

Navigating Dahiyeh, Negotiating Everyday Peace:
Mediation practices across Beirut's Southern Suburbs

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Abstract: How do 'ordinary' residents in violently contested cities navigate everyday conflict? Who do they turn to and how do they induce more powerful actors to step in and resolve their conflicts? How do socio-spatial structures shape everyday mediation practices? And what do these practices tell us about the constructive potential of cities? To explore the duality of destruction and construction in contested cities, we draw on fieldwork conducted across Beirut's Southern Suburbs (Dahiyeh), bringing it into dialogue with a Bourdieusian framework to analyse residents' experiences of informal mediation as everyday urban peace practices. While these practices are shaped by Dahiyeh's particular context, they speak to practices in other urban contexts, in both the Global North and Global South. We make theoretical contributions by bringing the everyday peace and urban peacebuilding literatures together and contributing to their vernacular, spatial and practice turns, and by developing a spatialised subaltern reading of Bourdieu.

Keywords: Violently contested cities, everyday peace, everyday agency, mediation, Bourdieu.

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How do ‘ordinary’ residents in violently contested cities navigate everyday conflict? Who do they turn to and how do they induce more powerful actors to step in and resolve their conflicts? How do socio-spatial structures shape everyday practices? And what do these practices tell us about the constructive potential of cities? In this article, we focus on informal mediations as everyday peace practices to contribute to this Special Issue’s goal of ‘exploring and theorising [the] potentially constructive dynamics within the primarily destructive contexts of violently contested cities’.¹

Our empirical focus is Beirut’s Southern Suburbs, known as Dahiyeh, where, amidst the insecurity and continued contestedness of postwar life in Lebanon, residents and security actors have developed well-honed practices to manage everyday (in)security. While these practices are shaped by Dahiyeh’s particular context, they speak to practices in other urban contexts, whether violently contested cities or urban spaces more broadly in both the Global North and Global South.² Using Dahiyeh as a ‘vantage point’ from which to develop broader theoretical insights and focusing on the experiences of ‘ordinary’ residents, we aim to contribute to the pluralisation and vernacularisation of the social sciences.³

We analyse residents’ experiences of mediation as everyday urban peace practices across Dahiyeh through a spatialised Bourdieusian framework. Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of capital, habitus/*doxa* and field enable us to explore a) which peace and security actors residents turn to across Dahiyeh’s varied urban space and why; b) how everyday agency and socio-spatial structures interact to shape mediation practices; and c) what role violence plays in shaping them.

By developing a theoretical framework that allows us to analyse the routine, spatial and relational practices that residents employ to navigate conflict in Dahiyeh, our paper

¹ Emma Elfversson, Ivan Gusic, and Jonathan Rock Rokem, ‘Urban Peace and Conflict: Exploring Geographies of Hope in Violently Contested Cities’, *Peacebuilding*, Forthcoming.

² In this Special Issue, see e.g. Mantilla (Cúcuta, Colombia), Dijkema and Mouafo (Grenoble, France), Harboe & Hoelscher (Medellin, Colombia).

³ Waleed Hazbun, ‘The Politics of Insecurity in the Arab World: A View from Beirut’, *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 3 (2017): 656–59; Amitav Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies’, *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59; Lee Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, *International Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (2019): 107–26.

contributes to the spatial and everyday turns in Peace and Conflict studies and the ‘peace’ turn in urban geography.⁴

Dahiyeh, contested cities and methodology

Dahiyeh offers a compelling site for empirical exploration and theorisation around geographies of urban peace and conflict. Dahiyeh is a product of war and socio-economic marginalisation, part of the broader contested urban space of Beirut. Having become predominantly Shia following decades of economy- and war-driven mass migration from the countryside, displacing much of its original Christian population, it nevertheless has multiple societal cleavages which can fuel insecurity – regional origin (South, Biqa Valley, Jbeil), clan/family, political, socio-economic, sectarian, refugee/citizen. Known historically as Beirut’s ‘misery belt’ and containing multiple Palestinian refugee camps, it encompasses both informal impoverished and affluent neighbourhoods and lies on key translocal trade and crime routes.⁵ Multiple armed security actors (political parties like Hizbullah and Amal, state actors, clan factions) operate in shifting and spatially varied assemblages.⁶ From the outside, Dahiyeh is typically depicted as a dangerous area,⁷ a Hizbullah stronghold and a place where drug lords and clan militias operate freely. However, for those who live there, the area can also denote community, a space of mutual support and security, in spite of the troubles the area faces. ‘Things are controlled’ and ‘in terms of safety . . . we have security the most in Dahiyeh’, said several residents.⁸

⁴ Emma Elfversson, Ivan Gusic, and Kristine Höglund, ‘The Spatiality of Violence in Post-War Cities’, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 4, no. 2–3 (2019): 81–93; Ivan Gusic, ‘The Relational Spatiality of the Postwar Condition: A Study of the City of Mitrovica’, *Political Geography* 71 (2019): 47–55; Jonathan Rokem, ‘Beyond Incommensurability: Jerusalem and Stockholm from an Ordinary Cities Perspective’, *City* 20, no. 3 (2016): 472–82; Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies’, *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 548–64; Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace’, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763–83; Silvia Danielak, ‘Conflict Urbanism: Reflections on the Role of Conflict and Peacebuilding in Post-Apartheid Johannesburg’, *Peacebuilding* 8, no. 4 (2020): 447–59; Giulia Carabelli, *The Divided City and the Grassroots: The (Un)Making of Ethnic Divisions in Mostar* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁵ Mona Harb, *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth (1985-2005): De La Banlieue à La Ville* (Paris: Karthala, 2010); Aurélie Daher, *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power* (London: Hurst, 2019).

⁶ Jeroen Gunning and Dima Smaira, ‘Who You Gonna Call? Theorising Everyday Security Practices in Urban Spaces with Multiple Security Actors – The Case of Beirut’s Southern Suburbs’, *Political Geography* 98 (2022).

⁷ Similar to the depiction of the ‘marginalised social housing neighbourhood in Grenoble’ Dijkema and Mouafo look at (this issue).

⁸ Former Ouzai resident, interview, August 2018; Tour of Tahwitat el-Ghadir I, interview, July 2019.

Since 1988, during Lebanon's war, Hizballah has maintained dominance across Dahiyeh, with Amal playing a secondary role. As the war ended in 1990 under Syrian 'tutelage', Hizballah remained armed in recognition of its resistance role against Israel. With the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon and the 2006 war with Israel, Hizballah gained more legitimacy and dominance particularly in areas of its presence. Since the 2005 Syrian withdrawal, Hizballah increased its participation in government. Alongside this, Hizballah provides one of the most expansive network of services, investing heavily as well in cultivating a pious and a resistance culture across Dahiyeh.⁹

Dahiyeh has historically had little state security presence, partly as a result of its growth as a place of informal migration outside the city of Beirut, and partly as a result of the post-war political sectarian settlement, which left Hizballah (and less so Amal) in control of security. From 2006, as Hizballah focused more on reconstruction and government, and with the wave of bombings by militant *Jihadi* groups targeting Dahiyeh in 2013, Hizballah requested increased presence from state security actors in Dahiyeh.¹⁰ With its involvement in Syria, reduced aid from both Syria and Iran, and increasing criminality in Dahiyeh, Hizballah's dominance became more openly questioned by residents, primarily around development but also around its ability and willingness to maintain order¹¹ and around its complicity with Lebanon's corrupt political system.¹² This did not apply to its resistance role; as several respondents explained: 'the least we can do is show gratitude' to Hizballah for defending them against Israel.¹³ In 2019, as the October Uprising mobilised Lebanese across regions and sects, support was initially visible from residents of Dahiyeh; however, this was soon contained, and it became clear that no sweeping change would occur in its legitimacy and dominance.¹⁴

⁹ Mona Harb, 'On Religiosity and Spatiality: Lessons from Hezbollah in Beirut', in *The Fundamentalist City? Religiosity and the Remaking of Urban Space*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad and Meegan Massoumi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 125–54; Daher, *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power*.

¹⁰ The Lebanese Armed Forces have since manned checkpoints at key entry-points into Dahiyeh. Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'

¹¹ The spike in criminality was reported by multiple sources including by a source from the Internal Security Forces; ISF Officer II, interview, June 2019.

¹² Dahiyeh election chats, interview, May 2016; Dahiyeh election chats, interview, May 2018.

¹³ Baalbek election chats, interview, May 2018; Sufair resident, interview, December 2018.

¹⁴ Other traditional parties also rapidly reclaimed variant degrees of legitimacy and dominance, although not without having to revise part of their discourse and to deliver to their constituencies.

Dahiyeh is home to contradictions and complexities inherent in the urban experience and, more specifically, in contested cities.¹⁵ Its density, heterogeneity and permeability shape how everyday conflict and peace play out.¹⁶ Dahiyeh is embedded within the broader contestation over postwar Beirut, in addition to having its own dynamics of contestation. Dahiyeh is contested internally regarding who has ultimate authority where, with potential for tension between the political parties, state security forces and armed clan factions, between people from different social classes and between and among 'indigenous' families and more recent arrivals from the South and the Bqaa. Nationally, contestations are over Hizbullah's arms, the boundaries of Dahiyeh and its relations with its non-Shia neighbours, as well as allocation of positions in Lebanon's sectarianized political system.¹⁷ Regionally and internationally, contestation is over Lebanon's strategic alliance with the West and Saudi Arabia versus Iran and Syria. Although these dynamics are intensified in Dahiyeh, everyday peace and security practices involving cooperation, coordination and mediation with and between multiple security actors are common across Lebanon, for instance in Tripoli, Bcharre, Baalback, or the Chouf. Consensual security provision has a long history in Lebanon, though the particular dynamics and assemblage of actors at play differ between regions and neighbourhoods.

Rather than being exceptional, the stark concentration of dynamics related to conflict urbanism makes Dahiyeh a 'typical' case for exploring the duality of destruction and construction in contested cities.¹⁸ As contested cities provide a window onto broader urban conditions, it is similarly a 'typical' case for exploring the effects of plurality, competition, informality, and precariousness on everyday practices in cities across the Global South and North.¹⁹ Cities under neoliberal governance are increasingly becoming precarious, securitised and unequal while moving towards decentralised, fluid and informal participatory forms of urban governance.²⁰

¹⁵ Danielak, 'Conflict Urbanism'.

¹⁶ Ivan Gusic, *Contesting Peace in the Postwar City: Belfast, Mitrovica and Mostar* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

¹⁷ Bassel Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Danielak, 'Conflict Urbanism', 448.

¹⁹ Jonathan Rokem, 'Learning from Jerusalem: Rethinking Urban Conflicts in the 21st Century Introduction', *City* 20, no. 3 (2016): 407–11.

²⁰ Hendrik Wagenaar, 'The Agonistic Experience: Informality, Hegemony and the Prospects for Democratic Governance', in *Practices of Freedom: Decentred Governance, Conflict and Democratic Participation*, ed. Aletta

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted between 2016-19. Dahiyeh is not an easily accessible site for researchers. It is highly securitised and Hizbullah does not often grant approval for interviews. One of us being Lebanese and a woman, with no visible regional, confessional or political affiliations, working with a local assistant, as well as both authors having affiliations with well-regarded higher academic institutions in the UK and Lebanon, aided acquiring approval from the Ministry of Interior and Hizbullah to speak to residents around election times and facilitated our interactions with different interlocutors. Outside elections, we focused on the everyday grounded in place, speaking with residents in different parts of Dahiyeh about what characterises their neighbourhoods, the problems they face and how they solved them, avoiding high politics to minimise risk to our interlocutors and suspicion of us. With Dahiyeh tending to be 'closed off', many of our interlocutors saw our discussions as a rare platform both to talk about the everyday problems they face and how they dealt with them (many were open and even critical of security provision), and to counter the stigmatisation of Dahiyeh or their neighbourhood as 'dangerous'. We recognise the stakes and our positionality and have read responses in this light.

We spoke with over 150 individuals. For security reasons, all responses were anonymised. We conducted semi-structured interviews with residents of diverse demographic and socio-economic backgrounds – students, professionals, shopkeepers and municipal, security and judicial actors.

We observed municipal and national elections in 2016 and 2018 respectively, conducting street chats with people across Dahiyeh and areas in Jbeil and the Biqa where most residents' families come from. We conducted walking and driving tours asking 'questions along the way'. Such 'go-alongs' help to unlock and capture the 'hidden or unnoticed habitual relations with place and the environment', making 'it easier to verbalise attitudes and feelings when 'in place''.²¹ This provided a rare window into lived experiences across Dahiyeh, which in their variety and nuance countered its external homogenisation as a Shia 'urban badland'. Interlocutors' ages ranged from early 20s to mid-60s. They came from

Norval, Hendrik Wagenaar, and Steven Griggs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 217–48. See also Dijkema and Mouafo (this issue).

²¹ James Evans and Phil Jones, 'The Walking Interview: Methodology, Mobility and Place', *Applied Geography* 31, no. 2 (2011): 850–51.

across Dahiyeh, some from indigenous families, others from families who had migrated from the South or the Bika. They ranged from working class to upper middle class and most were Shia. Because of our reliance on street chats, our sample was predominantly male. A more gender-balanced sample might have highlighted different dynamics. However, the women we spoke to described the same dynamics as their male counterparts.

Everyday peace in contested cities

Contested cities have their ‘socio-political ordering . . . contested’, even after a formal end to hostilities has been reached.²² They are characterised among other things ‘by segregation and ghettoisation, state neglect of certain areas, socioeconomic inequality, and contested reconstruction projects’.²³ Contested cities share characteristics with the general urban condition, though typically manifested more intensely: dense, heterogeneous and permeable. They function through mixing and conflict, which residents overcome through ‘creativity, accommodation and fragmentation’.²⁴ Because they are significant politically, economically, socially and symbolically, contestation and violence are heightened.²⁵ Yet, cities are characterised not just by destructive but also constructive potential, with antagonistic and agonistic conflict both structuring the city. While antagonism concerns conflict ‘between enemies’, agonism describes conflict ‘between adversaries’ establishing temporary ‘micro-spaces’ which can foster collaboration and interdependence.²⁶

We use the lens of the everyday peace literature to analyse the way residents navigate urban peacebuilding in contested urban spaces such as Dahiyeh – and cities more broadly. Through its emphasis on the everyday, it focuses on the non-elite, experiential, ongoing dimensions of peacebuilding, the ‘bottom-up, localized and particularistic conflict-calming measures’ rather than the ‘top-down, standardized, technocratic and institutionalized

²² Gusic, ‘Relational Spatiality’, 49.

²³ Elfversson, Gusic, and Höglund, ‘Spatiality of Violence’, 84.

²⁴ Ivan Gusic, ‘Peace between Peace(s)? Urban Peace and the Coexistence of Antagonists in City Spaces’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 16, no. 5 (2022): 619–40.

²⁵ Elfversson, Gusic, and Höglund, ‘Spatiality of Violence’, 82.

²⁶ Danielak, ‘Conflict Urbanism’; see also Annika Björkdahl, ‘Urban Peacebuilding’, *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (2013): 207–21.

approaches to peace'.²⁷ Everyday peace is place-based and highly contextual; it refers to knowledge about navigating conflict which individuals gain only by living in a certain place.

Everyday peace encompasses anything from survival and coping mechanisms to conflict transformation. Our fieldwork led us beyond the coping mechanisms commonly highlighted in the literature²⁸ to the more proactive and generative practice of resorting to informal mediation. Although non-transformative, mediation allows ordinary residents to be active agents of everyday peace, generating favourable conditions for themselves and settling their disputes, despite often unequal social structures, and it is this generative potential, which urban peacebuilding highlights, that is key to understanding the constructive potential of cities.

The 'puzzle' that particularly interests us is that everyday peace practices are 'simultaneously ad hoc and scripted', 'routinized' yet agential, where 'people are simultaneously patterned by social discipline . . . while still able to engage in improvisation', involving 'extraordinary cognitive skills'.²⁹ Ordinary people have 'emotional intelligence and situational awareness'³⁰ and to borrow from the notion of 'people as infrastructure', an ability – imposed by brutal urban conditions – to be creative, generative and ready to adapt to unpredictable changing conditions.³¹ The principles informing such practices are 'implicit, embedded within and between communities but rarely explicated'.³² Urban everyday peace is shaped by socio-spatial structures, in particular the heterogeneity and permeability of urban space, with people from different regional origins, political affiliations and socio-economic background thrown together in a dense space, pervaded with extra-urban networks and broader power struggles.³³ The urban condition means that there is more potential *both* for everyday insecurity *and* for everyday peace. Though cities are

²⁷ Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 2014, 549; Pamina Firchow, *Reclaiming Everyday Peace: Local Voices in Measurement and Evaluation After War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

²⁸ E.g. 'avoidance, ambiguity, ritualized politeness, telling and blame deferring'; Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 2014, 555.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 551–55.

³⁰ Roger Mac Ginty, *Everyday Peace: How so-Called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 101.

³¹ AbdouMaliq Simone, 'People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg', *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004): 407–29.

³² Cecil paraphrased in Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace', 2014, 554.

³³ Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'; Setha Low, 'Spatializing Culture: An Engaged Anthropological Approach to Space and Place (2014)', in *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, ed. Jen Gieseeking and Setha Low (New York: Routledge, 2014), 34–38; Simone, 'People as Infrastructure'.

characterised by the thrown-togetherness of strangers, urban peacebuilding often rests on social connections, as our article shows. To bring out this interplay between space, structure and agency, we build on the ‘practice turn’ in social theory, using a Bourdieusian framework.³⁴

Bourdieu, space and agency

To conceptualise how residents go about negotiating everyday peace and why they turn to a particular mediator in a specific location, we use a place-based Bourdieusian framework.³⁵

Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, habitus, *doxa* and field enable us to map the ‘systems of social relations and systems of meaning’³⁶ residents are embedded in, which they can mobilise to negotiate everyday peace.

Actors carry varying amounts of capital, determining their position in a particular field: economic, social (e.g. networks, social standing), informational, cultural (e.g. rank, knowledge), coercive.³⁷ Capital can be embodied (comportment), objectified (buildings) or institutionalised (bureaucracy) and members of organisations can draw on their organisation’s collective capital.³⁸ Capital thus captures relations in both social and physical space. Symbolic capital is when a form of capital comes to be seen as a source of legitimacy or trust, e.g. the cultural capital of rank becoming the symbolic capital of loyal obedience or coercive capital giving the holder the (perceived) status of community protector. Symbolic capital thus masks the symbolic violence implied in the claim to legitimate authority.

Habitus and *doxa* respectively describe actors’ embodied dispositions and taken-for-granted beliefs; one disposes us to do, the other to think in ways shaped by our environment.

Bourdieu considers both to be pre-reflexive (more on this later) and the boundary between

³⁴ Theodore Schatzki, K. Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, eds., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

³⁵ Gunning and Smaira, ‘Who You Gonna Call?’

³⁶ Sharon Hays, ‘Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture’, *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 65.

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58; Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989–1992* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

the two concepts is blurred.³⁹ We use *habitus* to refer to dispositions informing embodied practice, *doxa* for cognitive yet unquestioned beliefs (e.g. that a family elder has the authority to mediate). *Habitus* and *doxa* are both internalisations of social order, reproduced through everyday practices. They shape what people intuitively think and do as ‘natural’, including how they value capital.⁴⁰ For instance, in a clan-dominated part of the city, someone steeped in clan *doxa* and *habitus* is likely to both cognitively value and be bodily disposed to resort to a clan elder rather than a party representative.

Fields are where capital, *habitus* and *doxa* play out. Fields are the externalisation of social order and regulate social interactions within different social spheres (e.g. security, politics, education). Each field has its own stakes and ‘rules of the game’ and the continuous struggle between actors in the field determines the field’s dominant *habitus* and *doxa*, what capital is available within the field and how it is valued. Capital determines actors’ positions in a field relative to others and actors can transfer capital from other fields (e.g. from the political to the security field).⁴¹

Statist capital is meta-capital created through the concentration of different species of capital across multiple fields, which typically accompanies state formation, allowing state actors to shape fields and capital’s valuation.⁴² Both state and nonstate actors can accrue statist capital and partake in the struggle over the state’s field of power.⁴³ Our focus is on nonstate actors but actors can bolster their capital in the everyday peace field through statist capital from the bureaucratic and political fields.

Echoing a ‘relational spatial’ approach,⁴⁴ we conceptualise Bourdieu’s framework as a ‘socio-spatial dialectic’,⁴⁵ going beyond his ‘rather dualistic theorizations of objective and social

³⁹ Cf. Omar Lizardo, ‘The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu’s *Habitus*’, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 34, no. 4 (2004): 375–401.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 52–65; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation*, 120–40.

⁴¹ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation*; Didier Bigo, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power’, *International Political Sociology* 5, no. 3 (2011): 225–58.

⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field’, *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 4–5.

⁴³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation*, 112; Bourdieu, *On the State*.

⁴⁴ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005); Gusic, ‘Relational Spatiality’.

⁴⁵ Soja in Gusic, ‘Relational Spatiality’, 47.

space'.⁴⁶ Capital, habitus, *doxa* and field are both shaped by space and shape space, continuously co-constituting each other. Taking Lefebvre's spatial triad,⁴⁷ they (re)produce space materially (through place-based objectified and embodied capital), perception-wise (through institutionalised capital, *doxa*)⁴⁸ and as lived experience (through place-based habitus).⁴⁹ Place shapes the location, value, distribution and mobility of capital and which habitus, *doxa* and field dynamics are enabled there. This dialectic also includes translocal socio-spatial relations.⁵⁰ Someone whose family originated from the South is embedded in different translocal capital relations, habitus and *doxa* to someone originating from the Bika, affecting, as we will see, which actors they turn to for mediation and which dispositions and norms shape it.

Bourdieu has been critiqued for being overly deterministic and lacking convincing accounts of agency, reflexivity and transformation.⁵¹ We follow feminist readings of Bourdieu which, while recognising the weight of the status quo, emphasise the indeterminacy of social structures and habitus, leaving room for agency, understood as the capacity for choice 'among the alternatives made available by the enabling features of social structure, and made possible by a solid grounding in structural constraints'.⁵² Habitus 'makes room for manoeuvre, discretion, cunning; that is, for agency . . .' yet this agential 'micro-strategizing' is still being regulated by habitus and field (although people can also choose to step outside their habitus and *doxa*).⁵³

On this reading agency can range from being unconscious or unintentional to being highly reflexive and intentional. Reflexivity is more likely when there is a dissonance between

⁴⁶ Louise Holt, 'Embodied Social Capital and Geographic Perspectives: Performing the Habitus', *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 2 (2008): 235.

⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

⁴⁸ Including when *doxa* becomes ortho- or hetero-doxo; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 168–69.

⁴⁹ Fabrice Ripoll, 'Attention, un espace peut en cacher un autre', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 195, no. 5 (2012): 112–21.

⁵⁰ Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'; see also Simone, 'People as Infrastructure'.

⁵¹ Davide Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 67–69; Lois McNay, 'Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation', *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 2_suppl (2004): 180–83; Agoston Faber, 'From False Premises to False Conclusions. On Pierre Bourdieu's Alleged Sociological Determinism', *The American Sociologist* 48, no. 3 (2017): 436–52.

⁵² Hays, 'Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture', 64; McNay, 'Agency and Experience'; Eeva Jokinen, 'Precarious Everyday Agency', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 19, no. 1 (2016): 85–99.

⁵³ Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 59–61; see also Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity', *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 1 (1999): 95–117.

habitus, *doxa* and social structures, as happens at times of rapid societal change.⁵⁴ But, we argue that reflexivity is also a central part of everyday agency in the way agents ‘account’ for what they see, experience and do.⁵⁵ Our mediation examples contain a mixture of self-reflexive calculation and routines, some consciously followed, others unconsciously, both rooted in lived experiences and internalised dominant social structures. Who people turn to contains an element of reflection – even under everyday circumstances – about who within their environment might have the right amount and type of capital, what beliefs and dispositions others might have, and thus what options they have.⁵⁶ Urban heterogeneity, density and permeability increase the need – and opportunity – for reflexivity to navigate the multiple and fluid options available.

Feminists and everyday peace scholars often reduce agency to resistance,⁵⁷ thus missing when agents, following Mahmood, choose to ‘inhabit’ rather than ‘resist’ the prevailing norms.⁵⁸ Agency is central to both the reproduction and the transformation of social structures. Structures are the product of everyday agential practices and the everyday is where agency and structure co-constitute each other, making it inherently political, a reflection of the world we inhabit.⁵⁹ Our mediation examples show ‘structurally reproductive agency’ rather than ‘structurally transformative agency’.⁶⁰ Unlike Bayat, we do not focus on the *collective* effects of ordinary people’s everyday practices to improve their lives.⁶¹ Our focus is on how ordinary people leverage social structures and shared systems of meaning to resolve everyday conflicts they face. The practices we look at do not seek transformation,⁶² although they are political in the sense of being embedded in and shaping power relations; however, we agree with Selimovic that the ‘creative micropractices’ of

⁵⁴ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation*, 131–40; McNay, ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field’, 109–13.

⁵⁵ Cf. ethno-methodology in broader practice theory; Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 137–38.

⁵⁶ John Myles, ‘From Doxa to Experience: Issues in Bourdieu’s Adoption of Husserlian Phenomenology’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 91–107; Bigo, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations’.

⁵⁷ Cf. Oliver Richmond and Audra Mitchell, *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁵⁸ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 15.

⁵⁹ Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 35.

⁶⁰ Hays, ‘Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture’, 63–64.

⁶¹ Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁶² For a focus on collective protest aimed at transformation, see Nagle and Mabon (this issue).

everyday agency can contain transformative potential.⁶³ Because agents must negotiate their way through the multiplicity of the everyday context within a network of social relations and because practice is future-oriented, agential practice contains an inherent indeterminacy, rendering the process of reproduction ‘never fully stable or absolute’.⁶⁴ This indeterminacy is intensified in an urban context and it is this that allows for subtle and potentially transformative change to occur.

Understanding ‘agency’ in a socio-spatial sense means seeing agents ‘as interactants, . . . possessors of capacities that can only be practised in joint actions’ and ‘producing particular effects in the world and on each other through their relational connections and joint actions’. Socio-spatial relations are thus not separate from agency, but co-constitutive of it.⁶⁵ On this reading, agency is ‘a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* create and enable’.⁶⁶

In this relational sense, residents are ‘ordinary people foster[ing] security for themselves and for others’.⁶⁷ Although they may not occupy positions of power, they are agential, pro-actively leveraging relationships with more powerful actors whose symbolic capital relies on their consent. A subaltern way of reading Bourdieu emphasises that all capital is relational. Symbolic capital in particular is ‘founded on credence’: ‘a power which the person submitting to *grants* to the person who exercises it, a credit.’⁶⁸ Building and maintaining trust is important for powerful actors, making ‘ordinary’ people integral to the everyday peace field.

Because the security field is contested within Dahiye, residents have some choice regarding whom to turn to. But this choice is shaped by the socio-spatial structures they are

⁶³ Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, ‘Everyday Agency and Transformation: Place, Body and Story in the Divided City’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (2019): 131–32; also Bayat, *Life as Politics*; Danielak, ‘Conflict Urbanism’; Björkdahl, ‘Urban Peacebuilding’.

⁶⁴ Hays, ‘Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture’, 65; Hendrik Wagenaar and S.D. Noam Cook, ‘Understanding Policy Practices: Action, Dialectic and Deliberation in Policy Analysis’, in *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, ed. Maarten Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 150, 152–53; Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 27; McNay, ‘Gender, Habitus and the Field’, 102.

⁶⁵ Ian Burkitt, ‘Relational Agency: Relational Sociology, Agency and Interaction’, *European Journal of Social Theory* 19, no. 3 (2016): 323, 336.

⁶⁶ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 18.

⁶⁷ Adam Crawford and Steven Hutchinson, ‘Mapping the Contours of “Everyday Security”: Time, Space and Emotion’, *British Journal of Criminology* 56, no. 6 (2016): 1188.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 202.

embedded in – the density of housing, the families they belong to and their geographical distribution, their proximity to party offices and security installations, their own habitus and *doxa* and the habitus and *doxa* dominating the everyday peace field in their urban area.

Mapping Dahiyeh's everyday peace and security field

Dahiyeh sits between the southern boundary of Beirut and Beirut International Airport. Interpretations of Dahiyeh's boundaries vary; we mean it to denote the municipalities of Ghobeiry, Chiyah, Haret Hreik, Burj al-Barajneh and Mreijeh/Tahwit al-Ghadir/Laylaki (fig. 1), covering an estimated population of one million.



Fig. 1 Map of municipalities and mediation locations in Dahiyeh (Google Maps, 18 January 2019)

In this section we map out the main actors in Dahiyeh's everyday peace field whom residents turn to for resolving conflicts. Each actor has a distinct combination of capitals, often straddling multiple fields, influencing their position.

Families and clans

If the conflict is minor, the first port of call are typically the immediate families: 'If two *shabab* [youths] are involved, families sort it out within a few hours'.⁶⁹ For larger conflicts, the *kbar* (singular *kabir*) or heads of the relevant families are asked to step in, as they

⁶⁹ Palestinian activist, interview, May 2018.

embody the symbolic capital of their family and bring with them the social and informational capital of their extensive connections and the cultural capital of 'traditional authority'. Place, size, distribution and time matter here. 'Local' families from the villages that became Dahiyeh, such as the Khansas and Mansours, have higher political capital as they alone can stand and vote in elections in Dahiyeh (more recent residents remain registered by law in their family's location of origin). Larger, more recently migrated families/clans, particularly if physically concentrated in space with strong translocal family links to political capital elsewhere, such as the Mokdads and Ze'aiters, have high social capital which can enhance their political capital, even without being able to stand in elections in Dahiyeh. If involved in translocal trade, for which Dahiyeh is well-situated next to the airport and with relatively easy access to Beirut's port, it can have high economic capital. If some of its members are involved in drugs or smuggling, typically via clan links to the Biqa, it has increased coercive capital. A family's capital can be further enhanced if members hold positions in the political, bureaucratic or (state) security fields.⁷⁰

The reliance on families is partly pragmatic. When state institutions are mistrusted or perceived as ineffective and costly (e.g. bribes), alternative conflict regulation mechanisms become more attractive – particularly when these are well-established. Family-based mediation can be more adaptable and accessible than formal institutional solutions. *Kbar* have deep local knowledge and are typically more familiar than state employees with the local 'rules of the game'. They are better at implementing outcomes, since the family is embedded in local networks and its own symbolic capital is at stake.

Yet, this family-based approach is maintained through habitus and *doxa* which disposes residents to turn to family (habitus) and makes that cognitively the 'commonsense' thing to do (*doxa*). This practice has a long tradition in the South and the Biqa, where most of the families of Dahiyeh's residents originate and the state has historically been seen as distant. The practice was continued when people first moved to Dahiyeh, often in close proximity to and socialising predominantly within family circles.⁷¹ These habitus and *doxa* are local, shaped by local urban everyday practices and structures, *and* translocal, shaped by the

⁷⁰ Former Ouzai resident, interview.

⁷¹ Fuad Khuri, *From Village to Suburb: Order and Change in Greater Beirut* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 50–51.

sedimented habitus and *doxa* of a family's place of origin which residents carry and which is reinforced by frequent interaction with extended family in the South or the Biqa.⁷² However, due to the pressures of urban life, including the spatial dispersal of families, the role of the *kabir* is decreasing.⁷³

Political parties

The two main political parties, Hizbullah and Amal, play a central role in mediation, especially in larger conflicts. Both Hizbullah and Amal have divided Dahiyeh up into small administrative urban zones, with a party representative and structure in each area.⁷⁴ Amal's presence across Dahiyeh is more limited overall but even Hizbullah's capital varies across Dahiyeh, affecting which habitus and *doxa* dominate in particular areas (e.g. clan- rather than party-focused). In a fight between powerful clans, Hizbullah, or depending on location Amal, steps in if the families do not succeed in resolving the conflict.⁷⁵ Hizbullah's mediating role draws on the social capital of its efficient organisation and societal connections, the cultural and symbolic capital accrued from its role in the resistance, its religious capital, and the coercive capital of organised arms. Amal's organisation is less efficient and it lacks the capital coming from piety and active resistance.⁷⁶

In addition to their own capital, the parties can draw capital from the family, political and bureaucratic fields. The parties have controlled Dahiyeh's municipal councils since the 1990s, enabling each to draw on the other's capital. They contain members from powerful local families such as the Khansas and the Khalils, and large clans such as the Ze'aiters and Mokdads with branches in Dahiyeh, the Biqa and Jbeil. The Ze'aiters, for instance, have close connections to both Amal and Hizbullah, with Ze'aiters having served in parliament and government as well as within the parties' hierarchies.

Because Hizbullah needs the large clans for votes and foot soldiers, locally and translocally, it avoids costly confrontation, instead either mediating or passing the file to the Lebanese

⁷² Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'

⁷³ Member of Mokdad family, interview, May 2018; Dahiyeh students, interview, May 2018.

⁷⁴ Daher, *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power*, 128; Harb, *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth*, 79; Burj resident, interview, May 2018; Former Ouzai resident, interview.

⁷⁵ Member of Mokdad family, interview; Driving tour of Dahiyeh, interview, May 2018.

⁷⁶ Tahwitet shopkeeper and friends, interview, May 2018; Sufair resident, interview.

Armed Forces, with which it has a good working relationship. As a student from Dahiye explained:

In Dahiye, Hizbullah leaves big clans alone, lets them sort out their internal business . . . when two clans clash, they [Hizbullah] step in to impose order . . . [but not] with guns blazing; more often it is diplomatic, involving tribal *shaykhs* [clans' *kbar*] . . .⁷⁷

A member of the Mokdad family similarly emphasised that 'usually it is the army that comes to stop the fighting while Hizbullah is in touch with the *shaykh*'.⁷⁸ However, Hizbullah's rare deployment of coercive capital makes it a real background threat.⁷⁹

Mukhtars

People also turn to the *mukhtar* who constitutes the lowest tier of state representatives; they are elected at neighbourhood level and responsible for issuing formal documents as well as mediation.⁸⁰ *Mukhtars* represent a small, densely populated area and usually have strong social networks. Although they are members of a particular, usually influential, family, their having been elected to represent the entire area makes them more likely to protect others' interests than a family's *kabir*.

Mukhtars combine the symbolic capital of election with the social capital of place-based relations and the informational capital of deep local knowledge. Their symbolic capital is typically enhanced by their having a 'track-record' of being 'conciliatory' and a good mediator.⁸¹ Their social capital stems from their family's support and their usually good relations with local stakeholders – the main parties, the municipality, the police, relevant state officials. Crucially, *mukhtars* tend not to be regarded as state actors but as 'a mediating actor'.⁸² Thus, they do not represent statist capital themselves but through their position they can help to secure access to statist capital.

⁷⁷ Dahiye students, interview.

⁷⁸ Member of Mokdad family, interview; also Driving tour of Dahiye, May; US Embassy Beirut, 'Lebanon: Hizbollah Asks for ISF Assistance to Combat Growing Crime' (US Diplomatic Cable 08BEIRUT1524 (April 8), 2008).

⁷⁹ 'Hezbollah forces raid suspected drug warehouses in Beirut's southern suburbs', *Daily Star*, 31 March 2017.

⁸⁰ Nora Stel, 'Mukhtars in the Middle: Connecting State, Citizens and Refugees', 4 December 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Print/32751>.

⁸¹ Nora Stel, 'Governance between Isolation and Integration: A Study on the Interaction between Lebanese State Institutions and Palestinian Authorities in Shabriha Gathering, South Lebanon', Working Paper (Beirut: The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, June 2014), 18–19.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 19.

Police and other security services

Most of the people we talked to said that they did not turn to the police or other state security services for everyday security matters, let alone mediation. This is partly a function of the institution's traditional law and order focus and their very limited presence within Dahiyeh. Interviewees were further generally distrustful of the police, whom most also regarded as inefficient.⁸³

Practices of mediation

We now turn to three examples of mediations which illustrate the negotiation of everyday peace in urban contexts like Dahiyeh (see Fig. 1). The practices are rooted in a sophisticated understanding of socio-spatial relations and constitute experiential knowledge that is only gained by living there – what Cahill calls 'street literacy' and in Bourdieusian terms is a mixture of habitus and *doxa*.⁸⁴ Residents know their and others' positions within the urban everyday peace field. When faced with an issue, they initiate a mental mapping exercise – for a particular problem in a particular location with its particular socio-spatial characteristics – and activate the most appropriate assemblage of actors. These practices show the generative capacity of ordinary residents acting as everyday peace practitioners.

Mediation 1 – The landlord vs. the *az'ar*

The first example illustrates the role – and limits – of political parties in mediation. The main protagonists are a landlord and an *az'ar* (thug or troublemaker; plural *za'aran*) with a reputation for violence and involvement with drugs:

I wanted to rent [out] the apartment upstairs. The realtor comes with a client. I later find out that he is one of those *za'aran*: 'You cannot have one of them staying in your building with your wife and a [female] neighbour'. So I told them I no longer wanted to rent the place [out] but [the client] would not have it. It escalated: 'The man came by on a motorbike and started shooting in the air from under the building. The *harakeh* [Amal representative] comes by to see what was going on, tries to mediate. He does not succeed . . . After a lot of

⁸³ Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'

⁸⁴ Caitlin Cahill, 'Street Literacy: Urban Teenagers' Strategies for Negotiating Their Neighbourhood', *Journal of Youth Studies* 3, no. 3 (2000): 251–77.

back and forth, the *harakeh* guy convinced me to pay 500,000 L.L. . . ., the *az'ar* claiming that he had done some work on the flat . . . What he bought was not worth 500,000 . . . but the *harakeh* guy convinced me to pay to let this go away as he could not do anything else. He did not have leverage on him otherwise (. . .) 'they don't care, they would shoot at the Amal guy too'.⁸⁵

This example illustrates a number of dynamics. First, the importance of place. The reason an Amal representative came to inspect the disturbance is the apartment's location near Tayyouneh, where Amal is the local powerbroker. In areas where Hizbullah has a strong presence, the relative balance of capitals might have been different.

Second, the example shows that the parties are often in a better position to mediate than families, as they have more, and more varied, capital, including the social capital of effective organisation, the coercive capital of organised arms, and the capital accrued in the political and bureaucratic fields.

Third, this example shows the limited value of coercive capital in mediation. Although Amal would be able to 'militarily' take on the renter and his clan, to do so would be costly. *Za'aran* furthermore have ambiguous relationships with the parties, often being deployed informally when the parties want to use deniable violence against opponents. In this context, the Amal representative seeks to avoid violent conflict.

Finally, this episode shows both the limitations landlords without the backing of a powerful family face and the means available to them to resolve conflict. The landlord's family were from the South, where families no longer have the clan structure and *habitus/doxa* prevalent in the northern Biqa. The *az'ar* belonged to one of the powerful Biqa clans, factions of which are involved in the drugs trade. When dealing with conflict, residents originating from the South typically rely on the parties, while residents originating from the Biqa can fall back on their clan.⁸⁶ The landlord's family thus did not have sufficient capital to force the renter to leave and he needed Amal to increase his capital to the point where the renter was willing to leave for payment. The party's involvement was dictated by its need to

⁸⁵ Laylaki and Mreijeh Tour, interview, June 2019.

⁸⁶ Gunning and Smaira, 'Who You Gonna Call?'

maintain symbolic capital; and the landlord would be able to return the favour by voting for Amal in elections in the South where he would be registered.

Mediation 2- The theft of a motorbike

The second example concerns the theft of the motorbike of a resident of Tahwitat in southern Dahiye. When his bike was stolen by a local gang of clan members, he contacted someone he knew with high standing in the perpetrators' clan who also held a position in Military Intelligence:

I called Military Intelligence that day, calling [xxx] . . . He called the father of the café owner . . . who stole my motorbike. He told him: "I am here in [xxx] and your son has this motorbike and I am expecting it to come to me". And indeed, the motorbike came back.⁸⁷

By calling someone who combined the symbolic and social capital of a prominent position within the clan with the statist and coercive capital of Military Intelligence, the Tahwitat resident dramatically increased his position in the everyday peace field.

This example shows both the motorbike owner's room for agency, despite having little capital himself, and the complex web of social expectations that made the officer act on the request and the café owner accede to it. Regarding the latter, the implicit threat of the deployment of coercive and statist capital would have played a background role. But the café owner would have known that his kinsman would have been deeply reluctant to deploy force. The more persuasive capital in this case was the combined social and symbolic capital his kinsman had – not to accede would have been costly for the perpetrator and his father's capital within the clan.

The Military Intelligence officer neither had a family nor a political obligation to the bike owner. Military Intelligence are not elected and the bike owner would not be able to vote for the officer's clan in the Biqa as he would be registered in the South. Why then did the officer help? As a clansman, he would want to uphold his family's reputation. As an officer, he would want to uphold his organisation's reputation. This exchange boosted his symbolic capital and put the bike owner in his debt. But, according to the local field's habitus and

⁸⁷ Tahwitet resident, interview, July 2019.

doxa, the officer, as patron, is also expected to provide services for his client, the bike owner, in return for the client's support – power in return for credence.

This example shows that what makes a mediator effective is the combination of multiple types of capital across multiple fields. In this case, the mediator had high value capital in both the security and family fields. He was chosen because he was both related to the perpetrator and high up in Military Intelligence.

The urban context threw together actors from different rural origins in a small area. The bike owner found a way around his lower status by activating mediation, showing agency and ingenuity by tapping into social relations and practices he did not have access to through his own family. The urban condition of heterogeneous, permeable density meant that the owner faced both increased insecurity (the bike was stolen by a gang formed and armed through its connections to the Biqa) and enhanced opportunities for resolving the conflict (increased chance of knowing the Intelligence officer). Nonetheless, the officer followed the same clan code (*doxa*) found in villages and towns in the Biqa, underlining the permeability of the city and the continued influence of extra-urban habitus/*doxa* in the urban experience.

Mediation 3 – The kidnapping of a Palestinian teenager

The third example illustrates the leverage marginalised actors can gain by using counter-violence to trigger mediation involving the most powerful local actors. It shows the duality of conflict urbanism and the ability of ordinary people to create favourable conditions. Palestinian refugees have lived in Dahiyeh for decades in UN-run refugee camps.⁸⁸ The camps have a clear perimeter, marked in physical space. Lebanese security forces largely abide by a historical agreement not to enter the camps, which are policed by Palestinian factions, marking the boundary in perceived and lived space. Consequently, Palestinians are both part of and outside the Lebanese social, political and security fields that govern Dahiyeh, with its own habitus/*doxa* governing the camps and potentially drastic differences in the value of capital in- and outside the camp.

⁸⁸ UNHCR, 'The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon' (Geneva: UNHCR, February 2016).

Our example involves Palestinian teenagers who are in a doubly precarious position as both teenagers with limited capital and Palestinians with limited, severely place-based, capital. As a Palestinian activist narrated:

The Mokdad clan kidnapped one of my friends when I was 15. We took two Mokdads as a negotiating position. You need to show toughness. Old men, the mayor, the *mukhtar*, Hizballah – all came, for three days: let’s drink coffee and solve the problem.⁸⁹

‘Urban informality’, increasingly common in ‘urban growth worldwide’,⁹⁰ played a central part in this example. The physical rupture between camp and surrounding area, combined with the separate ‘jurisdictions’ inside/outside the camp and the Mokdad’s lack of lived experience inside the camp, were used by the Palestinian teenagers to increase their capital.

As in other contested cities and informal areas, violence can reach alarming levels quickly; however, there are well-established routines for resolving conflict and the process described here, although concerning Palestinian refugees, would be similar following fighting between other protagonists in Dahiyeh. Note that, after the initial (antagonistic) violence, resolution was achieved through (agonistic) coffee-drinking and talking.

The actors called in to mediate brought different types of capital. The most powerful local security actor, Hizbullah, provided the symbolic and coercive capital to ensure that the mediation’s outcome would be implemented. The mayor and the *mukhtar* covering Hayy Mokdad (area named after the Mokdads) carried the symbolic capital of their office as well as the social capital of their connections and the cultural and symbolic capital of their education, interpersonal skills and reputation. Here, the Palestinian teenagers rated the mayor’s personal capital highly, augmenting the capital of his elected position: ‘He knows most of us, knows the camp like his family. When I renewed my ID card, he asked after my grandfather and my uncles in the Gulf.’⁹¹ Finally, the assemblage involved the *kbar* of the relevant families, as they have the capital to persuade and, if necessary, compel their family

⁸⁹ Palestinian activist, interview.

⁹⁰ Rokem, ‘Learning from Jerusalem’, based on Roy and AlSayyad.

⁹¹ Palestinian activist, interview.

members to comply through appeal to the clan code and for clans with armed factions, such as the Mokdads, they can also draw on the clan's coercive capital.

Who is involved is also impacted by the type of incident. 'If it is about drugs', the Palestinian activist noted, 'the parties leave it to the army'. The Collective Actions database of the Civil Society Knowledge Center shows that, for the period of our research, the LAF and Military Intelligence were involved the most in drugs raids and dealt with armed clashes.⁹² Thus the type of incident and where it takes place both affect the hierarchy of actors and the valuation of their capital within the field.

The Palestinian teenagers displayed their agency by kidnapping two Mokdads to improve their capital. By escalating the conflict through involving Lebanese citizens from an influential clan they created the imperative – and the opportunity – for mediation to be carried out by the locale's key actors. The danger of escalation was itself a mediating factor. They also bolstered their field position by increasing their symbolic capital both by 'showing toughness' and by demonstrating that they had the coercive capital to carry out a counter kidnap. Mediation and violence were thus deeply intertwined.

Reflections on everyday peace in Dahiyeh

Our paper makes both a theoretical and an empirical contribution by bringing the everyday peace and urban peacebuilding literatures together and contributing to the vernacular, spatial and practice turns in both. It also develops a more dynamic reading of Bourdieu's conceptual tools. Our spatialised framework helps to understand how urban socio-spatial structures shape everyday peace practices, who has power where and what types of capital mediators bring to the table. Our subaltern reading of Bourdieu illustrates the room for agency ordinary residents have. And it illuminates the dialectic between violence and non-violence in mediation.

The examples are particular to Dahiyeh; but they reflect dynamics that can be found in dense urban spaces in both 'ordinary' and contested cities across the Global North and

⁹² CSKC, 'Geo-Located Mapping of Conflicts in Lebanon', n.d., <https://civilsociety-centre.org/cap/map> (latest access 03/04/2019).

South. The mediation practices outlined showcase the generative potential of cities, including contested ones, for developing agonistic microspaces by providing opportunities for collaboration and accommodation. The particular combination of place- and issue-specific capital, habitus and field will be different in other places. But, whether one seeks to understand why Lebanese *mukhtars* play such a central role in mediating between Palestinian refugee communities and the state in South Lebanon or what makes specific community members the ‘violence interrupters’ or go-to mediators in urban conflict in parts of Chicago,⁹³ our conceptual framework can help to explain what specific types of capital and which habitus and doxa in the local everyday peace field are dominant in a particular place and how this affects the creation of mediation assemblages and mediation practices more broadly.

The everyday peace field, capital, habitus and *doxa* – and the practices these give rise to – are shaped across time by the socio-spatial relations of urban space. The 1975-1990 war, the ongoing war with Israel, political sectarianism, Lebanon’s and the region’s economies, and regional and international power relations have shaped how capital is distributed across Dahiyeh (materially, where powerful actors live), how areas within Dahiyeh are perceived (including who is thought to have jurisdiction there) and residents’ lived experience and habitus. Capital, habitus and doxa in turn shape space through the practices they engender. Amal became involved in the landlord’s dispute because its capital was high there, in return bolstering its dominance in that place. The dispute would have played out differently in Laylaki, where clans, rather than parties, are dominant. The Palestinian teenagers used the camp’s material and lived boundaries and its extra-legal condition to neutralise the Mokdad’s stronger position outside it – and in doing so, reinforced the camp’s inscription in space.

While conflict and rapid urbanisation under conditions of marginalisation has made life precarious in Dahiyeh, it has given particular actors the capital to be the go-to mediators and nurtured a habitus and *doxa* that posits them as the ‘natural’ mediators, even though they can also be sources of insecurity. In our examples, mediators often combine different types of capital, not only across multiple fields but blurring formal and informal boundaries.

⁹³ Stel, ‘Governance’; Wesley Skogan et al., ‘Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago’ (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2009).

Mediation assemblages can be made up of both state and nonstate actors with access to capital from both formal and informal field positions.

The observed practices are profoundly urban. Urban density, heterogeneity and permeability means that residents from different geographical regions are thrown together in close proximity, having to face differences in capital and habitus/*doxa*. The landlord did not think that paying off the *az'ar* was the 'natural' thing to do; the *az'ar* did not think it 'natural' to be evicted just because he was seen as an *az'ar*. The urban context accentuates those differences, forcing residents to negotiate the difference reflexively, either re-asserting their *doxa* or adapting it.

Urban conditions make conflict more likely, visible and potentially escalatory – in cities across the Global South and Global North. In our case, the presence of a refugee camp close to a clan-dominated area, both largely informal and armed, represents a particularly urban condition, as do the presence of multiple migrant communities, extensive party structures, well-organised criminal gangs and frequent outbursts of violence. However, informality, precarity and density also create opportunities for developing thick relational networks and a sense of community which residents can draw on ingeniously to pursue everyday peace. Despite the emphasis in urban studies on the thrown-togetherness of strangers, in our examples residents relied on actors they knew and had mutually obligatory relations with. As our Bourdieusian framework highlights, the preservation of extra-urban practices plays an important role in mitigating the effect of living among strangers, showing the continuing importance of translocal habitus, *doxa* and capital in everyday urban peacebuilding.

Although mediation practices in Dahiyeh follow similar scripts to those in villages in the South and the Biqa, they play out in urban conditions of greater complexity, increasing the threats and options available to residents. The motorbike owner did not act according to the habitus and *doxa* of his Southern upbringing but accessed those made available by the urban context, using improvisation and scanning options available to him – an opportunity and a skill integral to the urban condition. But once the clan acquaintance became involved, the mediation followed a traditional clan script. The extra-urban and urban are thus enmeshed in ongoing interaction.

Ordinary residents may have limited capital but they can appeal to capital-rich actors through webs of social relations shaped by habitus and *doxa* which create both limits and opportunities. They are thus not passive subjects but active participants, *resisting* perceived injustices but through *inhabiting* their place in the world – making creative choices with the capital they have access to and within the dominant place- and issue-based habitus and *doxa* in the everyday peace field. Their ability to do so relies on the need of powerful actors for residents' credence to replenish their symbolic capital. Within families, the position of *kabir* comes with obligations to family members. Parties and *mukhtars* need to fulfil their obligations towards residents to maintain symbolic capital. The multiplicity of security actors and absence of a monopoly on violence and legitimacy mean that powerful actors need to compete for symbolic capital, increasing room for residents' agency.

Agency, habitus and *doxa* combine to shape practices. Amal's involvement was calculated to maintain public order and bolster its reputation as local security provider. The landlord's decision was a calculation of his options in a field where he was in a weaker position than the *az'ar*. But both choices also followed well-honed routines that made Amal's involvement and the landlord's acceptance dispositionally habitual and cognitively 'natural'. Particularly for those originating in the South, Amal and Hizbullah have been the go-to security providers for decades and most of our interlocutors responded, without pause, that they would go to the *hizb* (Hizbullah) or the *harakeh* (Amal) – depending on where they lived.

However, there is room for acting reflexively even within established socio-spatial norms. The constitution of the kidnap assemblage was calculated, involving the actors most likely to resolve the crisis *and* followed well-established clan and camp codes of how such crises are resolved. The motorbike owner strategically went beyond family and party, as a Southern *doxa* would dictate, *in order to* mobilise the Biqa clan's conflict resolution *doxa*. The Military Intelligence officer gained symbolic capital from the exchange while his actions echoed aspects of the habitus and *doxa* of the historical *za'im* (political boss). Habitus and *doxa* condition actors' dispositions and 'commonsense' solutions. Yet, the everyday also involves subtle forms of relational agency, reflexive micropractices, often unspoken and taken for granted, yet generative of new microspaces.

By operating within existing patriarchal, clientelistic relations, the described everyday mediation practices are not explicitly transformative. Rather, they reveal the ‘systems of social relations and systems of meaning’ residents inhabit and reproduce through their practices, illustrating powerfully how ‘mundane everydayness . . . discloses our world by way of our . . . everyday . . . strategies’.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, by de-escalating conflict through place- and issue-based mediation assemblages, these everyday peace practices are generative of microspaces for collaboration and accommodation. As such, cities, including contested ones, clearly do not just have destructive potential but through their dense heterogeneity can also be constructive, containing agonistic and peace-making qualities, and potentially even transformative. Ordinary residents play an important part in this through their everyday peace practices.

The examples further illustrate the subtle interplay between (the threat of) violence, symbolic violence and mediation. There are well-established routines for de-escalating conflict non-violently. Violence is costly in terms of social, economic and symbolic capital. The capital that is powerful in mediation is symbolic capital, coming from occupying a position of authority – formal or informal – good relations and a reputation for effective mediation. Yet, wielding symbolic capital implies symbolic violence, the imposition of one’s will on others, re-inscribing relations of inequality masked by *doxa*.

However, coercive capital still played a role in all three examples. The gang being armed meant that the motorbike owner could not confront it, even though he knew exactly where his motorbike was. Military Intelligence’s coercive capital, though not deployed, enhanced the officer’s authority. The *az’ar*’s shooting led to Amal’s involvement; the threat of further violence limited both Amal’s and the *az’ar*’s options. The violence of the counter-kidnap served both to re-establish parity between the parties and trigger mediation; Hizbullah’s coercive capital increased the chances that its outcome would be observed. Especially in contested urban spaces, the threat of further escalation and violence should thus be considered integral to the mediating process – dangerous while potentially generating resolution of conflict.

⁹⁴ Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 35.

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