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EMBODIED PLACEMAKING: FILIPINA MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS' NEIGHBORHOOD IN BEIRUT

Abstract
Based on a larger ethnographic project that investigates the spatial impact of the *kafala* (sponsorship) system on the access and mobility of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Beirut, Lebanon, this paper focuses on embodiment and the placemaking of Filipina MDWs in the city. From a theoretical lens that is placed at the intersection between the anthropology of space and place and feminist geography, I argue that the ways in which the precarious and marginalized community of Filipinas creatively makes place for themselves in the city despite spatial exclusion, labor restrictions, and employers' control, ascribe new meanings to these already existing productions of Beiruti space. The argument is delivered through a spatial ethnographic analysis based on two months of participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

INTRODUCTION

The growing numbers of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in the Middle East bears with it an emerging phenomenon: the workers' embodied presence in the spaces of Middle Eastern cities.[1] Through a theoretical lens situated at the intersection between the anthropology of space and place and feminist geography, this article investigates one such presence: the Filipina MDWs' spaces in the city of Beirut, Lebanon. Through this spatial ethnographic analysis, I contend that the ways in which the precarious and marginalized community of Filipinas creatively makes place for themselves in the city despite spatial exclusion, labor restrictions, and employers' control ascribe new meanings to these already existing productions of Beiruti space.[2] I mobilize the notions of embodiment and placemaking, which bring to the foreground not only the significance of place in the construction of social relations and social boundaries but also the centrality of the body "as a mutually constituent element of the built environment."[3] Unlike other Middle Eastern cities where the presence of African and Southeast Asian migrant workers as a constitutive part of urban life

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precedes migrant domestic work, Beirut witnesses this new presence as an outcome of the growing demand for foreign domestic work.[4] In this article, I chose the category of migrant domestic worker (MDW) to denote Filipina women who may have come to Lebanon as MDWs but are no longer employed in this sector, or those who are still currently in this line of work and are either documented or undocumented. The embodied experiences of MDWs of space, due to their identity as migrant, racialized female domestic workers, is intrinsically intersectional and offers a complex understanding of human relations to the spatial environment that is in dialogue with feminist geographers' critiques of the gendered social construction of space.[5]

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on an ongoing larger dissertation project that explores how space and the *kafala* (sponsorship) system together produce the ways in which MDWs' access and mobility in the city of Beirut takes place. I begin by describing and reflecting on the global methodological approach to the entire project, followed by a more detailed focus on the ethnographic object of this article.

The research was predominantly conducted in Beirut in two phases: between March–September 2018 and July–August 2019. Entering the field, I relied on my former acquaintance with the associative support of MDWs, developed from having been born and raised in Lebanon, as well as my experience as an active member of former feminist collective *Nasawiyya* in 2012–2013 and my previous participation in the annual Workers' Parade. My initial points of access were volunteering as a language teacher every Sunday at the Migrant Community Center (MCC), conducting conversation practice sessions based on improvisational theatre techniques in the English classes offered by *ʿĀmel* Association once every two Sundays, visiting the Protestant service of the French-speaking African community at the Protestant College, and attending political events such as Women's Day on the eighth of March and the events of the Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers.

From the very beginning, my main limitation was, expectedly, that most of these activities predominantly happen on Sundays, MDWs' only day off. Unable to be present in all places at once, I dealt with this dilemma in two ways. First, I selected one or two spaces from each category. For example, for the entirety of my fieldwork, I attended two of the many churches that offer services for migrant workers and

decided to follow the Alliance rather than the trade union, since the latter has been researched extensively.[6] My second strategy was to apply a rotation. During the Sundays on which I volunteered at *ʿĀmel*, I would spend the afternoon there and then continue my day with the group of Ethiopian women who attended these classes. On the alternate Sundays, I would either spend my day at MCC after the end of my morning class or attend the mass at noon and spend time with the church community. This proved to be challenging at times, in particular during the Sundays on which special events took place and I had to change my plans.

I am a Lebanese cis-gendered woman who was twenty-eight to twenty-nine years old when conducting this fieldwork. And while I spent most of my life in Lebanon, I have been living abroad since 2013. Anxieties over whether I would be accepted in the field due to my nationality accompanied me throughout preparation for and during fieldwork. My national identity was possibly a factor that played a role when some refused to be interviewed (although this was never explicitly stated). On the other hand, being a woman and from the same age group as most MDWs gave me the chance to bond and form friendships with some of my interlocutors. Additionally, my former experience with *Nasawiyya* and the politically motivated nature of my research attested to my solidarity with their cause. Depending on my field site and how many months I had been in the field by then, I navigated between the roles of researcher, language teacher, and friend, even though in all occasions I presented myself first and foremost as a social scientist whose research drove her engagement. After two months in the field, some MDWs invited me to spend the day out with them, and urban walks in the city became part of my methodology, which allowed me to experience Beirut from the MDWs' perspective.[7] The type of participant observation adopted varied from one field site to another. Based on Junker's categorization of the sociological roles in field observation, I was an observer-as-participant (such as when I taught language classes), while in other cases I was a participant-as-observer.[8] The language of command varied depending on the context. I used my native Levantine form of Arabic in communication with the Sudanese and Ethiopian communities as well as with my Arab interlocutors, English with the Filipina and Sri Lankan communities, and French with the Francophone-African community. In addition, the research included semi-structured interviews predominantly with MDWs, employers, church pastors, social workers, and activists. The names provided in this article were

anonymized when requested and deemed necessary for the protection of my interlocutors' identities, documentation status, and political activism.

More specifically, the second fieldwork phase on which this article is based (July–August 2019) followed a decision to focus on one neighborhood. I chose the *Ḥamra* District, as existing research on spaces of migrant workers focuses more on other migrant centers, such as *Dawra* and *Borj Ḥammūd*,[9] or does not tackle the specific question of space.[10] This particular instance of fieldwork consisted of weekly visits to Cairo Street in Beirut's *Ḥamra* District, which is where the Filipina community is based. Every Sunday, I spent the entire day observing mobility on the street and taking notes and mental maps, chatting to groups lingering on corners, attending the church services and beauty pageants, visiting stores and karaoke bars, and interviewing key interlocutors. My access to this field site was ensured by my gatekeeper Marie (anonymized name), a Filipina live-out MDW and activist whom I had met during my first phase of fieldwork. The gathered data, in conversation with the selected theoretical framework, produces a spatial ethnography of *Ḥamra*'s Filipina community. Spatial ethnography is defined as "an interpretive method that combines analysis of artifacts (buildings, streets, furniture and other forms of material culture) with ethnographic and observational accounts of how people use and give meaning to these artifacts."[11]

In the next section, I contextualize my empirical contribution in a historical and sociological overview of the changes experienced by this sector as well as the role of the *kafala*. The following section, "Embodiment, Space, and Placemaking," is a theoretical review that contextualizes the significance of employing a spatial perspective in social sciences. I present the notions of embodied space, embodied placemaking, this article's use of feminist geography, and intersectionality. Each of the subsequent four sections defines a particular form of placemaking.

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORK IN LEBANON

Similar to several Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon's *kafala*, or the sponsorship system, manages migrant work, including migrant domestic work. The Arabic term *kafala* (meaning: guarantee, sponsor, and custody) has family connotations and denotes the guarantee of safety and care. When live-in domestic work was performed by Lebanese women, to be "under the *kafala* of a family" meant to be under

the guarantee of their economic and social protection in exchange for domestic chores. Traditionally, women from rural areas or urban working class families were sponsored often as domestic workers by upper-class households. These young women, typically aged between ten and eighteen years old, were provided with shelter, protection, and an annual salary given to their parents until these women reached marrying age. Other women from the region were hired as domestic workers as well, such as Palestinian refugee women following the state of Israel's foundation in 1948.[12] The landscape of domestic work began to change, however, after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), as Palestinians and Lebanese citizens from various religious sects gained greater military control. While hiring a woman from the same religious community remained the "safest" option, Ray Jureidini argues that the strong politicization at that time meant that "the idea of employing Lebanese women and girls in such a servile position was anathema to a national pride that was emerging along with the country's physical and social reconstruction."[13]

Meanwhile, following the 1950s oil boom in the Gulf, the number of migrants, who were the main contributors in the construction of Gulf cities such as Dubai, began to increase dramatically due to the promised "trappings of a tax-free lifestyle and accelerated capital accumulation."[14] Those attracted to this new growing economy included migrant women from countries such as Sri Lanka and India who came to be employed as domestic workers. Lebanese men working in the Gulf saw a new business opportunity in the recruitment of MDWs and therefore began opening recruitment offices in Lebanon. By 1978, with the opening of the first recruitment agency of domestic workers for Sri Lankan migrants,[15] Lebanon became a new gateway for MDWs. In addition to the gendered and class-based construction of domestic work, the domain took on a new racialized form. The term *Sri Lankiyyi* (Arabic for Sri Lankan) became a pejorative expression synonymous to domestic worker in the Lebanese language. By 2016, it was estimated that approximately 400,000 MDWs, predominantly from Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, are employed via the *kafala* in Lebanese households.[16]

Today, the *kafala* refers to the fact that a MDW must have a sponsor in the country who would act as her legal representative. The sponsor, accountable for the worker's residence and work in Lebanon, must be her only employer; the sponsor's name is written on the worker's permit issued by the Ministry of Labor.[17] Interestingly, the *kafala* cannot be found anywhere in the Lebanese judiciary, as it is a

customary law made legitimate through its social and economic practice. There are various speculations as to the origins of this practice. Some scholars argue that it has been used in Lebanon since the 1950s to organize other forms of migrant labor, such as agricultural work, and likely originated in the Gulf.[18] Other researchers, however, claim that the practice of the *kafala* was traditionally tied to the pearl fishing industry in the Gulf.[19]

This system, which has been labelled as oppressive to MDWs' basic human rights, is safeguarded in Lebanon by several governmental and nongovernmental actors, namely the Ministry of Labor, the General Security, the private recruitment offices, and the MDWs' employers. Private recruitment offices, which act as placement agencies for MDWs in Lebanon, "match" employers with potential MDWs who are catalogued and displayed in photos.

Perceived national and racial hierarchies also play a role in who is considered to be more legitimate or worthy of the position. While exploring the racial and national hierarchies between MDWs is beyond the scope of this article, Filipina MDWs are considered to be at the top of this hierarchy due to their command of the English language, their perceived higher levels of education, the stronger consular support they receive in contrast with other nationalities, and the Lebanese perception of Asian women's superiority to black women.

Following the "match," entry visas are then issued by the General Directorate for General Security, an institution responsible for processing foreigners' entries and monitoring their residences, as well as issuing passports for Lebanese citizens.[20] Upon the MDW's arrival to Beirut's International Airport, monitoring is ensured as a staff member from the General Security escorts the MDW and asks her to wait for the employer. At this point, the General Security officer keeps the MDW's passport and hands it to the employer as soon as the latter arrives.[21] Beginning with this passport confiscation and control of entry to Lebanon, employers ensure full control over MDWs' everyday lives. As the *kafala* ties the MDW to the employer in terms of living and working conditions, the employer decides where the MDW sleeps, the number of hours she works, whether or not she gets a day of rest, her confinement to the private space, and the partial or full restriction of her mobility outside the house. The Ministry of Labor, responsible for validating MDWs' contracts and issuing work permits, maintains the "legal" enforcement of MDWs' constructed position as "inferiors." In an interview that I conducted with an employee from the Ministry of Labor, I inquired about the four categories of migrant labor: the first

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being occupied by high managerial positions, the second by white collar professions, the third by blue collar work, and the fourth category being domestic work. Although the third category is similarly governed by the *kafala* and is usually occupied by migrant men, domestic work marks the only category that is not covered by the Lebanese labor law code and where MDWs are not legally able to transfer to another form of labor. Moreover, as I learned in the interview, different rules apply to female MDWs and the minority of men who are employed as live-in gardeners or cooks. The condition for employing a male MDW maintains that the house must be at least 300 square meters so that a separate wing can be provided for them. When asked why the same condition does not apply to female MDWs, the Ministry of Labor employee answered that the "privacy of the family must be protected."[22] In the intersectional construction of domestic work as a category, not only is domestic work excluded from the basic labor protection granted to other categories, but, additionally, a gendered and racialized decision regarding whose privacy merits protection is made. State institutions and employers assert the intersectional position of MDWs as "inferior" individuals denied freedom of mobility, privacy, and the right to autonomy over their own basic bodily functions, including rest, sleep, protection, intimacy, and sexuality.

The last decade witnessed a growth in the political mobilization of MDWs against the *kafala* as well as the available research on migrant domestic work in Lebanon. Policy-oriented studies focused on the working and living conditions of MDWs,[23] which have been denoted by some as a form of contemporary slavery.[24] On the other hand, another form of literature appeared, which focused on the spaces and collectives shaped by MDWs. Amrita Pande analyzes the spaces where moments of "meso-level resistance" occur.[25] The first category is balcony talks, or the conversations that take place between domestic workers from different apartments on balconies; Pande argues that these discussions provide needed solidarity, socialization, and opportunities to plot for escape. Pande's second category is "practical prayers," which take place in ethnic churches to facilitate praying as well as MDWs' socializing and networking. The third aspect of her analysis focuses on the illegal freelancers "who forge alliances in apartments in battle-scarred abandoned buildings."[26] Based on three case studies of Eritrean and Ethiopian households, Joyet Beyene investigates the way these workers access the housing market through their social networks.[27] Fenneke Reysoo highlights the role of the

embassies in creating safe houses where MDWs are provided with emotional and legal support.[28] Other studies of MDWs have focused increasingly on their growing visibility in political debates as well as belonging to city space.[29] My work engages with the latter conversation while focusing on the spaces of the Filipina community, which have not been the principal object of most of these studies thus far.

EMBODIMENT, SPACE, AND PLACEMAKING

Why is taking a spatial perspective in the study of the experiences of MDWs important? Looking at space presents a good starting point for unveiling inequalities and social exclusions that materialize and would remain otherwise invisible.[30] Studies in the anthropology of space and place have highlighted inequalities at play in the city, such as gated communities, gentrification, occupation of public space in social movements, and privatization.

The spatial turn in anthropology brought a new way of understanding the built environment for the discipline. Space was no longer considered to be a universal physical entity but rather an entity that is relational and socially constructed within the different sociohistorical contexts in which it is situated.[31] In this article's theorization of space, I turn to Setha Low's notion of embodied space.[32] Embodiment resolves the dichotomy of the biological body and the social body. This concept recognizes that humans' identities determine their positions in space, and this positioning shapes power relations. In this article, I aim to explore not only how Filipina MDWs are positioned vis-à-vis the social space of Beirut but also how places are being made. Embodied placemaking, a concept advanced by Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman, designates the body's role within the construction of place.[33] Through the framework of embodied placemaking, the city becomes a place where racialized and gendered experiences (among other categories) are performed through the acts of walking, mapping, seeing, hearing, touching, and smelling.[34]

In parallel, the relevance of considering gender in the study of space was put forward by feminist geographers who recognized the masculinist assumptions that shape the hegemonic narratives of space.[35] Among the important theoretical contributions that feminist geography has presented is the visibility of difference (not only of gender, but also of intersecting categories such as race, class, disability, and sexuality) in its interaction with spatial issues such as mobility, accessibility, and spatial division.[36] This article's ethnographic analysis benefits from the feminist geographical critique of the social construction of the city's public and nocturnal spaces as inherently

unsafe for women, and the construction of the private space as a safe haven that provides feelings of warmth and the sense of home.[37] In my analysis of space, the notions of private and public, and the meanings ascribed to them, are deconstructed. Moreover, public and private are not understood here in terms of the legal categorization of land and building ownership, but rather in terms of accessibility. Public space thus becomes a "ground of exchange where people sharing a common world also share this common 'space of appearance.'"[38] In addition to streets and sidewalks, I label the shops, restaurant, karaoke bars, the church, and parking lot analyzed in this article as public spaces, as anyone can enter them versus the private space of an enclosed residential area.

The existing studies of domestic work focusing on space as a central notion have mainly tackled the changing boundaries and notions surrounding private space in the presence of a MDW,[39] access and social life in public space,[40] access to housing,[41] as well as political spaces and resistance.[42] In the following sections, through an intersectional theoretical dialogue between anthropology of space and place as well as feminist geography, I offer a spatial reading of the neighborhood of the Filipina MDWs in Beirut that explores placemaking in four different ways: placemaking through a creative use of vacant spaces, placemaking as homemaking that deconstructs the private/public binary, placemaking that blurs the temporal construction of the nighttime city, and placemaking that reveals a growing rate of interracial intimate encounters. Approaching this study from an intersectional perspective, I take categories of gender, race, and class as "anchor points" for the empirical complexity of MDWs' everyday experiences.[43]

BEIRUT, CAIRO, OR MANILA?

It's like having a little Manila in Beirut.[44]

It is often said that Beirut never sleeps, yet Sunday mornings seem to prove otherwise. On Sunday mornings, the city is hung over from all-night, weekend partying and exhausted from working long shifts during the weekdays; so, it retreats to its most intimate spheres to spend just a little bit more time in bed with loved ones or enjoy an extended breakfast with family members. The spirit of Beirut quietly withdraws on Sunday mornings from all but a few of its streets. Nestled in the *Ḥamra* District, one of Beirut's economic and cultural

centers, Cairo Street is one such moment of interruption of Beirut's sleepy-end-of-the-week state.

Over the past decade, Cairo Street has gradually evolved to become the center of Beirut's Filipina community. Tracing its history is difficult due to the lack of documentation, but all my interlocutors who had been in Lebanon since the 1980s confirmed that Saint Francis Church, situated on *Ḥamra* Main Street, has been offering church services for Filipinas from even before they had arrived. For several decades, the community's social space was limited to the church, the adjacent Capuchin School, and the playground connecting both places. In his study of *Ḥamra* a decade ago, sociologist Steven Seidman wrote that "in the course of four months of observation, Filipinas and Africans were never seen 'hanging out' in any of *Ḥamra*'s common public places."[45] Today, this social life has expanded to take over Cairo Street (the street that intersects *Ḥamra* Street at the corner of the church) and interconnecting corners. While a few of the grocery stores and restaurants remain open all week, most of these spaces come to life on Sundays, including a church mass conducted in both English and Tagalog, bible study groups, beauty pageants, temporary food and clothing kiosks, discos, karaoke bars, hairdressing salons, and remittance services.

Unlike most centers of migrant communities in Beirut which have emerged in marginalized neighborhoods and suburbs of Beirut (*Dawra*, *Nabʿa, Sabra*, and *Karm–al- Zaytūn*), the Filipino community, remarkably, has claimed its place in one of the central and most cosmopolitan middle class districts of the city. Originally occupied by farmlands, the *Ḥamra* District witnessed rapid urbanization at the turn of the century with the establishment of the American University of Beirut (formerly known as the Syrian Evangelical University) and, soon after, the Lebanese American University. Between 1947 and 1967, the population of *Ḥamra* grew from 2,400 to 15,000 inhabitants as economic opportunities arose in this new intellectual hub.[46] With its cafes, publishing houses, cinemas, theatres, and bookstores, *Ḥamra* soon transformed into "a magnet for adventurers, tourists, intellectuals, political activists, and writers and artists from across the Middle East."[47] Acting as an alternative center when the Beirut Central District was destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War, the district maintained its reputation as a cultural and economic hub throughout those fifteen years. As today's more globalized character of *Ḥamra* altered its landscape with high-rise buildings, yoga centers, and the opening of global corporation franchises including Starbucks, H&M, and Dunkin

Donuts, much of its recent history remains visible through its local cafes, pubs, and theatres occupying the modernist buildings lining its streets. Walking down the *Ḥamra* main street, Cairo Street is a secondary road that branches out only one block away from *Masraḥ al-Madīna,* the city's historic theater. Situated between the Saint Francis Catholic Church and Rossa coffee shop (previously the international Costa Café), Cairo Street hosts a wide range of facilities. Filipina enterprises coexist with two four-star hotels, an Iraqi restaurant, and electronics and clothing shops, among other small-scale services.

There is no clear evidence as to why the past decade witnessed a mushrooming of migrant centers in Beirut. The current explanations posit that this development is linked to an overall increasing number of migrant workers, bringing forth a greater demand on spaces that cater to the social and economic needs of these communities.[48] Interestingly, this urban visibility coincides with the growing political visibility of debates on MDWs' rights. In 2011, the International Labor Organization adopted Domestic Workers' Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers.[49] This step has resulted in an NGO-ization of domestic work globally, including in the Middle East.[50] In Lebanon, a similar process of NGO-ization took place, headed by the founding of the Anti-Racism movement in 2010, which supports migrant workers. It is then possible that the political ties and financial support which this NGO-ization generated gave way to a facilitation and acceptance of this increased presence. Returning to the particular presence of Filipinas in Cairo Street in the following paragraphs, the four distinct forms of placemaking are laid out.

VACANT SPACES

It is a little past six o'clock on a Sunday morning, the sun is still rising, and the air is cooler than it would be the rest of this summer day. The smell of freshly baked *Mana'īsh* and Arabic sweets invades the city streets before most passersby do. Around 6:30 a.m., a few individuals begin to arrive and set up their kiosks in the parking lot that transforms into a temporary market. At 7:00 a.m., most shops remain closed with the exception of the two main Filipino stores: Carmen's and Friendship's Market.

The gates of the Capuchin School playground open at 8:00 a.m. A group of Bangladeshi men arrive in two cars and park in front of the school. They set up their merchandise of okra beans, cucumber melons, and other types of fruits and vegetables, laid out on plastic bags and

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carton boxes on each side of the road. One car is strategically parked next to a ficus tree so that some of the products can be hung on its branches. Boxes are also laid out on the front hood of the cars. Movement in the street is still scarce as the different spaces gradually become more occupied closer to mass time at noon. More shops begin to open later in the morning. At 8:30 a.m., music is already blasting from a karaoke bar located on the upper floor of one of the stores. The woman managing the space arrives to set up. She takes off her high heels, sets them aside, and starts arranging the bar. Two women are hanging balloons, one of whom tells me that they will have a birthday party later that day. In the opposite room, a couple of women are already getting their hair done.

During and following the Lebanese Civil War, the spaces of the country's capital became some of the most contested reflections of a national identity crisis that questioned the role of the state, the collective memory of the war, and the meaning of public space. In a swift attempt to reconstruct Beirut post-conflicts, the public–private partnership represented by *Solidère* (an acronym of *Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth* and translated as Lebanese Company for the Redevelopment and the Reconstruction of Beirut) led to a "colonization of public space by the private sector."[51] Today's Beirut is a battleground between contradictory notions: its location as a global city versus the unresolved local sectarian divides,[52] a state of amnesia reflected in the new urban development versus the scarred architectural ghosts that haunt its present as memories of the war,[53] and finally, continuous privatization versus the remaining yet gradually disappearing public spaces.[54] These public spaces are becoming playgrounds for the elites. One of the latest testimonies of this transformation is *Ramlet–al-Bayda*, the last public beach in Beirut, which was recently sold off to private developers.[55]

Migrant communities, including Filipina MDWs, find themselves excluded from increasingly privatized Beirut. This exclusion takes on various forms that are either structural or symbolic. First, exclusion happens by making these spaces unaffordable for certain classes. Second, it is commonly known that many beach resorts and night clubs in Beirut ban MDWs from accessing or using their services. In a YouTube video that went viral in 2012, activists from the Anti-Racism Movement in Beirut recorded phone calls in which they contacted thirty different beach resorts across the country. They pretended to be employers who would like to know if the MDWs employed at their places can access these resorts. The activists received

the same answer from all but one resort: a MDW is only allowed to enter with her employer and she does not pay a fee. However, she cannot use the pools. The stated reason for this administrative policy is to prevent disturbing the resorts' clients, who may not accept swimming in the same pool with a MDW.[56] The third strategy of exclusion is a symbolic one. Several of my interlocutors, in this particular field site and in others, told me that they did not feel welcome in most restaurants and shops in Beirut due to the disapproving looks that they received or comments such as "you cannot afford any of our merchandise." The social construction of Beirut's spaces makes it clear to MDWs that there is no place for their intersectional identity to be expressed, leading them to create their own places. "Groups that are often marginalized elsewhere in the city, create unexpected forms of placemaking and inscriptions of meaning."[57]

One such example is the market mentioned earlier, which is set up every Sunday in the parking lot. When the mass ends at one o'clock in the afternoon, it is customary for many of the women to sit in large groups in the church's small garden or in the playground and share homemade foods. From this social tradition, which has taken place as long as the mass has existed, a small market practice slowly evolved. Women began to set up stalls in the playground and sell food, crafts, handbags, and jewelry. During my first phase of fieldwork in March–September 2018, I was told by the Filipina women that this was the case until a little over a year ago when the church asked them to move their market elsewhere because it was becoming difficult to manage and overcrowded. Mobilizing their networks in the neighborhood, each group eventually began to rent, for a fee paid each Sunday, a plot in the parking lot, a tent, and a table.

A Filipina MDW, Tatiana, served me vegetable spring rolls as we chatted about the market. The stand, run by herself and her sister, offers a vast array of traditional Filipino foods and sweets. The long table is typically filled with various fried pastries and casseroles of rice, noodles, and typical dishes such as *chicken adobo* and *sinigang*. She informed me that her sister, who has been in the country for fourteen years, cooks the food at her employer's place on Friday and Saturday evenings. A small outdoor kitchenette was also set up for the food stands for heating and cooking on the same day. The rest of the items are brought by them (other tables and chairs, cooking pots, washing and cooking materials, etc.). The entire endeavor functions as a collaborative effort: the ingredients are purchased from the stores

nearby selling Filipino products, the special fruits and vegetables (such as bitter melon) that cannot be found in regular grocery stores are often grown by a minority of Filipino male workers tending gardens of residential villas, and both Filipino men and women volunteer to assist in dishwashing. Since there is no onsite running water, a space for dishwashing was created by using large pots as sinks and purchasing large gallons of water from the stores in the neighborhood. The money collected from selling the food then goes to renting the tent and purchasing the products. "It is for the sake of the community. Because of places like this one *Ḥamra* became like a little Philippines," Tatiana said.[58] The parking lot's temporary market also now hosts kiosks run by Syrians that sell clothing and accessories. In order to counter their marginalization from most of the city's spaces, Filipina MDWs engage in placemaking in vacant spaces instead. A vacant space is an architectural term that denotes the surplus landscapes in, for example, an urban area.[59] This space can be vacant either temporarily or permanently. Examples of vacant spaces are empty parking lots, abandoned plots of land, or unused corners between buildings.

As marginalized communities often find commercialized city spaces uninviting, they reclaim existing spaces in ways that "transgress architectural boundaries and normative behavior."[60] During the first weeks of my visits to the neighborhood in July 2019, my key interlocutor in *Ḥamra*, Marie, suggested that I should meet one of the most active members of the Filipino community. As she led the way, I realized that we were approaching an electronics store. "This is odd," I thought to myself, "There doesn't seem to be much happening here." The static façade of the shop however masked a bustling social life happening inside; entering further into the shop revealed two separate food stalls run by distinct Filipino groups. This instance offered a competing blend for all the senses: brightly painted colors, food smells, and music all came together to create an experience unexpected for such a place. On another day, I discovered that the upper floor was transformed on Sundays into a karaoke bar with another room serving as a hairdressing salon. Filipina women typically sit in groups of five or more at the tables and take turns singing Filipino pop songs or Anglo-Saxon love ballads. Seeing the potential to comfortably run their stalls even during the rainy seasons, these Filipinas creatively approached the shop owner to use the shop's vacant spaces. However, this transgression is not only limited to the physical shaping of these made places, but also in their social functions, as will be explained in the next paragraph.

Rosemarie, a Filipino MDW who has been working as a live-in for forty years in Beirut, is responsible for running one of the food stands in the store. In 2011, along with Filipino and Filipina friends, she founded the Group of the Overseas Workers in Lebanon. "We decided to organize this group so that we can help friends who have problems," she stated.[61] With the aim of supporting Filipina MDWs in need, the group decided to set up a stand and raise money by selling food and drinks. "Everything that we gain here we donate for the unfortunate Filipinos. If they have problems with their employers, we give them food, shelter, they get to go home. And special hygiene sometimes if they are in jail."[62] On one of the days that I met with her for a drink at the stand, she had just returned with her group from the Filipino embassy where they donated products for the women staying at the safe houses. Similarly, the group often collaborates with Caritas. In order to sustain this initiative, Rosemarie, who is the main cook, spends her Saturday night from two o'clock in the morning until the early morning hours of Sunday preparing the food with two friends. In this instance, placemaking benefits more than those who eat, drink, and socialize in this place. Placemaking here extends beyond the physical space to promote networks of solidarity. Today, the Group of Overseas Workers has 800 followers on Facebook.

Nevertheless, despite these collective efforts, the Filipina community is still a victim of its increasing precarity amid a worsening economic situation in the country. The owner of the shop, a Lebanese man in his late sixties, has been renting out this space to the community for ten years (with the karaoke bar being the latest addition from 2018). When he wanted to rent the place to Filipina MDWs, many of his acquaintances discouraged him.

> In 2009, some of the women approached me and asked if they can use the vacant spaces of the shop. They [his acquaintances] said it's not going to work, but look they have been renting this place for years. Each group pays $50 for each Sunday. . . . They never miss one payment, and no *bad* activities have happened so far.[63]

We exchanged a few more sentences on the false perception of the migrant workers' community by Lebanese society, but then he continued, "They will be really sad though when I close the shop." As it turned out, he is unable to afford maintaining the space and is

looking into selling it; he had not informed the groups yet. "I am afraid they will be really disappointed because this became like their second home. But unfortunately, I got a bad cancer and I struggled a lot with my family. We also had to sell our house."[64]

Despite the barriers to a social construction of places of their own that Filipina MDWs constantly face, this type of placemaking, offering economic, social, and political initiatives, represents a promising example of "fleeting encounters," which hold the "possibility of those encounters growing into the thicker sociability of a community."[65] In the next section, I lay out the argument of how embodied placemaking in Cairo Street deconstructs the assumed gendered binary of private and public use of space.

HOME AND THE PRIVATE SPACE

One morning before mass, Marie introduced me to *Kapit Bisig* Group (rough translation from Tagalog: hand in hand). The group comprises older members of the Filipino community who came to Lebanon in the 1980s and have been active in the social life of Saint Francis Church since their arrivals. As we spoke about their lives in Beirut during the civil war and their current feelings about being here, one of the women who had been in Lebanon since 1983 described *Ḥamra* as her "second home and family away from home."[66]

The home, a word often deployed by my interlocutors, is a notion overburdened with meaning. It is associated with intimacy, spiritual unity, care, and nurturing harmony. It is perceived to be the locus that shelters family from the outside buzz of political and economic stress of everyday life.[67] However, the home is not only considered to be a psychological concept, but it is also a defined physical entity. The notions of house and home are often used interchangeably, as the idea that only closed private spaces can offer an environment of intimacy and security remains unquestioned.[68]

The means by which MDWs negotiate their access to spaces of socialization, economic activities, as well as political solidarity, however, invert the meanings of what can be designated as "private" or "public." As MDWs, legally required to work as live-ins, fail to find the desired privacy and sense of home in the spaces of their employers, they seek such privacy in spaces that are conventionally considered to be public.

Following the church service, Filipina women can be observed appropriating various corners in which activities that are traditionally

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tied to the private sphere play out: in the garden of the church, women sit in groups on benches or on the edges of planters and share home-cooked food brought in Tupperware or aluminum foil. In the playground located at the back entrance of the church, I witnessed birthday celebrations take place almost weekly; large groups would be gathered around plastic tables with balloons, a birthday cake, and various foods, singing and celebrating. It is not uncommon to spot a couple of women painting their nails on the sidewalk, or simply lingering and enjoying a cigarette. Placemaking here becomes a form of homemaking that deconstructs the understanding of home and privacy as being sheltered from public spaces and city life.

Since the 1970s, feminist geographers' debates centered on modern society's division of public and private space as posing a negative impact on women's everyday lives.[69] As men went to work, women were charged with the burden of maintaining the unity of the home. And as housekeeping was perceived to rely on women's "natural" skills and was unpaid, it was rendered "unproductive" and long left untheorized.[70] Moreover, due to the "masculine" assumption of public space tied to the notions of work and political expression, women's freedom in public space is still taken for granted. Historically, women who did not conform to their inscribed roles as keepers of the private space were labelled as fallen/immoral. This label still persists today, demonstrated by the way female victims of rape or attack in a public space are often blamed for being out alone or staying out too late. In her analysis of gendered differences regarding fear of crime in public space, Gill Valentine explores how these differences can result in varied modes of behavior.[71] Due to the social construction of public spaces as unsafe for women, women develop a "heightened consciousness of the micro-design features of their environment" and follow a set of individual strategies to ensure their own safety when accessing public space.[72] In contrast, the privacy of the home is labelled as a safe haven for women. Paradoxically, women often face the most oppression in the home: from unpaid labor, to domestic and sexual violence, to isolation and confinement.[73] The same can be said about MDWs who experience the worst types of violence in the homes of their employers, often leading them to commit suicide.[74]

In the aftermath of the increasing visibility of attacks targeting women in public space, such as gang rapes and victim blaming, feminist movements around the world called for women to "reclaim the streets" and assert their presence as equally important users of city spaces in everyday life.[75] The "gendering of space within a patriarchal

society" is performed with "women controlled through the domesticated private space of the home," therefore blurring the boundaries between private and public space and "threatening patriarchal control."[76] In Middle Eastern cities, including Beirut, it is mainly men who typically linger on the streets and in public spaces, appropriating sidewalks with tables, chairs, and shisha. The increasing visibility of MDWs' placemaking in the public space of Beirut, a new and unprecedented presence in the city,[77] is met with resistance through various strategies: restriction of access to public space, policing of clothing and behavior, sexual and verbal harassment, and negative perception.

On one of the Sundays when I was sitting with a group in the playground, I spotted a man who works for the church approach a Filipina woman from another group. She wore shorts and a white t-shirt. He pointed at her clothes and stated that she cannot wear shorts on the church's premises. The group that I was sitting with then told me that this is a new policy imposed by Saint Francis Church. After debating with the man for about a minute, the woman eventually said a few words to her friends and took off down the street. During mass on the following Sunday, the priest made a remark on the issue toward the end of the sermon: "Please remember that here, the church and the school, this is your place, *our* place. So please remember to dress in a way that reflects us and respects our beliefs and values."[78]

Additionally, employers of MDWs in Lebanon view restricting access to public space as key to ensuring control and discipline. The repression of live-in MDWs in the private space of the employers is perceived to be a strategy for maintaining a proper worker-employer relationship, and freelancers' apartments are viewed as immoral spaces that foster promiscuity. Even when employers allow the workers to go out, they attempt to map what is perceived as "appropriate" spaces for leisure, such as going to church. When asking Lebanese employers during interviews why they do not allow their workers to go out on Sundays, I received the answer that women who go to neighborhoods such as the Filipina's area in *Ḥamra* are engaged in crime and prostitution.

The MDWs' intersectional status as domestics, constructed in Beirut as being an inferior race, class, and gender position, constantly subjects them to harassment and disrespect in city spaces. Ha Yeon Lee, a student who conducted her master's thesis on domestic work in Lebanon, notes that, as an Asian woman, she was mostly exposed to harassment on Sundays, as it is the time when most domestic workers

are out on the streets. She writes: "A horde of men of various age and nationalities, including those of Syrian, Turkish, and Egyptian, linger around and woo live-in maids or freelance domestic workers who are out on Sundays."[79] Flirtations and exchanges of numbers are typical of Sunday interactions between Filipina women and Arab men on Cairo Street. "You come here every Sunday?" a middle-aged Lebanese man asked a Filipina woman as he stroked her hair. Another day, while I was standing near the parking lot, I overheard a man possibly in his late fifties narrating his experience with a Filipino woman to his two friends sitting next to him at the edge of the parking lot. These were his exact words: "*ʿatayta 50,000 bas staḥit. Eltella trajjeʿle el masareh ma kenet treddon. Eh kiss ekhtik ʿomrik ma terjaʿe!*" ("I gave her 50,000 L.L but she felt shy. So I asked her to return the money but she wouldn't do it. So I said fuck you! Just got to hell then.") He then continued to say how "they" (Filipino women) like beer, that he enjoys getting drunk with them, and so he keeps a stash of strong dark beer in his car to offer them.

These observations of embodied placemaking, illustrating a deconstruction of the notion that homemaking is inherently tied to the private sphere and sheltered from city life, illuminate how spatially differentiated intersectional practices can allocate new meanings to space.[80] Through the embodied acts of lingering, painting nails, celebrating birthdays, and eating home-cooked foods, spaces such as the church garden, the school playground, and sidewalks are given new meanings associated with the notions of home and privacy. The opposing reactions attempt to prevent these moments of embodied placemaking by disciplining the bodies of Filipina MDWs, not granting MDWs days off, or labeling these congregations as areas of crime and prostitution. This opposition means to reject places of difference where the social construction of gender, race, and class gives new meanings to the traditionally ascribed hegemonic gender, race, and class identity of Beiruti spaces.

THE NIGHTTIME SPACE

It was a little past one o'clock in the afternoon and the soaring heat was beginning to get to me. I headed to the *ʿEintabli* branch next door (a local juice bar) to order a fruit smoothie. The individuals who run the temporary market operate in less than ideal conditions when it comes to batting the rising temperatures of Beirut's summer days in an asphalted parking lot, as I was beginning to realize through my own embodied experience. While I was paying for the juice, I heard loud

techno music coming from nearby. "*Kell aḥad heik*" ("It's like this every Sunday"), one of the sellers joked. Walking back down the street, I understood that the music was coming from the neighboring Chinese/Asian food restaurant Leone. Opening the entrance door, I was surprised to see that the restaurant had transformed into a dance club. Filipina women and Arab men swayed in the shadows of flickering disco lights. *Almaza* (a local beer), nuts, and cigarettes occupied the tables as other groups sat and drank as early as one o'clock in the afternoon. I spoke to one of the waiters who informed me that the restaurant becomes a karaoke bar/disco club every night as well as on Sundays during the day.

In research conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Beirut office with a sample size of 1,500 questionnaires, it was concluded that only 36 percent of employers allow MDWs a day off, with this share increasing to 65 percent when only Filipina MDWs are considered.[81] While the survey recognizes that this may be an overstatement, considering that most of the individuals were recruited from churches and markets (hence skewing the results), it is also crucial to note that even when employers provide a day off, they still impose time and space restrictions over the mobility of MDWs. As mentioned earlier, employers categorize leisure activities of MDWs between appropriate and inappropriate ones. The former include educational and religious activities (such as going to church or taking language lessons), and the latter comprise lingering on the streets, going clubbing, and mingling with men. Additionally, over the course of my fieldwork, I met several live-ins who always rushed back to their employers' houses by their curfews of five or six o'clock in the evening. I recall that toward the end of the May Day Workers' Parade in 2016, which I had participated in, it was announced that for live-in workers whose curfews were 5:00 pm, there were buses leaving in ten minutes from nearby the church.

Curfews represent a strategy that parents often employ with their adolescent daughters to ensure gendered control. They serve as a means to distance young women from nighttime activities perceived to be inappropriate.[82] The nighttime city is constructed as inherently unsafe due to its links to male pleasure, criminal behavior, and female insecurity, and the accompanying female fear of the nighttime is considered common sense.[83] MDWs, due to race, class, and gender-based assumptions, are deemed to be "unstable teenagers" and thus perceived by employers to be easily affected by other encounters. In the fear that they would fall in the wrong crowd, keeping them from

"hanging around at discos and mixing with guys" is a key strategy to ensure that MDWs stay out of trouble.[84]

The notion of time-geography contests the long-held tradition in social sciences that time is not a central factor in the study of human behavior in space. In his work on human migration patterns in the 1960s, Torsten Hägerstrand put forth the notion of a space-time path to describe how humans are bounded to a three-dimensional frame when it comes to their mobility and access in their spatial environment.[85] Time and space then together produce various limitations and restraints on an individual's movement. Among his three denoted categories of limitations, an authority constraint refers to the idea that individuals' access to certain spaces is controlled by time limits set by institutions or people with higher positions.[86] MDWs face an authority constraint in terms of their common inability to have a nocturnal social life in public space. In line with feminist critiques of time-geography, however, it is crucial to recognize the significance of corporeality in relation to time and space.[87] While the control of mobility and the confinement of intersectional bodies to the private sphere—away from the so-called illicit activities of the night—is seen as essential to maintain respectability, the embodied acts of dancing and mingling with men in broad daylight act as resistance to this control. The embodied placemaking performed through the transformation of Leone Restaurant to a karaoke bar and club during the day blurs the day-night dichotomy and contests the exclusion of MDWs from the nighttime city.

A SPACE FOR INTERRACIAL ENCOUNTERS

In his study of ethnic enterprises in *Dawra* and *Sabra*, Dahdah wrote that there are three strategies through which migrant workers overcome limitations of access to Lebanese commerce imposed by the *kafala* system: running an unauthorized enterprise, partnership with Lebanese individuals who would operate legally as their employers, or marriage to a Lebanese citizen.[88] On Cairo Street, ethnic enterprises run by Filipina former MDWs occupy the third category. In the following two vignettes of Leone Restaurant and Carmen's, I explore how these enterprises represent a form of placemaking that embodies the changing notions of family and citizenship in the context of Lebanese interracial marriages.

Scarlet has been in Lebanon for ten years. After working as a live-in MDW in a house in *Sin el-Fil* for ten months, she became tired of her extreme confinement and ran away. For the next few years, she

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stayed at her cousin's place and worked as an undocumented part-time employee in a clothing store and part-time freelance domestic worker. She met her Lebanese husband through other Filipina acquaintances, and they dated for three years before they got married. Over the years of their marriage, they opened and closed several businesses together. They first opened a night club in *Brūmmana* (a town in the Mount Lebanon region) for six months, then moved to *Anteliās* for a couple of years, and finally established themselves in Leone Restaurant and Bar in *Ḥamra.* "We will not stay here for more than two years I think," she stated as she took another puff from her shisha. "We don't like to stay in the same place for too long."[89] Seemingly, the couple's long-term goal involves moving to the Philippines, where they intend to run an establishment. "There is nothing to do here really," she continued nonchalantly. In parallel to Leone, she runs her own hairdressing salon that carries her name in *Dawra.* Every day of the week, she opens her salon at nine o'clock in the morning, and stays there until closing time at five or six o'clock in the afternoon. As soon as she finishes, she arrives at Leone and stays there with her husband until the late hours of the night. "As long as we have clients we stay open," was her response to my question about the closing times. When the clientele is scarce, it is typical that they close around ten o'clock at night. But it is also not uncommon that they close in the early morning hours on Friday and Saturday nights. We sat together in Leone, with the company of one of her Filipina friends and a bottle of Vodka. "Cheers to happiness!" her friend would raise her glass every now and then and smile to us. Scarlet raised her glass but kept her permanent allure of tiredness and boredom. Her well-composed appearance would fool me into believing that she has not been working for the last twelve hours with as little as three hours of sleep the night before. Scarlet had also hired several freelancer Filipinas to work in her salon, but they were arrested. "I will only hire women who have Lebanese papers from now on."[90]

In studies of citizenship and everyday mobility, it is argued that the modern citizen's established relationship with the city is more accentuated than their relationship to the nation-state.[91] Scarlet not only managed to surpass her class position as a domestic worker and her precarious legal status as a freelancer, but she also acquired a status that changes her relationship to the urban space of Beirut, specifically, and Lebanon, in general. Her ability to juggle two businesses located in two distinct areas of the city and to move through space and labor without the risk of being arrested, like the women who worked for her,

are evidence of a new embodied experience in the city. Both the salon in *Dawra* and the restaurant in Cairo Street are processes of placemaking that serve as testimonies to *kafala*'s failure in restricting MDWs from both labor and urban mobility. As mentioned in earlier sections, under the *kafala*, MDWs are not allowed to work in any other sectors other than domestic work, and the *kafala* gives great power to the employers in regulating MDWs movement and mobility.

Its shelves packed with Filipino food and skincare products, and its few tables cramped with Filipina crowds that spill over onto the sidewalk, Carmen's shop and canteen is another social hub in Sundays' Little Manila. The place was named after its owner, Carmen, a Filipina former MDW who has been in Lebanon since 1984. She runs the shop with her two daughters and son whose father is Carmen's Lebanese husband. The couple met during one of Carmen's days off at a birthday party and later got married in secret, despite his family's disapproval. After being out of work since her marriage, Carmen finally decided to open a store in *Ḥamra* in 2009. "My kids start to go to university and I know that my husband cannot afford so I start to open this shop."[92] In the past two years, her husband has also been out of work. "He used to work for an Italian news agency but they closed because of the budget, they said. So he used to help me here. Then about six months ago he started to drive a taxi." Her husband's family was again discontented with this decision, as Carmen shared. "My mother-in-law and father-in-law said 'I will close this shop' because they don't like me really to work. They prefer me to stay in the house and sit with my kids. But I forced them. I told them no, I want to work."[93]

Carmen's shop, another moment of placemaking, represents a double contestation. The first, similar to Scarlet's case, is her contestation of the *kafala* through marriage, which enabled her right to engage in commerce. The second instance of contestation happened when, by opening the shop, she challenged the gendered expectation that she would maintain her sole role as caretaker. The disapproval of her in-laws in both instances demonstrates the danger that these affective encounters impose onto existing familial norms and the role that a Filipina woman is expected to fulfill in Lebanese society. Moreover, in financially supporting her husband temporarily and supporting her children's enrollment in university, she breaks the stereotype of the "gold digging Filipina woman" who financially relies on her Lebanese husband.

Interracial marriages in Lebanon remain a disputed minority tucked away from the Lebanese national gaze. During our

conversation, Carmen recounted a story from when her son was a small child and his friends had mistaken her for their domestic worker: "Most of them, first time they come to our house: 'ohhh Ḥammūdi you have maid!'"[94] She went on to say that in these situations she was proud of her children's defensive attitudes. Based on the experiences of her Filipino acquaintances married to Lebanese men, some children feel ashamed and pretend that their mothers are their maids. In a country where even Lebanese marriages of mixed religious backgrounds remain difficult, a reality attested by the difficulty in legalizing civil marriage,[95] interracial marriages prove to be an even more radical endeavor. Amidst this reality, women-run ethnic enterprises are further examples of placemaking that publicize a spatial embodiment of interracial relationships and families, which would otherwise remain hidden from the eyes of the nation-state and Lebanese society.

CONCLUSION

Through a spatial ethnography examining the Filipina MDWs' neighborhood in Beirut, this article argues that, despite facing precarity, control, and marginalization, Filipinas engaged in new forms of placemaking that ascribe new meanings to the city space. Through an observation of seemingly simple acts such as cooking, lingering, dancing, singing, and painting nails, we understand how experiences of the city that are intersectional and embodied "allow individuals to influence and transform its culture."[96]

Four ways in which this embodied placemaking is manifested were examined. First, Filipina MDWs countered their exclusion from the increasingly privatized spaces of the Lebanese capital by creatively using vacant spaces in the city. These newly shaped places, the outdoor temporary marketplace as well as the indoor karaoke bars and food stalls, not only provide a social space for their direct users, but also, as seen in the case of Rosemarie's group, extend to shape networks of solidarity beyond these places. Second, gendered and racialized control that prevents Filipinas from enjoying a sense of home and privacy within the space of their employers led them to create a "home away from home" in the public space of Beirut. This form of placemaking unlearns gendered assumptions of what a public and private space is, and where a sense of home and privacy is found. In addition, as live-in Filipina MDWs are often unable to challenge their employers and earn permission to go out during the night, they took back their rights to the nighttime-associated social space by making place for it during the day. And finally, the ethnic enterprises are spatial articulations that reveal

the prevalence of interracial alliances in Lebanon. In a country where gender equality and interreligious marriages remain contested rights, these instances of placemaking call into question the understanding of what a Lebanese family looks like and the place of Filipina women in Lebanese society.

All of these intersectional forms of human interventions, often marked by spontaneous and temporary activities, produce a creative (re)appropriation of urban spaces that pervades the normative social construction of the city of Beirut. As I write this article one year on from when these stories were collected in the summer of 2019, drastic changes have sadly taken place. Lebanon is currently undergoing its worst economic crisis, which had gradually evolved over the preceding years and was exacerbated by the political unrest and protests of October 2019, as well as the COVID-19 outbreak. Fears over the growing abuse of MDWs and withdrawal of payments have become a reality.[97] Since December 2019, the Filipino embassy has been repatriating thousands of Filipina women who no longer want to remain in the country.[98] During my last visit to Lebanon in January 2020, Carmen informed me that she had to dismiss the women employed in her shop and lost part of her clientele who could no longer afford to go out so frequently. The number of Filipinas who want to go home continues to rise as inflation and the dollar shortage rapidly push the society into extreme poverty. In light of this growing instability, I contend that these forms of placemaking represent a potential model for future spaces of solidarity which can be imagined as lifeboats in the crisis. In an atmosphere colored by despair over a failed revolutionary attempt at change and an utter distrust in authorities, perhaps those whom had always been excluded from both the nation-state and city space can offer lessons in placemaking amid precarity.

EPILOGUE

It is a little past six o'clock in the evening on Tuesday, August 4, 2020. The sun is setting behind the smoke emanating from the vanished city port. The air is heavy with toxins. Broken glass, building debris, and the blood of the dead and wounded invades the city even kilometers away from the explosion. Beirut has just witnessed yet another catastrophe resulting from state negligence. In 2014, 2,750 tons of Ammonium Nitrate were carelessly deposited and left in the port of the Lebanese capital, a ticking bomb in a populated city. The resulting explosion claimed the lives of over two hundred persons, including dozens of MDWs, wounded six thousand others, left districts of the city

in ruins, and rendered three hundred thousand individuals homeless. Both the absence of state institutions in providing support on the ground and the great solidarity encountered among people was striking in the aftermath of this tragic event. As I follow the news from a distance, in sadness, disbelief, and anger, and as I am told by Rosemarie, one of my interlocutors in this article, that she will probably leave the country for good in the winter, I am left to wonder what tomorrow holds for the spaces of Beirut. Protesters are back on the derelict streets in a déjà vu from October 2019, (re)appropriating the center of Beirut and demanding revenge and radical political change. Amid this embodied enactment of anger and injustice, can the city's rubbles bring forth new forms of social and political placemaking?

NOTES

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