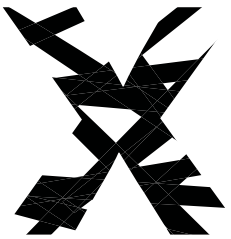

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info@urbancreativity.org
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Urban Interstices between Appropriations and Resistances

Gülçin Erdi
CNRS Researcher at UMR CITERES (Cities, Territories, Environment and Society), University of Tours

This special issue grew out of a two day conference entitled *Whose space is it? Interstices and urban commons: the city from an interdisciplinary perspective*, which was held at the University of Tours in December 2020. Despite of difficult conditions and impredictibality of situation due to Covid-19 pandemic, the conference was a real success and brought together researchers from various disciplines of social science and more than ten countries. This conference provided an excellent venue within which to begin the discussions on the signification, the use and the ways of appropriation of what is called *urban interstices* covered in this issue. Urban interstices were one of the two main research themes of this conference whose scientific purpose has been collectively prepared by myself, Bénédicte Florin and Ulrike Krampl, all of us from University of Tours. The interesting point was to see how our different scientific disciplines, respectively sociology, geography and history provided a large scope to understand the interstices and their perception.

If we take litterally, the word interstice refers to something and/or somewhere located between two or more places, as demonstrated in the German "Zwischenraum" and the English "in-between". In some languages, such as Turkish, the word has no direct equivalence. With the increasing urbanization in the Western world during the nineteenth century, the word take on a more general spatial meaning, namely that which is situated between one thing and another, to be associated with words such as "niche, vacant lot, recess, wasteland, zone, interface, etc.

If we have a look on the origin of the world, we find the following definition in *Dictionnaire de la langue française* : "*the time that the Church observes between the reception of two sacred orders*"[1]. Which means that the interstice initially had a temporal rather than a spatial sense. The interstice therefore has a spatial but also a temporal connotation, and the two are sometimes inseparable when it comes to urban interstice (Farazdag 2019).

In its spatial sense, the word also refers to otherwise forgotten and abandoned places, void of interest, seen as insignificant and even disregarded, hardly visible, more or less out of the way, more or less laid-out, well-defined spaces or passageways, all of which are unstable. An interstice not only has a history but has temporalities as well, all of which are respectively related to their changing functions and to their processes of (non)integration within the urban environment. Certain spaces enter into the category of interstice, others not, all of which requires an understanding of its development over time and according to particular social, historical, and cultural contexts. In this sense, the concept of the interstice covers a heterotopic dimension which may also imply a heterochronic temporality. In this sense, Rouba Kaedbey's article constitutes a good example presenting a former abandoned beach as an evolutive interstice with changing functions, escaping to the control of various actors. Its changing functions make it progressively exit of its interstitial status and a commercial object as hip-hop artists and young adults transform it in a clean, frequantable area. In the same way, Félix Lefebvre presents

1 - Definition « Interstice », Littré Emile, Dictionnaire de la langue française, Paris, Hachette, 1863.

a case of heterotopic interstice around the tea grins in Ougadougou, places where people –especially men – drink tea and discuss about political affairs and where a 'subaltern cityness' is constructed. Therefore they propose a protective area for their participants concerning the power relations specific to the public space, while offering a space for discussion and enunciating a collective speech. In the article of Lefebvre, we see clearly that tea *grins* as interstice have a spatial and temporal status making possible to offer the qualities of an open space, in communication with the existing public space such as roads, parks, etc. It is a flexible and temporary space, "creating possibilities for the freedom of appropriation of the city by its citizens: It becomes a space allowing a spatial and usual breathing, contrasting by its informal character with the structure of the city in which it figures". (ibid., p.22)

An interstice has not forcibly a negative meaning. It is not always something useless which does not require attention. It may have some potential if some actors, groupes (political, social, cultural, artistique even même religious) decide to appropriate it for their alternative and sometimes subversive practices. The article of Hugo Rochard et.al provides this kind of experience around the example of *Collective Interfriches* composed of architects, geographers, urban planners, ecologists, sociologists, politicians, artists, seeking to think the role of urban wastelands as interstices in the making of the city in different contexts. Based on a workshop on a third place named *Vive les Groues* managed by an association (Yes We Camp) in the suburban Paris, their paper leaning on the experience of involved persons puts collective methodological questioning into a reflexive dialogue. What does an interdisciplinary workshop allow to capture about an occupied urban interstice ?

An interstice could be also considered as an exception within normality and understood only by social activities performed within it but outside of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations could be cultural, social and traditional and not only legal or written. We argue therefore that interstice has no fixed or formal meaning, being more of a blanket term with potential use in many contexts, by different disciplines like art history, geography, sociology etc., all depending on the specific areas and time periods studied. The aim of this issue has less to do with finding a precise definition of interstices as with bringing together various fields of research to contemplate their respective approaches, their objectives and their methodologies.

Existing outside of the urban order, the interstice as a concept can easily be adapted and modified (squats, camps, places of resistance and refuge, etc.), appropriated for common uses ("donkey paths"), and used for discrete, secret or illegal activities (drug-dealing, lovemaking, a place for political or religious refugees, etc.). If urban planning is capable of creating interstices, the improvised uses of these locations may well interfere with urban flow, security, and surveillance, etc. On the other hand, in spatial arrangements conceived *a priori* without interstices (such as housing complexes), micro-interstices may be spontaneously created. Laura Monfleur presents in her article this kind of interstice. The doorways and spaces adjacent to buildings or sometimes walls can be considered as buffer-zones likely to be used and transformed for other purposes. In Egypt, because of uprisings during 2011 in Cairo, the government installed walls and checkpoints in cement in different areas of the city in order to control the access towards Tahrir Square and large avenues. L. Monfleur shows in her article how these walls have been diverted from their formal uses and transformed by inhabitants in micro-interstices for expressing a counter-power against political control or hegemonic urban planning. The Street Art performances played a role as creative power for the (re)appropriation of urban spaces by people fighting for their political and human rights.

Interstitial spaces may be borrowed or appropriated, or otherwise adapted for some other function of a social or artistic nature; they also represent spatial resources for city dwellers, resources which are in their turn subject to power relations (of social orders and gender, etc.), and which have the potential to create conflicts. Silent, almost invisible, and often discontinuous in nature, these interstices and what happens within them may be menaced and coveted, but are all part of the urban construct. Engin Sustam questions this conflictual nature of interstices by studying how inerstitial practices related to art performance in urban space especially in cities with Kurdish majority reveals forms of emancipation and resistance against domination of authoritarian

regimes. At the same time, these subalterns and subversives practices are a form of creation against hegemony of space production by Turkish government. For example, The 'Bahçeya Hewsel' mobilisation deployed a form of ecological squat against a gentrification project and the urban transformation considered as an authoritarian intervention by Kurds in their life space.

Whether located in the center or on the outskirts of the city, the interstice remains inextricably linked to the problematic of spatial and social margins. While the interstice is defined by its uses, functions and appropriations, the periphery on the other hand in its various historical configurations occupies a place related at the same time to several areas, some located in the center, some reaching far beyond. The interstice thus seems to defy any rational spatial organization and normative standards. In Kosova for example, Krasniqi and Muharremi's article shows how places built with Ottoman architectural style became a kind of interstice as they were excluded from the ideological objectives and wills in Yougoslavia in different periods of history. Especially in 1990s, they were marginalised, damaged and destroyed in order to be replaced by the modern architecture during the Serbian occupation of the city. This example demonstrates that interstices may be subject to intervention by governmental agencies seeking to re-establish control over them, to redefine their functions, or even to remove them. The appropriation of the interstice by urban planners, whose motivations and purposes change with time and according to local contexts, is made possible through means specially designed to control or to reshape it.

The articles in this issue provides insightful analyses and perceptions about interstices towards various empirical studies. They show variety of interstices and of ways of their use and appropriation. This will contribute, we believe, to understand the interstices as social and sometimes political constructions, their transitory and changing caracter and their malleable use that could be propitious for creation, advocacy, transformation and emancipation.

Walls as Interstitial Combinations: Security Infrastructure and Practices in Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Downtown Cairo

Laura Monfleur
Geography, CITERES/CEDEJ, Tours/Le Caire, France/Egypte

Abstract
This article questions the notion of interstice through the analysis of spaces in downtown Cairo and their evolutions between 2011 and 2021. This article will focus on the walls as security infrastructure. In fact, during the Egyptian revolution between 2011 and 2013, walls were built in downtown Cairo, to create frontlines between security forces and revolutionaries. They created a geography of dichotomy, composed of a policy of zoning and a policy of emptying. However, practices of revolutionaries and residents and workers redefined the uses and the meanings of these walls, creating interstitial combinations. Walls became interstitial infrastructure between security control and political resistance, between material signs of control and memorial spaces of the revolution. This article will take the examples of graffiti and informal activities, which have already an interstitial dimension between resistance and adaptation, formal and informal. The article concludes on the evolution of the walls, which were reintegrated into a spatial manifestation of power through their beautification and their staging by an authoritarian regime in 2020 and 2021.

Keywords
Revolution, securitization, interstice, graffiti, informality, Cairo.

1. Introduction

Looking for interstices in downtown Cairo, both during the revolution between 2011 and 2013 and during the authoritarian reinforcement that happened since then, allows us to consider the different meanings of the term "interstice". According to a first morphological definition, the interstice is an abandoned, empty, or leftover space where uses and functions are still undetermined. Geographically, the interstice is associated with the margin, being outside of the projects of urban planning or outside of the physical, political or social centralities (Le Gall, Rougé, 2014). This structuralist and functionalist vision of the interstice doesn't seem to apply to downtown Cairo. Planned at the end of the 19th century by Khedive Ismael and invested as a political centre since then, downtown is characterised by a formal and dense built environment and is the subject of a strong investment by urban policies and urban planning (Abaza, 2011; Pappalardo, 2016). Downtown is a social, economic and political central space. Space for the representation of the political regime with the presence of several domestic and foreign institutions such as ministries, administrations, embassies, it's also a political space for the contestation of the regime. The Egyptian revolution, which started on January 25th, 2011 and led to the removal of the president Hosni Mubarak, took place in urban spaces in downtown such as Tahrir Square. This square has been occupied by the revolutionaries during eighteen days in 2011 (Abaza, 2016; Pagès-El Karoui, 2014; Rabbat, 2012; Ramadan, 2013).

According to a second social and political definition of the interstice, it's a crack in domination and in hegemonic norms[1]. Here, the interstice doesn't rely on a physical shape but on the nature of the practices and experiences described as subversive (Le Gall, Rougé, 2014) or on the nature of the actors often described as subaltern (Pappalardo,

1 This distinction between domination and hegemony can be found in the work of Gramsci (Gramsci, 1996). It enables to understand that norms can be imposed by practices , of coercion or repression but also by practices such as discourses, cultural, social and moral norms. We consider that authoritarian regimes embodied by different actors (police, army, etc...) and ruled by a dominant class use these different types of practices to impose their control.

2016) or marginal (Bautès, Reginensi, 2008). The interstice is a counter-power against political control or hegemonic urban planning (Le Strat, 2007) and it's also a creative power (Hatzfeld et al. 1998). In that case, the interstice is more defined as "the outcome of a composition of interactions and affections among a multiplicity of actors that coexist within a given spatial situation" (Brighenti, 2013, p. xviii). The interstice is not a no man's land but the result of territorial appropriations and negotiated interactions (Navez-Bouchanine, 1991). In both definitions – morphological or interactional – the interstice temporally and spatially conveys the idea of uncertainty and fluidity (Brighenti, 2013; Dumont, 2006).

Between 2011 and 2013, the Egyptian revolution opened a time of uncertainty and fluidity as several actors were competing for their political rights but also for the appropriation of urban spaces. This struggle was left without a clear political or urban hegemony (Armbrust, 2019). The revolutionaries were in conflict with a series of successive authorities first under the presidency of Hosni Mubarak until February 2011, then under the transition government organized by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and finally under the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, elected president in 2012. Nonetheless, after the removal of Morsi by a *coup d'état* organised by the army in 2013 and after the election of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2014, the regime reinforced its authoritarian control through a set of repressive practices and of legislation such as the 2013 anti-protest law (Boutaleb, 2017; Guirguis, 2016). Urban securitization is also part of the reinforcement of the authoritarianism. Cement walls, checkpoints, cement blocks or barbed wires had been set up in downtown since 2011 and were maintained until 2016 (Abaza, 2013; Othmane, Stadnicki, 2015). This material and legal securitization contributed to the disappearance of contestation practices. Downtown is also characterized by processes of urban normalization and return to order, especially with the eviction of informal practices that multiplied during the revolution. Authorities such as Cairo governorate and the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for police, try to counter the uncertainty and fluidity of the revolutionary times and spaces through securitization and normalization. With the observation of the end of contestation and informal activities, one can consider that the hegemonic norm in downtown since 2013 is a norm of control materialised by security infrastructure and urban policies.

Despite the formal, dense and planned built environment, and the presence of hegemonic control materialised by security infrastructure and urban policies during and after the Egyptian revolution, this article raises the possibility of interstices in downtown Cairo. Focusing on the walls, I argue that this infrastructure constitutes the very condition of the emergence of urban and political interstices. I define the interstice as a crack in the securitization and normalization planned by urban and political authorities and enforced by security forces. I propose that looking at one dimension – morphological or interactional – is not enough to find the interstice and that the interstice appears in the combination of both materiality and appropriations by different actors. I will take two examples: the case of graffiti as a practice of political subalterns and the informal activities as practices of social subalterns.

This article relies mostly on fieldwork conducted in 2014 and 2015. An update of this work is the result of fieldwork between 2019 and 2020. I used qualitative methods such as observation while I was living in downtown Cairo and more than 60 semi-structured interviews with urban planners, inhabitants, or workers in downtown and graffiti artists. In order to study the discourse of the regime, I analysed videos and texts.

I will first discuss how the materiality and the territoriality of walls challenged the urban and political interstitiality of the Egyptian revolution between 2011 and 2013. With an interactional perspective, I will then describe how the walls became a form of interstitial infrastructure through the combination of their materiality and practices such as graffiti and informal activities between 2012 and 2015. I will conclude on the evolution of the walls that led to a disappearance of such interstices since 2016.

2. The revolution and the walls: the geography of interstitiality and the geography of dichotomy

The revolution introduced some uncertainty and fluidity in the spatial and political order in Egypt and particularly in downtown Cairo. Temporally and politically, the Egyptian revolution between 2011 and 2013 can be described as a "liminal crisis". The term of liminality was developed by Arnold Van Gennep (Gennep, 1961) and Victor Turner (Turner, 1990) about the rite of passage and applied to crises such as revolutions by Bjørn Thomassen (Thomassen, 2014). Walter Armbrust uses this term for the Egyptian revolution in his book *Martyrs and Tricksters: an Ethnography of the Egyptian Revolution* (Armbrust, 2019)[2]. He describes the Egyptian revolution as a period of transition between two normative states, whose outcome is uncertain: will it be a democratic change? Will the authoritarian regime manage to keep control? The absence of a political and social hegemony results from the presence of several actors with multiple and conflicting interests. Concerning the security forces, police withdrew from the streets during the first week of the revolution (Stadnicki, 2014b) and security forces lost their absolute control over urban spaces and protests. Between 2011 and 2013, several actors were responsible for policing protests and thus for securitizing protest spaces: revolutionary security committees around the camp in Tahrir Square (Pagès-El Karoui, 2014), Ultras[3] with their experience and knowledge in clashes with the police (Gibril, 2015; Woltering, 2013), anti-harassment brigades (Amar, 2013; Boutros, 2017; Malmström, 2012), *baltagiyyas* which are thugs paid by the security forces to break the revolution, popular committees (*el-liggan esh-sharbiyya*) that protected neighborhoods with checkpoints (Bremer, 2011; Lachenal, 2012) but also police and army. Thus, the term of liminality implies the revolutionary energies that claim rights and contest power but also the authoritarian forces that try to restore order and protect the former political system[4].

Moreover, the revolution was characterized spatially by an urban fluidity created by the absence of the security apparatus. Informal activities, especially those performed by street vendors, multiplied in downtown Cairo. The conquest of urban spaces by these informal activities exemplifies "the contestation of public space in this period, redefining the meaning of public space and challenging the rules governing practices within it" (Nagati, Stryker, 2013, p. 44). Informal activities challenged the hegemonic vision of the authorities for the city. The neoliberal and globalized vision of downtown is embodied by the eviction of popular neighbourhoods, the exclusion of informal activities, the construction of towers for businesses, the renovation and protection of the buildings (Abaza, 2011; Pappalardo, 2016). This vision is hegemonic as the authorities try to have a totalizing action on the urbanity. In this context, informal practices were socially marginalized activities practiced by some subalterns (Pappalardo, 2018) but they spatially reintroduced a social interstice in the centre during the revolution. Moreover, as mostly governmental institutions were the ones organizing and exhibiting art before the revolution (Winegar, 2006), graffiti were also marginalized and repressed practices in Cairo before the revolution and can be define as politically subaltern practices. During the revolution, graffiti acquired visibility and centrality while they participated in the occupation of public spaces (Nicoarea, 2014).

2 For a state of art about the notion of liminality, see (March, 2021).

3 Ultras are supporters of football clubs who organize themself in association. In Egypt, the most famous groups are the Ultras Ahlawy and the White Knights which supports the two biggest egyptian teams el-Ahly and Zamalek.

4 The notion of liminality can be linked to the notion of transition between two states – here, revolution between 2011 and 2013 and authoritarian restoration - as the liminal state has to end when a new normative state is set up. We are aware of the teleological bias of such conception of revolutionary and post-revolutionary times : the moment of « restoration » is not simply « the return of the old » and can be described as « a becoming-restoration » that is never only authoritarian and stays a moment of redefinition of rules (Allal & Vannetzel, 2017). This present article is an empirical contribution of a geographer to this debate, showing how resistances to and interstices in the norms of control and securitization organized by an authoritarian regime can be find after 2013, how political pluralism can be find in ordinary practices and spaces. We are using the notion of liminality in this article for its contribution to think uncertainty and non-hegemonic moment not only between 2011 and 2013 but also after. We defend a spatially, temporally an socially contextualized approach of this notion that goes beyond a dichotomy between revolution and restoration.

Figure 1. Cement walls in Sheikh Rihan Street, next to Tahrir Square and the Ministry of Interior. Source: Monfleur, 2014.

Those practices can also be understood as part of the liminality of the revolution as they were competing with the domination and the hegemony the authorities tried to establish by restoring order and erasing the graffiti (Armbrust, 2019). As these artistic and informal activities were characterized by a temporary and shifting nature in terms of material and social appropriation of urban spaces, downtown was redefined as a space "in flux" (Nagati, Stryker, 2013).

The "liminal revolution" or the "city in flux"– and the meanings of uncertainty, in-betweenness, fluidity, subversiveness involved in them – are really close to the notion of urban and political interstice. Nonetheless, the revolution was characterized by other dynamics that counter this uncertainty and fluidity. The security infrastructure set up by the Supreme Council of the Forced Armies is one example. The army built the first wall, after the clash in Mohamed Mahmoud Street in November 2011. Between 2011 and 2013, they built several walls around ministries, protest spaces such as Tahrir Square (See Figure 1) and embassies (See Figure 2).

Through infrastructure, the army and police took back and occupied downtown Cairo, creating a heavily securitized space. Gates, checkpoints and barbed wires com-

Figure 2. Cement walls around the American embassy, next to Simon Bolivar Square. Source: Monfleur, 2014.

pleted this securitization (See Figure 3). Strong constraints, the walls contributed to displace demonstrations and sit-ins in more peripheral neighborhoods, such as Nasr City where the Muslim Brotherhood organized a sit-in in Rabaa el-Adawiya and Nahda squares (Stadnicki, 2014).

The walls were first built along the frontlines of revolutionary protests and clashes between security forces and revolutionaries. Between 2011 and 2013, they created a boundary between securitized spaces, which were controlled by security forces and spaces of protests considered as dangerous. They produced spatial segregation between a protected inside and a contested outside (Abaza, 2013). These dichotomies were set up clearly to counter the fluidity of the revolutionary risks. During interviews conducted in 2015, several inhabitants and workers[5] described the walls as borders:

> "Those walls are used to intensify, to increase the borders of the authority, to eliminate people in the street, to securitize public spaces, to put people under siege."[6]

5 The persons interviewed and quoted in this part of the article are mostly former revolutionaries and/or against the government of Sisi. They are part of a middle class and are mostly men. Each of them is anonymized for security reasons.

6 Interview with an inhabitant in downtown, conducted

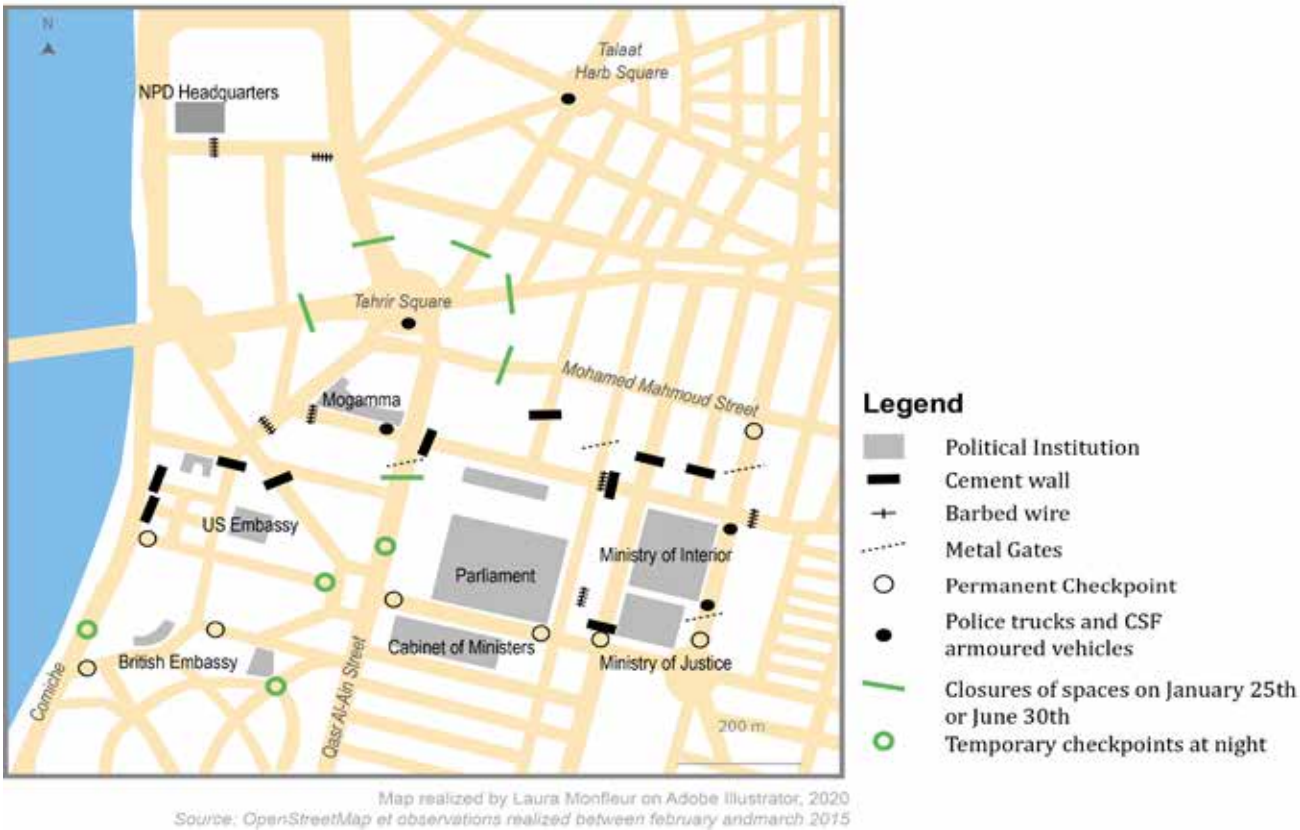

Figure 3. Security infrastructure in downtown Cairo in 2015. Source: Monfleur, 2020.
Data: OpenStreetMap and personal observations realized between February and March 2015.

Others were comparing the walls to the borders and hot spots during wars such as the Berlin Wall[7]. The space around the Ministry of Interior was compared to the Green Zones in Bagdad[8]. These quotes show how the residents had a strong perception of the dichotomy created by the walls, even after the demonstrations and the fights during the revolution.

In fact, after 2013, the walls were progressively reified and became fortifications for some political institutions such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice or the American embassy. The material securitization was extended to the streets surrounding the buildings. The walls created a no man's land around those political institutions, producing a disconnection in the everyday flux in the city (See Figure 4). An urban planner described spaces around the walls as "no-go-zones"[9]. The emptiness of the space was a territorial strategy of dispossession of space against protest practices. The authorities emptied spaces to better securitize them and produce buffer zones. With the walls, securitization goes through a policy of zoning – creating a territorial limit and segregation between spaces - and a policy of emptying – producing a spatial void around political buildings.

in Cairo in March 2015.

7 Interviews with an architect in February 2015 and with an inhabitant in March 2015, conducted in Cairo.

8 Interview with an urban planner working in downtown, in February 2015, conducted in Cairo.

9 Interview with an urban planner working in downtown, in February 2015, conducted in Cairo.

Figure 4. The walls as a policy of zoning and a policy of emptying: territorial limit and spatial void in Mansour Street, leading to the Ministry of Interior. Source Monfleur, 2014.

3. Graffiti, informality and the walls: interstitial combination of practices and infrastructure

Looking at the leftover space is not enough to understand the interstice. This spatial void is part of the securitization and the geography of dichotomy. Nonetheless, it creates a functional indetermination and an uncertainty in the uses of this security walls and the space around them. After their construction and their role of frontlines during clashes, they can be spaces of possibilities: strong constraints for political practices, they were also support for other practices since 2012. These practices can divert the security role and norms of the infrastructure.

The interstices that I describe rely on the combination of three factors: a specific spatial and material context that open potentialities, the interactions and practices of different actors who actualize these potentialities and the symbolic meanings that embody those practices that challenge a dominant norm. The interstice is "a phenomenon 'on the ground', a 'happening", a 'combination' or an 'encounter'." (Brighenti, 2013, p. xviii) that appear in the folds of the material, interactional and symbolic dimensions of space (Hatzfeld et al., 1998).

First of all, the artistic practices on the walls produced an infrastructure in-between a revolutionary geography and a security geography (Abaza, 2013; Lennon, 2014; Nicoarea, 2014). Several artists such as Ammar Abo Bakr, El Zeft and Nazeer launched the project "No walls" in March 2012. They painted *trompe-l'oeil* on the walls, recreating the continuity of the street. This collective initiative organized unauthorized happenings next to the painted walls, inviting revolutionaries to gather around music and the graffiti. According to one of the artists of this initiative, they wanted to create a space of protest in urban spaces, showing that these don't only belong to security forces. These events enabled to build a common space around the walls that became support of a fully but yet temporary revolutionary public space:

> "[…] we invite people to occupy the area and to share with us the event. There was music. First to say we still have this place and we can do what we want. It's part to celebrate occupying this place first. The second to tell the people about these walls."[10]

These graffiti can be described as heterotopia (Foucault, 1984; Klaus, 2019; Kraidy, 2013) a space of otherness in its physical, symbolic and political dimension[11]. It enables the juxtaposition of spaces that seem to be incompatible otherwise: here, the walls and the continuity of the street. The graffiti creates a blurred line in the dichotomy created by the walls and challenge the securitization. It constitutes a resistance by the imagination, as one of the inhabitants in Cairo underlines:

> "They tell the government that our imagination and our dreams is behind the walls. It's not the physical or material space that ends our dreams."[12]

This heterotopia can be more permanent than the performance or even the presence of the graffiti in the physical space, especially when the graffiti is anchored on the collective and revolutionary memory. This memorialization goes through social networks (Carle, Huguet, 2015) and books published by the artists themselves, that became archives (Karl et al., 2014).

Nonetheless, these practices show how the walls remained strong constraints for the revolutionaries. In fact, in the first months following the walls' construction, revolutionaries tried to destroy them by removing some of the cement blocks, while the security forces were building them again. In this game of constructions and destructions (Abaza, 2014; CEDEJ, 2013), the revolutionaries lost most of the time, removing one block in several hours while the security forces were building them more rapidly. These practices of leaning on the walls instead of destroying them show a modification of the repertoire of collective actions against the walls towards more temporary and reversible practices – the graffiti can be repainted on, or erased – which Omar Nagati and Benedicte Stryker called "soft interventions" in their book *Archiving the City in Flux : Cairo's Shifting Urban Landscape since the January 25th Revolution* (2013, p. 13).

More than a simple border, or cut, in urban spaces, the wall is a contested support and become an interstitial infrastructure that bears contrasted and conflicting imaginaries. Its polyvalence stems from its use by both the security forces and protestors. In the case of the artistic events and the graffiti, the practices were fully part of the repertoire of revolutionary action, so much that walls gained an interstitial dimension. In the case of the informal activities, the practices themselves bared the interstitial dimension, as they were challenging the security function of the walls without cancelling it.

If the street vendors were mostly absent from the streets in downtown in 2015 after their evacuation by the security forces and the governorate, informal parking lots were established in the *cul-de-sac* formed by the walls (See Figure 5). This practice relied on the wall and gave another function to the walls and the emptied space in front of them. They challenged the normalization of downtown. The

10 Interview with a graffiti artist who participated in the project « No walls », in March 2015, conducted in Cairo.

11 Walter Armbrust defines the heterotopia as « a spatialized formulation of liminality » (p. 1). In our case, we adopt an approach that combine an account both on temporality and spatiality.

12 Interview with a dweller in Cairo who goes to downtown often, in February 2015, conducted in Cairo.

Figure 5. Informal parking lot in Mansour Street. The wall in the figure 4 is in the background. Source: Monfleur, 2015.

fact that these informal activities were maintained in 2015 in the most securitized spaces in downtown Cairo while other activities, such as street vending, were evacuated in the other streets seem to be a paradox. Nonetheless, the dynamics were different: the street vendors were blocking the everyday mobility while the parking lots remedied to the lack of this service in downtown Cairo[13] using a dead space.

In-betweenness characterized these activities that were not politically subversive and not part of a protest geography. First, they are in between eviction and tolerance from the authorities. In fact, the people in charge of parking and supervising the cars often gave some money to the policemen to maintain their activities. Secondly, they were in between constraint and resistance in the post-revolutionary period. Rather than pure resistance, this practice of appropriation was instead an adaptation and negotiation. It constituted a "quiet encroachment" on the security control of public spaces (Bayat, 2009). In that case, this practice was itself interstitial. They produced a space around the walls that is an in-between: between control and tolerance, between constraint and resistance. The space around the walls was not completely controlled by security norms and function. It was a negotiated space between informal actors of the parking and formal actors of the security.

13 The lack of parking lots was mentioned in several interviews in 2015 by the inhabitants and drivers. Between 2019 and 2021, this issue is still mentioned by interviewees.

In both cases, the interstice is not a void or a no man's land but is the subject of negotiated or conflicting appropriations and territorial marking. This practice challenged or diverted the security function of the walls and their territorial mode of operation such as a policy of zoning in the case of the graffiti and a policy of emptying in the case of the informal parking. It was not only subversive but was in between constraints and resistances. It didn't replace the security norms and functionality of the walls but work with them.

In its spatial dimension, the interstice has a political and normative ambiguity and uncertainty. In its temporal dimension, temporary and shifting appropriations describe the interstice. We can best describe this through the idea of spatial and temporal contingency. The interstice is not known in advance but created in the combination of spatial materiality, unexpected and unplanned practices and the norms carried by those practices. But this interstitial combination is precarious and can be undermined if one of the elements changes or disappears.

Conclusion: after 2016, the end of the interstice ?

In 2014, the army tore some of the walls down, because the closure of the streets prevented the normal and everyday flow of the city. Later on, metal gates in the color of the Egyptian flag replaced some walls (see See Figure 6). These gates could be opened and closed in case of protests and could be used pre-emptively against protests. When the Ministry of Interior, main securitized institution, was removed from downtown and displaced during 2016 in the periphery of Cairo, in New Cairo, the walls and the gates were removed as well. Only the walls and the gates around the American embassy remain in Garden City. A gate is still in Falaki Street but always open.

Figure 6. A gate replaced the wall in Qasr al-Ayni Street, leading to Tahrir Square. Source: Monfleur, 2015.

The removal of material infrastructure did not imply a desecuritization in downtown Cairo. Security control is even higher, as the security forces establish temporary checkpoints in specific spaces such as the main squares (Tahrir Square, Talaat Harb Square). It also heightened during particular moments such as January 25th, the anniversary of the beginning of the 2011 revolution. With the removal of the walls came the removal of the support for the graffiti that were constantly erased by the authorities but also painted over by artists. The informal parking lots have been evacuated as an official and underground parking lot was built in Tahrir square. A private security company controls the entrance in this parking.

The fact that the securitization is more volatile, more flexible, and more temporary prevents interstitial practices to appropriate tools and spaces of security. The remaining walls around the American embassy in Simon Bolivar Square has been recovered by hieroglyphs in 2020 and 2021, first by the students in Fine Arts of Helwan University (See Figure 8) and then by the authorities (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Wall around the American embassy in Simon Bolivar Square in 2021: hieroglyphs made by the authorities for the Golden Parade of the Mommies in April 202. Source: Monfleur, 2021.

Figure 8. Wall around the US embassy in Simon Bolivar Square in 2021 with the hieroglyphs made by the students of Fine Arts Faculty of Helwan University in 2020, screenshot of the live of the ceremony of the Golden Parade of the Mommies. Source: Ruptly, video You Tube, 3rd of April 2021.

The regime used the walls in the Golden Parade of Mommies in April 2021. This event was a long parade where the mommies were transported between the National Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Tahrir Square and the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Fustat. This event was broadcast online and on television. It was staged in a way that promoted and legitimated the authoritarian regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. It's the glorification of a mythical past showing how the Egypt of Sisi is strong, as was the Egypt of the Pharaohs. The walls with the hieroglyphs were part of this staging (See Figure 8). With this beautification, the remaining walls seem to belong completely to the geography of a political power, and are not interstitial combination anymore. This political power tries to legitimate itself as a strong regime and glorious nation while it continues to repress the population and securitize urban spaces.

Conflict of interests

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The Kurdish political and artistic making by the transborder perception in the interstitial spaces

Engin Sustam
Associate researcher, Cetobas-EHESS and IFEA-Istanbul

Introduction

This article focuses on the recontextualization of the interstitial space over the last decade in Kurdish space. It will specifically focus on the Middle East territories between Turkey and Syria. The aim of this article is to investigate how the urban interstices have affected the political mobilization of the stateless Kurdish society and state control process in the conflicted public sphere. The previously mentioned interstitial urban space is important for Kurdish mobility. The 'Kurdish space[1], first of all, bears a case of intra-state question in the Middle East (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria). The term 'interstitial space or urban interstices' ('openness in the city', Nicolas-Le Strat, 2004) encompasses a multitude of concepts that are multifaceted (from conceptualisation to institutionalizing). The urban interstice in the Kurdish space signifies the invisibility of the minority's space in the becoming and a space, which gives the possibility of also creating Kurdishness in the place of the conflict. As pointed out by Sanò, Storato, and Puppa in their article(2021, p.3): 'The (in)visibility and the emptiness that characterise these interstitial spaces make them a source of autonomy.' At the same time, Kurdish space is positioned in relation to its new subjectivity constituting emancipatory space and decolonial corpus around this stateless society practice by deploying the urban interstitial spaces in big cities like Diyarbakir in Turkey and Qamichli of Rojava in Syria.

Meanwhile, the Syrian conflict after 2010 plays a central role in redefining the interstitial cross-border relationship around the Kurdish context today. This article aims to question the complex reading of 'interstitial practices' in the Kurdish space (especially the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir)[2] and its critical decolonial approaches against the power and the knowledge of authoritarian regimes in Turkey, especially in Syria. It also analyses the rising of emancipation in these in-between empty spaces against the militarist destruction of the war. It is possible today to say that urban interstices has a rhetoric and an attitude that is favourable to the priorities of the Kurdish urban struggle like 'Hewsel Gardens'[3] in Diyarbakir ('Baxçeyên Hewselê' in Kurdish). The Kurdish experience of interstitial space is above all a political questioning of colonial habitat. This is questioning that diffracts according to several political points of view and different levels of reality. We will discuss the expression of interstitial space in the Kurdish space in relation to the urban uprising and Kurdish political cause. The complexity of the Kurdish space engenders a new sociological reading by means of 'counterpower' and countercultural approach (and 'a political economy of space'[4]), which makes itself visible (from invisibility to visibility), transcending any conventional structure on the spatiality of the place in

1 The concept 'Kurdish space' means the territoriality of the Kurdish population in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria or in western diaspora, etc. See the book for more detailed concept analysis. Hamit Bozarslan. 2013. (interview), pp. 23-32, and Engin Sustam. 2016a. pp. 19-65.

2 We will give specially the images of the city of Diyarbakir. Because the city of Diyarbakir is an important laboratory in the Kurdish space of resistance and political change of Kurdishness, and thus of the operational intervention of the state.

3 In this article, we want to use the letter 'w' of the Kurdish appeal instead of the letter 'v'.

4 See, version of 'Cobayes lettrés Editions' in pdf, Henri Lefebvre. 200b. Espace et politique : le droit à la ville II, Paris, Rémi Hess, Editions Anthropos : https://monoskop.org/images/7/78/LEFEBVRE_Henri_-_Le_droit_à_la_ville_II_Espace_et_politique.pdf, pp. 75-87.

the making. It will be about understanding what these urban or peri-urban interstitial spaces are in the context of the emergence of insurgent subjectivity in Kurdish spaces/areas. Even if the Kurdish municipality had deployed the spaces of interstice for a new way of living and investing the urban space completely militarized by the war since the 90s in the Kurdish region, the governmental interventions after 2015 restructured the city as a zone of control and a place of surveillance with the policy of 'Kayyum' regime ('trustee' or 'trustee regime')[5]. It is important to recognize that interstitial space in the Kurdish region become one of the control places for the regime of 'biopolitical governmentality'. Through the concept of biopolitics and governmentality, Michel Foucault tells us how life, living things, population, and thus space has become the stakes of new neoliberal strategies (Foucault: 1994, pp. 641-642, 2004a and 2004b).

As Deleuze also shows (1990, pp. 229-249), these spaces may not be the 'lost' urban interstices, but the spaces are replaced by state domination by erasing all traces of the collective memory of the place. With its multi-layered political-cultural background, Kurdish urban spaces are open to different sociological or urban readings. As Nicolas-Le Strat points out, 'we will say that an interstice unfolds at several levels of reality and that each of these levels is determined concerning the others' (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007, p. 115). The article observes, in addition, the social processes in the spatiality of conflict and resistance and analyses the constituting space that contains the urban memory (see, Harvey, 1997, pp.19-28). In other words, how can the spatiality of the Kurdish areas be both the place of state control and the common spaces of Kurdish urban resistance. For example, the Kurdish national celebration ritual event 'Newroz' in Diyarbakir (the ritual of the Kurdish insurrection and, also the imaginary space of the Kurdish identity, Aydin, 2005; Khalid, 2020), on March 21 of each year, and which expresses the Kurdish national awakening, is a remarkable example. The places where the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir takes place are temporally defined as urban interstices are in fact the places where the circulation of daily life is the most intense. The Newroz squares, one of the empty urban spaces, were not formed according to the structures surrounding the city centres but were formed on the outskirts of the city, because the state systems (governor, military, police, places of control, etc.) surrounding the downtown area did not allow.

The article proposes to question the role and place of artistic perceptions in the creation and the use of interstitial space. We observe that contemporary artists invent and critically reconstitute these spaces in their conceptual forms to ironically reclaim militarized space and the locus of state violence. In this sense, this article is interested in the forms of resistance in urban space through the spatiality of 'interstice or in-between' in Kurdish space and is also interested in the heterotopic dimension that can be involved in its temporality and spatiality. Hence, we will first address the memory of the Kurdish space and its resistance in the interstice spaces in the chapters below (1) before dealing with urban interstice (2) in its relation to the Kurdish political question, then analyse them with the works of contemporary art (3).

The area of resistance and the context of conflict

Our purpose deals with the question of in-between spaces. The notion of urban interstices is strongly instrumentalised by the neoliberal sustainable development in a logic of gentrification, via an ecological approach of living together with the will to appropriate in-between places in the city. This approach of social engineering creates the possibility to rehabilitate these interstitial spaces for an urban spraw. While the concreting culture develops so much in Turkey (Pérouse, 2017; Erdi& Sentürk, 2017), the interstices could constitute spaces to live together, a voice to create a common life. However, when we talk about Kurdish urban spaces (or rural spaces) with different social models, we can not read these areas by ignoring the culture of colonial oppression, conflict and war. For nearly a century, the Kurdish space has been defined by dynamics of violence and conflict (Bozarslan, 2009).On the other hand, the mobilization in the Kurdish space shows that politicization has spread to all the sociological layers of place and spatiality.

5 See the article, Mahmut Hamsici, 2019; Sultan Tepe, Ayça Alemdaro□lu, 2021, pp. 87–101 and the news, 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish Opposition', URL : https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition, and

The interstitial space is physically fragmented by the armed conflict and occupied by the 'subversive actions' of Kurdish emancipation struggle. Hence, interstices are now becoming places of artistic resistance and creative visibility. Indeed, the Sur district (generally Sur district in Diyarbakir, 'Suriçi' located inside the historical fortress of Diyarbakir) was transformed during 'Hendek' resurrection (barricade trenches)[6] in 2015 and 2016 into a battlefield. It is currently being transformed through the urban gentrification projects of TOKI (Mass Housing Administration)[7]. The town centre of Diyarbakir like many others is therefore targeted for demolition[8]. It becomes a controlled space where the daily urban life of the population is controlled by the State.

We could give the example of the resistance of 'Baxçeyên Hewselê' as an emancipatory resistance of the Kurds by using the interstitial space to create an ecological, micropolitical, and creative activism in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. Another example of an initiative in civil society is 'Jinwar' ('woman's place' or 'woman's land'), the women's self-managed ecological village in the canton of Cizîrê, near the city of Amûdê in Rojava in Syria (Rosen, 2021).

Qamichli city in Syria (in Djézireh canton of Rojava) is also quite interesting to see for the reconstruction of its multiplicity of space after the conflict, and the use of interstitial space. Some Kurdish urban spaces, after the urban destruction from 2016, occupy an important place. Like the city Diyarbakir which is a very important place for the Kurdish political movement, they represent also the traces of the struggle for emancipation through the socio-political mutation of the public space and the social change of spatiality (Güvenç, 2011, p. 25-40).

Figure 1: Urban gardens between buildings in Diyarbakir, and Hewsel Gardens' Resistance [9]

Some transit areas of the city and the rural place in the outskirts of the city such as Diyarbakir's Seyh Said Square, Sur neighbourhoods, or Hewsel Gardens were chosen as the subject of work by the artists. The 'Baxçeyên Hewselê' (Hewsel Gardens) mobilization deployed a form of ecological squat against TOKI's gentrification project (the mass housing administration in the town city and around the fortress of Diyarbakır), as well as tree chopping and nature destruction in the Kurdish area.

6 See for the 'Hendek' resistance and re-occupation of Diyarbakir city by Turkish neo-colonial politics : Leyla Bedirxan. 2017 and Kurdistan TATORT, 2013.

7 See the real estate announcement on the TOKI gentrification town planning project. 'TOKİ Diyarbakır Sur Dibi'nde kentsel dönüşüm yapacak.' (TOKİ will carry out urban transformation in Diyarbakır Sur Dibi). 2008, January 31. In Emlak Kulisi. URL : https://emlakkulisi.com/toki-diyarbakir-sur-dibinde-kentsel-donusum-yapacak/2927

8 See, the master thesis work 'The heritage development process in Diyarbakır' of Mehmet Tayfur. 2018. 'Le processus de patrimonialisation à Diyarbakır : Moments, acteurs, valeurs. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon.

9 The image taken from the Arkitera site, 'the report with the Ecology Association in Diyarbakir' by Ekin Bozkurt URL : https://www.arkitera.com/soylesi/diyarbakirda-yasam-alanlarini-yeniden-kurmak-uzerine/ , and Hewsel Gardens resistance, The image taken from Bianet, Ercan Jan Aktas, URL : https://m.bianet.org/biamag/toplum/154165-hevsel-de-neler-oluyor

The resistance and 'the squatted space' created by Kurdish urban insurgents have attracted the attention of artists and intellectuals to protect this space. Civil, and ecological disobedience and artistic practice in Kurdish space are transformative for a transversal creation of habitat against spaces designed by the state. Indeed, the Kurdish space in Turkey (and in the Middle East) becomes a 'place' of interstice in the face of the nationalist definition of state territoriality. The resistance makes then a micropolitical place constituting the break with the state disciplinary order of the city. The new way of defending the ecological habitat space like the artists' squats, has become a form of civil disobedience in the spatial urban fabric (Subra, 2016).

It is most certainly, the conflictual environment, which creates destructions in the physical form of cities in the Kurdish space, can also allow a city to become an intrusion control mechanism. Social living and urban spaces or spatial patterns require another reading because of war, conflict, and violence. This is also a new micropolitical culture of mobilization through an ecological struggle on the interstitial spaces in the Kurdish region. On the other hand, this form has a certain spatiality in the social, cultural, and political sense in the Kurdish space which mobilizes the emergence of urban uprisings in Diyarbakir since the beginning of the 20th century. Because the city of Diyarbakir carries a central political coding of the Kurdish question (Gambetti, 2005, 32, 43-71; Gambetti and Jongerden, 2015 and Genç, 2014). The city of Diyarbakir is a cultural and political capital of the Kurdish space, and an imaginary capital of historical Kurdistan in its spatiality. Therefore, we chose to analyse the interstitial space in this emblematic spatiality.

These are urban interstices in the Kurdish space which gave an urban micropolitical aspect deployed by the actors of political, cultural, and artistic disobedience vis-à-vis the practice of institutional control of neoliberal governments. In this case, the urban interstices in the Kurdish space can be seen as areas of insurgent and decolonized visibility (like the area of Hewsel gardens). The resistance and 'the squatted space' (Hewsel Gardens) have attracted the attention of artists and intellectuals to defend this space and to reveal how multiple identities of a Mesopotamian heritage can align with the specific goal of preserving an urban interstitial space within a conflictual area and socio-political production of the Kurdish space. The Hewsel Gardens protests garnered transnational support from intellectuals like David Harvey.[10]

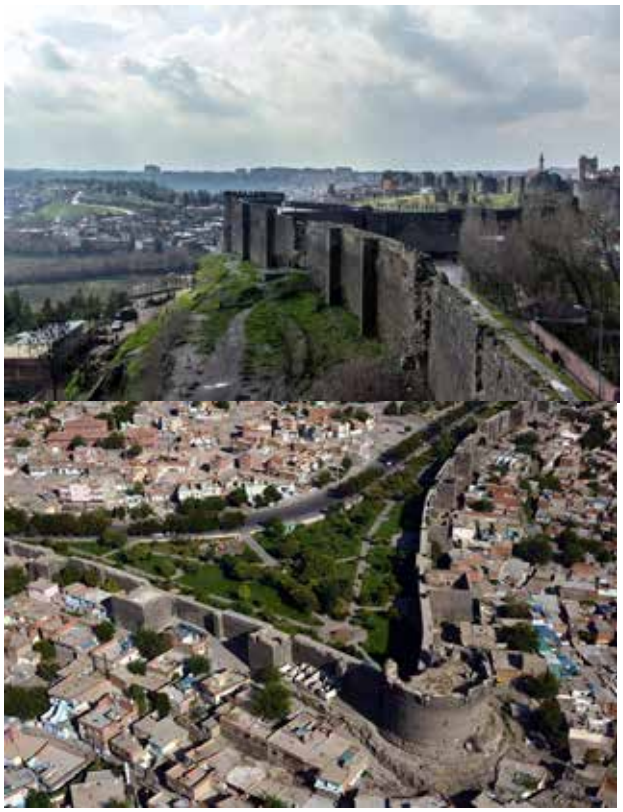

Figure 2: Hewsel Gardens and Fortress-Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality[11] pro-HDP before Kayyum intervention of AKP government.[12]

10 See, 'On 'urban riots' with David Harvey' by Beril Eski, BBC in Turkish URL : https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/04/140409_harvey

11 The image taken from The Independent newspaper in Turkish, Veysi Polat see URL: https://www.indyturk.com/node/120051/haber/tarihi-surlar-için-diyarbakır'-gelecek-unesco'ya-ça?rı-sadece-devleti-de?il-stk

12 The Image 2 taken from the website of Unesco, URL : https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/thumbs/site_1488_0003-360-360-20150610152851.jpg

from Hewsel Gardens to the street barricades

Kurdish uprisings have succeeded in delineating the oppression in the Middle East with the prospect of trans-border mobility. They are creating a new stage in their decolonized cross-border visibility on the Kurdish question. To understand the political character of the Kurdish political movement and his political resistance in interstitial space, it is necessary to concentrate on the Rojava Revolution and the resistance at the barricades ('Hendek') in Kurdish cities between 2015-2017. After which a growth of the population towards the outskirts of the city increases and the rapid construction of buildings in the urban centres by the legal and practical politics of a 'trustee' replacing elected Kurdish mayor is realised (Tayfur, 2018, p.67-86 and Öztürk, 2013). As Tayfur emphasizes on the conflictual situation of Diyarbakir during the resistance of the armed struggle in Kurdish city, the state destroyed much of the ancient town of Sur. '*The conflicts that erupted in the historic town in December 2015 completely changed the situation in the old town of Sur, which led to the destruction of many historic buildings, and some of them were damaged.*'(Tayfur, 2018, p.13) Indeed, after this military intervention, a large part of the city is emptied, and rebuilt according to the state policy of TOKI of the Turkish government (Özyeti, 2016 and Scalbert, 2013). The military attack by the Turkish government between 2015 and 2017 following the resumption of clashes between the Turkish state and the PKK, the Kurdish municipalities of the DBP (HDP) became the target of Erdogan's power (Günes, 2019, p. 41-60). Hundreds of people lost their lives and thousands of people were forced to emigrate, which also led to the destruction of the districts of the sub-prefect of Sur in Diyarbakir (formerly 'Hançepek or Gavur Mahallesi : Giaour Neighborhood' or 'Non-Muslim' quarter according to the local language)[13], one of the symbols of contemporary Kurdish resistance in the city of Diyarbakir. Indeed, leaving a large interstitial space within the medieval fortresses of Diyarbakir (see Soyukaya, 2015), and the destruction of the sub-prefect Sur neighbourhoods, not only destroyed a collective memory of existence but also a control mechanism was created with these empty spaces created by the state violence Celik, 2010).[14] As the state creates new open or empty spaces in insurgent cities, it has instead placed the memory of the state. In the latter case, all the urban interstitial spaces became the control zone laid out by the state's landscape architects after the demolition.

Figure 3: Satellite image '2015' of Sur before Turkish security forces bombarded the city. Source: Google Earth Pro Satellite. Image '2017' of Sur after demolition by armed bombardment. Source: Google Earth Pro[15]

13 These neighbourhoods are the former urban area of the Armenian and Assyrian populations before the Armenian genocide of 2015. See, Ahmet Yıkık. 2018. p.453-464, and Francesco Marilungo. 2018. p.144-145.

14 To see the cartography of the neighbourhood (transformation of district) which became a ghetto after the forced political migration of the 90s.

15 These images used for analysis on the South Florida

It is rather a question of underlining a difference of approach on ecological transformation and democratic resolution in the Kurdish space with the analyses, the dynamics, and the stakes which lead to the point of the discussion. There are so many different experiences of the Kurdish space, so many dissonant visions of uprising emancipation and urban destruction: How do we include this socio-political complexity in our analyse on interstice urban? With the post-2015 demolitions, the conflict space in the Kurdish zone emptied, on the other hand, all the interstitial zones in Diyarbakir or other Kurdish towns were re-occupied by the military forces of the state. Indeed, returning to the geopolitics of decolonial knowledge whose transformation of the Kurdish space in recent years was marked by Kurdish ecological emancipation and by its decolonial approach (Sustam, 2021d). Therefore, our approach underlines the extent to which this transformation and the instrument and political language at the heart of the Kurdish identity struggle with facing the decolonial practice (Spivak, 1988 and 1999). As a result of the destruction of the spaces of the old city in Diyarbakir and the gentrification, the state not only de-memorizes the old historical spaces but also modifies the texture of the city and the politico-cultural forms (Armenian, Syriac or Kurdish architectural heritage). In recent years, it is possible to observe an artistic visibility of a new generation of artists dealing with the Kurdish space. We propose to study works of artists like Deniz Aktas, Berat Isik, Ahmet Ögüt, Fatos Irwen, Hasan Pehlevan, Hüseyin Aksoy, Sidar Baki, Sener Özmen, Timur Celik, etc.

Artistic Perceptions on interstitial space

The most destructive aspect of the new type of neoliberal and militarist intervention in the Kurdish space was implemented by the AKP government after 2015 (after the destruction of the old 'Sur' district of Diyarbakir by a military intervention). This article observes the emergence of the creative meaning of the Kurdish space occupied by state hegemony (interstices urban under the authoritarian control). This space is also the place of artistic work carried out by the study of various artistic perceptions as well as their political urban dimensions. For example, the contemporary artist, Deniz Aktas, associates his work with an 'aesthetic of urban ruin'. In general, his drawings reflect this feeling of being both in and out of the urban space or city ruin, of urban crisis (conflict, ruin, squat, occupied, etc.), which refers to this idea of 'aesthetic of ruin'. The ruins in the Kurdish space due to the war contain the traces of state violence as well as a potential for social transformation (Grierson, ed., 2017). This article will reflect the urban trauma concerning the interstices urban, and the architectural violence by the gentrification state project. The main purpose of this paper is to investigate art interventions in the interstices urban design by Kurdish artist as the concept of trauma, and the memory of struggle. How the Kurdish urban space becomes the decolonial making of Kurdish artists 'in-between' approach? Nevertheless, artistic performers make a positive impression on the future of the Kurdish area with their works. Urban space is becoming popular each day in global contemporary art. Our hypothesis is that the Kurdish artistic intervention should be considered as an artistic form of struggle for the emancipation of Kurdish identity. In fact, it seems that the space is not only 'marked' (Lefebvre, 200b) by politics, also by emancipating artistic and cultural production. The artistic perception on urban interstices gives a 'policy of singularity' like 'a constituent power'(Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007) on urban planning.

Discussing the decolonial relationship of the urban space and contemporary artworks performed in interstices urban space in Kurdish cities, this article will study the traumatic memory in the visual perception of artists using the public aspect. The question then arises to know to what extent the concepts of artistic creativity interfere in the interstitial space. Because at the end of the 1990s, many interstices urban spaces resumed their place in artistic works such as the work '*Welcome to Diyarbakir*' of Sener Özmen. Some artists, some activists take action on the interstitial practice. They settle, with or without rights, on these abandoned places which become a representative political space. In-

University St. Petesrburg Campus site by Thomas Smith, 'Political Science Professor Explores 'Urbicide' and Redevelopment of Kurdish Cities in Turkey', See URL : https://spcampus.usf.edu/home/2020/06/11/political-science-professor-explores-urbicide-and-redevelopment-of-kurdish-cities-in-turkey/

deed, the exemplary work 'Welcome to Diyarbakir' takes advantage of the interest of a stigmatized exoticism to thus question the stateless society in an interstitial space. The photographic installation of artist Sener Özmen was present in a former depot of 'Sümerbank' (former national bank of the Turkish state) as part of the 'Force of language 1' exhibition (curator: Ali Akay) in 2003 in Diyarbakir. The work is a photographic installation, that includes different images such as those of a ruined, abandoned, enclosed depot (which has become a place of interstice), and those of Tahitian women dancing and warmly welcoming visitors to this interstitial space. The exhibition takes place in a war zone where the local culture is named by a different social layer, repressed by the colonial spirit. This photo affects the crack that cuts through reality and the cultural tone of the interstitial space in the middle of the ruin with five women dancing and singing 'Welcome to Diyarbakir' like an exotic place, represents in the background a gnawed, ironic space and traumatic.

Figure 4: Image 1: 'Welcome to Diyarbakir' by Sener Özmen, 2003, Former Sümerbank Factory in Diyarbakir. Image 2: 'Adult Games'by Erkan Özgen, 2004, a park among the houses of the city in Derik, Mardin occupied by hooded children.

So, we can look at the works of Deniz Aktas. He works on urban spaces, also on urban interstices spaces by deploying in his works the images of materials in the place of interstice such as abandoned statues, armchairs, tombstones, water wells, military vehicles, car tires, etc. His work deal with the situation between destruction and nature in the interstitial space. In his work, the artist looks at the 'a place without a place', the demolitions, the ruins, the rubble, and what remains of the excavations. We see that the 'a place without a place'[16], the demolitions, the rubble, the rubbish, the concrete graves, and the rubbish. That could count as excavations do not come from 'natural' ways in the interstitial space, but that the natural becomes 'natural' by constant militarist destruction and reconstruction, just like the unchanging fate of the geography in which it lives and produces. The artistic approach of Kurdish space gives us a decolonial aesthetic through the singular approach of collective memory and makes a lot of use of the interstitial space and the entry position. The urban images of the Kurdish space that the artist has painted look at the buildings of a complex form, dispersed city, the space in-between, the spaces of interstitial space, the traces of urban transformation, the forced evictions by the gentrification project of the inhabitants (their memorial materials). Looking at the destroyed urban area, he also examines the memory formed in the spaces of this interstice urban area (Figure below, taken in Diyarbakir). The artist emphasizes the urban representation of Kurdish space with his compositions in which the artist chooses the 'a place without a place' (the heterotopic space in-between the city and the Mesopotamian steppe) and the traces of the interstitial space to document the ruin and the trauma with the monochrome technique in the abandoned spaces. For Kurdish artists and actors, making works of art or work on the Kurdish space is simply a politi-

16 The Foucaldien concept is '*un lieu sans lieu*' in French. See, Michel Foucault. 1994b. 'Des espaces autres ' Dits et écrits, Tome IV, Editions Gallimard, p. 756.

cal approach and decolonial perspectives (a rhetoric of micropolitical critique of traumatized memory: Sustam, 2016a and 2016c, p. 45-71).

Figure 5: Photos, Deniz Aktas. The works 'those who change - those who transform'

We can also quote 'Kan Baldan Tatlidir' (blood is tastier than honey), this collective work by Sener Ozmen and Ahmet Ögüt is part of a larger project 'A Contemporary Art Project', which was presented in an exhibition in Istanbul in 2004. 'Kan Baldan Tatlidir' is an allegorical black and white fanzine whose dialogues are adapted in Kurdish, Turkish and English, and which takes place in the streets of Diyarbakir. Their art book creates a postmodern fanzine style that manifests itself in the form of urban 'nomadic' art that takes the spaces of interstice as a frame for the Kurdish war zone in Diyarbakir. Kurdish artists not only do an artistic practice on the Kurdish space and its urban codes, but they also do on the world-ecology, the urbanity of today, the spatiality, the place of demolition, the interstitial margins of the city like the works of Ahmet Ögüt, Fatos Irwen, Sidar Baki. One of the absurd examples of artist Ahmet Ögüt's work is 'Yichang and Pleasure Places of All Kinds' (2014)[17] that humorously conveys urban gentrification in Turkey. Ahmet Ögüt always also deploys the global dimension and a relational aesthetic of urban space in his works. Ögüt, attached to the collective memory of the city, transforms the gaps of urban areas in his work. It is not about showing works of art in the Kurdish space to see how Kurdish artists intervene in the multiple dependencies of the city (urban interstice). The area of conflict (Diyarbakir and the Kurdish region) becomes a interstitial space (like 'body without organ', Deleuze and Guattari : 1980)[18] by the artistic approach with the movements of reterritorialization and deterritorialization. The urban area is the place where interstitial spaces are deterritorialized. It can still be seen in the work 'The Castle of Vooruit'[19] by Ahmet Ö□üt (2012). The urban interstice is a spatial projection of artists, a form of resistance, blockage, and thus a force for micropolitical productivity. We find that Kurdish artists deploy the image of interstitial spaces and empty or rural spaces, and the balance of power between periphery, center in their works of art. It would be interesting to relativize and put into perspective the definition of urban interstice for the use of art through sociological study. The video 'Adult Games' of Erkan Özgen is a good example of asserting a point of view of the 'periphery

17 See, the work 'Pleasure Places of All Kinds', URL : https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/68605/Ahmet-Ö□üt-Pleasure-Places-of-All-Kinds-Zurich

18 The 'Body without Organs' and 'the movements of reterritorialization and deterritorialization' are a concept of Deleuze and Guattari as a concept of a set of practices in its spatiality and temporality that they define. See, G. Deleuze, F. Guattari. 1972. L'Anti-Œdipe., Éditions de Minuit, and 1980. Mille Plateaux, Éditions de Minuit.

19 See the work 'Figure : Castle of Vooruit' by Ahmet Ögüt in Ghent, URL : https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34180/track/

as the interstitial place and of exclusion (periphery, suburb, and city in Kurdistan), a decolonized artistic criticism anchored in an interstitial position and in a 'relational aesthetic' (Bourriaud, 2001) in front of the discourse of the 'center'.

It is in this context of interstitial space between resistance and control that the 'in-between' condition emerges, thus offering us a non-institutional approach to various micropolitical and artistic activities. Indeed, we could consult a micropolitics of spatial singularities which constitute these 'in-between' spaces. These two situations (visibility or invisibility or resistance or control) situated 'in-between' the vertical zones and the horizontal zones of the city lead us to another reading on the interstice. The 'in-between' areas are the areas where the city or social struggles take place, as we can see in the example of Diyarbakir. These spaces of interstice also produce an internal and external conflict according to the diverse strategy. Deleuze and Guattari had underlined this 'in-between' encounter with the connection as 'An apparent conflict arises between desiring-machines and the body without organs.' (Deleuze and Guattari :1972, p. 15). We find another approach to the analysis of spatiality that Deleuze and Guattari underlines in 'Thousand Plateaus' the tension between two different zones which interpenetrate (1980, p. 70): 'Nomadic waves or flows of deterritorialization go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new center to the new periphery, falling back to the old center and launching forth to the new.' This 'in-between' situation in art expresses a perception of spatiality like 'normative space and anti-normative space'. It is a space that can consider as a heterotopic space according to the Foucauldian reading. Foucault would say this 'Of Other Spaces' (Heterotopias : Foucault, 1994b, p.752-763) as 'a place without a place' where space puts in charge different tensions, various issues, forms of opposition without counting the sign of the nation-state. From the interventions of the space of the oppressed, the interstitial space here becomes the actions of a minority counter-power. It is also as a conceptual reference, that Foucault's analyses (as well as his referential concept 'Heterotopias') will allow us to draw up the analysis on the interstitial space. The interstices space are the spaces of heterotopia that we underline as 'a set of relations' and 'a relation of forces.'

A memory of urban space and urban interstices

Interstitial spaces are also reclaimed by the process of state militarization in Kurdish space in Turkey, especially in Diyarbakir which is emblematically an identity capital of urban insurgency in Kurdish memory. So, it is a question of questioning the two accesses to the term in the Kurdish space: the Kurdish state and subjectivity. The war and destruction that emerged in the urban uprisings of 2015 damaged the urban memory of the Kurds with the target of state violence that shook the geography of Kurdish region. Thus, many struggles aim to protect these interstitial spaces for an account and to reveal the evocative power of these places. Like the resistance from Hewsel Gardens to Diyarbakir, the Kurdish insurgents are expanding the field of resistance to also transform the urban interstices under the control of authoritarian regimes in Turkey and Syria. The interstitial space becomes a form of reappropriation, aesthetic reassessment of Kurdish social, cultural and political resistance in Turkey and also in the Middle East (especially in Kurdish region between Turkey (North Kurdistan-Bakûr) and Syria (Western Kurdistan-Rojava).

In the practice of the Kurdish space, we could consider these spaces of interstice as the space of fashions, uses, urban approaches which requalify the borders of the city, memory in the face of forgetfulness. It is obvious that these districts have three different memories. The first (1) is that there are areas the suffering and trauma of the Armenian genocide (Celik and Dinç, 2015). The second (2) is that these pains or traumas were constantly recalled by the memorial works of the former municipalities of HDP in the interstitial spaces before, the preservation of the buildings, the statutes, the renovation of the chapels, and the rehabilitation of the old names of the streets before the founding of the Turkish republic (1923). That is the reconstitution of

the space to memorize the traces through the signs in Kurdish, Armenian, Arabic, or other languages. As the replacement of the old names of places, towns, and villages (from Arabic to Kurdish or other languages) in North of Syria (in the Kurdish space, the Rojava) after the revolution of 2012, and the declaration of the Autonomous Self-Administration in North and East of Syria. The name change of space (which is the symbols of Kurdishness) is placed in the political and epistemic discourse of Kurdishness according to the political and identity terminology of the Kurdish political movement (Sustam, 2016b). Even if the trustee appointed ('Kayyum') of the Turkish government replaces today the local toponymic panels (city, village and neighbourhood change names for the Turkishness view) in Kurdish by panels in Turkish.[20] The last (3) is the new codes of Kurdish political resistance that were taking hold in the interstitial zones of the city's neighbourhoods, and thus the state control of the interstitial space through militarism and authoritarian police visibility like daily visibility of the police after the revolt of Gezi Park in Taksim Istanbul. The AKP government uses a certain national policy of gentrification in minority areas such as the neighbourhoods of Alevis (especially in Istanbul), Kurds (particularly in Kurdish region), Armenians (particularly in Istanbul), or Greeks (in Aegean and Mediterranean region) and Gypsies (in Sulukule Istanbul : see, Erdi, 2019). We can compare it with the renovation project of the Gypsy district of Sulukule in Istanbul.

Figure 6: the new look of Seikh Said or Dag Kapi Square, Diyarbakir[21] and its former image in 1970.[22]

While it is disputable whether the state reconstitutes its memory in the spaces of interstice and the place opened by the bias of the visibility of the state or by the means of the construction of the statutes, the architectural landscape installation. Therefore, the new memory of the Kurdish space emerging in these areas may be a new area of struggle to protect the urban interstice that the state is trying to erase and reveal its mnemonic power, just like in the old place Dağkapı (nominated by the HDP municipality as 'Sheikh

20 For the discussion on the Kurdish naming of villages, squares, towns, and panels in the Kurdish space, and thus the change of first names (from Turkish to Kurdish) : Senem Aslan, 'Incoherent State: The Controversy over Kurdish Naming in Turkey', European Journal of Turkish Studies, 10 | 2009, URL : http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4142 ; Joost Jongerden. 2007. The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds. Leiden-Boston, Brill, and 2009, 'Crafting Space, Making People. The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey', European Journal of Turkish Studies 10: 2-22, and 2010, 'Dams and Politics in Turkey. Utilizing Water, Developing Conflict', Middle East Policy 17 (1): 137-143.

21 The image taken from the T24 site, 03 December 2015, URL: https://t24.com.tr/haber/diyarbakir-dagkapi-meydaninda-sokaga-cikma-yasagi,318935

22 The image taken from 'Eski Türkiye Foto□rafları Ar□ivi', URL : http://www.eskiturkiye.net/3554/diyarbakir-1970

Said Square' (Gambetti, 2009).[23] However, with the project prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization of Turkey, it is desired to change the name of Sheikh Said Square (Saadi, 2021, p. 847–861). As the Diyarbakır city space demonstrates, the Kurdish space is not only a scene of conflict, also a political scene of 'productive forces' and 'social production' as Henri Lefebvre underlined in '*La production de l'Espace*' (Lefebvre, 2000a, p. 48, 56, 93, 102 ; 1974, p. 15-32, and 2000b. Ibid.).

Conclusion

Interstitial spaces are heterotopic and urban living quarters. That is, it invests a space (geographic or regional) in connection with its local environment, its memory, and with the inhabitants. Indeed today, there is more and more talk of local policies on the interstitial space that is occupied by the gentrified project. These are spaces of life, control, violence, and travel that define the veins of the city as underlined Andrea Mubi Brighenti (2016, p. XV, Introduction). The analysis of the Kurdish space in this approach with the analysis of the space of interstices gives us to carefully read the tensions of this minor and invisible space in the field of urban study or urban sociology. The concept of 'interstice' in our analysis is defined as a decolonial heterotopia in artistic and urban political perception. Through our analysis, we tried to question, why and how are these urban interstices formed in the Kurdish space which favors a micro-political practice of habitat and find themselves between borders, control, and resistance. Urban interstices provide an opportunity to rethink differently living together, neighbourhood and meeting in the temporality and spatiality of contemporary cities.

In this context, the significance of interstitial space is a political framework in Kurdish space, and indeed generated by several factors. This is the way to imagine differently the places of resistance, of the Kurdish question today. This is the way to perceive the loss of memory of the Kurdish inhabitants considered 'so-called citizens' in Turkey. The Kurds have already suffered this stereotypical language in Turkey 'so-called people', 'so-called society', 'so-called Kurdistan' (or 'so-called language', etc.) as a racial pathology of the dominant space. Like the artistic work of Cengiz Tekin '*Sanatçının Sözde Portresi*' (2003, the Portrait of so-called artist)[24], the artist criticizes the stereotypes in Turkish popular culture and the taboos towards the Kurds. Artistic movements are certainly emerging in Kurdish space that are struggling to assert themselves, and an intellectual consciousness that is deploying urban space, urban interstice, and city intrusion. In other words, this is about showing different aspects of the same space of artistic creation, resistance, and control: spatiality, reality, experience, urban interstitial.

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23 During the time of Co-mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakir Gültan Kı□anak, with the decision of the council of the Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakır, the name of Sheikh Said, who was executed in 1925 by the Turkish Independence Court along with 47 of his friends Kurdish insurgents in Da□ Kapı Square, was attributed to the place where he was hanged in 2014. See, the Evrensel newspaper and the DIHA news agency : https://www.evrensel.net/haber/89855/dagkapi-meydaninin-adi-seyh-said-meydani-oldu

24 See, See the artist's work, in 'I'm too sad to kill you!'. Proje4L Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum. 2003, in Salt Arastirma URL : https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/9606

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

Rouba Kaedbey
PhD Candidate at UMR 7324 CITERES, CNRS/University of Tours
Associate researcher at IFPO-Beirut

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

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

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

1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.1 The context of the investigation

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

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

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

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

2. Case study and context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

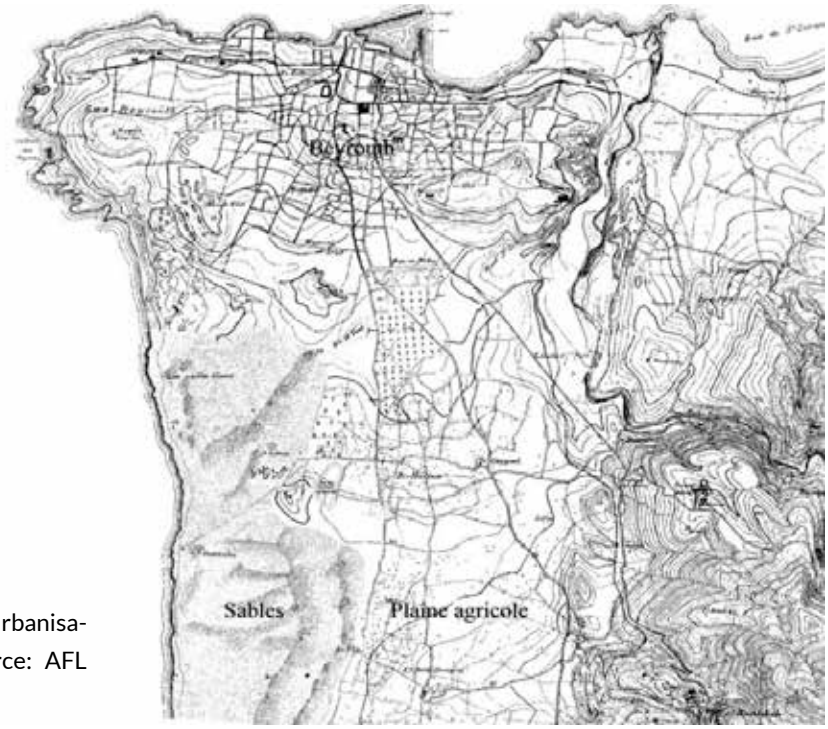

Figure 3. The vast sandy areas before the urbanisation of the southern suburbs of Beirut. Source: AFL Topographic Bureau, 1920, Beirut.

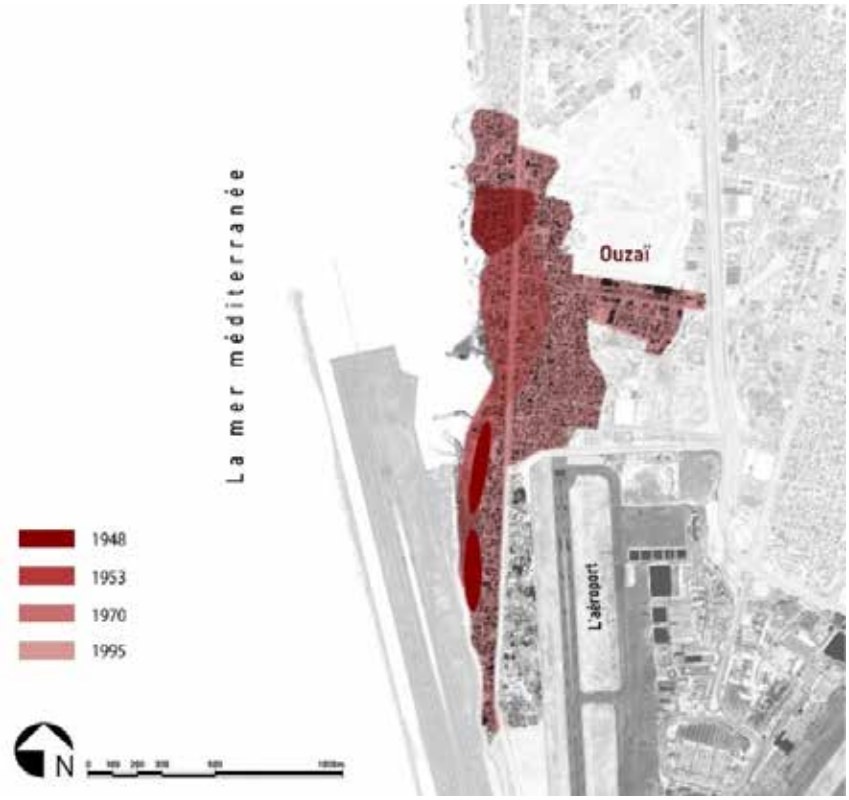

Figure 4. The urban development of Ouzai. Mapping: R. Kaedbey 2018.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

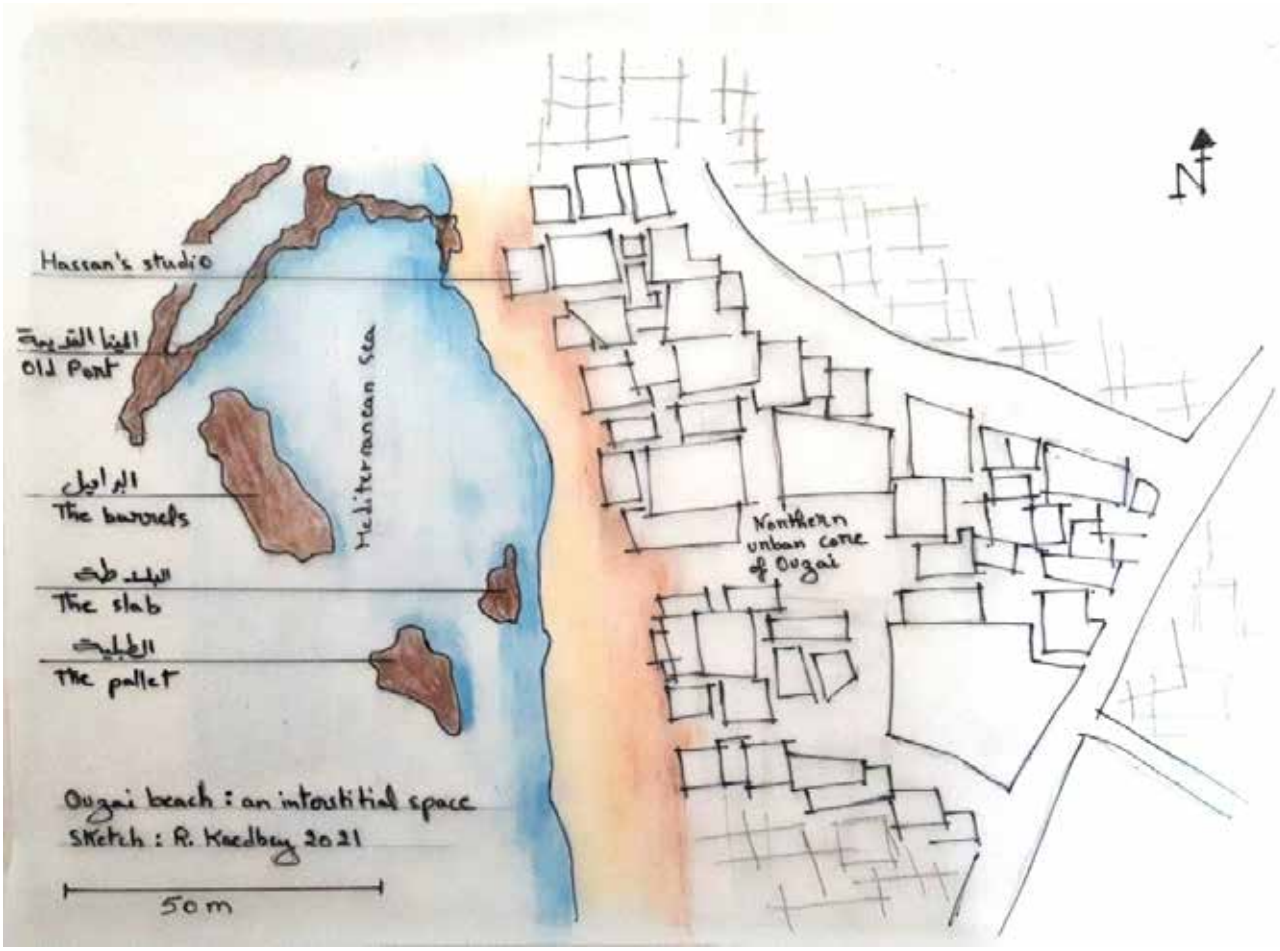

Figure 6. The given names to the rocks of Ouzai Beach by the 'street boys'. Sketch: R. Kaedbey 2021.

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

to come.

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

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

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

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

4.1 Artistic and interstitial practices: a form of resistance

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

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

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

The beach was also transformed into a space of spectacle

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

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

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

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

4.2. The constraints of appropriation: power relations and conflicts

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

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

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

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

Interview with Mahmoud, 26 years old, 2020.

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

5. Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Rethinking space and politics from the urban interstices: Politicization of youth through Ouagadougou's 'grins de thé'

Félix Lefebvre
CESSMA (Paris) / Université de Tours, Département de géographie,
50 av. Jean Portalis · BP 0607 · 37 206 Tours Cedex 3, France

Abstract
In Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, tea *grins* are set up in interstitial spaces, on the border between public and private. They are meetings of young people (mostly men) who gather at varying times to drink tea and chat. They constitute spaces of sociability, both refuge and resource space, where the hierarchies that usually structure social relations which are linked to age, gender or social status, are subverted without disappearing completely.

If they are not necessarily considered as political places by their users, politics is very present in the values mobilised around the *grin* and in the very practice they constitute. The *grins* can be considered as *heterotopias*, and moreover 'arenas' where public problems are constituted through collective discussion, but they do not appear as a legitimate instance of political debate. The *grin* thus represents an illegitimate arena where a 'subaltern *cityness*' is constructed. Thus, this article questions the processes of politicisation linked to specific practices of urban space, without necessarily appearing in the public space of discourse. Cityness is considered in its processual aspect, that is, as the space of the city that allows individuals to constitute themselves as political subjects.

This article also questions the existence of a *continuum* of political speech, whose public expression would depend on the possibilities of negotiations with the social order, and on the power relations that produce it. In short, it asks whether the infra-political practices of the space by the dominated allow the construction of collective actions around these questions.

Keywords
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, urban resistances, infrapolitics, subaltern cityness, heterotopia

1. Introduction

In Ouagadougou, there are 'spaces of the in-between' (Boyer, 2014) whose organisation and conditions of access protect their participants from the power relations specific to the public space, while offering a space for discussion and enunciating a collective speech. *Grins* are certainly part of this. In general, they are more or less informal groups of individuals, usually young men, who gather in a particular space. They appeared in urban areas during the 1990s, following the waves of democratisation (Hien, 2011; Kieffer, 2006). They are found in the Ivory Coast (Vincourt, Kouyaté, 2012), Niger (Boyer, 2014; Masquelier, 2019) and their practice is thought to be older in Mali (Bondaz, 2013) and the western part of the country, notably in Bobo-Di-

oulasso (Ouattara, 2003). The word *grin*, of Dioulan origin, designates a 'meeting'. In concrete terms and refers to groups of rather young people[1] who meet at variable times in a specific place to drink tea and discuss. In most neighbourhoods, they generally invest in unoccupied spaces that offer the group a certain tranquillity and relative comfort. It can be the terrace of a shop at night, after closing time or a shady place under a tree where benches or chairs can be installed.

The primary purpose of the *grin* is to 'spend time' together over a cup of tea: 'in a context marked by institutional and political violence, crisis of employment and of the urban system, these *grins* refer to a street culture created by young people at odds with postcolonial practices' (Kieffer, 2006). *Grins* constitute a space of sociability where the hierarchies that usually structure social relations are somewhat blurred without being erased. They appear to be both a refuge and a place of exchange, but also a resource. They are a space where collective identities are constructed, and services and strategies are exchanged – in particular, those of 'débrouille' (scavenging) (Hien, 2011; Kieffer, 2006). Finally, they participate as much as they testify to the constitution of the codes of the social group driving street culture in urban Africa – the Youth (Biaya, 2000).[2]

In this way, they structure a 'system of generalised exchange of services' (Kieffer, 2006), which constitutes a *de facto* hierarchy, often between dominant elders who offer these opportunities to younger people,[3] and younger people who benefit from this network of mutual aid and exchange. In this context, *grins* constitute kind of a transmission belt of the dominant practices and representations within a particular social order. Nevertheless, they are spaces where this order can be questioned and discussed owing to the familiarity that develops among them and the possibility of handling irony or jokes. Speaking out and protesting are parts of the game. The values conveyed by the elders are transformed and nourished by the influence of new values introduced, for example, by the cultural and musical exchanges that take place there. It is often in *grins* that rap or reggae young artists' lyrics are tested (Kieffer, 2006). Thus, the *grin* constitutes a social system that follows certain rules, particularly hierarchical ones, but where a new culture and new values are invented, which become the new urban cultures and values. It is a social space that does not escape the rules of the environment where it develops, but where new possibilities for negotiation and questioning of such rules emerge.

These spaces develop in a deeply unequal urban

1 In the recent scientific literature on West African regimes after the democratization waves of the 1990s, urban youth are defined, in addition to their growing demographic weight (Courtin, Guengant, 2011), by the contrast between their driving position in the processes of socio-political change in West African societies (Awenengo-Dalberto, 2011) and their subordinate position in social hierarchies, the formal labor market, and positions of power (Attané, 2002 ; Delaunay, Boyer, 2017; de Bonneval, 2011). This was particularly salient in the 2014 Burkina Faso insurgency, where youth and organisations claiming to be such were on the front lines, where their collective demand for political emancipation seemed to echo a necessary social emancipation in a country where 20-30% of those under 30 are unemployed (Roth, 2014). In this sense, the 'youth' is not so much defined by age as by the particular social position it occupies, marked by precariousness and dependence on intra-family solidarities (*ibid.*).

2 Although undeniably overwhelmingly male, the *grins*' audience can in some cases be more gendered mixed. A more in-depth study could perhaps establish whether the cases of diversity are linked to the specificities of certain neighborhoods or certain socio-economic categories (the author was able to note in particular a significant gendered mix for a *grin* in the close to downtown neighborhood of Wemtenga, which was composed mostly of artists and rappers. In general, it is tricky to give a clear sociological profile of *grin* participants, at least from personal observations. If certain characteristics can be put forward – a majority of men, rather young, not from the elite – each observation of *grins* tend to contradict these tendencies as women can participate, sometimes notable of the district, and some *grins* are frequented by older participants (between 30 and 55 years old, as in the case of the Camp fonctionnaire *grin*), etc. The socio-economic profiles vary, ranging from the homeless unemployed to the prosperous shopkeeper or civil servant, to the student or even the small craftsman. Some initial strong characteristics of the *grins* are now almost obsolete for their understanding, as the western origin of the participants.

3 This question of the social hierarchy linked to age has already been highlighted in previous works. These spaces thus appear to be a way of escaping this hierarchy in part, while at the same time reproducing it in one's own hierarchy (see in particular the question of the *kogho*, p. 56). The elders are identified in most works on West African urban societies as 'real power holders in the political field' (Kieffer, 2006), 'at all levels, from the family to the State' (Boyer, 2014). The *grins* therefore offer spaces for challenging these norms and proposing more equal relationships, even if they do not guarantee that 'young people do not place themselves [...] in a position of reproduction of the social order when they change status' (*ibid*).

context. The difficulties in accessing urban land in Ouagadougou are accentuated by public policies aimed at evicting vulnerable populations from central areas towards informal neighbourhoods on the periphery (Biehler, 2010). The result is an intense inequality in accessing the city's resources that is strongly correlated with economic status and age (Delaunay, Boyer, 2017). While the public debate on institutional issues was able to take advantage of an effective associative and activist network to trigger an insurrection that led to the departure of President Blaise Compaoré in 2014 and a democratic transition (Bonnecase, 2015; Chouli, 2015), the issue of spatial inequalities, despite being central to the daily lives of many Ouagadougou's dwellers, does not seem to give rise to a strong structured activist mobilisation (with a few exceptions). Overall, the issue of spatial justice has not emerged in Ouagadougou as a public problem (Cefaï, Terzi, 2020), structuring a set of activist actions and discourses, as in other cities (Bénit, 2005; Bret, 2002; Gervais-Lambony et al., 2014).

Thus, thinking about the question of *heterotopic* or *abnormal* spaces (Foucault, 1984) in an objectively inegalitarian urban context leads us to consider the question of resistance to this urban order from the inhabitants. If *grins* seem to constitute a natural crucible for this resistance, then this imposes a redefinition of the political framework within the context of Ouagadougou, by taking an interest in the *infrapolitical* dimension (Scott, 1992) of urban practices, whereas the *grins* were not conceived to give rise to a direct confrontation with the authorities. Finally, it is a question of continuing the research conducted in recent years about the *de facto right to the city*, that is, a constructivist approach to H. Lefebvre's political concept (Lefebvre, 1968) which proposes to start from social and spatial practices in order to understand the emancipatory potential of urban experience outside of strict militant frames (Morange, Spire, 2017).

This article is based on a PhD study conducted in Ouagadougou between 2014 and 2016. The contribution of political subjectivation processes through urban practice studies (Bayat, 1997; Choplin, Ciavolella, 2018; Foucault, 1982) to the author's research has led to his analysis of the struggle for urban resources not through the discourses transpiring in public space, but through the practices and representations of the inhabitants, and the search for an 'autonomous use' of the space (Ripoll, Veschambre, 2005). The empirical material on which this article is based consists on the one hand in numerous extracts from biographical semi-directive interviews (about 50 in all) conducted with inhabitants[4] in 15 city districts that cover their practices and representations of space, and on the other hand, in observations of three different *grins* in three different neighbourhoods of the city (Ouidi, Camp fonctionnaire, Nonghin) and informal conversations carried out on this occasion and recorded in a field notebook.[5] The author had been invited to participate in these *grins* by various acquaintances in the field, where he tried to limit his interventions and exert influence on the subjects discussed to reduce the impact of his presence on the normal course of the *grin*.

The question is how these spatially and socially interstitial spaces constitute a milestone in the politicisation of an unequal urban space. The aim is to analyze how specific spatial practices can constitute infrapolitical modes of action against urban power relations without declaring itself a political act.

4 The participants were exclusively men, often young (under 40 years old) and of low to middle social position. However, if this is the majority sociological profile within the *grins*, it is not the only one. The language used during my invitations was French, which was spoken fluently by most of the participants I met. Nevertheless, participants normally exchanged in Moore, the language of the Moose, the majority in Ouagadougou. It should be noted that the *grins* are a practice that originated in the west of the country, and that Dioula is therefore a common language there (this is the case for the Nonghin *grin*, which essentially brings together participants from the western region of Bobo Dioulasso)

5 The survey protocol did not focus specifically on the grins, and the author only attended them casually as a guest, without suspecting that he was going to witness decisive elements in his reflection, and thus without a precise methodological device (neither observation grid, nor interview grid, nor photographs). The excerpts presented are from individual interviews conducted with inhabitants concerning their practices and representations of the space, during which they mentioned the *grins* (and then invited the author to attend). Consequently, it is undeniable that more precise data from the *grins* would be necessary to solidify the leads of this article: this is the object of the research project currently being built by the author.

2. An *other space* between public and private

2.1. A space that brings the collective word into play

In the interviews, residents mentioned that the *grins* were popular places to meet and debate. Attending some of these *grins* helps to realise their importance in the production of a collective discourse on the urban environment, among many other subjects. In fact, almost everything is discussed. Political topics are far from being the majority as people talk about their day, discuss sports, and exchange job and networking opportunities. That said, in times of political unrest – during the weeks leading up to and following the 2014 insurgency, in particular, the *grin* can quickly turn into a political agora where topics of concern to residents are publicly debated. The political vocation of the *grins*' speech is often felt in the name that youth groups choose for themselves, although this is not systematic.[6] In Nonghin district, Christian's *grin*, for example, is called the 'Youth Palace': 'It's like the National Assembly, everything is discussed here!' (interview Christian, Nonghin, 29/05/2015). Perhaps more subversive and provocative, the *grin* that Aristide attends in his home district of Ouidi nonetheless bears a name loaded with political meaning: the *Azawad*.[7] Christian confirms that while the *grin*'s vocation does not directly provide a space for political discussion, pre-existing tensions are readily apparent:

> "In the grin here, we talk about it [about the neighbourhood's problems], we discuss, we talk about everything. Often, debates are very heated. [...] Until a certain time of the night, we discuss. " (Christian interview, Nonghin, 29/05/2015)

If, like most, the *grin* in which Christian participates is constituted around a well-identified social group, that is, young people between 20 to 40 years of age, mostly from the western region, and without stable employment – the group can expand for certain debates:

> "Pretty much, it's the same generation [but] often there are 'dads' that come and talk with us" (*ibid.*).

Christian presents it as a way of gathering the opinions of the whole neighbourhood:

> "What I told you is my point of view. If you come back and you find that it's crowded, you are going to get everyone's perspectives. " (*ibid.*)

If Christian fails to mention the inevitable power struggles that arise in each *grin*, and the limited representativeness to which they claim, then the *grin* is perceived as a kind of democratic ideal where every point of view is exchanged. This symbolism can be found in the speeches of most of the interviewees who attend the *grins*. Aristide presents it by insisting on the openness of the place and the freedom of the discussion that takes place there:

> "Anyone can come to Azawad. You come, you discuss. We talk about everything, we drink tea... It's quiet! " (interview Aristide, Bassinko, 11/04/2016)

This ideal of horizontality does not exclude a well-defined distribution of roles among participants. Before going to the *grin*, Aristide asks the author to accompany him to buy tea and sugar at the nearest store. This role can change depending on the financial means of each person but is usually done by the same person. In some cases, the tea may be paid for by someone outside the group, usually a relative of a group member, or even an older brother or sister, whether or not a former group member, and it is often another member of the *grin*, usually the youngest, who prepares the tea. In general, there is one *kogho*,[8] often the eldest, or a member of the group who is recognized for his

6 While the two *grins* mentioned in the following lines have a name with a political meaning, this name can also refer to much broader (less directly political) topics, corresponding to the different concerns of the participants such musical references, especially to rap ('les fils du Wu Tang' (Wu Tang Sons), 'Positive Radikal', etc.), references to location ('Grenoble City' located on the outskirts of the Reemdogo music garden, partly financed by the city of Grenoble), etc. (Kieffer, 2006).

7 From the name of the Saharan territory located essentially in northern Mali (and partially in Niger and southern Algeria) whose independence is claimed by various Tuareg armed separatist groups, sometimes associated with jihadist groups.

8 *Kogho* means 'big brother' in Moore.

social success or wisdom, who acts as leader.[9] With respect to these roles and their conditions, the *grins*' unity is upheld and everyone respects the conditions (Kieffer, 2006).

Grins are also distinguished by the spatial conditions that lead to their installation. They take place exclusively in the street, which makes them obvious meeting places. If their access conditions respond to precise codes,[10] they are held in public spaces and in full view. They are recognisable through certain codes, such as the teapot on the brazier, which distinguishes them from the rest of the space and from any other grouping. Thus, the *grins* are on the border of the interiority or exteriority relationship which brings 'into play the question of power and its control' (Boyer, 2014). Just as the discussions that take place such as stage free speech and equal exchange in a highly-normalised and hierarchical social setting, the open/closed spatialization of the *grins* makes them transitional spaces between the norm and alternative speech. In this way, they constitute a kind of 'spatialization rite' (*ibid.*: 8) which is defined as 'the implementation of an apparatus with a symbolic purpose that constructs relative identities through mediating alterities' (Augé, 1994). The *grin* produces anot*her space*, a *heterotopia* (Foucault, 1984) that creates a group that is united and identifiable as such, despite the hierarchies that may pre-exist, where a collective discourse can be expressed. In this regard, it should be noted that the participation of women, frequently in the *grins* although always a minority, also constitutes a subversion of the gendered order of space, marked by the unequal sharing of tasks, and therefore of spatial practices between men and women. This relative mix might be associated to the non-negligible place of women in the 2014 insurrection; one of the triggers was probably 27th October Women's March (Hagberg et al., 2015). This unequal gendered spatial order can be contrasted in Burkina Faso with the active participation of women in community life, through the many women's associations (Ilboudo, 2006), as well as in political life in general (Rouamba, 2011).

The *grin* has its own regime of representation that is different from all the space representation regimes competing in Ouagadougou. This does not mean that it is not subject to the influence of such because 'heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable' (Foucault, 1984). In Foucault's writing, historically, these spaces, both open and closed, refuge and place of passage, serve to spatially manage 'crises' (ritualized spaces that gather individuals to go through a crisis: adolescence, gestation, old age, etc.) or 'deviations' (sick, insane, prisoners, etc.). If such spaces emerge, then, it is in some way to solve a problem. The fact that each user of the *grin* presents it by insisting on the function of dialogue and exchange leads to the belief that these spaces are there to make up for a lack of dialogue within the youth.

In this sense, the *grin* assures the political role of urban space by allowing exchange in a society where the youth lacks spaces of their own:

> "In the neighbourhood, there are places for recreation, but they are not for everyone. So we meet around a tea and we chat with friends. […] There is no place where young people can meet. There is no youth centre, there is no sports field, no soccer field… There is nothing!" (Christian interview, Nonghin, 29/05/2015)

Political discussion as well as the exchange of work opportunities or artistic creation make these spaces the vector of 'the plurality and abundance of possibilities of which the big city is the theatre' (Fouquet, 2013). Both a refuge and a resource, the *grin* allows for 'the juxtaposition in one place of several spaces that would normally be, should be incompatible' (Foucault, 2009).

9 This position does not include any privileges within the group other than not having to buy tea from the store and prepare it.

10 Whatever my respondents say, anyone passing in the streets does not settle in the *grin* without reason.

2.2. A spatial and social interstice

A wooden bench, a few cinder blocks as seats, a dusty flaming tree, a few glasses, and in the centre, on a small charcoal brazier, a thin teapot in which a strong mint tea is brewing. It is in this configuration that almost every day at the end of the afternoon ('à la descente', the exit of the offices), the few participants of the Azawad grin meet. There are usually no more than three or four on average, but this number increases during the evening by friends passing by. The flaming tree is next to the outside wall of the courtyard of Bernard, the *kogho*, an artisan in his thirties who is permanently dressed as a football player (soccer being his favourite topic of conversation at the grin). The wooden bench comes out of his house, as well as the teapot and the brazier. Thus, the *grin* is a form of extension of the interior of his courtyard. It is not held in the courtyard, reserved for relative family intimacy, but on the street, in full view of everyone, and available to friends and acquaintances who wish to join in.

It is common in Burkina Faso, as in many countries of the South (Houssay-Holzschuch et al., 2007), for public space to be invested as an extension of private space in order to carry out household chores, set up a temporary business, or organise a festive event. The grin is one of these forms of 'in-between' spaces, neither completely public nor completely private. It is both an intimate space for discussion and a public ceremony, where the exchanges that take place are both protected from too much publicity and from the gaze of elders in the family yard. It is not intended to be a public discourse, but to be in the public eye.

The grin of the Camp fonctionnaire neighbourhood is notable in this respect. This neighbourhood no longer exists, destroyed as part of the ZACA project, a major urban renewal project for the city centre in the early 2000s. Fifteen years later, the ruins are still present and nothing has been rebuilt. The former inhabitants of the neighbourhood, scattered throughout the city after their eviction, meet almost every evening for a mint tea on the sidewalk in front of the wasteland that was their neighbourhood. It is not a demonstration, a sit-in, or a political meeting (even if politics is a subject of conversation like any other, and especially in the evening when the author is invited). The goal is mostly to get together with friends, to have a good time together and to keep the community bond alive. However, by being held in this precise place, the Camp fonctionnaire's grin bears witness to the memory of the neighbourhood and keeps it alive as a public space. The grins are therefore held in these urban interstices, a piece of sidewalk, the shade of a tree, the terrace of a business, at the border between private and public, and constitute paradoxical spaces, restricted groups summoning the gaze of all. In this, it is at the same time spatial interstices, taking place in the folds of the public/private border, temporal interstices, between twilight and dawn, the working day and the return to the family intimacy, and social interstices, out of the traditional social hierarchies without however contradicting them frontally.

While the spatial organisation of the *grin* is important and systematic – every *grin* is organised in much the same way – territorial attachment is not invariably a defining feature of this type of institution. The *grin* may always be held in the same place, but it is not strictly speaking a space to be defended, and it can be mobile. The Azawad sessions are usually held under the tree adjacent to the family courtyard of Justin. However, on some evenings, the *grin* moves a few meters away, to the dimly lit cement terrace of the small store owned by one of the *grin* members. Therefore, the *grin* does not set as a goal the appropriation of space, even though it brings into play the question of appropriation through the construction of a public space for discussion and through the themes addressed (spatial problems related to the neighborhood, the street, the city, etc., can be discussed there).

In sum, the *grin* space is not fetishized, but rather responds to a basic need to overcome socio-spatial inequality: the difficulty for young people to access meeting places.

3. A *continuum* from *grin* to activism?

3.1. In Silmiyiri, from the *grin* to the *Cibal club* via the residents' association.

There are bridges between *grin* and more concrete political actions. The *grin* is not necessarily destined to be just an outlet, containing subversive words, and allowing them to be expressed. The line between the way collective concerns are expressed in the *grin* and mass political action is porous. During the author's fieldwork, he was able to study at least one example of a *grin* that served as the basis for the formation of a more political association and then a *Cibal club*[11].

In the neighbourhood of Silmiyiri, an association was formed by several of its residents in the wake of the 2014 insurgency, with the aim of defending their interests. Here, the political discourse that gives coherence to a collective precedes and motivates the production of a community of spatial interest, as Georges explains:

> "FL: And do you ever have meetings here in the neighbourhood with residents to discuss things that are common to the neighbourhood? Planning? Sanitation for example?
> G: Yes, because after the events of last October, we saw the need to create a certain cohesion at the neighbourhood level. We took the initiative to establish an association. So people [...] came to me one evening to see if they could hold a meeting under the tree next door. " (interview George, Silmiyiri, 17/05/2015)

In this case, the awareness of collective interests regarding spatial issues was somehow born out of the political substrate of the 2014 social movement, acting as a ferment. The latter seems to have brought to light the need to work towards a 'cohesion' of the neighbourhood. Concretely, it is a matter of finding solutions to various local problems related to the management of space, which are not provided by State services. In other words, it is about a collective organisation of the inhabitants becoming aware of their existence as a community, and consequently of their common interests as a community, to act against the spatial inequalities they experience:

> "G: Currently, we are finalising the papers of the association to have the receipt of the association, the recognition. It is the association "Vivre ensemble"[12], which will work on sanitation, etc. We have even considered a list of activities: cleaning, sanitation, as well as some public structures.
>
> FL: Because there were gaps in the neighbourhood? Some things that were not being done?
>
> G: Yes. To be able to do these things officially, you have to have the papers. If, for example, you say we're going to come and clean up, you have to introduce yourself, you can't say "we're an institution in the making". However, if you go with the receipt, it is still much more credible. " (*ibid.*)"

Indeed, Silmiyiri is a neighbourhood that was progressively subdivided in the 2000s, very far from the city centre and that suffers from a lack of facilities and planning, as its inhabitants say. Therefore, this inequality is conscientized, that is, objectified as a social problem (Cefaï, Terzi, 2020). Organised collective action involves a search for credibility and a competence increase in administrative matters which makes it possible to appear as a legitimate interlocutor for the State. Setting up a neighbourhood association makes it possible to obtain the 'receipt' which constitutes the real political birth certificate of Silmiyiri as a community of inhabitants. Georges insists several times

11 The *Cibal clubs* (for 'CItoyens BAlayeurs', or 'citizen sweepers') are local activist groups born under the impetus of the *Balai citoyen*, whose members meet by similarity of activities (journalists, students, etc.), but more generally by geographical proximity (Banegas, 2016, Gorovei, 2016). These have the particularity of attracting a public apparently close to the one found in the *grins* and give themselves among other functions the purpose of encouraging and aggregating political discussions. Like many *grins*, they are named according to a precise political symbolism, although more official and codified (their names correspond essentially to recognized political leaders and intellectuals, African or not: Thomas Sankara club, Kwame N'Krumah club, Cheik Anta Diop club, Che Guevara club, etc.).

12 'Living together'.

on the seriousness of the organisation of the association: 'we have a board of seventeen members with two auditors' (*ibid.*).

Georges himself agreed to take on the presidency of the association, because he was able to bring the credibility by virtue of his status as a former civil servant of the Ministry of Health and as an executive in an American NGO. This tends to show that the structuring of a collective discourse on the scale of a neighbourhood struggles to erase pre-existing social inequalities, where a notable of the neighbourhood naturally takes the head of the structure. However, he maintains that he did not ask to become president, and that it was the residents who 'co-opted' him and then 'reappointed him as president' (*ibid.*). This position has an impact on the association's actions. On the one hand, he brings his competencies and reputation in order to structure and give credibility to the association: 'I made the statute and the internal rules for them' (*ibid.*). On the other hand, the association cannot function against his own interests, especially in terms of reputation. Georges remains very cautious about politics and does not want his position to lead to his being identified as an opponent:

> "If it's not political, I'm in, but if it's political... I wouldn't want to intervene one day or be interpreted as anything. They told me that no, it's not political, it's a structure that will work for the well-being, for social cohesion... When they came, to reassure me, they invited me to come and assist, so I came, I assisted. As we went along, I shared my position with things. "(*ibid.*)

In a way, the socio-political dynamics of the neighbourhood leads to the social movement built around spatial issues to follow the interests of the dominant. The logic of spatial appropriation is based on social rivalries for the control and occupation of space (Tissot, 2010). Furthermore, the dominated have fewer resources that allow them to speak out. During the survey, the most privileged inhabitants (owners or those with a stable job and a good salary compared to the general level) do not hesitate to hold a politically engaged discourse. This can be seen as freedom of speech, but it also means that their socio-spatial position allows them to express themselves without fear of losing their social or economic capital. Moreover, this capital allows them to formalise this discourse.

Thus, the associations whose vocation is to defend the claims of the inhabitants concerning spatial inequalities in the public arena come up against two interrelated stumbling blocks: the desire to keep away from political contestation, and the need not to jeopardise the existing power relationships. However, while this association may characterise a form of political avoidance (Eliasoph, 1998), it is also an example of an attempt to transform a hidden transcript into a public one (Scott, 1992).[13] While Georges presents the association as having emerged as it is, Malik, a young hardware dealer from Silmiyiri, and then Isidore, an artist, confirmed in informal discussions the idea that the association emerged from a neighbourhood *grin* - which still meets. It is in the context of the political effervescence of the pre-insurrection period that the idea of setting up an association emerges. It will allow the collection of concerns in another context – wider than that of the *grin*.

Malik confirms the experience of the association was quickly felt as a failure:

> "We were having meetings to try to figure out what was wrong, to fix it together. However, for now, it has stopped. But there were many of us." (interview Malik, Silmiyiri, 17/05/2015)

If the precise reasons for the discrediting of the association are difficult to discern (Malik is not very talkative and is not fluent in French), Malik and Isidore will then participate in the launching of the 'Cheick Anta Diop' *Cibal club* in the neighbourhood, which brings together about 50 inhabitants, mostly young men (but also many women and a few old men). Spatial issues are certainly not at the centre of these clubs' concerns. They were generally absent from the discourse at the time of the launch of the 'Cheick Anta

13 'The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. […] I shall use the term hidden transcript to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage", beyond direct observation by powerholders. […] It consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript' (Scott, 1992).

Diop' club, and in the insurrectionary period and the short post-insurrectionary period corresponding to the research fields. In general, the discourse focused on the issue of Blaise Compaoré's departure and the return of democracy in the fragile context of the transition. However, the *Cibal clubs* regularly carry out local actions in their neighbourhoods, such as street cleaning, reforestation, and the organisation of debates on the bangs of markets. These activities show a willingness to be active on the daily issues of the inhabitants, and therefore necessarily on urban issues, and not only on national politics. Moreover, since the insurgency, the *Balai Citoyen* has been able to interfere with public debates on spatial issues. The discourse that the movement develops on corruption has allowed it to position itself on topics such as the trafficking of land plots, leading to a call for a national audit on subdivisions in 2016 (koaci.com, 08/04/2016), and in general, for 'transparency' in subdivision operations (aouaga.com, 23/08/2014).

3.2. Towards a bottom-up approach to politics

Certainly, we do not have the elements to trace the logical path of local claims from the hidden transcript to the public transcript in Ouagadougou. It is therefore out of the question to define a *continuum* of public speech that would logically go from the *grin* to the *Cibal club*[14] via the neighbourhood association. This schema would be too simplistic, hide many other possibilities, and give meaning to the different bodies, especially to the *grins*, that they do not claim. However, it is still interesting to observe these different public discourses over a limited time, which also shows the possible developments in Ouagadougou. What is important to remember here is that the *grin* remains a space of the in-between, where speech that 'questions the spatial and social norms imposed by the elders, holders of power at all levels, from the family to the State' (Boyer, 2014) is constructed. This speech remains confined to the *grin*. The *grin* allows for the release of a protesting speech specific to a dominated group (youth), but the question arises as to the formalisation of the protest, and the concrete effects of the speech, which is often intended not to leave the *grin* setting. One can ask to what extent the alternative speech carried by the *grin* has the 'efficiency on the reality of their position of dominated' (*ibid*). This brings us back to the difficulty of transforming hidden speech into public speech, which requires procedures as 'it is very likely that the hidden transcript will be produced for an audience distinct from that of the public transcript, and under different conditions of power' (Scott, 1992).[15] The discrepancy between speech and its conditions of production in a space like a *grin* and in direct political spaces capable of carrying public speech such as *Cibal clubs* tells us more about 'the impact of domination on public transcript' (*ibid*: 19), and the actual conditions of enactment.[16]

From this perspective, F. Boyer suggests 'observing the attitude and discourse of these young people outside their *fada*[17] with regard to what happens within the *fada*' (Boyer, 2014), and to wonder about the mechanisms of knowledge circulation and ways of being between the different 'worlds'. If within the *grins* an alternative speech and alternative social relations are invented (concerning the questioning of the hierarchy linked to age), we must ask ourselves if this alternative can infuse and spread beyond the *grin*, or if the change of place also corresponds to a return to traditional statuses and to the reproduction of the social order.

4. Conclusion

The practice of speech within the *grin* must be seen in the context of Burkina Faso's semi-authoritarian regime, where public speech is risky, but where the State tolerates intermediate spaces of controlled freedom that must allow political exchanges while neutralising their scope (Hilgers, Mazzocchetti, 2010). *Grins* appear to be spaces of free speech, including regarding the elders, as long as they do

14 This is especially true since the *Cibal clubs*, despite their undeniable popularity, are not unanimously supported by Burkinabè youth. We should not risk setting them up as the natural, or even the only, way for popular collective demands to emerge.

15 "What is certainly the case, however, is that the hidden transcript is produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power than the public transcript" (Scott, 1992).

16 For example, it is difficult to assess what the social movement that gave rise to the 2014 insurgency owes to the *grins*, while it is simpler to connect it concretely to the work conducted within the *Cibal clubs*.

17 The *fada* is the Nigerien equivalent of the grin.

not lead to the effective questioning of social hierarchies. This raises the following questions: are they only outlets for the social frustrations of youth, or spaces where ephemeral hopes are born and immediately extinguished? On the contrary, are they safe places where resistances are discreetly elaborated, waiting for the right moment to burst into the open?

It is necessary to underline the paradox that the study of resistance to inequality constitutes here. To try to understand the political claims of the inhabitants on the space appears all the more complex, as this reveals a particularly diffused imprint of power, and especially the power of the State. What we call resistance often consists not in directly confronting power or oppression, but rather in trying to get the best out of the game and to bend the urban space to its demands. This complex reading inclines us to look for resistance not in speeches or acts claiming to be political, but rather in practices and ways of being-in-the-city, or in the infrapolitics (Scott, 1992). This is what the *grins* highlight: if there is political discourse – and we have seen that the *grin* is clearly linked to political speech – it is above all the result of a particular practice of space. The *grin* is, in fact, a simple practice linked to spatial organisation: it is about young people meeting in a pleasant place to exchange opinions and services. The presence of this type of speech in the public space immediately gives it a political aspect that does not fail to assert itself. The *grins* have naturally become places of political debates, proto-agoras or 'parliaments of the street' (Banegas et al., 2012). However, at its core, it is partly a practical organisation, particularly to compensate for the lack of socio-community infrastructure that allows young people to meet in the neighbourhoods. Basically, it is indeed a place of 'leisure' before being a political place. It was born out of a social and spatial injustice – the lack of freely accessible meeting places for the youth.

This is not to deny the political significance of the exchanges that take place within the *grins*, but to remind that the simple fact of meeting there is a political act. The practices, as a result of the interaction between the city dwellers and the unequal spatial situation they face are already political acts. To participate in the *grin* is to play with the spatial devices of power, to acknowledge an unfavourable balance of power, and to propose a strategy to escape the situation. The term 'strategy' is used here deliberately in reference to Certeau's reading of it: 'it postulates a place that can be circumscribed as a proper and be the base from which to manage relations with an exteriority of targets and threats' (De Certeau, 1990)[18]. The *grin* thus represents an illegitimate arena of public debate, where a 'subaltern cityness' is constructed above all (Fouquet, 2013).

The *grin* is a way of appropriating the city, and thus, of increasing one's 'urban skills' (Berry-Chikaoui, Deboulet, 2000). 'Rather than living passively in a city perceived as foreign, certain marginal populations [...] physically mobilize in the space of the city, claiming a place in urban and national society' (Choplin, Ciavolella, 2008)[19]. In this sense, *grin* appears as a resource. By occupying the space, *grin* participants play with the rules of the game and open up a space of possibilities in the city. The symbolic geography proposed by these groupings is invested with political significance in the face of a rationalisation of official spatial policy that does not encourage these practices. This political symbolism is not necessarily experienced as such, but it allows for the creation of one's own representations, based on one's own space that generates one's own practices. In this sense, according to M. De Certeau, it is a question of constructing an autonomous space that allows one to move from tactics, poaching, and cunning to strategy, that is, thanks to the construction of a space of one's own, the development of a 'global project' in one's relationship to space: 'tactics are determined by the absence of power, just as strategy is organized by the postulate of power' (De Certeau, 1990)[20]. In the *grins*, the inhabitants produce 'arts of doing' that aim to acquire power over the space.

In sum, by participating in the *grin*, residents exercise a *de facto* right to the city, that is, 'the way in which city dwellers [...] transform their way of being in the city, and thereby contribute to the construction of a social and spatial urban order, through the daily repetition of gestures, the transformation of social ties, the practical adherence to collective rules, the ways of occupying and appropriating

18 translation by the author.

19 translation by the author.

20 translation by the author.

space, etc.' (Morange, Spire, 2017)[21]. The use value of the street produced by bodies such as the *grins* will thus perhaps end up being confronted head-on with the exchange value conferred on it by power. Only the modalities of confrontation remain to be determined.

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Crossing views on the field: a commoning experience on an urban wasteland

The Interfriches network; Hugo Rochard[1],*, Cécile Mattoug[2], Cécile Gauthier[3], Marion Brun[4]
[1] Geography, Université de Paris, Ladyss, Paris, France
[2] Geography & Urban Planning, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, Géographie-cités, Paris, France;
[3] Geography & Political Sciences, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, Ladyss, Paris, France
[4] Landscape and Ecology, LAREP, ENSP Versailles, UMR Citeres, Université de Tours, Tours, France

Abstract
The study of urban wastelands as specific forms of interstices engages researchers to intersect disciplines, knowledge and positionings on the border between ecological and social dynamics. The Interfriches network - carried by an interdisciplinary collective - was created in 2019 to bring together human, social and environmental scientists and practitioners on the common object of urban wastelands. Involving architects, geographers, urban planners, ecologists, sociologists, politicians, artists, it seeks to reflect on the role of wastelands in the making of the city in different contexts. Based on a workshop on a third place (i.e. a place of social bonding, emancipation and collective initiatives) in the suburban Paris, this paper puts collective methodological questioning into dialogue. What does an interdisciplinary workshop including collective surveys allow to capture about an occupied urban wasteland? We aim to make a reflexive analysis of the frameworks and limits of this commoning experience.

Keywords
Urban wastelands; interdisciplinarity; interstice; commoning; collective fieldwork

Introduction

Urban wastelands and interstices are the product of complex economic, political and social processes that characterize the urban fabric (Silva, 2017; Brighenti, 2016). Such gaps of urban planning are the place for "out of frame" practices as well as opportunities for passer-by to reinstate the place to the urban realm (Tonnelat, 2008). More and more wastelands are used in urban tactics and third-place making for both innovative policy (Andres and Gresillon, 2013; Fabian and Samson, 2018) and market-driven planning (Colomb, 2012). To capture the growing complexity of such dynamics, some scholars also express the necessity for the social sciences to give more attention to the naturality of urban wastelands (Gandy, 2016; Jorgensen and Tylcote, 2007). On the whole, the literature in urban studies hardly finds a unified vision of urban interstice that would lead to a trans-disciplinary research model (Phelps and Silva, 2018).
Formed in 2019, Interfriches is a network which brings together researchers and practitioners working on wastelands' role in the urban environment. By using the alternative form of the dialogue, this paper aims to elucidate some of the challenges inherent to a collective and interdisciplinary study of a wasteland that was invested by actors of tactical urbanism[1]. In fact, in November 2019, the Interfriches network organized a workshop on a third place called "Vive les Groues"[2] managed by an association (Yes We Camp) specialized in temporary occupations of urban interstices. Since 2017, the civic group is investing a former wasteland in Nanterre, in the western suburbs of Paris.

1 - Tactical urbanism can be defined as short-term change in the built environment at a local scale. It implies low-tech and low-investment practices and seeks to develop social capital and civic engagement.

2 - "Long life The Groues" (translated from French)

The four sequences restitute the collective thinking of the Interfriches network. The following scene presents how the organizing committee has to write the synthesis of the workshop after it was held. This dialogue takes place in the meeting room of a research center. Three protagonists get in and set up around a table. Among them are Henri L., geographer and urbanist, Rachel C., ecologist and Ester H., political scientist and urban planner[3]. The references are mentioned in the replicas and each will be developed in footnotes.

Sequence 1: Starting off the feedbacks about the workshop on "Vive Les Groues"

Ester: Hello everyone! Now that the workshop has been in full swing, I suggest that we take a moment to assess these two days of collective research on "Vive les Groues".

Rachel: It's none too soon we find time to start working on this report.

Henri: It's true that we have a lot of things to do for this review, and a lot of material to process. I would say that this workshop was a success for the Interfriches network. We brought together researchers and professionals from different disciplinary fields: architecture, planning, ecology, landscape, sociology, urbanism… and they were able to immerse themselves in the reality of this wasteland and its specific context.

Ester: Though, the results are vast and partial so much the reflections were numerous and multiple... It's going to be challenging for us to synthesize.

Rachel: It's a pity that the question of vegetation and ecology was so quickly evicted from the workshop, that we will deal with that later...

Henri: (*nodding*) Mm… beyond the two introductory walks that we carried out in the wasteland's neighborhood, the objective was to leave the participants free to discuss and develop the points that seemed to be priorities for them. And despite the ecological orientation of one walking itinerary, the participants oriented the discussion on urban planning issues, which is also understandable given the specificity of the site.

Ester: Also, I wonder if your observation comes from the elaboration prior to the workshop by our collective and the fact that this area is the PhD fieldwork of one of the organizing members[4]. This discussion is precisely the occasion to clarify what we wish to communicate to the participants, to the actors we met and to the public more generally. It is time to get things straight!

Henri: The first thing that needs to be included in this review is the evolution of the subject during the workshop. After all, the subject emerged from discussions among us about temporary occupations in wastelands, and the question of vegetation was central.

Rachel: We should also emphasize all our choices for the workshop organization, as well as the unexpected aspects of our exploration… the weather for instance. The late fall season and the rainy weather influenced our view of the wasteland and its neighborhood. We were not able to capture the natural and aesthetic landscape that can be seen in spring or summer. In the fall, most of the plant species present were only late-blooming ruderal species, which is less pleasant to study and less representative of the whole potential plant diversity. In addition, we encountered feral nature with primary successions of vegetation, which are often less considered as "natural" areas than areas with grassland vegetation[5].

Ester: Sure… not to mention the fact that we had a very short time frame. Only one day on the field to understand a temporary occupation site and the associated urban and

3 - The authors have deliberately chosen each character's name in function of their own disciplinary anchors and they forced the line in order to highlight the importance of compartmentalization in the construction of knowledge.

4 - Cécile Gauthier is leading her PhD on urban "third places" and her fieldwork is focusing on "Vive les Groues" in Nanterre where the Interfriches network workshop was held.

5 - Brun, Di Pietro & Bonthoux, 2018. Residents' perceptions and valuations of urban wastelands are influenced by vegetation structure, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, Volume 29, 393-403

political issues... A lot to grasp in such a short time. And with a larger proportion of architects and urban planners, it is not surprising that participants focused on what interested them most: the insertion… or let's say the integration of temporary occupation projects in an urban environment undergoing major changes.

Sequence 2: Occupying a transforming neighborhood, what for? The critical moment

Henri (starting with an academic tone): The synthesis also allows us to present at least some elements of the diagnosis of the Groues neighborhood. The wastelands' location gives the subject its full meaning, and especially for Les Groues neighborhood's specificities and the project of the Zone d'aménagement concerté (ZAC)[6] of the same name. After all, we were in a territory with clear tensions between its past of a small working-class industry and its present integration to the economic dynamics of La Défense the business district and the Greater Paris metropolis. I would say that the ZAC will probably subvert the sociology of the neighborhood and we will shift from an industrial zone with less than 300 inhabitants at the border of three very different municipalities to a middle-class neighborhood connected to the subway and the business center. Well… after all, during the workshop, some neighbors told us that there had only been informal occupations during and after the end of the laundry factory's activity. The temporary occupation "Vive les Groues" was initiated in partnership with the city of Nanterre and the "Paris la Défense" developer[7]. They intend to prefigure the new district and thus it offers new urban uses: participatory and self-construction work sites, gardening, cultural and festive events, collective catering, etc. but they wondered whom these were uses created for. For the inhabitants of the Groues district or to attract the future middle-class residents? That is a big issue in new urban green developments in neoliberal cities[8] ...

Ester: Indeed, they asked if Vive les Groues as a third-place marked a break with previous practices of the space, but also with the other possible uses in the neighborhood. Few of the passer-by we met knew the existence third-place or said they feel legitimate to go there. As the participants in the workshop said, it would be necessary to question the "off-ground" character of a legal occupation project agreed with institutional actors.

Henri: Right, this is the critical point of the workshop final discussion. This occupied wasteland is finally a sign of a profound change in the social, material and political composition of the neighborhood.

Rachel: And we could carry the same reflection for the vegetation and I would distinct the feral vegetation in the neighborhood from the "aboveground" vegetation brought by Yes We Camp. After all, the site hosts plantations of *Paulownia tomentosa* - a non-local species - planned for the future stations of the "Grand Paris Express" subway[9]. Plus, they are experimenting the cultivation of cereals on a reconstituted soil, and less focusing on the spontaneous naturalness that developed during the time the wasteland was on standby. Though, it *is* true that our flash inventory of species on the areas that were not occupied by the association Yes We Camp… I mean interstitial cracks between the different zones and activities proposed by the association. These cracks showed a significant floristic diversity! The pioneer and fallow communities that we observed pointed out a direct link with the uses of the place (ruderal on the places of passage, grassland on the abandoned spaces), unlike the "created" naturality for this third-place.

6 - A ZAC in the French legislation of urban planning is a long-term public operation of development of an urban land led by a public institution (municipality, region…). A ZAC project is based on a preliminary phase of environmental impact study and consultation with the public (inhabitants or users).

7 - Paris La Défense is the public development institution and authority for the Defense Seine Arche area where is located the neighborhood "les Groues".

8 - Holden, M., About C., Doussard, C., Rochard, H., Airas, A., Poiroux, A., 2021. Off-cycle: Comparing model sustainable neighbourhoods in France and Canada, *City*, in press, DOI: 10.1080/13604813.2021.1988346

9 - The Grand Paris Express is a metropolitan project of an express subway (200 km) linking the suburbs of Paris. It is part of a broader economic and social development project for the Paris region.

Figure 1. Picture of the "Vive les Goues" project in the Groues neigborhood. Photo: Pierre-Yves Brunaud, 2019.

Ester: You are right. But this is what you found and not what the workshop participants found themselves. Also, the term "off-ground" must also be qualified with respect to the situation and dynamics of the so-called "neighborhood": we must say that the inhabitants seemed to be absent from the site during our survey. This suggests that this third-place leaves little room for a strong inhabitant appropriation during weekdays. And we must say that Yes We Camp discourse didn't claim a strong local identity of this place. That is what the participants also highlighted. On the whole, it is like local residents are silently undergoing these everyday transformations, coping with shovels and trucks going back and forth.

Henri (clearing his throat): Ester, I hear your political stand. I would say it is quite striking to see how the professional practices of temporary occupation that were intended to be specific to this interstice, have become opportunities where the project leaders seem to stick their representations and practices on a neighborhood in order to make themselves the main occupants, leaving little room for inhabitant appropriation of the place, as one participant said (*Henri reads a paper*):

"*It is a kind of paradox that we feel with the wasteland's occupation. We say to ourselves that we are going to make do with what is already there, but in the end, what we observe are the same mechanisms that we see elsewhere. That is to say: earth fill that is added in the ground, sometimes excavations that are made... In any case, we are really in a system of transfer from the outside that comes and goes but we are not in a process that starts from the place and tries to build with it.*"

Figure 2. Picture of the fragmented neighborhood. Photo: Pierre-Yves Brunaud, 2019.

Henri: At the same time, these are professionals who settle in the place, who participate in creating dynamics for a new neighborhood by opening cafés, by offering places for active participation, if only for some inhabitants… just like Paul, one of them who participated to our workshop, "out of curiosity" as he said.

Ester (taking in her turn an academic tone): You know, this is the core of this notion of "aboveground" as developed by the participants. There is both a parachuting of these professionals and an attempt to connect with the social environment of the neighborhood in the project. At the same time, Yes We Camp lacks material and financial support from local public actors, and they need time to establish themselves in the district. Can we really say that this type of occupation participates in the involuntary eviction of inhabitants and users, as if it were part of a gentrification process?

Rachel: It's really difficult to assert that this is gentrification, at the moment. If we ask the question of a shift with existing uses, remember what Paul told us: he had the feeling that there was nothing in the neighborhood and that it was "a bit of a dump here", like a permanent construction site. In the end, some residents found in this wasteland's occupation a place to live in. We cannot generalize. I am thinking of other projects such as R-Urban which has generated new commons around education, manufacturing, collective gardening, nearby, in Colombes[10].

Ester: There are obvious tensions around this temporary occupation that is a sort of catalyst for a future ZAC which is still undefined, and a dynamic that goes beyond this

10 - Petrescu, D., Petcou, C., Baibarac, C., 2016. Co-producing commons-based resilience: lessons from R-Urban, *Building Research & Information*, 44:7, 717-736, DOI: 10.1080/09613218.2016.1214891

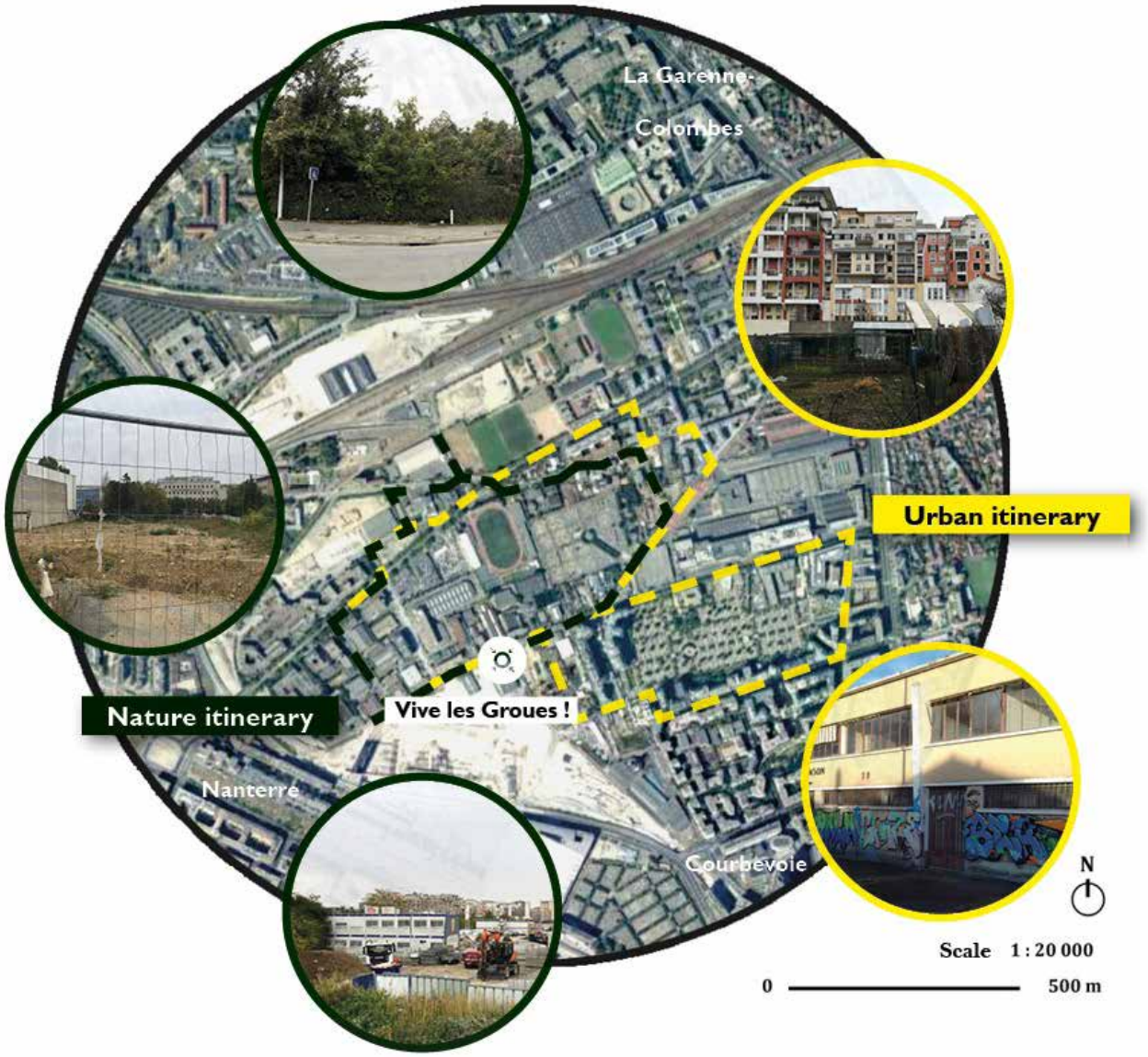

Figure 3. Courses of the two walking itinerary made by the participants during the workshop in the Groues neighborhood. Interfriches network, 2020

framework. All these dimensions are very discrete and they emerged by capillarity during the workshop.

Rachel: So, would we need a driving force such as more residents for the neighborhood anchoring to be more effective also in the workshop?

Ester: Maybe…

Rachel: And what about our own anchor in this place? This was also the way we restituted the survey: I'm thinking about a participant who made a video to show the presence of different palisades around the wastelands and abandoned lots as forms of partitions of the neighborhood. This worked like a narration. They named it as "the forms of fragmentation and sedimentation of the urban landscape"; the images were a proof of that. There is thus a strong link between aesthetics - or let's say our common sensitive ex-

Figure 4. Picture of the collective experience on the bridge. Photo: Pierre-Yves Brunaud, 2019

periences - and the construction of our common knowledge of and on the place. This is what a great thinker like Dewey would say, I guess[11].

Sequence 3: The collective inquiry, hybridizing fieldwork practices

Henri: The workshop would have been completely different in another context. It is also important to emphasis that the time of the morning walks, was intended to present this very particular context to the participants. It would be good to recall the two itineraries that we did (*Henri shows the following diagram*), one more focused on the neighborhood's history and the changing urbanism and the other looked at the vegetation and the overgrowth of the neighborhood's plots.

Rachel: Yes, absolutely. That said, I also see other factors explaining the orientation of our results: the lack of variety of the participants' profiles - a majority of architects-urban planners, plus the thematic split of our walking itineraries (figure 3) - even if our path overlap - or the non-definition of a common and transversal problematic that we could have been submitted to the participants of the workshop.

Ester: The collective survey was an immersive practice that allowed us to be confronted with the same realities, without smoothing our perceptions or interpretations. Where the urban planner sees a ZAC and questions the wastelands through the uses, their actors and their insertion in the urban fabric, the ecologist identifies the plants and tries to understand the reasons of their distribution and the landscape architect looks at the gardening and development practices of the wasteland.

11 - Dewey, J., 1934. *Art as Experience*, New York: Minton, Balch & Company

Henri: Yeah, this workshop is above all a collective experience. By writing the report of our workshop, we will look for the highlights and synergies, the perceptions that caught the attention of most participants during the discussions. We were forced to join our disparate experiences and our modes of attention to what questions the occupied wasteland: its plants, its buildings, the discourses of its project leaders... All these signs to which we must confront our interpretations.

Ester: I'd say fortunately, there was a photographer to accompany this collective work. The pictures were a driving force in the development of our collective view: they are both a product of the workshop and a support for deepening our thoughts. It is finally a staging of the collective and of the production of several researchers. In fact, it was like these visual productions, photos, drawings and montages had participated in the construction of the collective thought.

Rachel: Of course, the results of the collective survey do not claim to be representative. Moreover, if we managed to forge a common culture of the field, it is mainly thanks to the research work carried out before the workshop by us, the organizers. A one-day territorial immersion was not sufficient for any sociologist or anthropologist who intend to analyze a place... For that, it might have been necessary to consider several field sessions. Though if we return to the objectives that we had set ourselves at the beginning of this workshop, we wanted to work on an interdisciplinary methodology for the study of urban wastelands. However, unlike other workshops of the "Interfriches" network, this one started with fieldwork. Thus, the inductive approach has led the participants to focus on the *wasteland place* and the micro-local issues of the field rather than the *wasteland object* and its more theoretical questions.

Ester: I follow you on this last point, we were once again in an "interstitial" position, halfway between a posture of facilitator, speaker, expert but also, sometimes, part of the participants of our workshop. Then, this hybrid participative conduct of a collective investigation around the wasteland takes all its sense...

Henri: If I follow your reasoning, this position of in-between is found as well through our collective object of study, in the materiality of our field of investigation as well as in our postures of interdisciplinary collective!

Sequence 4: Experimenting commoning through the disciplinary interstice

Ester: Some scholars acknowledge that difficulties to practice interdisciplinarity are highly linked to the study of urban environments. Indeed, urban environments still tend to divide work and knowledge between natural, social sciences and the technical sphere[12] whereas those fields are and should be strongly complementary. In retrospect, it is really difficult to remember the role played by each specific participant, his or her point of view, or the weight of his or her disciplinary perspective in the elaboration of the collective survey. The representations of some participants took precedence over others, because of their greater disciplinary representativeness, their academic status or even their charisma which gave them a position of "knowing person". For the participants, the objective was then to agree and express visions from different backgrounds, and certain presuppositions about the neighborhood in question.

Rachel: Ok Ester, but there were several moments of confrontation that forced us to compromise. It must be said, however, that the reading of the wasteland through the prism of the game of actors alike this idea of "aboveground" has prevailed over the rest. The analysis of the flora gradually faded away, the political game between the actors overshadowed the present nature of this district.

Henri: That's right, and I recognize the ecologist speaking. We had the tools to bring the two topics together, in my opinion, through a localized political ecology or territorial socio-ecological approach.

Rachel: I agree! Some disciplines and approaches have been left out...

12 - Petts, J., Owens, S., Bulkeley, H., 2008. Crossing boundaries: Interdisciplinarity in the context of urban environments, *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, 593-601

Ester: We can also see it in another way: we more or less adopted an inductive approach in the end. We let the field "speak" and it is the socio-political issues that came out more strongly. This is not insignificant, since it is a field composed of a complex system of actors with diverse and varied interests. A collective of surveyors is just the same.

Henri (adjusting his glasses): Finally, if we come back to this key word of interstice... This idea of "standing between"[13] describes well a position but says a few about the ecological materiality of the places we have crossed. The third-place "Vive les Groues" is a developed and partially maintained wasteland in an interstice situation between different municipal territories, between a small abandoned office building, a suburban street marked by its worker past, garages, warehouses, buildings of the tertiary sector and now even a shisha bar...

Rachel: In another perspective, by making the interstice the support of a collective experience, we were also in a position of disciplinary interstice, that is to say in a contact zone, even a *friction* zone between our research backgrounds; which is what Bruno Latour understands by "hybridization"[14] as a very concrete collective practice of research aiming to put in relation and integrate knowledge in a scientific production.

Ester: Yes, this workshop and the collective survey allowed us to develop a shared knowledge of the places and showed us the challenges to take up in order to form our scientific community. That seems to be a great path of conclusion.

Conclusion

The workshop on the third-place "Vive les Groues" has put the emphasis on the hybrid practices that an urban wasteland offers for public-private developers, professionalized civic actors and a multidisciplinary group of researchers. The elements of discussion that ran through the entirety of the exchanges between participants show the enrichment and the challenges of a shared research work that blurs disciplinary boundaries. This fictional dialogue intended to restitute the diverse and sometimes diverging perspectives raised by a collective fieldwork experience on a common ground. The staging of the dialogue also reflects the role of oral communication between members of a group in the thought process and, finally, the constitution of a scientific community around a shared object of study. Similar findings on collective intelligence insist on compositional, interactional and definitional convergence between group members as well as the necessity of tensions for bridging knowledge in grounded-theory (Woolley and Fuchs, 2011).

Through an experimental and itinerant approach, the commoning experience have encouraged the crossing of opinions of researchers from various disciplines and backgrounds, practitioners and professionals. However, when it comes to the consistency of the results obtained, some limitations must be considered. One explanation lies in the professional and disciplinary profiles of the participants of the workshop. If a diversity of profiles was obtained, the important proportion of urban planners and architects among the participants necessarily oriented the reflections of the collective. From this point of view, the objective of crossing ecological sciences with social and political sciences was not achieved. Wastelands as social-ecological systems can be characterized by their "in-betweenness" allowing creative social and research experiments.

13 - Brighenti, A.M. (Ed.), 2013. *Urban Interstices: The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between* (1st ed.), Routledge, London. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315548807
14 - Blok, A., & Jensen, T.E., 2011. *Bruno Latour: Hybrid Thoughts in a Hybrid World*, Routledge, London, 208 p.

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Conflict of Interests

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Turko-Islamic Art In Kosovo and the Balkans and the Destroying of Mosques In Kosovo After The Final War (1998-1999)

Albana Krasniqi
Professor at Faculty of Education, University of Gjakova, Kosovo

Ilir Muharremi: Corresponding author
Professor at University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina, Faculty of Education, Kosovo

Abstract

This piece discusses t he architectural, cultural, and religious influence of Turkish culture on the major cities of Kosova as well as the major cities of the Balkan region as a whole. The destruction of the mosques after t he Final war of Kosova. Destroyed and damaged Islamic monuments throughout the Kosova conflicts (1998-1999). Many Kosovar-Albanian cultural objects were destroyed and damaged throughout the era of Slavic occupation of Kosova, specifically during the war era of the Final war of Kosova (1998-1999). Being t hat Kosova was a part of the Ottoman
Empire, Ottoman architecture definitely influenced Kosovar/Albanian architecture. After World War II, Kosova fell into Yugoslavian communist control, who had plans to modernize the general architecture of the communist country in a way to create more of a sense of urbanity to residential areas and city property as a whole. These architectural measures being taken were to rid the residential settlements of Ottoman architectural influence. To the communists, the Ottoman architectural design and style was known as "old fashioned" and not "modern".

Keywords: Mosque, culture, destruction/destroyed, Islam, religion, history, monuments, architecture

Opening

In terms of cultural heritage, Kosova is characterized and influenced by a large number of architectural features from many different cultures that throughout different historical periods, have developed in almost a ll the cities of Kosova. A characteristic of the Turkish-Islamic art style, which plays an enormous role in the development of architecture and various fields of art not only in Kosova but also Balkan countries as a whole as well as countries in and around Europe and the Balkan region, would be the establishment of facilities; numerous architectural objects ranging from the hammam bathhouses to one of the most attractive and monumental ones: mosques, in terms of different architectural styles. This style brings a respective freshness and reflects upon paintings, sculptures and general architecture which will essentially be adopted as an ornament as a motive of expression.

The word "islam" means "obedience"; Muslims are those who devote themselves to worshipping Allah, the One and Only. According to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), all Muslims are saints and they are brothers, all members of one family or community. The specific feature of Islam and its primary nucleus is the synthesis of ethnic and universal elements. The religion of Islam has opened its doors to all, without considering their race, color, and culture. It was a national religion oriented in Arabia from which it spread to the four corners of the world.

The most renowned examples of Islamic architecture in the Kosova region are the mosques, hamams, bridges, tombs, tekkes, clock towers and many others.

Particular attention should be paid to the many architectural monuments and mosques that stand in the all the city centers of Kosova. Mosques have architectural monumentality that is presented from the city of Prishtina to Peja that deeply encompass a large number of cultural- historical heritage sites.

The mosque of Sultan Mehmet Fatih (conqueror) in Prishtina, which according to the inscription located on its portal, was built in the year 1460-61, is one o f the most important and valuable Ottoman buildings. The Carshia Mosque (now the Mosque) in the center of Prishtina, was built by Sultan Bayezid immediately after becoming the victor of the infamous Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Made entirely out of stone, the mosque's minaret stands out, including at the pointed peak, made of carved stone, which undoubtedly presents as an indication of construction in the areas where Islamic architecture stands out.

As a city, Prizren has a plethora of architecture that includes different styles of buildings, but especially Islamic based/influenced, starting from dwelling/residential houses to the numerous ducats extending from all sides of the town where the river Lumbardhi forks into two. On the east side of the city stands the fortress, with its ancient majesty. However to the south, with its grand monumentality and architectural beauty, is the Sinan Pasha Mosque, located in the busiest part of the city, standing out from the inside. In the mosque, we find the inscription "Xhenet misali" (resembles paradise). It was built in 1615-16.

On the other side o f the river Lumbardh stands the Hammam of the city of Prizren, the restoration of which has been done and is quite functional, except for the tourist destination of the facility that serves many tourists who come to visit the Islamic-cultural objects and historical heritage. Today, the hamam is used as a gallery, where exhibitions and cultural events are organised.

In the south-western city of Gjakova was also erected the Hadum Mosque, in the year 1592-93. In addition to its specific architectural solution, it stands out for its interesting pictorial decoration through walls with stylized landscapes and cypress trees.

A considerable number of Islamic objects are in the picturesque city of Peja, where mosques stand out as some of the most famous structures of Islamic architecture in Kosova such as the Bajrakli Mosque, Kurshumli Mosque, Hammam Mosque, etc.

The Bajrakli mosque is based on the architectural complex that was influenced by multiple old Islamic architectural structures. It's considered to have been built in the second half of the century. Its large dome, vital minaret and three small domes really depict the Islamic influence.

The Hamam mosque is built near the hammam. It is very old and has only one inscription preserved: the construction indicator year, which was 1861.

Mosques in Tirana:

- Et'hem Bey Mosque is a mosque that was built in Albania by Mulla Bey from Petrela around the end of the 18th century.
- Mulla Bey, who laid the foundations of the prayer building, managed to finish even the corners and the dome of the mosque. However, Bey couldn't experience the embellishments and paintings in this mosque: he passed away in 1807. The mullah's son, Hajji Et'hem Bey, rich in knowledge and position, managed to complete the minaret of the mosque. He decorated the mosque with paintings, built the ceiling and portico, and thus completed the mosque in 1830-31.

Mosques in Skopje:

Skopje and many other cities in Macedonia as also distinguished by a number of large Islamic objects that stand out in the busiest places of the city squares:

- The stone bridge, which ranks among the first objects from the historical monuments of Skopje, built in the 15th century.
- Skopje Castle, located on a hill, which dominates the entire city of Skopje.
- Kurshumli Hani, is a p art of a bazaar where y ou can eat and shop. It is one of the oldest places in Macedonia. The Kurshumli Hani is now an archeological museum.
- The Hammam of Daut Pasha is an art gallery
- The Mosque of Isaac Bey

Fig.1. The diverse mosque of Tetovo

- The builder of the mosque, Isaac Bey, was the commander of the Turkish army stationed in Macedonia, based in Skopje.
- He was the son of the famous Jigit Pasha.

The Larme Mosque-Tetovo

- Popularly known as the Pasha mosque, located near the river Shkumbin in the old part of the city of Tetovo.
- The mosque was built in 1495 and w ar rebuilt and expanded from the ground up in 1833 by Abdurrahmon Pasha, son of Rexhep Pasha, who were the great defenders of Tetovo, who also had great adoration of art.
- We understand all this data from the inscription preserved on the entrance to the mosque as well from the tomb mark which is preserved in the turbine built in the courtyard of the mosque.
- These famous pashas who acted in Tetovo in the first half of the 14th century, built and rebuilt the city castle and the Baba Teqen Arabs.

Mosques in Sarajevo

- The Ali Pasha Mosque in Sarajevo w as built in 1561. The mosque was built by Hadim Ali Pasha beg Budim in 1560-61, a t the time of the Paschal of Bosnia rule. The mosque is built based off of the classic influences of Istanbul.
- Ali Pasha, originally from Sarajevo, wrote in his will that near his grave, should a mosque be erected by the means of his Waqf. He died in 1557, four years before this mosque was erected.
- The Ali Pasha Mosque was declared the national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005.

Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque, or Beg Mosque in Sarajevo

- In terms of size and attraction, t his mosque is one of the most popular mosques out of all the Islamic architecturally influenced structures in the Balkans.
- Built in 1530.
- The mosque was built by Gani Husrev Bey, ruler of the Bosnian Sandzak.

Destruction of mosques in Kosova

Islamic monuments damaged and destroyed during the Kosova Conflict (1998-99).

During the period of Yugoslav rule in Kosova, the architectural heritage that belonged to Kosovar-Albanians was shown to be institutionalised contempt decades before the most recent war of the 20th century. Many ethnic Albanian cultural sites in Kosova were long destroyed during the period of Yugoslav rule and especially during the Kosova war (1998-99), which constituted a war crime that violated Hague and Geneva Conventions. During the war, 225 out of 600 mosques in Kosova were damaged, vandalized, or destroyed, along with many other Islamic facilities. In addition, 500 traditional stone Albanian towers and three of the four centers of urban maintenance of the Ottoman period in the cities of Kosova was severely damaged, resulting in great loss of traditional architecture. Public libraries of Kosova, in particular 65 of the 183 existing libraries were completely destroyed. 900,588 volumes were lost while Islamic libraries suffered damage resulting in the loss of rare books, manuscripts, and other important collections of literature and culture. Archives of the Islamic community of Kosovo with data that included 500 years were also destroyed. During the war, Islamic architecture was considered Albanian property for paramilitary forces and military. The destruction of non-Serb architectural influence was an integral part of methodical and planned ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosova.

Kosova, being a part of the Ottoman Empire for about five centuries, had many examples of Ottoman architectural influences. After World War II, Yugoslavia was ruled by communist authorities, who implemented plans for the modernization of the architectural landscape and the design of urban settlements. These measures were aimed at changing the appearance of settlements that were considered t o have elements related to the Ottoman period. According t o the Yugoslav communist leaders, there were elements that were quite “old-fashioned”. Starting in the late 1940’s, the architectural style of Kosova’s main urban centers began to be destroyed, mainly by the local government, as part of urban modernization schemes. During the 1950’s, this process was undertaken by the Institute of Urban Planning (Serbo-Croation: Urbanistiki zavod) of Yugoslavia, with the most well-known example in Kosova of the socialist modernization project of Prishtina. The Ottoman Bazaar of Prishtina contained 200 shops, divided into blocks for crafts and artisan society, owned by Albanians. There is a mosque that is surrounded by the bazaar: this complex was expropriated in 1947 and destroyed by labor brigades known in Albanian as the “Popular Front” and in Serbian as “ Narodni Front”.

The Bazaar of Prishtina, with the construction of new buildings and destroyed buildings and undestroyed buildings.

In 1952, the Yugoslav government established the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Kosova, in charge of dealing with issues related to cultural heritage in Kosova. After World War II, in communist Yugoslavia, only one monument the Ottoman period had the status of a cultural monument, and that monument was the Tomb of the Sultan Murat. While the status of state protection has been given mainly to church buildings Serbian Orthodox in Kosova. The criteria for listing mosques as historical monuments were way more restrictive than for Serbian Orthodox architectural structures. Buildings that had status received fundings for restorations, while numerous mosques from the Ottoman period were not protected or renovated during this time without the supervision of the institute, which often resulted in damage to original architectural elements. On the eve of the first major event of the Kosovan War, only 15 of the 600 mosques of Kosova had the status of historical monumentality, while Serb-Orthodox churches, cemeteries, and monasteries had the status of historical monumentality, even though more than half of the mosques in Kosova date from the Ottoman period, ie from the 14th to 15th century.

A house destroyed with a damaged mosque near in a village in Kosova, 1999.

The Kosovan war was a liberation war of Albanian fighters, mainly from the ranks of the Kosova.

Liberation Army (KLA), fighting against Serb paramilitary and military forces during the years 1998-1999, a war that ended with the military intervention of North Atlantic

Fig. 2. A mosque destroyed in a Kosovo village in 1999

Treaty Organisation (NATO). During the war, Yugoslav Serb forces put up targeting various state archives and buildings, museums and libraries; Islamic libraries, Muslim schools, and tekkes.

Before the war, the reserve collection consisted of numerous copies of library publications in the National Library in Pristina, held for use within Kosova for libraries and others which were destroyed in a paper factory in Lipjan by order of the Serbian director of the library. During the war, 65 (one third) of Kosova's 183 public libraries were fully accessible. 900,588 volumes were destroyed. The school libraries of Kosova were also destroyed during the war. In 1999, several cultural archives and collections were moves from Kosova to Serbia, such as the archive of the Institute for the Protection of the Monuments of Kosova, was removed from the building of the institute in Prishtina by the employees of the Ministry of Interior of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav-Serbian Ministry of Justice stated that the removal of public records from Kosova to Serbia in 1999 was "to prevent Albanian separatists destroying, or falsifying (them)". Some municipal registers of Kosova were also burned at the places where they were held.

The central historical archive of the Islamic community of Kosova contains data of the community for the past 500 years, in which was burnt on June 13th, 1999 by Serbo-Yugoslavian police after a ceasefire and just hours before the arrival of NATO peacekeepers in Pristina. In Gjakova, the Bektashi tekke of Axhiz Baba was burned in May by Serbo-Yugoslav soldiers with incendiary grenades fired from the shoulders and resulted in the loss of 2,000 books and 250 extremely rare manuscripts, such as a 12th century Persian manuscript. The Hadum Suleiman Aga Library (founded in 1595) in Gjakova was burned on March 24th by Serbo-Yugoslav soldiers, resulting in the loss of 1,300 rare books and 200 manuscripts written in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and the Albanian and Arabic alphabet together, with regional archives of the Islamic Community that included documents up to the 17th century. In Peja, the library of the Attic Madrasa had been burned with only the outer walls remaining, resulting in the loss of 100 manuscript codes and 2,000 printed books. (Attic Theological School Madrasa in Ferizaj dating from the Ottoman period was burned and its remains were bulldozed. The Museum of the League of Prizren in Prizren was also destroyed by grenades fired by the Serbo-Yugoslav police during March of 1999.

The Serbian cross symbol with four Cyrillic "Cs" engraved on a building during the w ar in Kosova, 1999.

After the war, in August of 1999, reports by the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) documented that 155 mosques were destroyed in Kosova, based on refugee accounts. According to the Islamic Community of Kosova, the duration of the war has resulted in the damage, destruction and collapse of 217 mosques, 4 madrasas, and 3 tekkes. Of the 498 active mosques in Kosova, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has documented that 225 mosques have been damaged or destroyed by the Serbo-Yugoslav army. Through the duration of the 18 months of counter-war, the Yugoslav-Serb army in 1998-99 inside Kosova resulted in 225 casualties (or one third) out of 600 mosques, which were vandalized o r destroyed. Some Islamic objects were damaged within the context of the fighting.

Mosques and other Islamic buildings in some urban neighbourhoods and villages became the only targets of violence against architecture. In the conclusion of an attack on a village and the flight of the population from villages, towns, and cities, attacks on mosques, other Islamic buildings and architecture were widely undertaken by the Yugoslav-Serb army. Attacks in some cases consisted of the downfall of mosque minarets; the tops of minarets were removed by artillery fire, explosive devices were placed inside minarets and in mosques, mosques were flattened by bulldozers, many fires were started, as well as many other attacks of violence. Vandalism of mosques, anti-Albanian and anti-Islamic vandalism, with the graffiti of facades with images and text, even in some instances, anti-Albanian and pro-Serbian inscriptions were carved into the walls of mosques. Inscriptions left on the mosque by the Yugoslav-Serb army often had the words "Kosovo je Srbija" (Kosova is Serbia), "Srbija" (Serbia), " Mismo Srbi" (We are Serbs), while the most common graffiti was a crow Cyrillic Cs in each corner, which is a Serbian national symbol. An in-depth study by Doctors for

Fig. 3. Destroyed mosque in skenderaj, Kosovo 1999

Human Rights for Kosovar-Albanian refugees, found that Albanians were often not present to see the destruction of Islamic architecture due to their escape. These events were also confirmed in reports from human rights organisations on the activities of the Yugoslav-Serb forces and their victims who were targeted and focused on achieving such destruction. In some, there were occasional witnesses to these attacks on historic monuments.

Mosques with exploded minarets in Skenderaj, Kosova 1999 .

There was also vandalism of the Albanian-Catholic churches in Kosova. The Saint Anton's Catholic Church in Gjakova was severely damaged by Serb-Yugoslav soldiers. Serbo-Yugoslavs in Pristina expelled nuns and priests and installed aircrafts radar in the belfry, which resulted in the NATO bombing of the church and surrounding houses. Whereas 500 (or 90%) of the tower dwellers, which belonged to the families of prominent Albanians, along with historic bazaars, were targeted. Three of the four centers that were well-preserved Ottoman urban buildings in Kosovar cities, were severely damaged by resulting in great loss of traditional architecture. The struck architecture suffered irreplaceable damage. Destroyed and damaged monuments were often in relatively quiet areas, which proves that the damage done was intentional and not as a result of military exchanges of war. During the war, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 70,000 homes in Kosova were destroyed.

The destruction of Kosova's historic architecture took place in the context of the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign, which followed a pattern similar to one that occurred in Bosnia and deteriorated, due to efficiency lessons learned from this conflict. Destruction of non-Serb architectural objects was a methodical and planned component of eth-

Fig. 4. View of a city destroyed during the 1999 Kosovo war

nic cleansing in Kosova. Harvard University researchers, Andrea Herscher and Andras Riedlmayer point out that the destruction of individual houses and properties, except the historic architecture, of course all the Kosovar-Albanian population was targeted as a defined cultural entity during the war.

Cultural heritage after the war in Kosova

After the war in Kosova (1999), there were reports from journalists and refugees about the destruction of Kosova's cultural heritage and the need arose to investigate these allegations and to document damages. The United Nations (UN) established civilian administrations in Kosova, however one of its agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Culture (UNESCO), which deals with cultural heritage issues, had no plans to undertake such an activity. Andrea Herscher and Andras Riedlmayer have conducted research, raised funds and three months after the war ended in 1999, went to Kosova in October and undocumented the damage done to cultural heritage institutions and buildings. With completion of the field research, their findings and documentations were placed on a database a nd a final report was written with copies provided to the Department of Culture. The UN Mission in Kosova and the Office of the Prosecutor which presided over the UN tribunal for war crimes in The Hague.

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic

At the trial of Slobodan Milosevic (2002-2006), the Yugoslav-Serb president during the war in Kosova (1999), the ICTY indictment against him referred to methods of persecution against Kosovar Albanians to "make unbridled systematic destruction, on purpose damage to their religious communities and cultural monuments". Prosecutions at trial tried to prove Milosevic guilty of these actions and events, Milosevic claimed that Kosovar-Albanian heritage sites,

in addition to Orthodox monuments and religious sites were damaged by NATO bombings. Yugoslavs on several occasions claimed that NATO destroyed the monuments, however the investigation team led by Andras Riedlmayer, found them intact, such as two Ottoman bridges and Sinan Pasha mosque. Investigators acquitted NATO of responsibility, in addition to damaging the roof of the village mosque and an abandoned Catholic church which was damaged through an airstrike after a nearby military base was hit by a missile. Reports Riedlmayer made in court concluded that the towers and a third of the mosques were damaged and destroyed, with three urban centers of the Ottoman period destroyed by fires of intentionally lit. The report also noted that the Yugoslav Serb army, the paramilitary forces and police and in some cases, Serb civilians had carried out those attacks, according to eyewitnesses. Riedlmayer found that the Yugoslav-Serb forces used two as a basis for action, the Catholic church, in which international law is forbidden. The investigative team stressed that the destruction and damage of Kosova's heritage sites took place during the war of the year 199 through ground attacks and not air strikes. With the weeks remaining before the end of trial, no court decision was reached due to Milosevic's death in March 2006.

After the war in Kosova. View of a city destroyed during the Kosova war, 1999 .

The destruction of numerous Serbian churches took place in a post-war environment done by some Albanians, who considered this architectural heritage as revenge against the government of Milosevic and his military forces for the violence committed during the war in Kosova (1998-1999). The Serbian government has used such attacks as a base to ask the United Nations to allow its police and armed forces to return and preserve historic monuments in Kosova. The request failed and the post-war attacks on Serbian cultural heritage are used by Serbian cultural institutions to divert attention from attacks on Albanian cultural heritage done during the war. These institutions reported on the damage done after the fight against the Serbo-Orthodox heritage and produced reports that were accepted by international cultural heritage institutions as neutral and objective assessments.

In the world, little awareness of concern has emerged about the cultural heritage to which belongs to Kosovar-Albanians, which many things associated with that were damaged during the war. The Serbian government only admitted it once that Albanian cultural objects had been damaged within the context of an assessment of NATO war crimes, which included airstrikes on several ethnic Albanian historical monuments. Little legal attention to the severely damaged Islamic heritage has occurred despite ICTU documentation of destroyed and damaged mosques of Kosova. There have been reluctant to acknowledge the damage done to the cultural heritage of Albanians in Kosova by the international community. Its humanitarian mission in Kosova to provide for its populations and the issue of damaged culture has been set aside towards a focus on "reconstruction" of Kosova. The Islamic Community of Kosova since 1999 through funding from various sources, is engaged in the reconstruction of 113 mosques damaged by the war in Kosova. A total of 211 war torn mosques in Kosova have been rebuilt through contributions from donors and local communities, non-governmental agencies and foreign governments, as assistance from some Islamic countries especially Turkey and Arabic nations. Islamic charities entered Kosova and rebuilt Ottoman-era mosques destroyed during the Arab/Persian-Gulf War and were responsible for the destruction of centuries- old religious complexes and mosques under the "reconstruction" period. Journalists in Kosova reported that the assistance to local communities was dependent on them and allowed special Islamic charities to rebuild local mosques. Libraries, cemeteries, and mausoleums that were centuries old were subjected to destruction by Islamic charities, who considered then to be "idols". Assistance came from Western institutions for the reconstruction of mosque, as well as from the Italian government who rebuilt two mosques in Peja and Harvard University, who rebuilt a mosque of importance in Gjakova. Kosovar Jews also financed the reconstruction of a mosque in Gjakova.

Protection, restoration and reconstruction of monuments and architectural stylings of Islam has not received much

interest from Kosovar state authorities in contrast to architecture belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Conclusion

The destruction of Kosova's historic architecture took place in the context of the Serbian campaign ethnic cleansing, which followed a pattern that occurred in Bosnia and deteriorated, due to efficiency lessons learned from this conflict. Destruction of non-Serb architectural objects was a methodical and planned component of ethnic cleansing in Kosova. Religious architecture in the Balkans has always had the influence of inciting various wars. From this conclusion came the result historial politics and incitement to inter-religious and national hatred.

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