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**NEGOTIATING
CONFLICT IN
LEBANON**

Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut

Mohamad Hafeda

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**NEGOTIATING CONFLICT IN
LEBANON: BORDERING
PRACTICES IN A DIVIDED BEIRUT**
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IN ARCHITECTURE**

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

'Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon' makes visible the interplay between material and immaterial borders in sites of political and religious conflict. It asks: What bordering practices of the political–sectarian conflict exist in urban space? And: How do the bordering practices of art and research operate in urban space in their attempt to negotiate, document, transform and narrate the conflict mechanisms and borders?

The book is a practice-led research project that employs art processes including interviews, documentations and media representations to work with residents and negotiate conditions of political borders. It proposes a method of negotiating; one that considers how artistic research can itself be considered as a form of a critical spatial practice and, in particular, a bordering practice – what the book terms critical bordering practice. This enables the rethinking of border positions, including those between disciplines – such as between practice and theory – and between spatial conditions – such as between private and public. This proposition leads to the transformation of certain borders particularly the positions of divisive political narratives.

The book is published by I.B. Tauris, (Bloomsbury), and is distributed internationally in hardcover for academic institutions and libraries. It is released simultaneously in paperback after positive critical review by professors Mona Fawaz and Sandro Mezzadra, amongst others, allowing the publication to reach a wider readership beyond academia.

The book's significance is in its interdisciplinary methodology of working in contexts of urban conflict that attracts academics and practitioners across the fields of border studies, urbanism, media studies and art. The professor of anthropology Ghassan Hage has remarked: 'the book is particularly useful to read for students of spatial practices from any discipline: reading it actually awakens the reader's spatio-sensory apparatuses, and sharpens one's appreciation of the various modes of experience pertaining to the spatial domain.'

BOOK BLURB

Drawing on innovative research into sectarian-political struggle in Beirut, Mohamad Hafeda shows how boundaries in a divided city are much more than simple physical divisions and reveals the ways in which city dwellers both experience them and subvert them in unexpected ways. Through research based on interviews, documentation of various media representations such as maps, visual imagery and gallery installations, *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon* exposes the methods through which sectarian narratives are constructed - arguing for the need to question, deconstruct and transform these constructions. Hafeda expands upon the definition of bordering practice by considering artistic research as a critical spatial practice which allows self-reflection and transformation of border positions. This study offers an alternative view to the mainstream narratives of what is meant by a border, and provides insights, methods and lessons that may be applied to other cities around the world affected by conflict and political-sectarian segregation.



'A compelling work of powerful reportage, careful analysis, and creative disruptions through which Hafeda masterfully engages the visible and invisible borders of today's cities. Taking Beirut as his landscape of intervention, the artist-author trespasses disciplinary boundaries as he navigates the distance between scholarly and everyday voices, but also the defining lines between art and social sciences, the audio-visual and the textual, the researched and the researcher, the governed and the governing, history and now, public and private realms, and more. Each of the four provocations presented in the book deconstructs outmoded assumptions about sectarianism's immutability, unravelling instead the everyday mobilizations of historical and contemporary practices that sustain it. The outcome is an important contribution that implores us to think critically about the making and remaking of urban borders in today's world.'

Mona Fawaz (Professor of Urban Studies and Planning, American University of Beirut, co-author of *Beirut: Mapping Security*, IBAR, 2009)



'This book is an analytico-artisitic examination of what the author calls 'bordering practices'. Beside offering an interesting and provocative take on sectarianism and borders in Lebanon, the book is particularly useful to read for students of spatial practices from any discipline: reading it actually awakens the reader's spatio-sensory apparatuses, and sharpens one's appreciation of the various modes of experience pertaining to the spatial domain.'

Ghassan Hage (Professor of Anthropology and Social Theory, University of Melbourne, author of *White Nation*, Pluto press, 1999)

'Beirut is a city shaped by the “chronic” experience of civil war and by political-sectarian conflicts that inscribe multiple borders onto the urban space. Mohamad Hafeda has been walking in that city for a long time, looking at the way in which people narrate and negotiate those borders. He has been working with residents and connecting artistic intervention and research to their tactical practices of resistance. The result is an amazing book. *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon* is a book on Beirut but it has something to offer to anybody interested in borders and border struggles also elsewhere.'

Sandro Mezzadra (Associate professor of Political Theory, University of Bologna, co-author with Brett Neilson of *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Duke University Press, 2013)

'The question of marking territories and defining borders in the city of Beirut demands not only a distinct and complex approach, but also a considered and enduring level of engagement. Mohamad Hafeda's volume, detailing the nuances of his current site-specific and practice-led research projects, provides not only this level of commitment, it also offers a thoroughly engaging encounter with the profound social and political processes that determine how we negotiate conflict.'

Anthony Downey Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa, Birmingham City University, editor of Future Imperfect, (2016)

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Links:

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