Everyday Humanitarian Geographies: Security and Segregation in Beirut, Lebanon

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Abstract

This paper brings a geographical perspective to bear on the study of the humanitarian aid industry's relation to the spaces it operates within. It argues that this allows us to move beyond a narrow focus on policy to consider how the security-driven segregation identified in the literature manifests itself in the everyday geographies of the people who populate this industry: international aid workers. It accomplishes this by using travel journals and in-depth interviews to map and unpack the daily comings and goings of 13 international aid workers in Beirut, Lebanon: a city with a sizeable humanitarian presence, significant security concerns, and yet no fortified aid compounds. This particular case reveals how the aid industry is implicated in local sociospatial processes and how its spatial patterns are in fact determined by pre-existing forms of (securitised) segregation. By employing the literature on geographies of fear to observe how international aid workers navigate this landscape, this paper therefore seeks to re-scale security, revealing it to be sociospatial practice which ties together the everyday and the geopolitical.

keywords: aid industry, geographies of security, segregation, geopolitics, everyday, beirut

word count: 8,034

Introduction

The humanitarian aid industry has expanded significantly in the past two decades and is quickly becoming a common feature and influential actor in urban settings across the world, particularly in the Global South (Barnett, 2005; Duffield, 2012; Potvin, 2013). Existing literature studying the relationship between the aid industry and the spaces it operates within has identified segregation as a central and recurring phenomenon. The industry's increasing concern with security, scholars claim, is leading it to self-segregate *away* from the local population and *into* "humanitarian enclaves" (Smirl, 2009) and/or "fortified aid compounds" (Duffield, 2009). This is posed as a worrisome problem as the industry literally loses contact with the people it aims to assist, thereby significantly reducing the impact of its projects (Smirl, 2015) as well as affecting the life and fabric of the city around it.

This paper brings a geographical perspective to bear on this body of work — centred around Lisa Smirl's posthumously published Spaces of Aid (2015) — which has so far been largely based in the disciplines of international relations and security studies. It aims to build on the existing literature by considering how this security-driven segregation unfolds itself in Beirut, Lebanon: a city with a sizeable humanitarian presence, significant security concerns, and yet no fortified aid compounds. It argues that this case necessitates us to look beyond the strictly spatial forms of segregation to observe its manifestations in the everyday geographies of the people who populate this industry: the international aid workers. In this way, it aims to resolve the rather strict binary employed by the existing literature, which places international aid workers on one side (within the compound, which is secured) and the local community on the other (outside of the compound, which is insecure).

By using travel journals and in-depth interviews to map and unpack the daily comings and goings of 13 international aid workers in Beirut, the project therefore moves beyond a discussion of policy to observe this security-driven segregation as it actually unfolds at the level of the everyday. Bridging the security studies literature with the work on (imaginary) geographies of fear, it will respond to calls in the geographical literature to re-scale security (Ingram and Dodds, 2012; Lemanski, 2012; Philo, 2012) and reveal it to be a *sociospatial practice* (Adamson, 2016) which is lived and negotiated. It will show that while organisational security policy is indeed a strong determinant of international aid workers' geographies, other important factors — namely as a sense of familiarity and an awareness of one's "foreignness" — are at play as well. Together, these lead to a complex-yet-distinct form of segregation that construes particular parts of the city as secure and others as not.

Finally, the paper aims to contribute to our understanding of the 'spaces of aid' literature by highlighting the important role played by existing local sociospatial dynamics in determining the aid industry's spatial forms and practices. In other words, not only does the aid industry impact the spaces it operates within — as the current literature convincingly shows (Potvin, 2013; Büscher and Vlassenroot, 2010) — but the local context also shapes, constrains, and determines the forms and practices of the aid industry. Specifically, Beirut is a space that is *already* heavily segregated, along both socioeconomic and sectarian lines (Genberg, 2002; Kassir, 2010; Alaily-Mattar, 2008); a

segregation which is reinforced through various local securitisation processes (Fawaz et. al, 2012). As this paper will show, this has significant consequences for the particular form 'humanitarian enclavism' will take in Beirut, leading us to conceive of the aid industry as *implicated* in local urban developments — even as it tries to segregate itself.

The paper is organised as follows. The first section provides a general background on the humanitarian industry and its security concerns, and how these translate into spatial patterns of segregation. Secondly, the theoretical framework is presented, combining insights from Beirut on the dynamic nature of segregation and security in the city with work on (imaginary) geographies of fear. The third section presents and reflects on the research design and methodology. Finally, the results of the travel journals and interviews will be presented and conclusions drawn.

The aid industry: security and segregation

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of humanitarian aid organisations worldwide has increased significantly and one can now speak of the existence of a distinct 'humanitarian aid industry' (Barnett, 2005). During this time, the nature of humanitarianism also changed: from a humanitarianism of impartiality, neutrality, and independence to a "new humanitarianism" that is principled, human-rights based, politicised, and often linked strongly to developmental agendas (Barnett, 2011; Fox, 2001). This has meant that humanitarian aid organisations are increasingly associated with particular geopolitical entities, thus leaving them, many argue, more vulnerable to violent attacks from those entities' opposing parties (van Brabant, 2000). International aid workers in particular are often seen as representatives of their organisations and their respective geopolitical backers and may therefore be increasingly targeted. Although the hard facts to back it up are either lacking or contested (ECHO 2004), a perception of increased threat and insecurity — centred around the figure of the international aid worker — is therefore widely held across the industry (Stoddard et al, 2009; Collinson and Elhawary, 2012).

This increasing concern with security has meant that international aid organisations have consistently invested more resources into ensuring the physical safety of their international staff (Report of the Secretary General 2000; Eide et al. 2005) through a range of elaborate security policies, staff, and trainings. The associated discourse and practices present the aid environment as one of permanent, invisible threat from which the aid worker must endlessly 'retreat'. Danger and risk are potentially everywhere and the only way organisations can ensure the safety of their staff is through strict security policies and their spatial manifestation: the fortified aid compound (Duffield, 2009). This spatial typology offers international aid workers "an essential refuge from environments that [they] can no longer read or feel safe in" (Duffield, 2012:4-5) leading to the paradox, as Duffield calls it, of "an expansion [of humanitarianism] that is simultaneously a remoteness of international aid workers from the societies in which they operate" (ibid.: 1). In short, an increasingly segregated aid environment.

Lisa Smirl's posthumously published Spaces of Aid (2015) has quickly become a landmark work in this field of study. In it, she employs Lefebvre's trialectic model to dissect three archetypical humanitarian spaces: the compound, the hotel, and the S.U.V. These spaces have become crucial to the functioning of humanitarianism as they materialise aid organisations' intentions to provide increased physical enclosure of humanitarian staff and assets. Through these spaces, international aid workers' exposure to — and therefore also their understanding of — their environments is severely bounded and secured (Smirl, 2015). Just like residents of gated communities (GCs) (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005), Smirl argues, international aid workers tend to restrict their movement to a small number of secure places; although, unlike GC residents, this restriction is one placed on them by the organisations they work for. This, it is assumed, ensures the security of the international aid workers. As a direct effect of this achieved security, however, interaction with local citizens generally occurs only in highly codified and superficial forms. Ironically, and just like their GC resident counterparts (Atkinson and Flint, 2004), this disconnect from the local population only works to *increase* aid workers' fear of their environments and their perception of being under threat (Smirl, 2015). Besides the severe negative impacts on the quality of work aid workers are able to deliver, such a segregated pattern of living also significantly impacts the city at large (Duffield, 2009).

While this body of work is groundbreaking in many ways, its focus on spatial typologies and organisational policy leads to a strict binary division which places international aid workers on one side (within the compound, which is secured) and the local community on the other (outside of the compound, which is insecure). This effectively reduces all spatial practice to organisational policy and leaves little room to consider the everyday geographies of the people who populate this industry, and the ways in which these might differ from, reinforce, or even contest organisational directives. It also does not provide us with adequate tools to evaluate the aid industry's tendency towards security-driven segregation in a situation where there are no compounds. The following section will therefore present literature with which to understand this phenomenon in the specific context of Beirut, Lebanon.

Segregation and security in Beirut, Lebanon

Beirut is a city with very few gated communities — humanitarian or otherwise — which nevertheless exhibits severe forms of sociospatial segregation. In addition to the decade-old patterns of sectarian division that the city is infamous for (see, among many others: Genberg, 2002; Kassir, 2010), Alaily-Mattar (2008) has demonstrated the emergence of a new form of segregation, largely based on socioeconomic class. Building on the work of Atkinson and Flint (2004), she argues that this segregation is best conceptualised as a *layer*, through which affluent residents expand their "gated activities" over the totality of the city, rather than remaining within one isolated area (2008:265). In the absence of the spatial form of the compound, the author proposes "an inquiry into spatial segregation that begins not with the physical urban fabric but rather with *the players, with their ways of life, their circulation patterns, their values, and their goals.*" (ibid:270; emphasis added) As such, the approach does justice to the fact that segregation is not always a clear binary condition, but instead a complex and dynamic process. Considering the fact that

international aid workers in Beirut are not restricted to life in a compound but are instead relatively free to make their own decisions about where to live and spend their time, this framework is well-suited for our analysis.

In line with the literature on GCs (Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005), security plays an important role in driving segregation in Beirut as well, albeit in a more complex form. In their recent study, Fawaz et. al. identify security as an important determinant of urban form and practice in Beirut: "a *reflection of* and *catalyst for* social and political divisions" (2012:191; emphasis added). The authors sketch an image of an already-divided city — along sectarian and socioeconomic lines — which expresses itself materially in security mechanisms (such as checkpoints, security cameras, and barbed wire) as well as residents' route- and destination-choices. Together, these practices in turn reinforce the segregation that first produced them. The authors found that participants' perception of security was significantly affected by their respective political orientation. Thus, rather than an objective 'fact', security shifts depending both on one's sociopolitical identity and where in the city one is located.

> "In other words, a "threat" in Beirut is dynamically changing as one moves across the fragmented urban landscape. Depending on one's individual identity···one changes position from possible victim to potential terrorist just by changing neighborhoods. Thus, many city dwellers choose not to visit the city's southern suburbs where they feel they may be seen as undesirable by the Hezbollah security that controls the area. Others choose not to go by areas where politicians...reside because they fear they will be questioned and/or harassed." (ibid.:189)

Where Alaily-Mattar (2008) and Fawaz et. al. (2012) successfully depict the everyday, lived experiences for local residents of Beirut, this paper evaluates how international aid workers navigate — and are implicated in — this segregated and securitised landscape.

Security and fear / geopolitics and the everyday

International aid workers are a unique type of urban actor by virtue of their institutional context which aims to secure them through restrictions, trainings, etc. This securitisation is directly linked to their identity as "international" subjects who, considering the (geo)politicisation of the aid industry as described earlier, may be perceived as targets. Phrased differently, their international bodies serve as markers of national identity and geopolitical affiliation (Fluri, 2011) and may be perceived and treated by others accordingly, thus confirming that "[c]orporeal security, mediated by way of symbolic inscription, inevitably links human bodies to their integrated place within the social world." (ibid:282). In this way, then, the everyday spatial practices of these international aid workers — their route and destination choices — are directly linked to geopolitics; a connection across scales which is often thought counter-intuitive, but which feminists geographers in particular have long maintained (Pain et. al, 2010).

Unlike the cases presented in the existing 'spaces of aid' literature, international aid workers in Beirut do not live in compounds and are thus to a large extent individually responsible for their own safety. This deferral of responsibility, existing research has indicated, often leads to a risk-averse subjectivity (Duffield, 2009; 2012). Considering the compartmentalised nature of the city of Beirut, in which one's political identity may be (perceived as) either a safeguard or a threat depending on which neighbourhood one is in, we may therefore expect international aid workers to make strategic choices about where to spend their time and which parts of the city they feel safe in. As Smiley writes in her study of the spatial segregation of expatriates in Dar es-Salam such "everyday activities carry significant spatial importance because they are mundane, repetitive actions...[they] help to distinguish between those areas that are known and therefore used and those areas that are unknown and therefore avoided."" (2013:219)

This paper will consider the specific impact of security concerns on these everyday geographies, thereby responding to calls across the geography of security literature to re-scale security (Ingram and Dodds, 2012; Lemanski, 2012; Philo, 2012). It will accomplish this re-scaling by bringing the literature on geographies of fear to bear on the study of security. This literature has long studied the impact of perceptions and practices of 'feeling (un)safe' on the ways in which people navigate through their everyday environments.

Fear and segregation

As an emotional and sometimes even irrational reaction, fear is an elusive object of investigation that is often difficult to pin down. Geographers of fear, however have shown that it nevertheless translates into observable material and spatial effects (Pain and Smith, 2008). Imaginaries of fear are in fact always spatialised: certain places are thought of as dangerous or unsafe, while others are not. Such imaginative geographies, "fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations. They work...by multiplying partitions and enclosures that serve to demarcate 'the same' from 'the other'" (Gregory 2004, 17) and the "safe" from the "unsafe". These imaginative geographies, in turn, lead to everyday spatial practices of frequenting and/or avoiding respective (un)safe spaces in the mundane, repetitive manner mentioned by Smiley (2013) above.

There is, then, an explicit link between geographies of fear and patters of urban segregation: people avoid spaces that (they imagine) are unsafe. Literature on Belfast — a city, like Beirut, characterised by residential segregation and (fear of) sectarian violence — confirms this (Murtagh, 2011; Shirlow, 2003; Jarman and Bell, 2009). In particular, Lysaght and Basten (2003) have shown how the experience of fear and the accompanying coping strategies shape spatial practice and lead to broader patterns of urban segregation. The authors found that for residents who had to regularly negotiate sectarianised space, avoidance strategies (Valentine, 1989; Pain, 1997; Brownlow, 2005) were the most straightforward and often-employed. However, the practicalities of everyday life also meant that people were forced to cross spatial boundaries and enter territories they perceived to be unsafe. To offset any potential danger, individuals in these situations had developed a range of coping or protective strategies (Miethe, 1995; Starkweather 2007) such as choice of clothing and strategic use of language and names. These strategies were

used differentially depending on one's location and the specific situation and thus instead of a simple black-and-white, safe-unsafe binary, Lysaght and Basten describe the city as

> "a mosaic in which various emotions of varying intensity are attached to different places that – in their entirety – make up an individual's environment. Fear, in other words, is highly spatialised. Perceptions of relative threat inform decisions on spatial behaviour." (ibid:2)

It becomes crucial, then, to understand both how particular spaces become mentally tagged as either "safe" or "unsafe" and how these perceptions, these imaginary geographies, in turn, affect people's daily practices. Specifically, how do international aid workers in Beirut construct imaginary geographies of in/security and use these to determine their everyday spatial practices in the city?

Research design and methods

This study uses data gathered through two complimentary methods. Firstly, participants recorded their daily travels (up to five trips per day) for a 7-day period. This was done with a paper travel journal, rather than GPS-logging, for security reasons: travelling through Beirut and Lebanon, one regularly encounters police or military checkpoints and the presence of a GPS-tracker could cause unnecessary questioning or feelings of discomfort on behalf of the participants. Data from the travel journals was then used to construct an activity diary for each participant with maps and approximate routes[1]. Following Yuichiro et. al (2010) the activity diaries were then used as guides for the second research component: a semi-structured interview that focussed specifically on how safety and security considerations influence participants' everyday geographies. The data was collected between November 2015 and January 2016.

While the study aimed to include 15 international aid workers, only 14 willing participants were found. This was in large part due to the fact that many potential participants were uncomfortable recording their daily travels, thus confirming the experiences of other qualitative researchers working with this community of a hesitancy to share personal details (Smirl, 2015). Of these 14 participants, 13 filled out the travel journals and completed the interview. The table below provides further demographic data. This paper presents only the data of participants' journeys within the city of Beirut. Considering the fact that most participants worked at their organisations' main offices in the city, this in fact represented the majority of their comings and goings.

In order to be included in the study, participants had to be (i) international (ii) employees of humanitarian aid and/or development organisations (iii) living in Beirut. "International" was defined for this study as anyone of non-local nationality who moved to Beirut for the specific purpose of finding work. For participants employed by either the U.N. or INGOs (rather than smaller, local NGOs), being an "international employee" meant that they were on a non-local contract with the organisation — i.e. significant differences with respect to their local colleagues in terms of salary, rent subsidies, as well

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[1] Having grown up in Beirut, the author was able to identify the routes from basic route descriptions and landmarks indicated in the travel journals.

as insurance policies (including potential evacuation). Participants were accessed in a number of ways. The author drew on his existing social network in Beirut to identify the first participants. Through snow-balling, these participants introduced the author to their colleagues and friends, some of whom were willing to participate. Finally, the author used a social media group of global international aid workers to recruit the final participants.

GENDER	MALE	FEMALE					
	6	7					

AGE	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-45	45+		
	4	6	1	1	1		

NATIONALITY	U.S.	U.K.	Italy	Canada	Japan	Norway	Poland
	4	3	2	1	1	1	1

IN LEBANON SINCE	1-3 MONTHS	4-6 MONTHS	6-12 MONTHS	12-24 MONTHS	24+ MONTHS		
	2	3	3	1	4		

ORGANISATION TYPE	U.N.	INGO	LOCAL NGO				
	4	5	4				

Results

The map below presents the data gathered through the thirteen travel journals filled out by the international aid workers participating in this project. Places have been classified into residential, leisure, and work locations. The map also indicates office locations of other large NGOs in Beirut for comparison, as well as the demarcation line — known as the "Green Line" — which separated the city into East (predominantly Christian) and West (predominantly Muslim) during the decade and a half of (un)civil conflicts. This line is presented in order to evaluate any relevance of this local segregation for participants' spatial patterns.

A first look at the map reveals a clear concentration of locations in a band that stretches across the north-western parts of the city. Except for one participant, all participants' residential locations are on the East side of the demarcation line, in the predominantly Christian part of the city. Participants' leisure locations, however, seem far less bound by the city's historic East/West division, with most locations concentrated in a band that runs from East to West along the Northern coast of the city. The office locations of humanitarian INGOs in Beirut seem to follow a similar pattern. On the whole, these are neighbourhoods with a high supply of bars, restaurants, and art galleries that exhibit noticeable patterns of gentrification (see Krijnen and De Beukelaer, 2015).

Remarkably absent from all travel journal entries are the city's Southern suburbs, also known as Dahya ("the suburb"). This is an area with a predominantly Shiite population and is often referred to in Western media as a "Hezbollah stronghold" (The Funambulist, 2015). It was the target of Israel's air strikes in 2006, and since Hezbollah's direct involvement in Syria, it has also been the site of a number of bombings. Historically, it has also long had a reputation of being the city's "misery belt", a stigmatised place of crime, and poverty (Harb, 2000). The absence of this part of the city is striking, especially considering its repeated mention in all of the interviews — a fact which will be elaborated upon below.

LEGEND

RESIDENTIAL LOCATIONS PARTICIPANTS ●
OFFICE LOCATIONS PARTICIPANTS ●
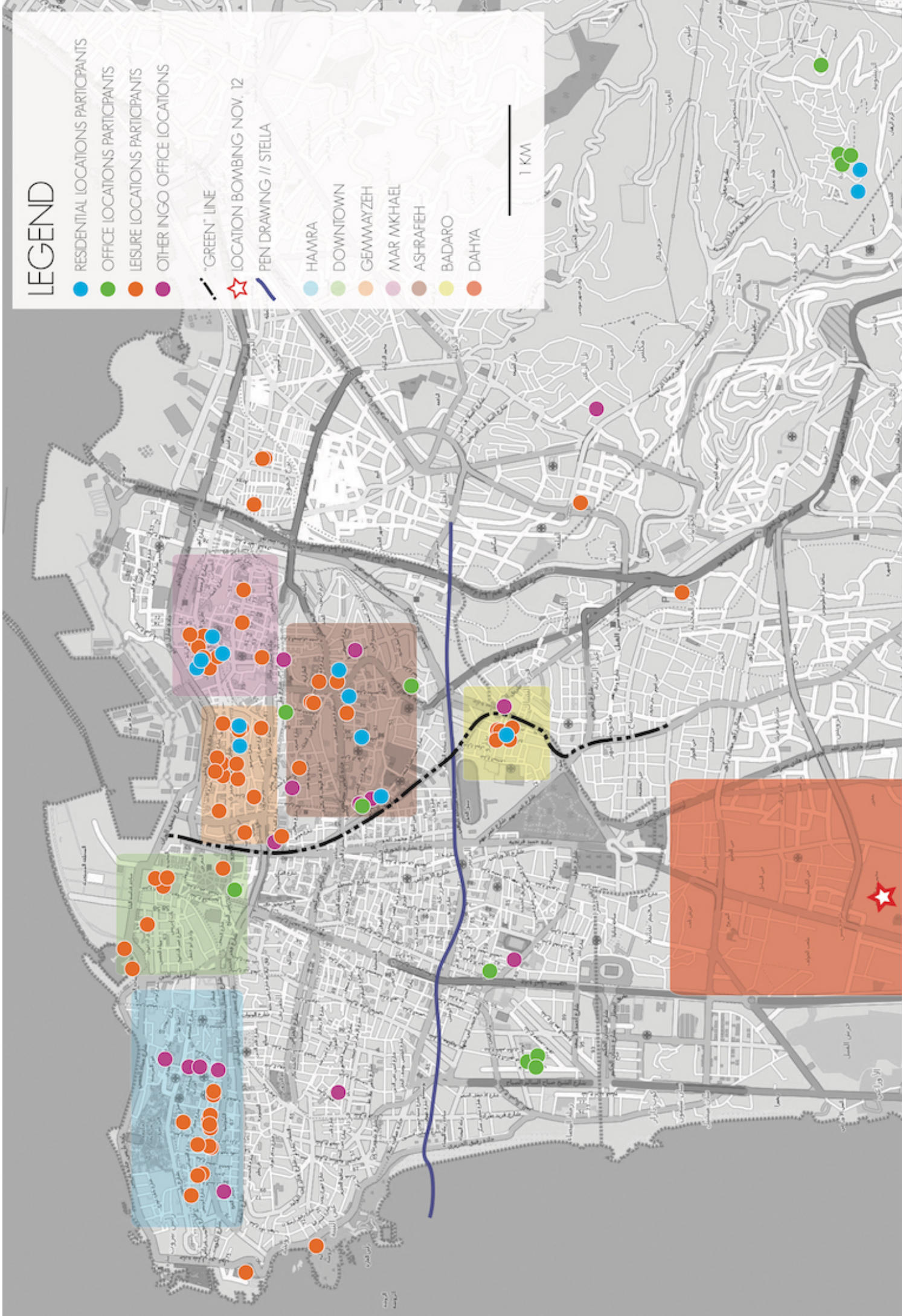LEISURE LOCATIONS PARTICIPANTS ●
OTHER INGO OFFICE LOCATIONS ●

"GREEN" LINE -·-·-
LOCATION BOMBING NOV. 12 ☆
PEN DRAWING // STELLA ▬

HAMRA ●
DOWNTOWN ●
GEMMAYZEH ●
MAR MKHAEL ●
ASHRAFEH ●
BADARO ●
DAHYA ●

1 KM

Evidently, the international aid workers who participated in this project do not regularly make use of the entire city but instead, an aggregation of activities and locations can be identified. The following section will present the main findings from the semi-structured interviews to explore some of the reasons behind this aggregated activity. It will show how organisational policies, individual perceptions and strategies, and the local sociospatial context interact to shape security-driven segregation for international aid workers in Beirut.

Security policy

The day after her arrival to Beirut from her previous post with the same INGO in Irbil (Iraq), Catherina attended her organisation's customary security briefing. During this briefing, she received an ordinary tourist map of the city on which a line had been drawn by the Security Officer using an orange highlighter. This line served to indicate a so-called "red zone": the parts of the city where she was not allowed to go. The map was accompanied by a briefing on the historical context of Beirut and its sectarian conflicts and, interestingly enough, the red zone's easternmost border traced exactly the city's historic Green Line. When asked about her strategies for choosing where to live, Catherina cited walking distance to work as the most important requirement. However, the office building where she works is situated along the Green Line and when asked specifically about the areas on the other side of the - in her case, Orange - Line, she replied,

> "OK, so no... This side (west of the Green Line) I wouldn't have been looking, because this side we cannot go to. I can't go there... A taxi, walking, nothing. So I definitely didn't look for apartments there."

Organisational requirements or suggestions of this nature were common across many participants. In a rather extreme case, Jacob's organisation restricted the residential location of its international staff to the immediate neighbourhood around the office, located in one of Beirut's Eastern suburbs[2]. Conflict over this policy in fact led one of the Jacob's colleagues to leave the organisation. Unhappy with his living environment in the suburb, Jacob himself later decided to challenge the policy by asking for a security review. The security review was conducted and after an 11-month "battle" he was allowed to move "down to Beirut". However, even then the only cleared neighbourhoods were located East of the Green Line. In the end, he took over the apartment of a friend in Gemmayzeh: a neighbourhood he had often visited before moving there and which he liked for its atmosphere and the availability of restaurants and cafes.

Organisational security recommendations often shift depending on the local situation, responding to apparent security threats as they emerge. While in previous years U.N. personnel had been allowed to live anywhere in Northern Beirut, Esben mentions that when he arrived to Beirut in 2010, he was advised to "find housing in the East, because this was very close to 2008 when they had to evacuate staff from Hamra[3]." This did not

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[2] Mansourieh: a Christian suburb where a number of humanitarian organisations (both local and international) have their offices, and other organisations have "safe houses".

[3] reference to street clashes in May 2008.

prevent him, however, from being exposed to danger: a car-bomb went off on a busy intersection nearby his apartment in Ashrafieh, shattering his windows.

As these three accounts show, organisational security policies have significant impacts on participants' choices of where to live. This was the case for all nine participants working for either the U.N. or large INGOs. At the same time, and in contrast to the narrative presented in much of the existing literature, these policies can also be ad-hoc (an orange highlighter on a tourist map), contested (by John), and/or ineffective (for Esben). Furthermore, the smaller, local NGOs which the four remaining participants worked for had no security policies in place at all; and yet the residential locations of these aid workers follow a similar pattern.

Familiarity

For most participants, choices regarding where to live or spend their time in the city seemed rather straightforward and very few mentioned security concerns as having a significant impact on these decisions. Instead, many participants cited various lifestyle considerations as an important factor. Even when not explicitly directed by their organisation, the only real choices seemed to be limited to just a few neighbourhoods, as summed up aptly by Jeff's response to the question how he came to live where he did:

> "I didn't want to live in Downtown; so it was either Hamra or here
> [Mar Mkhael]."

Similarly, since there are only a few neighbourhoods with bars, restaurants, and cafés, these are then "of course", participants explained, the ones where they would hang out. As can be seen on the map presented above, these are mostly the neighbourhoods Hamra, Ashrafieh, Gemmayzeh, Mar Mkhael, and to a lesser extent Badaro and Downtown: areas that either have been, or currently are, gentrifying rapidly and offer the possibility of a so-called "Western" lifestyle. Security rarely featured explicitly as a primary concern in these responses, but more as a secondary thought. For example, when asked to what extent security concerns affect his choice of where to spend his free time, Michael answered:

> "I don't really deliberately choose my places to hang out based on if it's safe
> or not, but they just happen to be also places where things are unlikely to
> happen."

While such responses explicitly prioritise mundane lifestyle considerations over issues of security and thus may seem trivial at first sight, these narratives in fact reveal much about the aid workers' imaginative geographies of the city (Gregory, 2004) and how such 'mundane' considerations and practices (Smiley, 2013) in fact lead to segregated experiences of the city. Statements such as Jeff's confirm that large parts of the city aren't even an option to consider; they simply don't exist in the minds of most participants.

A significant number of participants expressed the idea that Beirut felt familiar or comfortable, or even similar to their 'home' environments. During our first meeting at one of the bars in Gemayzeh, Julia explained that Beirut was "the place to be" for someone in the aid industry: it was both a drastic humanitarian emergency response offering important career-related experience *and* it offered the possibility of living a more or less Western lifestyle. Esben put it as follows:

> "Specifically in comparison to other options you have working for the U.N. or other similar organisations, Beirut is one of the better options you have. (⋯) I mean, basically Lebanon is, you know, a shitty part of Europe with more rubbish in it. (laughs) You can do more or less the same stuff you do in any European or Western country."

Contrasting impressions

Of course, as the travel journals show, these are not statements about all of Beirut, but rather about the parts of the city that these participants use on a regular basis. This becomes especially clear when we look at the accounts of two other participants, Sara and Hesther, who both talked extensively about their contrasting impressions of different parts of the city. They identified the current neighbourhoods in which they live as "Westernised" or "expat-filled", in direct contrast to neighbourhoods they had previously lived or worked in.

Sarah is a volunteer working for a local NGO. To pay her bills, she works part-time in a bar close to her apartment in Badaro, and during our conversation she contrasted this experience with going to visit her friends in the Chatila refugee camp, located near the city's southern suburbs:

> "Sometimes you simply can't imagine it's in the same city. I mean, you pass by such different neighbourhoods in just a few minutes! And for me it's impressive especially because when I go to my friends' house [in the camp], they don't have running water, and twenty minutes later I come here [Badaro] and people in the café ask for the receipt and they spend a lot of money to drink⋯"

Sarah's experience of moving across different parts of the city causes her to recognise the contrasts in ways that many of the other participants don't. However, not only is she more aware of this segregation than many of her international aid worker counterparts, but also compared to her 'local' Lebanese friends who frequent the bar she works at. During our interview, she explained how these 'local' friends considered her crazy for visiting people in Chatila which was, to them, a dangerous place — especially for a 'foreign' woman like herself. These friends of hers had never been to that part of the city — and probably never will. Although they have not been given tourist maps with lines drawn in orange highlighter, Chatila was for them, just like for most international aid workers, a no-go area; a sort of informal, undrawn "red zone".

Hesther confirmed many of Sara's impressions and added that her identity as a foreigner actually allowed her more freedom to move across various spaces and communities in the city because *"a lot of Lebanese people tend to be very restricted in terms of what neighbourhoods or towns or cities they'd go to."* As a 'foreigner', Hesther is aware that she is able to stand outside the local sociospatial segregation patterns and traverse across them. Important to note here is that both Sarah and Hesther work for smaller, local NGOs that have no organisational security policies in place.

What emerges, then, is an image of a fragmented city (Alaily-Mattar, 2008; Fawaz et al, 2012) which offers a range of contrasting experiences and impressions — for those willing to cross the boundaries. This is not a homogenous social space but rather a severely "fragmented body politic" occupied by "multiple, hybrid sovereignties" (Fawaz et al, 2012). And so it is only when one stays *within* the boundaries of a particular sphere of relative sameness (occupied by *both* international aid workers and a particular group of locals) that it is possible to have the types of impressions mentioned earlier: that Beirut is comfortable, familiar, and "perfectly safe". This, then, is also how we can make sense of participants' claims that the spaces in which they tend to spend their time 'just so happen' to be spaces where things are unlikely to happen. Security considerations and a sense of familiarity mesh to construct a segregated geography — both imagined and practiced — of the city.

Getting lost

Despite the existence of such segregated spheres of activity, the logistics of everyday life still often call for movement between different parts of the city. This movement, the interviews revealed, holds potential for uncomfortable or threatening experiences. Indeed, for a number of participants, the only experience they could recall in which they felt unsafe was that of getting lost while in a public taxi. This anxiety seemed to stem largely from finding oneself in an unfamiliar part of town; an environment which they were not able to read or feel safe in (Duffield, 2012). Participants described these neighbourhoods as "dodgy" and they pointed out that buildings in these areas were "ruined" and looked "poorer", thereby contrasting them with the more familiar (and nicer, supposedly safer) parts of town they usually spent time in. After carefully reconstructing the routes with them, it seems that all of these incidents took place somewhere in or near the Southern suburbs. Peter describes one such incident:

> "I was in a taxi, and he went too far South, and I wasn't paying attention. And we were in an area that I'd never been to; an area with a lot of the Amal movement flags and Hezbollah flags[4] and things like that, and I was like "What the⋯ Where are we?" (⋯) And, I mean, it was the Southern suburb of Beirut, exactly where we're not supposed to go!"

Besides the simple fact of getting lost and losing one's sense of direction, Peter's anxiety is compounded by the realisation (through the political markings) that he is in the

[4] Amal and Hezbollah are both Shi'ite political parties who, like most of Lebanon's political parties, also have an armed forces wing. Since the Southern suburbs are predominantly Shi'ite, many streets are marked with the flags of these political parties.

Southern suburbs, an area he has been warned by both his organisation and friends not to go to. In other words, he is aware of the fact that he is in a part of the city that has been mentally tagged (Lysaght and Basten, 2003) as "unsafe" and potentially dangerous. It is this recognition — rather than any direct sense of threat coming from his environment — that puts him on high-alert and makes for a rather unpleasant experience. Furthermore, at these moments of anxiety and unfamiliarity, participants became increasingly aware of their "foreignness". From their accounts, it seems that there is something about being found alone *in this particular part of town* that would make one stand out and immediately be recognised as a "foreigner". Implied in these narratives is the fact that this would potentially put them at further risk; the recognition of their "international bodies" (Fluri, 2011) — through their physical appearance and inability to speak the language — could potentially jeopardise their security.

"Here, we won't be taken care of"

The impact of security on participants' everyday geographies came to the fore most directly when asked which parts of the city, if any, they actively avoided for security reasons. In response to this question all except two participants indicated Beirut's Southern Suburbs, Dahya, as an area they actively avoid and consider unsafe. This at least partially explains the total absence of this part of the city in all of the recorded travel journals noted earlier. As Kristen's response below indicates there is a certain 'obviousness' to this avoidance strategy for most participants, based in part on the recurrence of bomb attacks in that area since Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict:

> "I obviously wouldn't go to the Southern suburbs. I mean, there are parts of Beirut that I just wouldn't go to··· Like the areas where bombs normally go off, like Dahya."

For many participants, the Southern suburbs were designated as a "no-go area" by their organisations, which was reason enough not to go there. Michael, who is a Security Officer for his organisation in Beirut explains that in security briefings he circles the Southern suburbs and advises new colleagues to avoid them. In response to my question of what he would do if a new colleague wanted to rent an apartment in that area, he laughed and simply said, *"Who would want to live there?!"* This sentiment is confirmed and voiced most strongly by Stella who literally took my pen and drew a line on the map in front of us, and said,

> "I don't want to live, you know, under this line [see map above]. For security reasons, I don't want to live below here."

When asked to elaborate further, she continued,

> "For security reasons. Like, Hamra personally I don't like it, so I don't want to live there. But for security reasons, I don't want to live below *here*. Like here [above the line] foreigners are recognised and···not privileged, but how

do you say, they pay extra attention to us and care. But if I go from here down, this is a totally local area where our presence is not going to be taken care of. That's why. If we go there, we are going to be in the middle of the people who don't care about foreigners. So I feel a lot safer to be around here."

Stella here makes a direct link between her identity as a foreigner and potential security threats located in *specific parts of the city*. While personal preference ("I don't like it") keeps Stella from living in Hamra, it is a perceived collective threat ("we won't be taken care of") tied directly to her status as a (Western) "foreigner" that causes Stella to actively avoid the Southern suburbs.

As such, organisational policy and personal considerations combine to form an imagined geography of in/security which in turn leads to segregated spatial practices. This becomes even clearer when we compare Stella's statements and spatial practices to those of Hesther and Sarah. The part of the city which Stella — and many other participants — describe as dangerous (especially for foreigners) and therefore avoid, is the same area where Hesther worked for many years and where Sara regularly goes to visit her friend. Both of these women work for smaller, local NGOs that do no have any security policies in place, leading us to conclude that organisational security wields a significant influence on aid workers' security perceptions and practices. Through the designation of certain areas of the city as secure, these policies shape aid workers' imaginative geographies (of in/security). This works to restrict their spatial practices to these particular areas, impacting both aid workers' experiences of the city and the fabric of the city itself (Smirl, 2015).

Bourj al-barajneh bombing

On November 12, 2015 two suicide bombers detonated themselves in a busy street in Bourj al Barajneh, one of Beirut's southern suburbs, killing more than 40 people. For a few of the participants, this incident occurred during the week they were recording their travel journals, while others recorded their journeys in the following two or three weeks. This section presents a close consideration of the ways in which this security incident impacted participants' security perceptions and practices. It thereby seeks to illustrate the extent to which the Southern suburbs are cordoned off as a(n imagined) sphere of insecurity in the minds and geographies of the city's international aid workers.

As the travel journals indicate, most participants of this project rarely spend time in Beirut's Southern suburbs. It is then not surprising that none of the participants were in any personal danger as a result of the attack. Nevertheless, two large explosions occurring in one's own city can still be expected to have a significant impact on one's experience and perception of safety. This varied between participants, mostly based on how long people had been living in the country. Peter and Nancy, who had just arrived to Beirut in the past three months, expressed feeling shocked — both at the attack *and* the way in which life seemed to continue 'as normal' around them:

"And I mean, my first reaction was shock⋯ But then there was absolutely no dramatic reaction around me⋯ It was, I think, very sad, in the sense that my neighbourhood felt like⋯felt no different whatsoever." (Nancy)

Although they are still relatively new arrivals to the city, both Peter and Nancy already had an understanding of its segregated nature: the fact that two large explosions happening in one neighbourhood don't necessarily need to affect what takes place in another. This was also the logic most other participants used to explain why they were not too surprised by the event: an attack like this is to be somewhat expected, they said, especially in Dahya.

"I mean — it's in Dahya, which is where a lot of things can happen. Again, it's very isolated. There's a saying that everyone who lives in Lebanon will tell you 'When there's bombings in South Beirut, you just keep going with your dinner and drinks in North or East Beirut- as if nothing happened.'" (Jacob)

Regardless of their emotional reactions, however, for none of the participants the bombing in Bourj al Barajneh — approximately 8 km away; a 15-minute drive — was cause to reconsider their movements within the city. Across the board, participants expressed that the incident did not affect the places they went to. For some, like Julia, whose organisations are quite strict about avoiding Dahya, it was as simple as: *"No — I still don't go to the southern suburbs."* Others explained the lack of impact by pointing to the fact that this was, after all, a bombing in Dahya, a part of the city they rarely visited. Hesther and Sara, however, stressed the fact that the bombing did not affect their choice of where to go in the city, because *"I've been here for a long time, and it's just one random explosion… I wouldn't not go to that area because of this."* (Hesther). For them, security threats are an expected and accepted part of moving around in Beirut and while they are aware of the risks, they do not stop them from going to Southern suburbs.

Jacob adds yet another dimension by explaining how this attack was different for him than the ones he had witnessed in previous years. In this explanation, we see once more the experience of being a (particular kind of) foreigner in a particular part of the city — the Southern suburbs — as central to aid workers' sense of security.

"It has made me a little more conscious of, you know, being seen as an American or Westerner⋯ Because it was an ISIS attack specifically. And that's the first ISIS attack in Beirut. So that is a bit different than some of the past ones, just because it's a different actor, and arguably a much more aggressive, you know, actor that is in Beirut — specifically towards foreigners⋯ So that does make me a little more aware." (Jacob)

Finally, without ever bringing it up myself, almost all participants used my question about the Bourj al-Barajneh bombings as a direct segue into talking about the Paris bombings and shootings that occurred the day after. While there is not sufficient space in this article to address the full implications of this comparison, one quote will suffice to illustrate the extent to which many international aid workers' experiences and

geographies in Beirut are "effectively *delinked* from local circumstances" (Smirl, 2015:203) and are in many ways more closely tied to events happening thousands of kilometres away. After talking briefly about the bombing in Beirut, Julia continued,

> "And then the next day was France. And I used to live, like, in that area (silence) So that affected me a lot more because…I lived there. I mean, like I said, I've never really been to the Southern suburbs and have no reason to really go⋯ and I also don't really know anyone who lives there, so⋯ That was also kind of weird, to feel like "Hm, in a way I was more affected by France than what happened in my⋯in the city that I live in."

To stress once more, however, the fact that this is not just a phenomenon specific to the aid community, but rather an already-existing local segregation onto which (part of) the international aid community grafts itself, I will close this section by quoting a Facebook post from a Lebanese friend and fellow geographer, Jad Baaklini, who wrote:

> "I have about twenty friends and acquaintances in Paris. I worried about them all. I don't know anyone in Bourj al-Barajneh. I don't have to worry when terror strikes there. I can cover this horrific thought up with other silken words that either mildly chide or reassure me—words like class privilege, divided city, sectarianism, post-war regime, securitisation—but none of that really expresses the sick feeling this thought brings over me."

Conclusions

Through a close reading of the travel journals and in-depth interviews completed by thirteen international aid workers, this paper has sought to elucidate the nature of the aid industry's security-driven segregation in Beirut. It has shown that while the spatial form of the "fortified compound" may not exist, aid workers' everyday geographies nonetheless exhibit a distinct form of segregation. Specifically, organisational security policies, a sense of familiarity (in some areas of the city), and an avoidance strategy (of other areas) combine to constitute a sphere of relative security. Within this sphere — generally defined as simply not the Southern suburbs — most participants feel at ease and free to move around and be themselves. Once they find themselves outside of it, however, fear and anxiety are often activated; thus confirming that fear is, indeed, localised (Pain and Smith, 2008).

An important part of participants' sense of security is directly tied to their recognisable identity as foreigners, a fact (of physical appearance and an inability to speak the language) which they cannot hide or cover up through protective strategies (Lysaght and Basten, 2003). In light of the 'new' (geo)politicisation of humanitarianism as described earlier (Barnett, 2011; Fox, 2001), this paper argues that security in this case is not only an individual experience pertaining to personal safety but also a manifestation of geopolitical affiliation, experienced as a collective threat. As individuals secured by and representing global organisation, international aid workers, through their everyday geographies, embody the link between the everyday and the geopolitical (Pain et. al, 2010). International aid workers represent a unique type of urban actor in this respect,

and considering the increasing ubiquity of the aid industry in cities across the (Third) world, further research on this subject is warranted.

This paper has not only shed light on the aid industry's security-driven segregation, but has also expanded knowledge of segregation in Beirut by including a non-local actor not yet considered in existing literature on the city. While arguably not large enough a group to start any urban trends alone, this actor nonetheless implicates itself in ongoing process and reinforces them (Collins, 2010). In this sense, the findings presented in this paper can also be read as further evidence of a relatively new, but already deeply engrained, kind of segregation in Beirut: no longer the infamous division between East and West, but rather a distinction between South and not-South. Importantly, this is neither a purely local phenomenon, nor one reserved for transnational or expatriate communities (Ley, 2004). Rather, it is a segregation which filters particular kinds of 'locals' with particular kinds of 'foreigners', each in particular parts of the city.

What emerges, then, is not an "Aidland" (Duffield in Smirl, 2015) as described in the literature: an isolated bubble exclusively populated by international aid workers. Rather, as the literature from Beirut claims (Alaily-Mattar, 2008; Fawaz et. al, 2012) and statements like those of Sara's 'local' friends confirm, Beirut is already intensely segregated and the aid industry's security-driven segregation simply grafts itself onto this process — thereby also reinforcing it. Thus, in its very tendencies towards segregation, the aid industry is in fact *implicated* in an ongoing local process (of segregation) and "rather than working against this pathology, or standing apart from it, [it] is a driving force." (Duffield, 2009).

Fortunately, however, this is not the entire story. Two of the aid workers in this study expressed no concern at all about going to the Southern suburbs. Both of these women work for small, local NGOs that do not have any strict security policies in place. As these cases illustrate, a lack of organisational security policy which divides the city into "safe" and "unsafe" areas may well contribute to less restricted geographies and lower perceptions of fear. As has been convincingly demonstrated, this may be crucial for the quality of aid work which humanitarians can provide (Smirl, 2015). Future research on the subject should therefore further evaluate the specific impact of various kinds of organisational policies, as well as the personal backgrounds and motivations of aid workers, in order to better inform the aid industry on how to provide security for its staff without compromising the quality of work it is able to deliver.

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