as noted by Zukin (1996), is rare in consumer cultures and is not based on a transactional relationship. Nevertheless, street art, as a small- 'p' political practice, then leads to an enhanced understanding of:

> "place in terms of hidden micro-cultural practices, distinct spatial biographies, relationships (or non-relationships) with surrounding space/structures, interaction with different temporalities, intrinsic social role(s) – both perceived and actual – and networks of feelings and semiotic significance" (Hayward, 2012, p. 453).

Furthermore, the 'places' which street art creates is temporary, in that, the artwork is left behind as a mark of a gift but can be seen a novel way of transforming a once drab environment. Beirut SA3 highlights this point by actively seeking out walls which seem to add to the boredom of traffic jams, and playfully creates maestros to direct the beeping sounds of frustrated motorists. Therefore, contextualising street art in divided cities as spatial tactics allows for a more in-depth discussion of how non-traditional political communities engage with spaces which limit and direct forms of interactions, around either ethnonational or neoliberal common causes.

Spatial tactics (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003) shows the "use of space as a strategy and/or technique of power and social control" (p. 12). The participants in Beirut and Belfast use space to obscure the existing ethnonational and neoliberal power relations as far as street art spaces demonstrate that which is collaborative, convivial and accessible, not based on capital exchange or sectarian territorialisation. Instead, as Belfast SA6's desire to respect the disappearing nature of civic space and Beirut SA9's desire to recreate summer salons found commonly in Lebanese villages, and within Mar Mikhael, deliberates their use of space to create more opportunities for civic engagement based on pleasant and collaborative interactions and encounters. Furthermore, according to Mady and Chettiparamb (2016), place-based projects, such as street art, become attempts to forge new identities for the inhabitants who engage with those spaces.

The spatial experiences of street artists create temporary spaces of artworks for either public commentary or a social diary (Tsilimpoundi, 2015). Armstrong (2005) suggests that street art attempts to re-purpose the existing urban environment where "street art 'evokes' meaning but are not necessarily representations of meanings but by its placement" (p. 5). The finding accounts for these attempts of making sense of everyday life within increasingly intensely territorial societies (Beirut SA5, Belfast SA8), where the street art communities co-produce their artistic interventions and adjust their practices so as not to jar with sectarian and neoliberal spaces, while also noting which spaces offer poor environments for the achievement of community, thus conviviality. The awareness of Beirut SA5 that although street art does engage in discussions about art and culture, the reality of creating art in Beirut, and the presence of ethnonational gatekeepers means that sometimes the artists have to remind themselves that "this is not meant to be part of the conversation" Beyond the co-production of places, their artistic interventions trace new zones which achieve a different sense of interaction, where they animate and create temporary public spaces which do not impact on the city's ethnonational groups or neoliberal consumer communities.

The third part of this section discusses how the street art communities, in the milieu of the divided city, creatively shed light on the 'open concept' of their civic engagement, as the micro-level struggles to redefine urban space as a collaborative process, delineated by organic forms of placemaking which are transient and transformative. Street art in Beirut exists within political and tribal spaces, whereas street art in Belfast exists within spaces designed and used by neoliberal urban development. In promoting a more collaborative process of democratic decision-making for the use of the street art's place, the artists identify new possibilities for taken-for-granted spaces, not only alleyways (Beirut SA6) and bridge underpasses (Beirut SA2), but sides of building along the Green Line in Beirut (Beirut SA4), or entire neighbourhoods (Beirut FO1) or derelict sites in Belfast's CQ (Belfast FO1) which are in the process of being developed. In doing so, their placemaking practices further situate the significance of their small- 'p' political act of street art in Beirut and Belfast in the practices' inherent transience and transformative forms of placemaking.

The study's investigation into the spatial practices of street art in the deeply divided cities of Beirut and Belfast sought to understand the extent to which the artists' attempt to re-purpose spaces constitutes a 'right to the city'. The finding suggests that the street art community engages in small-scale spatial urban practices to re-purpose neglected spaces for the inhabitants of the city, while, temporarily, identifying new possibilities of taken for granted spaces of the city.

Street art identifies new possibilities for spaces by bringing attention to 'taken-for-granted spaces' of the city. Beirut FO2 created Ouzville to bring the attention of both the political class and the inhabitants of the city, to an alienated and forgotten suburb of the city of Beirut. Beirut FO2's Urban Dawn project invited artists, such as Beirut SA3 and Beirut SA7, to demonstrate how alternative forms of civic engagement can brighten the neglected spaces within *Ouzai*. In doing so, the project reveals a process of understanding of the social and spatial realities of separation which are rampant within Beirut, and of ways to reconnect the neighbourhood's physical and social spaces through street art. In Belfast, however, Belfast FO1 produces the street art festival within the CQ to re-purpose alienated spaces which are the sites of derelict buildings or buildings waiting for regeneration. Many of the Belfast respondents participate annually in transforming sections of the CQ into temporary open-air art galleries for inhabitants to visit, and for the artists to display their work. In other words, street art in Belfast and Beirut uncovers a micro-level spatial process whereby their distinct urban practices shed light on nascent forms of placemaking.

The main difference between how street artists read space in Beirut and Belfast is dependent on where their artworks are primarily located. Beirut street art exists within the immediate periphery of Solidere and residential neighbourhoods, while Belfast street art is situated within the Cathedral and Smithfield-Union Quarters. Although many of the neighbourhoods in Beirut are experiencing the "explosion of colour" (Beirut SA1), the city centre is noticeably void of artistic interventions. In Belfast, though, the participants do not place their artwork within the single-identity neighbourhoods, except Belfast SA7 who, with the help of a famous political mural artist from East Belfast, is "allowed" to paint there. The placement of street art within Beirut and Belfast reveal the spatial attitudes of non-traditional actors who co-produce their artistic intervention with the inhabitants of the divided city. Belfast and Beirut-based artists locate 'neglected' spaces where no art exists, as sites for their intervention. Beirut FO1, Beirut SA4 and Beirut SA6 seek out empty walls, signposts, bullet-ridden buildings near the city centre and entire neighbourhoods in working-class communities. Belfast-based participants adhere to the limits and directives of the custodians of neoliberal spaces, businesses, and the Belfast City Council, who give street artists the walls to paint on.

In both cities, street art facilitates the collaboration of non-tribal communities to engage in alternative transactional relationships based on gift giving rather than claim-making. Instead, the small-scale political action of street art is that it temporarily experiments with spaces as a tool for the creation of its work, and then leaves ephemeral traces of communities who seek to vitalise and beautify the urban environment. They challenge the power relations which seek to restrict their use of art, by

providing temporary alternatives for an inhospitable environment for social gathering, while intervening to create new and temporary civic spaces. In this regard, street art describes areas where non-tribal communities, like the CQ's HTN, can form, however temporarily and, in placing their artworks, street art also demonstrates how non-traditional political communities interact with their cities. What is not known is whether street art as urban politics of the inhabitants (Purcell, 2002) encourages other inhabitants to participate in the "making of urban space" (p. 101). As such, street art is not a tool to empower the inhabitants of Beirut and Belfast, nor is it a collective response to "act in unspecified ways to define, fight for and claim their rights to the city" (Purcell, 2002, p. 100) as protests and demands.

The understanding of the likelihood that framing street art as an experimental appropriation of the city remains cautious, as the following passage suggests, because:

"There are holes and chasms. These voids are not there due to chance. They are the places of the possible. They contain the floating and dispersed elements of the possible, but not the power which could assemble them. Moreover, structuring actions and the power of the social void tend to prohibit action and the very presence of such a power. The conditions of the possible can only be realized in the course of a radical metamorphosis" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 156).

While the intention of street artists and festival organisers in Beirut and Belfast do indeed search out for "holes and chasms" to paint on, their small-scale interventions are too small to contribute to 'assembling' a broader political project. As discussed, street artists do not oppose or confront the logic of neoliberal or ethnonational power, nor do they particularly want to contest them. Instead, they bring attention to the broken 'fabric' brought on by the holes and chasms caused by decades of social and economic segregation. They re-purpose neglected spaces in Ouzai (Beirut FO2) or the CQ (Belfast FO1), and temporarily alter the social realities of the inhabitants living there. In a manner that might be described as 'guerrilla' urbanism, street artists and festival organisers take "the concept of public space very literally to mean that, as members of the public, they had just as much right to use urban public space as a medium for communication as […] anyone else" (Iveson, 2013, p. 949). It is too soon to tell whether street art's practices are capable of establishing "cities within the city" and their practices of re-purposing spaces "do not necessarily constitute a democratic urban politics that will give birth to a new city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 954). The localised practice of street art might contribute to a broader viewing of the city's alternative spaces and community interventions. They do so by exposing the challenges with transforming sectarian and neoliberal spaces while also allowing for a different viewing of the post-conflict city.

The strategy suggested by Lefebvre to remove the neocapitalist conceived space is a "counter-space" which is different and external to the "rules of the dominant space" (1991, p. 381). Lefebvre describes "counter-space" as a "utopian alternative to actually existing 'real' space" (1991, p. 349), corresponding to the new zones which the street art community withdraw to, following an understanding that certain places are not conducive to the gathering of their communities. For Lefebvre, "if art can

indeed play a crucial role in the re-appropriation of the city space, it is only through the transformation of space's meaning: arts highlights social contradictions and transforms the spatial practice" (1991, cited by Chabbert, 2015, p. 5). Interestingly, while Lefebvre's only mention of street art elucidates this point, part of the strategy of using walls to coalesce into the broader politics of the city, he wonders "is it really possible to use mural surfaces … while producing something more than graffiti?" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 145). In other words, the production of these 'counter-spaces' consists of something more than street art "offers in its use of visible surfaces" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Indeed, Lewisohn (2008) points out that street art initially emerged and still develops mainly in the city's margins: "the peripheral and neglected spaces where the dominant logic of space is less effectively enforced" (p. 7). In line with Lefebvre's strategy, street art produces from the city's margins where street art practices "forge a very physical and intimate negotiation with space by altering it" (Lewisohn, 2008, p. 93).

The placemaking practices of the street art community, which inform its small-'p' political act, offers an alternative perspective on the political aspect of street art, in that, it "goes beyond the reconfiguration of the meaning of space" (Chabbert, 2015, p. 6), especially in the milieu of antagonistic and territorial spaces. In the context of post-conflict societies, "societies emerging from ethno-political and inter-communal conflict face a range of complex problems that stem directly from the recent lived experiences of bloodshed and injury, militarisation, securitisation and segregation" (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 443). Instead of intervening or challenging the makeup of sectarian neighbourhoods, they create an entirely different type of zone by temporarily repurposing those spaces and suggest a new form of interaction based on ephemeral artistic interventions. They point to new zones by leaving their traces of convivial attachments, on the street or within an entire neighbourhood. They deliberately target areas of neglect. They create art spaces to discuss issues of neglect as both a political and a spatial factor.

The critical lesson from the discussion on the spatial practices of street art in Beirut and Belfast is not to dismiss the importance of the small-scale experiments in social and urban change. Instead, it is to argue, with Iverson (2013) and Lefebvre (1996), "that such experiments will only give birth to a more democratic city if we can find ways to politicise them" (p. 954). Part of this 'politicisation' is about,

"framing these practices within the broader political context of 'right to the city' … is useful precisely for raising questions about whether or not a politics is taking shape through DIY practices, and for suggesting some stances or orientations which might assist DIY urbanists who dream of giving birth to a new and more democratic city … The need for a new city to emerge out of our present dysfunctional and unjust urban condition is just as urgent now as it was in Lefebvre's time" (Iveson, 2013, p. 954).

Distinct from large-scale interventions, commercial or otherwise, the small- 'p' political practice of street art offers an overview of Beirut and Belfast's current urban conditions, and the communities struggling with its production. The street art communities in Beirut and Belfast engage in the small-scale politics of a place, their place in it and the politics which prevent or

allow the production of street art. As discussed in section 6.3, the right to re-purpose space entails the freedom to create urban spaces but also to allow the "full access to existing urban spaces" (Crawford, 2011, p. 35). The micro-scale artistic interventions of street art leave a mark on the urban political fabric and represent an urban practice which finds new possibilities for temporary transformations of the urban environment. A brief discussion on the political fabric is necessary to highlight the significance of street art's prospects of contributing to "coalescing into a wider politics of the city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 940). It will do so by seeking out other studies which examine these attempts to contribute to a broader political project.

Bollens (2007) viewed cities as "semi-autonomous catalysts amid larger societal conflict" (p. 2). Moreover, Yassin (2008) notes that "cities are targeted in the event of war, and such violence attempts to destroy not only buildings but societal fabric" (p. 398). Nagle (2018) argues, however, that the rebuilding of Beirut and Belfast, since the internationally brokered Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of Northern Ireland in 1998 and the Ta'if Accord of Lebanon in 1990, only 'symbolises' the successful appearance of the peace process. The economic redevelopment was a priority over concerns of social cohesion and national reconciliation. These new spatial realities ironically displace the same creative communities, through ongoing processes of gentrification, leading some scholars to suggest the co-option of culture for short-term economic gain (Kunkel and Mayer, 2012; Yudice, 2003), and rebuilding of the respective cities' ethnic and cultural 'fabric' at the "expense of maintaining peace and stability" (Yassin, 2008, p. 399).

The spatial realities and legacies of sectarian division and neoliberal urban development are but a handful of conditions which "[dis] empower artists, architects and other cultural activists to become key players in defining struggles and outcomes" (Crawford, 2011, p. 36). The desire to change the way space is designed and used in post-conflict cities, creates opportunities for the participants to imagine new possibilities for civic engagement. As opposed to confronting the private appropriation of space by political factions in Beirut and neoliberal urban development in Belfast, the communities respond by temporarily diversifying the use of space. In doing so, they redefine the design and use of contemporary urban spaces in the modern, post-conflict city.

6.3.2 Street Artists Imagine Urban Space in Beirut and Belfast

The various possibilities for street art, and other small- 'p' political acts, contribute to a broader political project of gaining informal access to the production of spaces, and which mirror the existing urban practices in Beirut and Belfast. The finding suggests that street artists also have the *potential* to frame new meanings and ideas of everyday life in critical city discourses. Like other urban movements, such as urban skateboarding, communities temporarily re-purpose spaces for their use, bound by their conventions and norms (Young, 2014). The gifting sense of the street art community, discussed in chapter five, culminates in the form of producing pleasurable everydayness where non-traditional forms of political participation shed light on alternative urban practices. They also produce several images which are more associated with their aesthetic sensibilities and the specificities

of the wall than the image regimes of consumerism and political division. In doing so, the street art communities attempt to challenge the visual norms of ethnonational political murals and neoliberal urbanisation of spaces by presenting creative alternatives. Moreover, street art encourages inhabitants "to see the city as a space for creative experimentation in the here and now" (Begg, 2011, p. 63). Nowhere is this more needed than in the cities of Beirut and Belfast where their respective divisions risk breaking the fabric which holds the city together.

6.3.2. i. Beirut

This section on Beirut compares the creative process of street art production and its subsequent search for taken-for-granted spaces, which are more conducive to civic engagement with studies conducted on the nature of public spaces in post-conflict Beirut (Nazzal and Chinder, 2018) and the experiences of the urban inhabitants within those spaces. The cases below examine the youths' post-conflict memory, and access to public spaces (Larkin, 2009, 2010, 2013), the experiences of non-sectarian movements in re-purposing taken for granted spaces (Nagle, 2016), informal settlements (Fawaz, 2009) and informal public transportation (El Moussawi, 2016) Adopting the typology of urban practices found in the investigation, the cases for similar research examine the challenges non-sectarian inhabitants of the city of Beirut have with the production of spaces. The value-added from comparing the small, but significant placemaking practices of street art to other studies of urban subcultures comprises a unique opportunity to consider the diverse and creative practices of inhabitants who seek alternative spaces for non-traditional forms of civic engagement. The right to the city, as Lefebvre (1996) reminds us, "is designed to further the interests 'of the whole society and firstly of all those who inhabit' the city" (p. 158, cited by Iveson, 2013, p 9). The insights from the creative process of street art production in territorial environments shed light on how these subcultures transform the urban environment.

Everyday life in Beirut is based on "social bonds of cohesion found in tribal, kinship and communitarian solidarities" (Larkin, 2010, p. 42), inherent in its sectarian society. The pervasiveness of sectarianism in everyday life experiences means that it takes on a geopolitical dimension since "the city remains a site of struggle over the meanings of Lebanese identity and nationhood" (Nagel, 2002, p. 717). Nazzal and Chinder (2018) survey the existing public spaces in Lebanon while noting that many of these spaces are indeed private, from shopping malls to beach resorts. They contend that the shortage of public space is a result of "lack of planning, regulations and awareness around the right to the city and the importance of public space" (p. 119). The major challenge of the absence of suitable public spaces in Beirut is the private property developments which "offers a limited number of public spaces, many of which are considered as dynamic gathering points in the city, and which carry significant meanings of integration" (Nazzal and Chinder, 2018, p. 122).

Larkin (2013) explores the intergenerational process of a memory transfer to the youth of the post-war generation and demonstrates how those memories restrict their ability to renegotiate the city of Beirut. While some show the desire to renegotiate

familiar or unfamiliar locations, they bear the baggage of memory stemming from their co-ethnic predecessors. Similarly, the street artists from Beirut intentionally seek out the space to make them more familiar, to re-purposing alienated spaces for their art. The community of youth who try to "reassess, subvert, or overcome the city's divisions for a more pluralistic" environment often become, as Larkin (2013) suggests, in and of themselves, a form of a re-enactment of an 'unresolved' past.   While Larkin (2009) does not explicitly mention the political act of accessing the city, the youths interviewed in the study mentioned that "Beirut's downtown remains distant and 'out of place', cut off from the realities of contemporary society" (p. 11). The awareness of the spatial distance informs their urban practices which arouses them to register the differences in spaces which are more conducive for social interactions. Like the street art communities, the youth's perceptions can invariably lead to "awaken physically numbed dwellers and reconnect them with a pleasurably consumable environment" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521). Larkin suggests that the young people in his study internalise narratives from their parents' war-time memories and contribute to the formation of their attitudes towards spaces in the city. Likewise, for the participants in Beirut, memories of previous social interactions, inform the construction of attitudes towards their practices and their ideas of civic engagement. However, while these attitudes are embodied, the street art community politicises spaces by briefly attaching their memories and diverse experiences from their interactions with the city, creatively and artistically. The remnants of those interactions are further made visible by their artwork. Furthermore, the youth in Larkin's study understand the link between reconnecting the divided city's fabric and the idea of national reconciliation, "which balances narratives of loss and suffering alongside those of recovery and redemption" (Larkin, 2009, p. 17).

Nagle (2016) investigates the experiences of non-sectarian movements' "struggle to forge participatory democracy in Beirut's city centre" (p. 149). Similar to Larkin's (2010) investigation of the post-war youth's perceptions of the city centre, Nagle examined how "the postwar reconstruction of Beirut city centre mirrored the attitude of Lebanon's political elite towards the memory of the civil war" (p. 158). The chapter's finding revealed similar tensions between the concept of accessible public spaces where the very nature of 'public' "narrows opportunities for different social and ethnic groups to mix and engage in social relationships that transcend divisive cleavages" (Nagle, 2016, p. 165). Further exploration of the Civil Campaign to Protect the Dalieh of Raouche reveals similarities between the experiences of the street art community in Beirut and that non-sectarian movement's struggles with uncovering spaces in which to intervene. In both instances, the communities re-purpose spaces in taken for granted environments and participate in a construction of new social spaces in which "concrete" small- 'p' political alternatives are possible. The radical difference, for Harvey (2012), is for "disparate heterotopic groups [to] suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different" (p. xvii.).

Fawaz (2009) employs the right to the city framework to understand how the dwellers of the informal settlements in Beirut "conceptualise their spatial presence and practices in ways that depart from state-sanctioned and market-dictated norms of social spatialisation" (p. 832). Fawaz found that the ability for dwellers to participate in the production of their homes, their neighbourhood and the "ability for the neighbourhoods to act as spaces in which low-income urban dwellers can exercise their

'right to the city'" (Fawaz, 2009, p. 848). The important similarity between the study of street art as practitioners and the informal settlers in re-purposing and re-socialising spaces is their ability to identify new possibilities for taken-for-granted spaces, in much the same way as the low-income dwellers. They imagine new spaces for their community. Moreover, Fawaz's finding also points to the sense of re-familiarising alienated spaces (Crawford, 2011) in the sense of re-occupying them, to use the term loosely. The "right to a dignified life in the city was eventually seen as part of the performance of the political" (Fawaz, 2019).

El Moussawi (2016) examines the case of informal public transport in Beirut to understand whether their spatial practices are a claim to their right to the city. Unlike street art, the practices of informal public transport facilitate, quite literally, the ability for populations to move from one part of the city to the other. The challenges which the community faces are what street art practices seek to overcome. In other words, while the ability of urban transports to move people from one location to the next produces an account of informal small –'p' politics of mobility, street art practices give us an idea of the uses of space and who accesses it. El Moussawi (2016) suggests that the capacity of informal public transport engages in a right to "mobility and accessibility to a considerable number of people by opening up new spatial boundaries and allowing people to use urban space beyond their confined living places" (p. 9). The political acts of street art and the informal public transport differ in scale, space and time, but are similar, in that, they contribute to the coalescing of diverse communities to change the way people's use of space is "established in the city of Beirut" (El Moussawi, 2016, p. 11).

Each case study examined the struggles of urban subcultures to participate in the political act of re-purposing spaces and to imbue them with meaning. The studies support the research by explicating the experiences of the communities who struggle with the ability to design and use spaces, such as the youth groups in Larkin's (2009, 2010) study, the Dalieh fishing port (Nagle, 2016), the informal settlers (Fawaz, 2009) and the informal bus transportations (El Moussawi, 2016).

This section reflects on how all these studies inform the research and what it can add to them. In all the studies compared, the ability for street art inhabitants to participate in the production of places supports the way other people uses spaces to exercise their right to the city. The sense of re-familiarising and re-connecting the divided urban fabric by painting taken-for-granted spaces in Beirut, re-attaching memories of previous social interactions, and possibilities for new relationships, visualises Larkin's (2010) point in colourful and 'concrete', small-'p' political actions. Moreover, the ability of street art communities to re-purpose spaces in Ouzai, Hamra and Mar Mikhael and to participate in the construction of visible areas for social spaces contributes to Nagle's (2016) assertion that alternatives to civic engagement are possible. The study of street art's placemaking practices contributes to enhancing these studies, by shedding light on how urban subcultures temporarily transform spaces by introducing new forms of aesthetic, civic engagement, and whose spaces are the result of overcoming arenas of struggle, rather than divisions.

Braniff et al. (2012) investigation suggested that memories and histories of conflict "remain fundamentally important and their expression often makes plain the ethnic contestation with sections" of Northern Ireland. They argue that it is essential to discover whether inhabitants of the divided city identify with these histories and whether it determines how "we see and engage with each other." It becomes apparent from the responses of the participants that the historical experiences present a desire for participants to distance themselves from the status quo, and form temporary and, importantly, convivial interactions with the street and the city, through their practices. Moreover, while the prevalent tradition of political murals acts "as territorial markers for both in and out-groups" (McQuaid, 2017, p. 12), street art in Belfast acts as an ephemeral marker with the city to invite inhabitants to practise their everyday routines in the sites where the artistic intervention exists. The street art community also points to those spaces which have been taken-for-granted by demonstrating new uses for them.

Shirlow (2001) framed the everyday experiences of residents in Belfast as influenced by 'codes' or 'cognitive maps' which enabled inhabitants to determine safe or dangerous spaces. In a similar experience with Beirut (Larkin, 2013), the inhabitants of Belfast are "bound together by ethnicity and fear, the geographical splintering of Northern Ireland's population produced single-identity communities exhibiting strong levels of social capital and tightly knit bonds" (McDowell et al., 2015, p. 233). This study's participants' relationships within their community demonstrate a more open, collective, and collaborative interaction bound by their artistic styles, norms, and conventions. The finding suggests that street art attaches residual feelings of 'pleasure and politics' of a space. The urban practice of street art has the potential of bringing the urban politics of small-scale actions "[closer] to the inhabited place … it constitutes embodied experience and embodied passion. Linking dwellers to their town and thus to its cultural, historical and social heritage" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 525). This point links back to Braniff et al.'s (2012) point that the purported aim of participants from Belfast heeds a call to encourage a relationship between the inhabitants with their city, which they hope street art can mediate. While there are many obstacles which prevent society in Belfast overcoming their sectarian and class-based differences, the street art community engages in small-scale attempts to demonstrate new relationships across diverse backgrounds, based on the exchange of visual images, skills, expertise and playfulness which is much needed in the city.

Furthermore, the street art communities strive for a familiar place with the inhabitants of the city, where they share representations of public space "as a context for enriching dialogical confrontation, as a repository of collective meanings, and as a stimulus of belonging" (Visconti et al., 2010, p. 521). Nagle (2009) argues that nationalists in Belfast proclaim a right to the city by "utilising the city centre for cultural and political events" (p. 133). Nagle (2009) problematises the nature of public space in the city centre of Belfast as not promoting equal access to all populations, regardless of their identity. The challenge for traditional political groups is a "politics of difference […] that can most effectively mobilise to make claims on the polity, or at

any rate it rewards ethnocultural political entrepreneurs who can exploit its potential for their own ends by mobilizing a constituency around a set of sectional demands" (Barry, 2001, p. 21).

Moreover, "the politics of territoriality, as groups demand their right to control public spaces for cultural performances, is a key battleground of the current political dispensation" (Nagle, 2009, p. 140). The main concern among many observers, as argued by the finding, relates to the access to public space. The construction of public space in divided cities should be a more pluralistic experiment, signifying the diverse "pluralities, hybridities and multiple identities of a complex diverse world" (Gaffikin et al., 2008).

Street artists imagine their use of space differently in Beirut and Belfast because of their knowledge of the 'street' and the specific social and urban conditions which influence the makeup of those cities. In Belfast, the long-lasting legacy of the 'Trouble's links identity politics to territories in material and symbolic forms. While the Peace Walls and political murals serve as reminders of the material consequences of sectarian placemaking, the increasingly neoliberal city centre creates a city running at two different speeds away from social cohesion and national reconciliation. Street art in Belfast attempts to redefine the forms of placemaking, from cloistered and macro-level politics, to bring attention to the temporary and transformative nature of space within the city centre. The street art community's pragmatic and rule-based outlooks of preserving the built environment, while acknowledging the aesthetics of providing opportunities for public encounters, mean that the placement of their work encourages participation. In other words, they refuse the appropriation of space by political mural artists and the City Council, and other regeneration efforts, and, instead, carve out spaces where their communities can form while leaving remnants of their artwork. In Beirut, how the city is experienced depends on the preceding generations' ability to convince the youth of Beirut to be wary and aware of sectarian attitudes towards space. Moreover, many youths do not venture into the city centre because they perceive that the city does not belong to them. However, the experiences in Beirut suggest that communities do indeed carve out spaces for their communities' representation, in the form of informal settlements, public transportation and through the experiences of non-sectarian movements who also temporarily re-purpose spaces for their use. Besides, their diverse experiences help politicise space by bringing attention to the urban politics, which Lefebvre (1996) says, contributes to the imagining of new possibilities for social worlds to reconnecting the diverse social worlds in any given city.

The critical points made in the studies of Beirut and Belfast relate to the pragmatic and democratic nature of their artistic practice which temporarily creates places, which represent their desire for creative spaces in the divided cities, and direct ordinary inhabitants to the available opportunities for non-commercial and non-tribal forms of societal interaction. The common points taken on the small- 'p' political acts of street art and other urban subcultures, lend themselves to the creative process entailed in finding spaces for their representations. The non-traditional forms of political actions represent the actions of urban inhabitants whose intentions are to give "birth to a new and more democratic city" (Iveson, 2013, p. 954). In doing so, the placemaking

practices of street art communities in Beirut and Belfast reflect the concerns found in the previous studies for creating informal settlements which not only re-familiarise alienated spaces but also direct the attention of inhabitants to the sites of their struggles.

However, according to Zukin (1995), a powerful means of controlling cities is to use the images and memories of the culture. The street artworks produce a source of images and memories of festivals and other social interactions which symbolise those who belong in specific areas (Zukin, 1995, p. 1). In this instance, artworks can be further developed, or co-opted, as a resource for the lubrication of neoliberal urban development (Petti, 2007), as has been the case in the gentrification of Berlin's Kreuzberg (Henke, 2014) and London's Shoreditch (Schacter, 2014) neighbourhoods. The use of street art as a resource to sanitise derelict areas of the city parallels the street art process of re-purposing taken-for-granted areas of the city The ability for urban subcultures to "depart from state-sanctioned and market-dictated norms of social spatialization" (Fawaz, 2019, p. 832), does not mean that they escape the all-powerful hand of larger political projects for city design. Fawaz (2019) warns that property-developers see spaces "as part of [their] performance of the political" to exert dominance (p. 832). While there is no evidence to suggest that the respondents contribute to the gentrification of neighbourhoods, the rejection of the appearance or the support for doing the 'job' for property-developer surveyors needs to be examined. Street art exemplifies "the role played by social interaction, symbols and language in giving form and meaning to physical space" (Low, 2017, p. 12). In other words, the cultural practices of street art can be developed and co-opted regardless of whether the street artists, themselves, appear to support the gentrification of the areas of their artwork. Therefore, the following section, 7.3.3, considers how the cultural practices of street art function as a resource for larger political projects of neoliberal urbanism which seek to regenerate areas using art and culture.

6.3.3 Street Art in Neoliberal Space

This section considers the spatial practice of street art within the context of the use of culture as a resource to lubricate culture-led neoliberal urban development and acts against the interpreted motivations and actions of the research participants. While the finding demonstrates that street art traces new zones for interaction which differ from segregating and commodified spaces, artists themselves have become "a cultural means of framing spaces" (Zukin, 1995, p. 23). In other words, street artworks mark the sites for the urban developers to form their claims to cultural hegemony and the presence of street art in the creative zone of Belfast's CQ, and within the cultural elite of Beirut, puts whichever neighbourhood in which the artwork exists at risk for gentrification (Zukin, 1989, Deutsche, 1988). However, it is also likely that the placement of street art in divided cities does not necessarily represent a deliberate act of political practice or engagement with current social and urban conditions within their societies. Developers may co-opt the cultural practices of street artists into consumerist rebranding and gentrification, which is not what street artists are necessarily about, primarily because these processes can be exclusionary.

Culture has a political value where it offers a neutral language to maintain social hierarchy in a historically polarised society (Zukin, 1995) and gives the appearance of a shared public culture. The use of culture creates new tensions around cultural politics in debates over historic preservation, subsidies to cultural institutions and uses of public spaces. Zukin (1995) notes, that "the power to impose a coherent vision of a space enables a group to claim that space" (p. 279), which she refers to as the framing process. Furthermore, "the power of framing requires a power to persuade" (Zukin, 1995, p. 280). An example of this is with political graffiti which Tonkiss (2005) contends has less to do "with speaking up to power than with defending the place and marking exclusions" (p. 141). Unlike street art, political graffiti aims to convert space into a territory, to "draw a colour line down the streets of the city" (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 1410). Moreover, the vision of the street art community in Beirut, as Beirut FO2 proposes, is "to convert the walls into artworks … where the streets can change into something more beautiful."

Bradley and Murtagh (2008) explored in the twin-speed city of Belfast, those communities which have not received the socio-economic benefits of economic regeneration attempts and those who are mostly untouched by these processes, namely, those who live in the single-identity communities. Beyhum (1993) described the trajectory of Beirut on a dual city transition where similar processes of isolation and exclusion exist in a contentious city centre. Both cities' post-conflict redevelopment and re-shaping of their urban geographies are mainly distinguishable by the former inheriting the legacies of previous planning failures, ethnonational diverging aspirations, and economic deprivation, and the latter emerging as a new-mastered vision for Beirut.

If Nagle (2018) suggests that rebuilding 'symbolises' the successful appearance of the peace process, many scholars lend their weight to this claim as economic redevelopment gives priority over concerns of social cohesion and national reconciliation. These new spatial realities ironically displace the same creative communities, through ongoing processes of gentrification, leading some scholars to suggest the co-option of culture for short-term economic gain (Yudice, 2003; Künkel and Mayer, 2012).

The production of culture and culture-related activities existed within spatial constraints and is located within the boundaries of these quarters. Undoubtedly, this posit complicates research on placemaking processes within the deeply divided city, by encouraging an understanding of the city of different ideological cultures vying for their forms of legitimacy and identity-making to shape the city around them. City managers choose to bridge this historical divide by creating new commodified 'places' which preside over the materiality of daily life. In this placemaking process, city managers, business improvement leaders and local council members frame their cities with catchy slogans to sell their future-looking visioning strategies and re-present their economies through new meanings and symbols (Evans, 2005). In doing so, they 're-market' places to change the perceptions of their war-torn countries with visible improvements and changes to the built environment, as well as having a propensity to host global-scale events and festivals, such as the Tour of Italy cycling race, the Giro d'Italia (2014) in Belfast or one of the largest New Millennium's Eve celebration in Beirut (2000). Indeed, the city management official (CM1)

from Belfast sees the emergence of the street art in the CQ as part of much larger art and culture-led revitalisation and sees the role which street art can play in promoting tourism to Belfast. It is too soon to tell, but the ramifications of the rapid development of the CQ have caused the annual HTN to relocate to the unregulated adjacent neighbourhood of Smithfield Union, a few streets away (Belfast FO1).

The creativity of the street art community is to attach non-tribal and non-commercial identities to places and thus transform a once dull area into a more vibrant environment. In a way, the cultural identities, and relationships which street art attaches onto the cityscape act as a similar process to the placemaking practices of other culture-led redevelopment projects, albeit on a much smaller scale. Urban and cultural geographers saw graffiti writers as engaged in the construction and re-appropriation of urban spaces, sometimes able to contest dominant uses of the city and sometimes reabsorbed into the cultural mainstream (Dovey et al., 2012).

Art in urban development conceals the disempowerment of urban dwellers to occupy the space of determining what the city is, by producing the ejection of communities through gentrification (Miles, 2000). Many critics of the street art community draw attention to prospective areas for redevelopment by sanitising the space and slowly beginning the process of gentrification where populations start to frequent the neighbourhood, to the detriment of the residential populations who live in the area and who are not receiving benefit from the influx of attention. Riggle (2010) and De Notto (2012) chide that some artistic interventions temporarily remove focus from the blight of the community while also sanitising the urban environment for developers to come in. Street art is an urban cool and a resource for urban development by concealing the disempowerment of inhabitants and ejecting the communities of residents through gentrification (Harb, 2012; Fawaz, 2008). Grounds and Murtagh (2015) suggest that cultural organisations have a role to play with sanitising blighted areas and forcing the removal of the original dwellers.

The culture-led development of the CQ mobilises an "aspirational image of the city instead and implies that the city can turn itself around if it adopts a prescription driven by the consumption habits of the creative class" (Degan and Miles, 2000, p. 10). In this instance, street art offers a seductive influence for urban developers using "artists' studios and lofts to stimulate housing markets and raise property values" (Zukin, 1995, p. viii). While there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case in Beirut, the development of the CQ as a creative zone encouraged the careers of street artists and other cultural organisations (Belfast Telegraph, 2018; Grounds and Murtagh, 2015; #SaveCQ, 2018).

Regarding the urban transformation of Beirut and Belfast, the struggle of these new spaces is that it may not be receptive to the needs of inhabitants who attempt to claim the use of space and to participate in the production of space. Not only does this reflect the mounting patterns of social injustice, but it also predicts that the way neoliberalism is re-shaping spaces will, in turn,

exacerbate injustices (Fawaz, 2008). Instead, street art is a small- 'p' political practise which sheds light on the micro-level co-production of spaces and temporarily engages with the ethnonational and the neoliberal processes of placemaking.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The study defined placemaking as a "set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live" (Pierce et al., 2011, p. 54). Within the context of deeply divided cities, the enduring spatial legacies of social segregation, political instability and unequal neoliberal urban development contribute to how inhabitants experience everyday life, through limits and directives. The co-creation of a place is also suggestive of the unspoken rules for non-tribal and non-neoliberal civic communities to engage and negotiate with those limits and directives to "carve their right to the city" (Mulholland et al., 2014, p. 746). The two contextual chapters on examining the placemaking processes of segregation, violence, securitisation (chapter 3) and urban transformation (chapter 4) sought to situate street art practices within an exploration of the divisive and active processes of placemaking. The research study contends that the practice of everyday life within the territorial nature of divisions influenced the intentions of the street art communities to produce temporary opportunities through experimentation with the urban spaces with the production of their artwork.

In this chapter, the study shed light on some of the spatial practices of nascent cultures of street art communities within the post-conflict cities of Beirut and Belfast. Street art politicises space by constituting democratic urban politics which the study suggests gives birth to a new understanding of the city. The street art community also takes the notion of public space quite literally, in that, their urban practices represent the urban politics of inhabitants who seek to diversify the use of space for their artistic and creative representation. In doing so, the creative subculture of street art participates in re-defining spaces for engagement. They also make use of space with the intention of awakening the slumber of urban dwellers with the visceral enjoyment and experiences of creating and producing street art for the inhabitants of the space. They re-purpose taken-for-granted spaces within the city, intending to demonstrate how inhabitants locate new spaces as a "transformative politics of encounter that brings together different publics, who might not otherwise have substantive contact with one another" (Crossan et al., 2016, p. 943).

The study has suggested a new way of understanding how street art communities temporarily re-purpose spaces and negotiate the power for "another way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness" (Soja, 1988, p. 10). Soja (1996) argues that by understanding the spatial conditions of everyday life, "we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities" (p. 8). The placemaking process of street art communities in Beirut and Belfast differ from the ethnonational and the neoliberal by engaging in pragmatic and rule-based, democratic, transient and transformative forms of placemaking practices. The spatial awareness of the street art community is advantageous because it can

demonstrate "the experience of the urban, provoking an engagement of urbanites with their environment and in re-socialising public space" (Tunnacliffe, 2016, p. i).

However, the comparison between Beirut and Belfast needs to be drawn out to describe the similarities, the differences and what this comparison says about studying micro-scale politics and social activities in deeply divided societies. The advantage of comparing two different cities, with their own social and urban conditions, brings attention to similar values directed towards the nature of public space, a deeper understanding of civic engagement, and the opportunities available for urban subcultures to transform them for their representation. The micro-scale politics of street art involves the forms of social interaction with placemaking by describing the pragmatic, democratic, transient, and transformative nature inherent in street art practices within divided cities. The legacy of territorialised spaces within ethnonational residential communities in Belfast means that the artists are sequestered to paint within environments which may co-opt their practices for development and, in a sense, contribute to the gentrification of neighbourhoods, which is against their intended motivations. In Beirut, the artists do not paint in environments monitored by ethnonational political parties, for similar reasons to Belfast, and pragmatically adjust their practices to locate areas where they will not encounter threats to their safety. Moreover, the production of street art accounts for a more democratic approach to civic engagement, which seeks to diversify the use of spaces and is distinct from the single appropriation of space. The micro-scale intervention of street art uncovers a creative process which involves members of the public, lookouts, business owners and the artist, all of whom contribute to the production of an artwork. In terms of available walls to paint on, the street art community from Beirut has a much wider canvas on which to experiment than in Belfast. With the recent support of, and nurturing from, festival organisers, street artists in Beirut and Belfast can create even larger pieces, across greater spaces, to experiment with skills, techniques, and finally, to travel to London, Paris and Belfast (forthcoming). The difference between Beirut's and Belfast's street art practices deals with the social and urban conditions of painting in environments which are controlled by the macro-scale politics of the ethnonational and the neoliberal. The nature of control over space differs considerably. The micro-geographies of Beirut which exist for the ethnonational groups produce opportunities for the production of street art along the fault lines (Bollens, 2000; Pullan and Baillie, 2013), between diverging ethnonational communities and neoliberal urban development, such as the case between Khandaq al-Ghamiq and Solidere, or between East and West Beirut. The artists are aware of the differences and seek out spaces within environments which will make the placement of their artwork less precarious. The nature of street artworks within the urban environment is a process of practices which embody the experiences and desires of creative inhabitants, who seek to reconnect others to an aesthetic sense of agency. The participants from Beirut promote an understanding of art and culture which can create social change (Beirut SA9), can create informal communities (Beirut FO1, Beirut FO2, Beirut SA6), and whose artwork contributes to beautifying the city of Beirut for its inhabitants. The placement of their artwork is evidence of the environments which they stage for temporary encounters of social cohesion, based on the desire to imagine alternative possibilities for the use and design of space. Differently, from social movements, their practices bring attention to the active and ongoing processes of making places, which are representative of diverse attitudes and beliefs. They are open to changing the social reality of forgotten places in the city.

The variously interpreted motivations of participants from Beirut reveal creative process and understanding of social activities which represent a myriad of civic engagement issues relating to amnesia, or memory of conflict, the role of women in a machismo society, the widening gap facing more marginal socio-economic communities and the rapid changes to the built environment. They commonly engage inhabitants by enchanting them with colourful images, which are temporary, ephemeral, and gratuitous. In Belfast, the prevalence of street art within the CQ underlines the transient nature of space waiting for development. While the spaces around the quarter are designated for redevelopment, the construction efforts have begun in earnest. They are during an urban struggle between civil society actors and the developers of the Tribeca project. Meanwhile, the artists have been transforming the built environment because they have had a dedicated area for which they can paint and sharpen their skills over the years. While many do paint in other areas of Northern Ireland, or within the business premises of retail and entertainment establishments within Belfast's city centre, their social practices are more distinctly related to the ideas of challenging images of Belfast for the future. The characterisation of their practices is removed from the central power of the city structure, where some participants expressly want to create spaces for communities who do not want a place within the establishment (Belfast FO1, Belfast SA8), and, instead, employ street art as a means of creating art places within existing residential or civic spaces (Belfast SA6, Belfast SA1, Belfast SA2).

The comparisons of the phenomena of street art in Beirut and Belfast bring insight into the micro-scale politics and social activities of urban subcultures whose very nature, leaves their artwork in public spaces as memories of their interactions. The small- 'p' politics of street art engages with, and remarks on, the possibilities for transient spaces, which not only offers another perspective into the practice of everyday life in divided cities but also adds vibrancy and vitality to the public imagination. The value of the comparison also sheds light on coalescing their micro-scale practices into distinct practices which inhabitants, living in cities with different forms of social cohesion, may call in to help their arenas of struggle.

The investigation of the spatial practices of the street art communities uncovered pragmatic, democratic, transient, and transformative forms of civic engagement with the city. The creative process entailed in the production of street art allows for a reading of the city as micro-scale attempts to participate in the re-familiarising alienated spaces, re-connecting inhabitants to their city and imagining spaces for representation. The ability to re-purpose these spaces also contributes to a nuancing of their right to the city, as sites which can be transformed, amid the social and urban polarisation of post-conflict cities. While there are larger political and neoliberal projects seeking to benefit from these artistic interventions and to use art and culture as a resource to lubricate the urban development, the micro-level practice of street art cannot escape the all-consuming powers of urban neoliberalism. Amid these processes which co-opt and develop their practices, the street art communities, nevertheless, contribute to coalescing a vision for diverse communities to change the way inhabitants perceive and participate in the construction of new urban places. While indeed small, their political actions demonstrate a nascent form of placemaking practices of urban politics for inhabitants who temporarily transform the city's visual landscape. The seventh and concluding chapter of the thesis acknowledges the study's empirical, theoretical, and methodological strengths. The limitations of studying

nascent urban communities in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast will also be further discussed in the next chapter while noting the limitations of conducting a focused ethnography, as characteristic of the research design and the methodology with a focus on the sample size, fieldwork duration and constraints on generalisability and the utility of the findings.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The concluding chapter makes up three parts. The first part briefly summarises the strengths of the findings of the blended case study design and focused ethnography concerning the research objectives, while acknowledging the study's limitations. The second part demonstrates how the research study enhances existing knowledge by presenting the main contributions to knowledge which exist within the empirical work. Finally, the chapter makes recommendations that are specific to the street art communities' social acts of gift giving and micro-scale, non-traditional forms of spatial engagement, and for future research.

7.2 Findings

Street art creates an urban gap – or, more correctly, identifies a new space where margins have a voice (Hooks, 1990) and communication is based on the formation of new communities and the inclusion of alternative readings of the city. The study of street art in Beirut and Belfast uncovers a nascent spatial process whereby street art places reveal traces of artistic encounters of non-traditional civic engagement and produce transient acts of generosity, very different from the divisive and exclusionary forms of the ethnonational or the neoliberal urban development placemaking. The study produced various accounts of everyday life in Beirut and Belfast from the vantage point of the inhabitants who impress/inscribe new social and spatial understanding of subcultures. Furthermore, street artists from Beirut and Belfast employ a set of tools which can "travel from city to city" (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p. 186). The social processes of street art allow for a new understanding of civic engagement which is temporary and does not have an impact on challenging the divisive power relations of ethnonational and neoliberal. Indeed, their intention is not to claim spaces in their city for themselves like the ethnonational and neoliberal urban development. They give the city and its inhabitants the gift of the artwork which remains behind. Street artists not only understand the textures and colour palette of the city's walls but also new ways of promoting civic engagement by deliberately placing it and making it visible for all to see, not a select few.

The research produced two significant findings which rework our understanding of what street artists perceive their practices achieve in the post-conflict city and what kind of places they create as a result of the placement of their work. The first finding suggests that street artists redefine social space in divided cities, by engaging in acts of gift giving as a social understanding of their experiences and motivations for producing visual landscapes art in Beirut and Belfast. The second finding is that street art imagines urban space whereby they do not intend to challenge the ethnonational or the neoliberal urban ideologies of control and power inherent in the spaces where they produce artwork.

Street artists imagine a new relationship with social space in deeply divided societies by advancing our understanding of their right to the city as an exercise in gifting Beirut and Belfast with small-scale artistic interventions, which does not have or want to impact with, the ethnonational or neoliberal urban. The street art communities do not claim a right to practise in the production of urban spaces. However, instead, they seek to contribute to a life-enhancing environment and contribute to another way of engaging with the city based on giving. In a sense, the motivations to engage with the practice of street art are evocative of how the participants themselves experience the ethnonational and neoliberal city. Within Beirut and Belfast, the participants break with the norm, challenge the static images of texts and signage of the typical consumer, and ethnonational city by adding more diversity in styles, where street art does not attempt to communicate informational or commercial messages.

The first finding reveals that while the artistic interventions of the street artists are, indeed, small, their social actions reflect significant attempts to imagine a new form of civic engagement. The street art communities of Beirut and Belfast understand their practices as meaningful ways to temporarily enchant and gift the inhabitant of the cities with gratuitous work. The finding also demonstrates that street art evokes a compelling lens to imagine everyday interactions which are different from experiences with social and urban polarisation. In cities where social exclusion from decision-making processes weaves into the fabric of everyday life, and where sectarian and political allegiances influence mundane interactions, the implications of unauthorised individuals who transform the city's walls with colourful and vibrant work, requires special attention.

Street artists also imagine the design and use of urban space as a placemaking practice of street art in Beirut and Belfast. Their practices are based on pragmatism, rules, and conventions about where and how to find spaces to place their artwork, which rejects the private appropriation of space and encouraging alternative uses of those spaces. The messages deal with the lack of adequate public spaces in Beirut and Belfast while noting how tribal or neoliberal ideologies currently consume spaces. The artists in Beirut often transform bullet-ridden buildings, to face the legacies of sectarian divisions which continue to segregate the East and West sides of the city. In Belfast, many examples of street art exist on the sides of derelict and abandoned building sites which are awaiting regeneration. The communities temporarily transform the areas in the hope that they can also encourage the necessary transformation to spark people's imagination, in environments where parochial concerns preoccupy everyday life.

The second finding then uncovers the spatial understandings behind the placement of street art in highly territorial societies. The finding discovers that street artists temporarily re-purpose divided spaces to trace new zones for social interactions. The study frames their placemaking practices as non-confrontational, temporary and ephemeral, where the placement of street art, then, generates new ways of thinking about the pragmatic, democratic, transient and transformative nature of space, and the practice of making meaning of everyday life, from below. The temporary re-purposing of spaces does not seek to confront or outwardly contest, instead it seeks to distance itself from the existing spatial arrangements by drawing attention to the places which can be temporarily re-purposed. Street art communities, nevertheless, contribute to coalescing a vision for diverse communities to change the way inhabitants perceive and participate in the construction of new urban places. While indeed small,

their political actions demonstrate a nascent form of placemaking practises of an urban politics for inhabitants who temporarily transform the city's visual landscape.

Street art conflates a social and spatial understanding of gifting fleeting moments for non-traditional groups to form, by demonstrating where those meeting grounds can occur, however ephemerally. The deliberate placement of their artwork carves out spaces which are more conducive for non-traditional, cultural, and artistic identities to form while offering tools for others to engage in their practices, such as street art festivals, happenings, and programmes. The street art communities' response to the lack of civic space is twofold. The placement of their artwork draws attention to spaces which are not claimed by the divisive neoliberal and ethnonational placemaking, and in doing so, they suggest new spaces for civic engagement, however small. The street art communities, temporarily, design and use space to create forms of placemaking which are pragmatic, democratic, transient and transformative, and where "politics is not made up of power relationships" but is made up of social and spatial relationships between different worlds which occupy spaces of the city (Rancière, 2006, p. 42).

7.3 Limitations of the Research Design and Method

However, the gift giving motivations and spatial engagement practise of street art cannot be conflated to be like other urban practices, such as graffiti. Graffiti as an action of spraying writing on the walls is more about claiming and appropriating spaces away from neoliberal spaces than it is about creating opportunities for non-graffiti cultures to meet. The study of street art in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast deals with the territorial nature of public meeting grounds and the material manifestations of borders, both ethnonational and commercial. Still, while no evidence suggested that street artists are aware of the process of co-option of their craft to gentrify neighbourhoods, the intention to create civic spaces outweighed the artistic dilemma of contributing to further segregation and fragmentation of everyday life.

The study's limitations are characteristic of the research design and the methodology with a focus on (1) the generalisability of solely comparing divided cities where the phenomenon of street art exits, (2) the fieldwork duration for conducting a three-month immersive ethnography, (3) the sample size with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and (4) the utility of the findings that are the result of the study design or method. The following discussion presents the limitations of generalisability and decisions which the researcher took to examine one form of urban art over other more contentious artistic communities.

7.3.1 Generalisability

The choice of selecting a case study design to place the phenomenon of street art in divided societies is to offer details about essential relationships between social groupings and the ideologies which influence their intentions. However, using a case

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study as a comparison does "not constitute a systematic evaluation of how interrelations among people within and without the area shape place contestation" (Pierce at al., 2011, p. 56). The generalisability of the findings is in the similarity of the themes which seemed to travel between the two cities and the intentions of the street artists behind why they place street art in specific locations. Moreover, as the finding suggests a reconceptualisation of Lefebvre's (1968) idea of claiming space, the street artists do not seek to contest the nature and shape of a place. Instead, the potential use of a case study design was to see how concepts of segregation, sectarianism and neoliberal urban placemaking travelled across the cities of Beirut and Belfast and were useful to frame the inquiry of whether street art has an impact on them and whether they have an impact on street art.

7.3.2 Fieldwork Duration

The second limitation of the research design and method was the duration of the three-month fieldwork when most interviews took place. In the months between September and November 2018, a total of twenty-two semi-structured interviews took place, first, in Belfast to coincide with the Hit the North (HTN) Street Art Festival, second, in Beirut to coincide with the end of summer breaks and, third, in Belfast to interview a few artists who were away on tour. The research design considered the relatively short fieldwork duration within an immersive, focused ethnography by exploring the peculiar social phenomenon of street art as it occurred in everyday life (Bikker et al., 2017; Ocejo, 2013). The researcher set up contact with the street art community in 2015 as part of his MPhil research and during the 2016 and 2017 HTN Street Art Festivals as an Artist Liaison in Belfast.

7.3.3 Sample Size

The third constraint dealt with sample size. The focused ethnography consisted of interviews with eighteen street artists, three festival organisers and one city management individual involved with the business improvement of the CQ. However, the sample size was appropriate in uncovering the social perceptions of the participants. The existence of street artworks in Beirut and Belfast are a result of commissioned and sanctioned co-production with festival organisers, local businesses, and the artists, and, as such, the size of the overall population is itself small. The study sought to uncover the power relations inherent in the production of spaces in the two divided cities, and, as a result, street artists who produced commissioned work were selected. The decision to research the practices of the street art community rather than the graffiti community dealt with the lived experience and awareness of the sensitivity of studying an anonymous community who do not seek permission to tag walls. The sample group did not include artists who paint in the political art traditions in Belfast and Beirut. The reason for these exclusions was due to the definition of street art which the study adopted for the research. The sample was also manageable for a three-month focused ethnography of the street art community, as demonstrated by the richness of data collected and analysed. The sample size of twenty-two participants was doing enough work in producing a rich data corpus, which included field notes, twenty-two interview transcripts, several photographic documentations, and archival sources. The interview transcripts were

recorded electronically and then transcribed manually. At the same time, the field notes were written manually in one notebook which the researcher carried with him during participant observation and interviews.

Given the sample size and the interview questions, the semi-structured nature of the face-to-face interviews produced "significant reflection, dialogue and time on each transcript and was in line with the more latent level of analysis employed, to identify underlying ideas, rather than a more superficial descriptive analysis" (Vasileiou et al., 2018, p. 10). The semi-structured interviews with the artist, festival organisers and city manager ranged from 45 minutes to one hour. As part of the immersive strategy of participant observation, the researcher observed a total of forty hours of street art created during the HTN street art festivals. In doing so, he was able to devote a lot of his attention to building trust with the participants and eliciting informed consent to allow him to study the phenomenon *in situ*. On average, twenty pages per interview were transcribed and contributed to well over 330 pages of raw data which were then analysed and synthesised into the two main findings.

7.3.4 Utility of Findings

The utility of the finding is in whether the "research decisions enable a project to make contributions that fulfil its stated goals" (Levitt et al., 2017, p. 10). The third apparent limitation of the study of comparing street art practices in divided societies is that the benefits of studying similar contexts and processes of urban and social divisions are not wholly generalisable to other cities experiencing similar forms of socio-economic and political divisions. The cities of Beirut and Belfast are not unique in those experiences, but they provide crucial insight into understanding emerging formations of cultural identities which differ from group solidarities entrenched in sectarianism. Furthering the discussion on the study's limitations, the decision to compare post-conflict cities took into consideration expanding the definition of division to encompass socio-economically divided cities like Berlin or ethnically divided cities like Nicosia and Jerusalem. However, in the latter, the comparison of Nicosia as a divided capital between Turkish and Greek Cypriots with the capital cities of Beirut and Belfast did not warrant investigation because the researcher did not have the necessary lived experience to appreciate the nuances of that protracted social conflict fully. In the case of Jerusalem, the decision not to research street art in Arab East Jerusalem or Abu Dis in the Occupied West Bank came down to a personal decision not to threaten ties with the researcher's native Lebanon which is technically still at war with the State of Israel, and, therefore, could not ensure his personal or his family's safety.

The research compared the social and spatial dimensions of street art in two divided societies. It offered new insight to a community of practitioners who temporarily engage with enchanting and gifting inhabitants' everyday lives with novel forms of social interactions with space while demonstrating the temporary nature of public space. Street artists do not directly challenge pervasive ideologies of the neoliberal and the ethnonational. Instead, the placemaking practises of street art suggest an alternative engagement of artistic intervention which are pragmatic and rule-based, democratic, transient, and transformative forms of everyday life. The elements of gift giving, as a social and spatial process, needs to be explored further in discussions of urban

politics, as it describes a practice which temporarily transcends divisions and imagines opportunities for social cohesion and shared moments, which might also create the basis of a much larger conversation about non-traditional forms of civic engagement.

7.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The unique feature of the thesis examined the interaction between the fields of social science and urban studies to explain the motivations and placemaking practices of street artists in divided cities. The following provides the key contributions and assertions that can guide future research projects concerned with the construction of social realities in post-conflict societies. The research undertaken contributes to three areas of knowledge and discourse – the empirical, theoretical, and methodological. The second part of this chapter elaborates on some of the critical contributions of this research.

7.4.1 Empirical Contributions

While the field of social science has extensively contributed to an understanding of the social reality of individuals who organise the meaning of their lives according to ethnonational and neoliberal institutions, few empirical studies have examined the social and urban processes of post-conflict street artists. They place artistic interventions within Belfast's city centre and Beirut. Indeed, the only written work on Belfast's street art remarked on the notable absence of it (Bush, 2013). While in Beirut, the studies on street art examined the political response which the street artists possess towards the socio-political uncertainty (Sinno, 2017), noting the general neglect of public spaces (Kraidy, 2013). The finding of the research builds upon Sinno's (2017) and Kraidy's (2013) writing, but from the perspective of what the artists think they are achieving with the placement of their work. Many studies conducted on experiences of everyday life focus on post-conflict reconstruction and the enduring legacy of ethnonational identities, shedding brief glimpses on subcultures' experiences (Nagle, 2018; Larkin, 2013). Among the studies conducted, very few have engaged with the experiences of street artists, their motivations, and what their placemaking practices reveal about the production of urban space (Lefebvre, 1991). The three gaps are central to the conception of the thesis and define its primary contribution.

A key contribution is its first-hand account of an empirical investigation, analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork of artistic subcultures in Beirut and Belfast. The new data and knowledge produced from the two case studies present an analysis influenced by social sciences and urban studies in post-conflict settings. The empirical synthesis produced a distinct set of data on the characteristics and implications of the placement/gifting of temporary artistic interventions which differ in motivation and placemaking from the logic of ethnonational and neoliberal urban development. By examining the perspectives of street artists within these divided environments, the thesis elevated discussions of culture and art at the intersection of post-conflict studies.

In seeking concepts that travelled for comparison between the two case studies, the social and spatial processes of segregation, securitisation and neoliberal urban development were useful for examining the phenomenon of street art in post-conflict cities, and for answering the research question. The approach has been one of a case study comparison concerning street art in divided urban settings, and addressing the gap about social perceptions and the experiences of everyday life in the milieu of Beirut and Belfast (Khalaf, 2006; Larkin, 2010; Makdissi, 1996; Mitchell and Kelly, 2010; Nagel, 2002; Nagle, 2016; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). The study of street art not only revealed the enduring legacy of ethnonationalism on the identity formation of new cultural identities but also evidenced how the street art communities differed from the seemingly stubborn and pervasive neoliberal urban and ethnonational ideologies.

This study explored new readings of post-conflict everyday life from the vantage point of artistic communities who co-produce temporary, non-transactional and gratuitous artistic interventions, and who trace out new zones where new cultures can form, however ephemerally. Nevertheless, by focusing on the individual street artist, the research presented diverse motivations to place street art within the public sphere which revealed an alternative reading of sub-culture and non-traditional political engagement with the citizens, not as a claim, but as a gift. The critical reading of identity formation and historical experiences with divisive placemaking processes in post-conflict societies contributes to the discourse on non-traditional forms of civic engagement. The civic engagement with the co-production of places expanded existing knowledge on the production of space, whereby street artists overcome the tense relationships of claiming space, by never claiming it in the first place. Instead, street art provides the city with opportunities to imagine new interactions and new ways to interact with space that is not bound in a "demand or a cry" (Lefebvre, 1968, p. 14).

The study also sought to understand the new readings of everyday life from the urban communities who temporarily engage with space, while challenging the usual messages of social and spatial segregation, political uncertainty, and socio-economic grievances. The empirical investigation addressed the following gaps in knowledge. The useful framing of street art as a repertoire (Highmore, 2002) enables new sets of tools for non-traditional civic engagement based on gifting citizens with temporary and ephemeral artwork, and new discourses on the co-production of places between the street artist, the audience and the city. The placement of street art reveals an original co-production of places within ethnonational and neoliberal spaces whereby the street art communities reveal new opportunities for non-sectarian and non-commercial civic engagement, however temporary. The concept of framing was a useful tool to examine how the experiences with segregation, ethnonationalism and urban neoliberal developments influence the motivations and the process in which street artists make meaning of their everyday life in divided societies.

Street art practices refocus the relevance of temporary artistic interventions along more temporary lines where the act of gift giving is more congruent with creating new relationships and reveals how non-tribal and non-commercial communities interact with themselves, their audiences and their city. Rather than confronting and rejecting the pervasive ideologies, the street

art communities in Beirut and Belfast distance themselves by establishing new cultural identities and opportunities for interactions.

7.4.2 Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution re-worked the original framework of claiming a right to the city, by imagining civic engagement in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast. The interconnectedness of the practice of street art and the social and urban processes of sectarian and neoliberal urban placemaking processes, identified in chapters three and four, produces insight from the perceptive of urban subcultures who seek to imagine alternative forms of non-traditional civic engagement.

The study investigated the cases of street art by comparing the experiences of street artists in the cities of Beirut and Belfast. The thesis advocates for the need for an interdisciplinary perspective in exploring the legacies of sectarian and neoliberal urban placemaking on the formation of social and spatial identities. The findings suggest that street art does not offer insight into understanding claim-making activities of appropriating spaces in Beirut and Belfast because it has no impact on challenging the existing neoliberal urban nor the ethnonational claims to space. Instead, their small-scale interventions suggest a new way of thinking about the production of space as one which is co-produced between the street art communities' need to enchant, communicate and entertain by drawing attention to places where non-tribal communities can meet. Instead, street art is a useful means to reconceptualise the right to the city from one of claim-making exercises to a gift giving exercise. The research promotes a more nuanced understanding of the set of available tools which non-tribal communities can practice everyday life by gifting artworks to the city and creating open-air art galleries across the city.

The study initially explored the practice of everyday life of street art communities through an understanding of their motivations and placemaking practices as a right to the city "which seeks to prioritise social space as truly public, owned, used, inhabited and accessible to all" (Zieleniec, 2016, p. 13). Moreover, Zieleniec argues that "graffiti signifies creative engagement with and the colonisation and appropriation of space through imaginative, playful and artistic interventions that conflicts, contests and challenges dominant discourses, representations and the regulations of space" (p. 13). While the focus of Zieleniec (2016) looked at graffiti as a quick and urban form of laying claim to the city, the research examined the extensive, exhaustive and often time-consuming process of street art production within spaces which prevent non-tribal and non-commercial interactions.

Investigating the cases of the phenomenon of street art in Beirut and Belfast from a synthesis of the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996), the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991), and Goffman's (1975) framing, the thesis advocates the need for a multidisciplinary perspective in exploring the social processes of street art communities in divided cities. The case studies of Beirut and Belfast present a contrast or a substantial re-working of the notion of the right to the city, in that, street art is not a process in the opposite direction to merely claiming a right to appropriate spaces, perhaps as graffiti would, or political murals

and urban property development projects. Instead, street art in Beirut and Belfast redirects the right to the city concept towards a new focus of the temporal nature of everyday life, as an ephemeral and temporary act of gift giving, where street art engages in a non-transactional and free practice of creating open-air art galleries for their audience. In other words, they are not claiming space to gift giving; their motivation is to engage with spaces to animate and beautify, socialising and enchanting forgotten spaces in the city. In doing so, street art is an attempt to imagine social spaces through enchantment and gift giving and is based on pragmatic and rules-based norms and conventions of transience and transformation. However, it is challenging to categorise street art as a solely altruistic exercise. There are other street art practices which reflect the co-option of street art by urban developers, property managers and businesses and their commodification.

The finding reveals that while street art communities understand the power relations that restrict their use of art, they also intervene in the divided cities to create new civic spaces. The right to the city suggests that inhabitants practise their right to appropriate spaces by claiming spaces for their use (Lefebvre, 1996). The act of claiming space is to take something and to declare ownership, and implies a unidirectional relationship with the city, which produces a city of difference based on different community building exercises, group solidarity and communication with one portion of society. The temporary re-purposing of territorialised spaces reveals a nuanced approach to civic engagement in post-conflict societies, one where the artistic communities gift their practice, not as a claim to the city. Street art is more like do-it-yourself urbanism (Iveson, 2013) for aspiring artists and social activists which allows for a quick and inexpensive way to communicate images with audiences.

In addition to shedding light on how street art communities re-purpose space and reshape social interactions in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast, the research elaborated on the voices and decision-making processes of how subcultures temporarily intervene in the persistent and hardened social arrangements, with their conventions and norms of ephemerality and temporality. As discussed in chapters five and six, the norms and conventions of street art are to temporarily re-socialise spaces around the placement of the artwork. Unlike political murals, sectarian graffiti, and other material expressions of the ethnonational and the neoliberal, street art is not permanent. Like the shifting sands of a dune, street art disappears as fast as it appears. The study of street artistic interventions within urban environments allows for a reading of the relationship between neighbourhood and community where "neighbourhoods are spatially based, communities are more amorphous institutions that are connected to local places through far-flung transnational networks" (Pine, 2010, p. 641). In other words, street art is a lens, which is the result of an iterative, evolutionary process of defining, not just boundaries or territories, but the rules and norms against which socio-political practices are understood.

7.4.3 Methodological Contributions

In addition to contributing to a gap in empirical and theoretical knowledge, the thesis contributed to research methodology by offering a window into the city's "little social worlds" (Park, 1929), as a coherent strategy for understanding the divided city from the perspectives of the street art community. It also investigated the nature of social reality in post-conflict Beirut and Belfast and its influence on the social phenomena of street art which can "do or can exist, the conditions of their existence and how they are related" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 92). The main methodological contribution dealt with the urban element of the study, explicitly being on the job as an artist liaison during the HTN street art festival and advancing community relationships.

Being on the job (Ocejo, 2013) permitted the researcher to work alongside the participants to "see and understand the embedded meanings in a setting and the constructed meanings of a group by doing what they do" (p. 79). The aim of immersing myself in the work of street art creation and production was to allow me to "experience their situations by entering into the same meaning-making processes that are central to their lives" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 10). An essential aspect of "taking the role of the other" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 10) by taking part and working with street artists in the field is that I was in the position to collect and generate data to analyse simultaneously. However, as Bourdieu suggests, "the universe of art is a universe of belief, belief in gifts, in the uniqueness of the uncreated creator, and the intrusion of the sociologist, who seeks to understand, explain, account for what he finds, is a source of scandal" (2003, p. 96). Overcoming this perception of researchers, then, being on the job entails describing the historical, economic, and social conditions of "the constitution of an artistic field" (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 103). The primary aim of being on the job is to paint a complete picture of those involved in the creation of street art and organisations who have an interest in art and the existence of art, such as festivals and city planners. I chose to uncover these relationships through participant observation (Cohen et al., 2011) during HTN as an artist liaison.

I have professional contacts with street artists and festival organisers in Belfast through volunteering with HTN, in collaboration with the Community Arts Partnership, where I worked as artist liaison for two years. The position did not exist before my interaction with HTN festival. My immersion as an urban ethnographer began to take place during my master's level research on street art in the Cathedral Quarter (El Masri, 2016). When I expressed interest to include street artists as foci in my doctoral study, they afforded me with the opportunity of participant observation through volunteering during the three-day live-panting festival with 30 artists from all over the island of Ireland, UK, Europe and the world. It was during this interaction that I was given a unique insight into the street art creation process while gaining access to all the local artists from Belfast and international artists. Aside from sharing the philosophical assumptions of my research, my primary responsibilities included organising of pre-ordered Montana spray cans for individual artists to use, taking them to their wall sites, securing ladders and scaffolding to scale higher walls while negotiating with businesses and property owners to supply us with walls for the artists to paint on. I became part of the process as well as observing them. I chose not to interview them during this process as not to detract from their task at hand. While some artists were keener to chat with me about my research or to include my ideas in their

creation, others were suspicious of my intentions, as Bourdieu (2003) warned it would happen and stayed away. Interestingly, the local artists were keener to chat with me than visiting artists from outside of Ireland.

The modest advances made in terms of methodology contextualised the metaphor of the "laboratory method" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 5) in terms of studying street art through a social scientific lens or small-scale urban anthropology. In doing so, the researcher *saw* street art as places in Beirut and Belfast, where a developing social force was visibly transforming the cities and urban life (Ocejo, 2013). Park considered the city as a "social laboratory", or a "clinic in which human nature and social processes might be conveniently studied" (Bulmer, 1986, p. 92). Investigating the practice of producing street art became the place from which to examine the changes of urban life, like a snapshot where "social orders were reflected in and shaped the built environment" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 6). From this perspective, a comparative case study and focused ethnography approach to studying street art in their urban habitat brought useful applications of conceptual tools and theories closer to the research's main objectives and aims.

The strengths of conducting an immersive ethnography with a little-known community of participants afforded the researcher great insight into operationalising Ocejo's (2013) guidelines of being up close and keeping street art community relationships in Beirut and Belfast. Through being there and experiencing the production of street art, within its many stages and creative processes, the modest advancement for small scale urban anthropology is that it provided me with "the data [to] explain a group's situation and make connections between them and larger structures in society" (Ocejo, 2013, p. 23).

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Across the street art communities, the comparative case study approach produced diverse themes dealing with social and spatial engagement in deeply divided societies. The current literature on the right to the city and divided societies are grounded in the experience of citizens to lay claim to their city as part of social movements in acts of contention. The thesis provides grounds for future research on the role of subcultures who temporarily engage in prompting "a counter-narrative to hegemonic operation of power and social control" (De Notto, 2014, p. x) as well as the ability to connect people to a broader sense of agency through discussions of art, culture and the built environment.

The similarities in terms of construction and substance of the artwork in Beirut and Belfast reveals an interest in offering alternative visions of the social and political norms around the representations of objectification of women, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) population, migrant and immigrant populations, animal welfare and the natural environment in the modern societal discourses. Furthermore, the concern for the lack of adequate public meeting grounds is a theme that travelled across the street art communities in Beirut and Belfast. The general lack of public spaces in Beirut and Belfast is the combination of urban planning failures (Gaffikin et al., 2016; Khalaf, 2006) and the prioritisation of economic

development (Fawaz, 2012) over social cohesion and national reconciliation. In response to the absence of public space, the street art communities' perspectives of space are to encourage a more participatory approach to the design and use of existing spaces with the placement of their artwork. While small, their interventions suggest a new way of looking at how communities design and use spaces which do not confront or clash with the existing ordering of spaces in the post-conflict cities.

The promising implications of the research design's focused, immersive ethnography allow the co-production of knowledge for under-researched communities concerned with transforming the narratives for the natural environment, human rights, and urban planning. The recommendations for future study include examining the re-working of Lefebvre's (1968, 1996) right to the city by applying it to communities who seek to temporarily use space for the intention other than claiming and appropriating space. The suggested communities include the Beat Collective in Belfast who temporarily re-purpose spaces in the city centre to stage elaborate musical concerts and other creative communities who perform an alternative cultural identity in public spaces. Another recommendation is to involve a reception analysis of the inhabitants who encounter the street artwork, as passers-by or as residents. The application of Hall's Audience Reception Theory (1973), for example, would allow for the audience to decode the messages and values inherent in the street artworks and to read how effectively they can receive and understand the message. The encoded messages and values of the street artworks could be a useful platform to evaluate the audience's dominant, oppositional or negotiated readings of ideologies of power inherent in their communities.

Street art embeds messages and codes into its work, using different skills, styles and images and reveals similarities in style and technique with propagandistic art found in other socio-politically divided cities. Therefore, a content analysis between street art and the propagandistic art or socio-political art would reveal more about the politics of the urban space, than the similarities in style and technique. The two art forms embed codes into their artwork based on symbols and meanings towards which they aspire, where they use space. A comparative study between the two urban art forms in Beirut and Belfast, for example, would allow for diverse opinions of practitioners who would not typically meet, to engage in discussions to understand urban collective memory, their experiences and social representations of communities.

7.6 Conclusion

The study of the phenomenon of street art in the post-conflict cities of Beirut and Belfast examined a community of street artists who gift their artwork in temporary interventions while drawing out spaces for the co-production of new social relationships within the divided societies. While street artists in Beirut and Belfast do not directly challenge or confront the ideologies of social power and control, the motivation to artistically intervene in the cityscape suggests a social understanding of giving which calls for further attention. Moreover, the key differences between the socio-spatial process of sectarianism and neoliberal urbanism, on the one hand, and street art, on the other, is one of reciprocity.

The most significant contribution to make about the social and spatial understanding of street artists towards their cities is that they transformed the historical experiences with the social and urban polarisation and produced cultural identities which give back to their communities, by leaving their artworks in the public sphere. The findings of chapters five and six called for a re-working of Lefebvre's right to the city framework which argues that for inhabitants to resist the domination of social control and order, they must re-appropriate spaces in the act of claim-making to spaces. In this instance, the re-appropriation of space reveals the actions of individuals or groups to 'take back the city' in a series of urban struggles which can be seen in the YouStink November of 2015 or the Occupy Movement in Belfast in 2012. As the thesis noted in chapter three, the warring sectarian parties claimed their right to the city by territorialising their communities with the use of political murals, slogans and helped to construct and maintain divisive identities. The street art community does not resist, confront or challenge existing placemaking practices such as sectarianism and neoliberal urban development, and have little impact on their respective cities' legacies of claim-making which generated their societies to conflict (Nagle, 2016). Street art functions in the act of reciprocity, taking their memories, desires and wishes for a colourful and vibrant public sphere and gifting their visual manifestations of fleeting moments of enchantment, entertainment, and beautification. The street art community shows a desire to give to the inhabitants of its cities by gifting artwork which transforms bland spaces into open-air art galleries, accessible to those who merely change their gaze and look upwards. The placement of its work has brought together non-tribal communities to form as street art groups and street festivals, however briefly. In doing so, the mere existence of the street artworks across their cities encourages a new reading of everyday life, where new forms of group solidarity attach artistic and cultural significance to places and meaning to the practice of everyday life. The street art community also generates new experiences to be had with the city, and importantly, one that is not tainted by the experiences of exclusion and separation generated by the legacies of ethnonational violence, ongoing sectarianism and neoliberal urbanism.

The social act of gift giving and the small- 'p' political act of engaging with spaces differ from the profoundly divisive logics of ethnonational and neoliberal urban processes. The community of street artists also reveals the formation of new cultural identities where the need for non-traditional forms of civic engagement is the primary motivator for the placement of their artwork in the public sphere. The placement of their artwork reveals a co-production of places where meanings are impressed onto the walls of the city temporarily and function as places where other groups can meet. As Zukin (1995) reminds us, the economy of the gift is rare in environments where ideological forces threaten to close off opportunities for diverse groups to meet and bases social relationships on the act of taking. Street artists present a new modality for social and spatial interactions based on gifting images in the public sphere and the elevation of new identities who see and use spaces quite differently. All this further diversifies the chaotic readings of everyday life in divided cities.

Postscript

At the time of writing up the thesis, civil protests began to take place in Lebanon, initially triggered by planned taxes on gasoline, tobacco and VoIP calls on applications such as WhatsApp. They quickly expanded into a country-wide condemnation of sectarian rule, a stagnant economy, unemployment, endemic corruption in the public sector, legislation that is perceived to shield the ruling class from accountability (such as banking secrecy) and failures from the government to provide essential services such as electricity, water and sanitation. Protests started taking place in small numbers around Beirut towards the end of September 2019. Since October the 17th, the youth- and women-led protests have swelled into a historic revolt against not just corruption and ineptitude, but also inequality, patriarchy and the sectarian politics that have dominated the country since its creation throughout the civil war and the Taif Accord. The outbreak of the protests was attributed to the accumulated crises within the preceding weeks in Lebanon. First, days before the protests began on October 17th, a series of about 100 significant wildfires in *Chouf*, *Khroub* and other Lebanese areas displaced hundreds of people and caused enormous damage to Lebanese wildlife. The Lebanese government did not deploy its firefighting equipment due to lack of maintenance and had to rely on aid from neighbouring Cyprus, Jordan, Turkey, and Greece. Moreover, the prices of both oil and bread had been increasing amid increased unemployment and poverty nationwide, with youth unemployment at 37% and general unemployment at 25% as of August 2019. Since all these issues are due to a lack of proper governance, the Lebanese people voiced out their opinions over the negative situation.

The postscript now considers the implications of the dynamic situation on a study of street art whose findings proffered two findings on the intentions and imaginations of street artists in Beirut and Belfast. The protest movement and the increasing politicisation of graffiti and street artists which deviate from a more purposeful and deliberate impact on the creation of new civic spaces

How has street art changed by the protest movement and the increasing politicisation of graffiti and street artists?

Street art in Beirut has been changed by the protest movement and the increasing politicisation of graffiti and street artists. The Lebanese Uprising (*Thawra*) was the fuse, and the recolouring and reclaiming of gentrified space in Solidere became the explosion. There was a sense among the artists I spoke with upon returning to Beirut in December 2019, that something had changed within their intentions to descend to Solidere. The vernacular term *balad*, replaced the name of Solidere, to stand for the public sphere which the area was once known for before the outbreak of the Civil War. The *Balad* now meant the protestors had reclaimed Solidere spaces, and more strategically, re-purposed significant locations for their own (see Figure 23). The protests centred around the Riad Al Solh Square, next to the United Nations Headquarters in Lebanon and within eye distance of the Lebanese Parliament building perched on a hill. As a result, the protestors reclaimed the land around the square and set up squatters' tents and meeting grounds for various social, political, and cultural groups. A few blocks away next to the derelict site

of once-famed film theatre, the protestors set up more squatter's tents and erected a market place for all walks of life from the extent of the 'Egg' down Martyr's Square to the *balad*'s border with the Mediterranean Sea. All around the edges of the encampment sites, street art and graffiti exploded and reclaimed walls of empty luxury and office buildings, in some cases, breaking glass and destroying the facades.

Figure 23: Al Balad: A Plan of Beirut's Central District During the October Revolution, *Source:* **Antoine Atallah, 2019.**
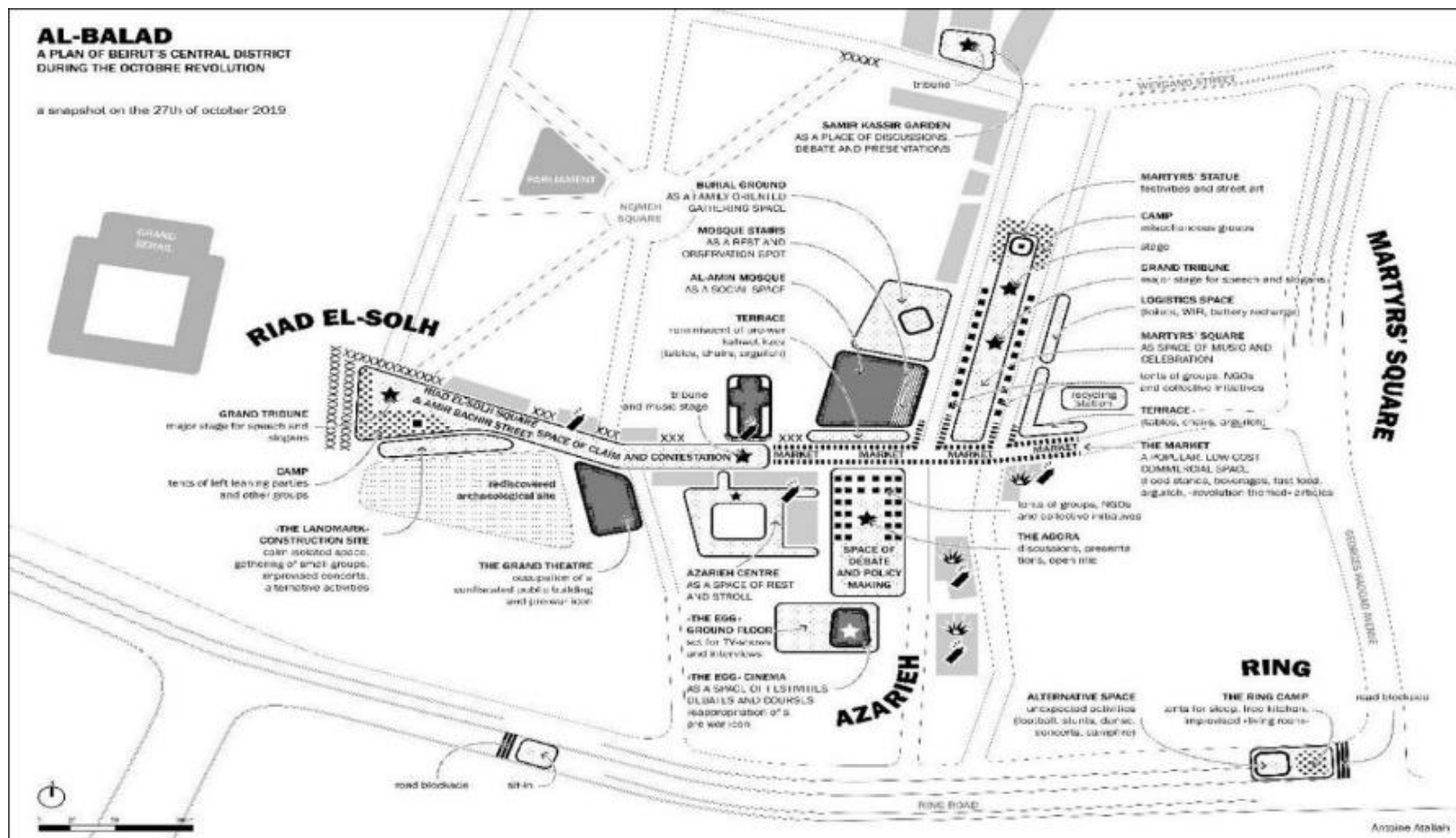
Is a Lefebvrian 'Right to the City' no longer relevant?

The motivations for the artists are more purposeful than ever, from the artwork itself which recreates the protest chants or parodies political discourses, rather than mere self-expression of their hybrid identities. For the first time in recorded history, all forms of "autonomously produced aesthetic production in the public sphere', including street art and graffiti the term of independent public art" (Schacter, 2016) became more widespread among artists and non-artists alike, who employ mere and artistic graffiti, stencils, mural art and paste-ups to claim places for their meaning. A new street art collective, formed by Ahla Fawda's Art of Change and 'WhereTheresWalls' (Art of Change, 2020), is a staging platform for existing and up and coming artists to paint. In addition to staging street art murals in Hamra, the collective descended to the *balad* shortly after the *thawra*

began, to paint on the reclaimed walls of banks and the sides of the plethora of empty buildings in Riad El-Solh, and within the Egg's structure, in Azarieh.

More international artists are descending into the city, more visible than before, with the likes of the Catalonia Tsunamic collective, making links to the protests in Hong Kong, Barcelona and Beirut and their battle against neoliberal policies. A key message, however, is of solidarity with social movements across the world. The October 2019 *Thawra* was an open invitation for street artists and graffiti writers alike to reclaim parts of the Solidere which had previously prevented their artistic interventions. The 'right to the city' holds more credence as artists from Lebanon and beyond claim a right to the city, for their vision, voice and messaging, noting the challenges which the enduring legacy of conflict poses, while offering new possibilities for engagement. While repopulating Solidere is not anything new. We have seen successive camps in Martyr's Square during the Cedar Revolution 2005, the 2008 parliamentarian crisis, to the 2015 Garbage Crisis. However, unlike the encampments based on sectarian lines, we see for the first time, a public realm of protestors from across the country. The public sphere is filled with people who tidy and clean the spaces as though it were their back yards, set up communal spaces such as the Agora and food kitchens and medical camps for those who cannot afford health care.

However, the artists who do descend to paint on the walls in the *balad* also highlight the divides between Solidere and Khandaq al Ghamiq, where Amal-backed youths and men harass protesters and their encampments in the Azarieh area. It is too soon to tell what the implications are of the street artists actions, without a reception analysis of the protestors and passers-by to the area.

Appendix 1 – Information Sheet for Participants

Project Title: The Right to Paint the Divided City: Urban Street Art as Spaces for Representation in Beirut and Belfast

Chief Investigator: Dr. Kris Brown   **Researcher:** Omar El Masri

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. Please read the following information and do not hesitate to ask any questions about anything that might not be clear to you. Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign a consent form to confirm the conditions for participation outlined in the information sheet.

My name is Omar El Masri, and I am a PhD researcher at the Transitional Justice Institute of Ulster University. This study is being conducted as part of my Doctor of Philosophy degree, and the findings will be published as a 100,000-word PhD thesis and in shorter articles in academic journals. The project is supervised by two researchers at Ulster University – Dr Kris Brown (Lecturer) and Dr Rachel Monaghan (Senior Lecturer in Criminology). I am funded through Ulster University's Vice-Chancellor's Research Studentship.

Why is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to uncover the social perceptions of street art creators and producers of street art festivals, towards the contemporary urban changes in Beirut and Belfast. The study also seeks to understand whether conversations about art and culture offer an alternative reading of everyday life and experiences with the divided city, namely the 'right' to lay claim to spaces. As such, the multidisciplinary motivation of this research is to examine the artistic creation and production of cultural identities, which exist at the edge of social and political contestations, divisions, and transformations in the divided city. The overall aims of the investigation, then, is to understand what social processes and motivations exist behind the creation and production of street art, how the social perceptions of street artists are constituted amid the broken urban fabric of the city, and whether these practices suggest an alternative reading to repairing the social and urban fabric of the divided city.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to participate because you have been involved with the creation and production of street art in Beirut and Belfast. The study will include sedentary interviews with about 8 street artists over the age of 18 in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, respectively. The researcher will also interview 2-3 festival organizers who have been engaged in street art programming initiatives in your respective city. Each sedentary interview will last between 60-90 minutes.

Can I change my mind?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and no payment will be made to participants. Agreement to participate in an interview can be withdrawn at any time, and no reason for withdrawal needs to be given. In the event of withdrawal, any data given by participants can be destroyed, if requested, and until the date of submission of the thesis.

Where will the interviews take place?

The interviews can be conducted in agreed locations, such as public spaces, university grounds, coffee shops or can also be arranged via Skype, if necessary.

Will the interviews be recorded?

The interviews will be recorded with your consent, with the use of a recording device. You can pause or terminate the recording at any stage. No one outside the project will have access to these materials, without your express consent. Following the interview, digital recordings will be transcribed by the researcher.

Confidentiality

All data collected will be anonymised and treated confidentially. This is following the principles of the United Kingdom's Data Protection Act (1998) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

How will the data be stored and used?

All the data collected during the interviews will be securely handled and stored following the principles of the United Kingdom's Data Protection Act (1998), the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (2018), and the universities' policies. During the fieldwork, all audio recordings and interview notes will be transferred daily to a password-locked computer and uploaded to the Ulster University personal cloud to secure the data. After the completion of the fieldwork, all the work on the digital raw data - i.e. audio recordings, transcriptions, and interview notes, will be stored in the assigned university password-protected computer. The hard data will be stored in locked cabinets at Ulster University. All the data collected will be used for research purposes only.

What are the risks of taking part?

The risks to the participants are minimal. You will have control over the decision to take part in the project, which questions you want to answer, what information you want to provide, on a confidential basis and finally, how the information you provide can be used.

Ulster University has granted ethical approval for this project

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Appendix 2 – Consent Form for Research Participants

Project Title: The Right to Paint the Divided City: Urban Street Art as Spaces for Representation in Beirut and Belfast

Chief Investigator: Dr. Kris Brown   **Researcher:** Omar El Masri

Please read the statements below and initial in the right-hand column if you agree with the statement, then sign and date the form if you agree to participate in the research project and provide your contact details.

Statement	Initials
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet given to me about the study.	
I confirm that I have been able to ask questions about it and that my questions about the study have been answered.	
I understand that I can pause or stop the interview at any time.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason, and without my rights being affected in any way. Any or all of the information can be withdrawn at any time up until thesis submission in September 2019.	
I understand that I will not be identified by name as a participant in the study by the researcher. I understand that the researcher will make all efforts to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study (except as might be required by law).	
I understand that the researcher will securely, and in confidence, store all information received from the interview in line with Ulster University ethical guidelines and within the limits of the law – information will only be released if a legitimate authority makes a valid request.	
I agree that the interview will be digitally recorded with my consent, that the recording will be transcribed and that handwritten notes can be taken during the interview.	
I understand that no payment will be made for participation in the interview.	
I consent to the researcher using the information gathered from my participation in this project and in all future projects on a related topic for research purposes, including transcribed quotations.	
I agree to participate in the study.	

Name of the Participant (PLEASE PRINT)   **Date**   **Signature**

Participants contact details (telephone number and/or email address)

Name of the Researcher (PLEASE PRINT)   **Date**   **Signature**

To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant or by electronic means. One copy to be kept by the participant: one copy for the researcher

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule

City	Name	Role	Date Interviewed
Beirut	SA1	Street Artist	25/09/2018
	SA2	Street Artist	26/09/2018
	SA3	Street Artist	26/09/2018
	SA4	Street Artist	28/09/2018
	SA5	Street Artist	04/10/2018
	SA6	Street Artist	09/10/2018
	FO1	Festival Organiser/Property Developer	09/10/2018
	SA7	Street Artist	10/10/2018
	SA8	Street Artist	12/10/2018
	FO2	Festival Organiser	17/10/2018
	SA9	Street Artist	20/12/2018
Belfast	SA1	Street Artist	17/09/2018
	SA2	Street Artist	20/09/2018
	SA3	Street Artist	10/30/2018
	SA4	Street Artist	01/11/2018
	SA5	Street Artist	02/11/2018
	SA6	Street Artist	06/11/2018
	FO1	Festival Organiser	06/11/2018
	SA7	Street Artist	08/11/2018
	SA 8	Street Artist	10/12/2018
	CM 1	City Manager	21/12/2018
	SA9	Street Artist	22/12/2018

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