

MA(I)DE IN THE *BEIRUTI* HOME
DYNAMICS OF SPACE AND LIVING RELATIONSHIPS OF
MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

My research focuses on the spatial (architectural and social) dynamics of the private sphere in the presence of live-in female migrant domestic workers in Beirut. The study looks at ways in which the overlapping class, race and gender discrimination that the workers face reflect first in the architecture (the design and location of the workers' rooms) and second in the restraints imposed by living with the employer and their family. The space of the home becomes a blurred mélange of private and public as both the family and the worker impose their strategies of intimacy and invisibility, as well as control and resistance that place the worker in a constant shift between her perception by the family as 'fictive kin' and 'unreliable stranger'. The research is based on ethnographic accounts drawn from participant observation with two households, volunteering at the Migrant Community Center (MCC), interviews with architects and developers as well as a visual analysis of middle- and upper-class apartment layouts.

INTRODUCTION

Lebanese Architecture 101: the Maid's Room

In October 2015, a photo carrying the text “*Lebanese Architecture 101: the Maid's Room*” was widely shared on Facebook after being posted on the page of the Migrant Community Center in Beirut (MCC). The photo, to which the artist is unknown, portrays a black woman wearing a maid's blue uniform, lying on her back while crammed in a carton box. The carton ‘room’, illuminated with a single lamp, is surrounded with a darkness that heightens the dramatic effect of the illustration. This strong graphical representation carries a profound message of the direness of the living arrangements that live-in female migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are subjected to.



Figure 1: *Lebanese Architecture 101: The Maid's Room*. Digital image taken from Migrant Community Center
Source: (MCC) Facebook Page, <http://www.facebook.com>

As this image is intended to shed a light on the significance of the matter, this thesis similarly aims to highlight the role that architecture plays in telling the story of maids in the home. In a study focusing on the spatial and social dynamics in the *Beiruti* private sphere with

the presence of live-in female migrant domestic workers (FMDWs), the main thesis is that the creation of a maid's quarter in Beirut's contemporary apartments not only blurs the *mélange* between private and public within the home, but also this blurriness mirrors a constant tension between the recognition of the FMDW as fictive kin or an unreliable stranger.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) approximates the global number of domestic workers today to about fifty-three million, taking into account that this estimation is more likely to be an understatement due to the informal nature of domestic work (Fakih and Marrouch 2014, 341). While states and policy-makers have been in most cases nonchalant in their institutionalization of the care economy, domestic work remains one of the central topics dealt with by scholarly writings on gender and migration. This attention given by gender and migration studies is not surprising, as most domestic workers are both female and migrants. The following research proposes to explore the issue of domestic work from a perspective that has so far been predominantly neglected, being the 'spatial' angle on the story. For while domestic work accounts for an important labor force especially in urban areas and the migrant domestic worker in the city is a frequently studied topic, the city itself from an architectural and urban perspective in relation to those migrant domestic workers remains as a background topic. The case is especially true in the Middle Eastern context where domestic workers cover about 20% of female employment (341). Exploring the private sphere in this work—consisting part of a larger research prospect targeting the public spaces of the city as a central object—looks at Beirut the capital of Lebanon as a case study. Beirut is a migrant city with its migrants (especially the FMDW) remaining invisible in both its visual and social representations. Highlighting Beirut's invisible migrant domestic labor force requires looking at first their spaces of residence and work and second, their spaces of leisure and collectives (the public sphere such as markets, squares

and religious institutions). In this thesis, I tackle the first part of the study by asking the following question: How are the architecture and spatial social dynamics of an apartment in Beirut with live-in FMDWs at the same time shaped by and shaping the different hierarchies and intimacies based on an overlapping class, race and gender discrimination?

The main research question stated above is broken down into several questions that shape the different chapters and sub-chapters of the thesis:

- Who was responsible for the role of domestic work in Lebanon before the arrival of migrants? And why did the situation change?
- Did the phenomenon of hosting FMDWs in Lebanon create a change in the design of Lebanese apartments?
- What are the criteria that architects follow when deciding the location and dimensions of the maid's quarter? And how does the maid's quarter influence the spatial unity of the apartment?
- How do the different layers of hierarchies and intimacies imposed by both sides (the migrant worker on the one side, and the employer and the family on the other side) affect and create the social spatial dynamics of the private sphere?

Contextualizing Domestic Work in Lebanon

Historically in the region, women from surrounding rural areas and poorer backgrounds were 'sold' to an upper-class family. What is meant by the word sold is that the parents would receive an annual sum of money in exchange to giving their daughter to an aristocratic family who would in its turn keep her as a live-in domestic worker until she is mature enough to get married. This is of course not exclusive to the region as in similar traditional systems around the world domestic work followed very similar models. As an example, prior to the independence of

India, domestic services in Kolkata were performed by members of lower castes who would live with the *Bhadralok* (the Indian elite) and be bound to them for a lifetime in both affection and servitude (Qayum and Ray 2003, 523). In China, domestic work followed a system known as the *Mui Tsai*. The latter term, meaning little sister in Chinese, refers to young girls from rural areas that were sold to houses or brothels to work as domestic workers or prostitutes, with the condition that they would be freed in order to get married (1999, 3). In Lebanon, most women were local but not exclusively. In the first half of the 20th century it was very common that Kurdish women would take on domestic work. From 1948 when the state of Israel was founded, many domestic workers in Lebanon were also coming from the Palestinian refugee camps. During the 1950s and the 1960s with the union provisions between Egypt and Syria, Egyptian women came to Lebanon as vendors but were often convinced by Lebanese families to work in their homes as domestic workers (Jureidini 2009, 77). During the 1970s the change began when Lebanese men working in Gulf countries started to bring Sri Lankan women employed there in domestic work to Lebanon. In an interview conducted by Ray Jureidini with employers of domestic workers, one interviewee had sarcastically commented: “Imagine the Lebanese business mind-to bring in Sri Lankans during the war!” (91). Ever since, women from various countries from Asia and Africa, such as Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kenya, the Philippines etc. have been coming to work in the country based on a special labor law entitled the *Kafala* in Arabic (or the Sponsorship System). This labor system exclusive for domestic workers requires them to have sponsoring employers who would be responsible for the cost of their arrival and residency. This means that a migrant worker’s working and living contract is tied to one employer and should she ever decide to end the contract, she would need to return home or find another sponsor (Hamill 2012, 11). While it is hard to pin point the exact number of

FMDWs in the country, it was estimated in 2009 by the Human Rights Watch that there are about 400,000 migrant domestic workers (both legal and illegal) residing and working in Lebanon (Pande 2012, 387), a country of no more than five million individuals. The FMDWs come from over fifteen different nationalities, and the largest number of workers comes from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (388).

While women in other parts of the world were gaining a higher education and entering labor sectors other than domestic work, this was not the reason why domestic labor in Lebanon became the responsibility of migrant workers starting from the 1980s. For compulsory primary education was introduced in Lebanon only in 1998 (Jureidini 2009, 75). It was in fact the civil war (1975-1990) that was a turning point for domestic work in Lebanon, gradually replacing Arab live-in domestic workers with migrants. When the war broke out, Lebanese employers stopped hiring Palestinian women. As Palestinians in refugee camps gained greater military power, having a Palestinian in the home became a threat. Moreover, with the increasing Sectarian tensions in the Lebanese society, it became dangerous to hire a Lebanese domestic worker from another religious sect. While hiring a woman from the same religious community remained the ‘safest’ option, 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.” (Jureidini 2009, 90). It can be said that the Lebanese modern state, especially during and after the civil war, reached its peak in what Suad Joseph labeled as political familism. This term was defined by her as:

The deployment of family institutions, ideologies, idioms (idiomatic kinship), practices, and relationships by citizens to activate their demands in relation to the state and by state actors to mobilize practical and moral grounds for governance

based on a *civic myth of kinship* and *public discourse that privileges family* (Joseph 2011, 150).

Amid this continuous instability that encourages the strengthening of family ties (155), the domestic worker's position within the family in regards to these new developments took on an ambiguous form of professionalization with a severe power imbalance. For while the work authorization of FMDWs is issued by the Lebanese Ministry of Labor, they are excluded from the Lebanese Labor code and therefore are not protected by minimum wage requirements (Hamill 2012, 12). There is no stable salary that is paid by employers to FMDWs as it varies from employer to employer. The decision of what to pay is also based on the nationality of the domestic worker. As an example, Filipino FMDWs tend to be the ones paid the highest among the different communities of FMDWs. Aside from the living costs that are covered by employers; the salaries usually range between \$100 and \$300. Furthermore, the system and their living and working conditions lock them to a "master/servant relationship" (13), shaping their everyday life in a way that can be described as a form of modern slavery. The profession of domestic work has become so racialized in Lebanon starting from the late 1980s, to an extent that Lebanese people began to refer to a maid as a *Sri Lankiyeh* (Sri Lankan) regardless of whether she actually comes from Sri Lanka, or another country such as Bangladesh or Ethiopia (since the first state to begin sending domestic workers to Lebanon was Sri Lanka). Domestic workers are either live-in maids who live and work with the employers, or illegal freelancers who work by the hour for different employers and live on their own or share an apartment with other migrants. While the study of freelance FMDWs' access to housing in Beirut has been discussed by a previous master thesis (Beyene 2005), this thesis focuses exclusively on live-in FMDWs as their distinct and less emancipatory living arrangements as well as their involvement with the personal life of the employer makes their case an entirely different one from freelancers.

The Feminization and Racialization of Domestic Work

On a macro level, the change in the landscape of domestic work took place in two significant moments over the past two centuries. The first is the industrial revolution and the massive urbanization that accompanied it by the end of the 19th century. As machines took over a wide range of labors including agricultural work, young rural women found themselves obliged to migrate to cities and seek employment as domestic workers. The percentage of women involved in domestic work kept increasing steadily until the 2nd World War when women had larger opportunities available for them due to the lack in male labor force. From this period on the popularity of live-in servants started to diminish and disappeared in the 1950s during the revival of traditional middle-class gender roles (Momsen 1999, 3–4). The second point in the 20th century that witnessed an expansion in domestic labor was the 1970s. Amid the emergence of more effective contraception methods and the rise of second-wave feminism, upper- and middle-class women were entering the workforce to an unprecedented degree. Nevertheless, the traditional patriarchal system and the assigned gender roles within it were not put into question. As a result, although women and men began to participate in the economic sphere equally, little has change in the perception of housework as a feminine task. With that women became expected to hold the dual task of working within and outside the home. And in order to lessen the burden without having to sacrifice their career or create tensions within the household, upper- and middle-class working women began to employ another woman to take care of the house work (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 1–2). Today, several decades later from the failed ‘domestic revolution’, the number of women being hired as live-in or live-out domestic workers remains increasing worldwide.

Prior to the mid-1980s, studies of migration revolved around the widely believed notion at the time that economic migrants usually fall in the category of young, single men. Female migrants were supposed to be moving for family reasons and therefore they were invisible in the research on labor migration. The increase in migration for domestic work by the 1980s however turned the attention of anthropologists, sociologists and policy makers to the fact that women may have always been independent economic migrants (Sharpe 2001, 4). In a global and capital economy, the states of developed and developing countries alike seek to make the most of the labor services of immigrants to serve their economic demands. On the other hand, they limit their own costs and responsibilities in immigration policies (Chang 2006, 42). To many women around the world, domestic work is their only ticket to crossing economic borders legally (or even illegally, as a large network of undocumented migrant servants exists around the world). Moreover, the lack of an institutionalized and state-sponsored infrastructure of care obliges many working women to hire a low-wage migrant domestic worker. This balance of supply and demand has led over the past several decades to a globalized network of care economies. Based on a hierarchical system of states, classes, genders and ethnic (racial) groups, this chain of socio-economic inequalities has created a network of service-providers (being the workers themselves and the institutions linking them to the host countries) and service-recipients (being the employers and their families) (Yeates 2009, 42).

The most significant motivation for women to migrate and seek employment in household service is the necessity of improving the financial status of their families (Zlotnik 2000, 34). And as mentioned earlier, many of these female migrants reside in the host countries illegally, and therefore choose to work as live-in maids since first, this occupation provides them with a place to stay and second, their invisibility to the state renders their stay in the country

secured (Momsen 1999, 6). On the downside, the lack of state-control in private homes and regulations of migrant wage policies leave domestic workers (legal and illegal alike, but the latter even more) “at the mercy of their employers” (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 4).

Migrant women tend to receive the lowest salaries among migrant men or non-migrant men and women (Zlotnik 2000, 35). But aside from the low financial compensations that do not meet the host country’s minimum wage, FMDWs are subjected to all kinds of abuses and damaging work conditions. Physical violence committed against domestic workers includes trafficking and forced prostitution, rape, slapping and beating, long hours of work as well as malnutrition and poor living conditions. The sending countries are often helpless as mutual economic interests prevent them from being able to cut the immigration accords with the host countries. As an example, in spite of the continuous abuse faced by Filipina workers on the hands of Saudi employers, the Philippines is forced to maintain its workers exchange with Saudi Arabia as the latter is the Philippines’ main source of oil supply (Momsen 1999, 6).

In the household, the employer and the domestic worker live in divided spaces that are demarcated by a set of racial, class and gendered scales (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 9) In its labeling as a feminized and racialized employment and its association with the usual unpaid traditional housework, domestic work fails to be perceived by the society as a production of high value. In the study of overlapping oppressions of gender, race, class, intersectionality is a significant concept that, although not directly engaged with the analysis in the following chapters, is nevertheless worth mentioning as it provides the framework for understanding how our distinct experiences as individuals are shaped by various powers and privileges (of race, class and gender).

The notion of intersectionality was coined for the first time by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality came as a criticism to patriarchy as a universal model of oppression limited only to gender and also as a result of the failure of feminists to account for the experience of women of color, mainly African-Americans. Crenshaw herself is a woman of color. In her article *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, she argues that there can't be a single feminism and she defines intersectionality as the "various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Similarly, Collins states that while it is easy for white feminists for example to point out the wrongdoings of sexism, they are reluctant to speak for their skin privilege and how it made them part of the racist oppressor's side. The discomfort to talk about the oppressor in us, Collins says, is rooted academically in the problematic way in which we theorize oppression. For instead of competing over which oppression is the universally ultimate and dominate one, scholars must find new ways to conceptualize "race, class and gender as distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression" (Collins 1993, 26).

Social Space, Architecture of (In)justice

In my analysis of the topic of migrant domestic work from an architectural and spatial perspective, I am following the lead of sociologists, anthropologist and geographers who have proven for decades that the way individuals and societies shape space, including architecture, is not arbitrary. In buildings, apartments, public spaces, is inscribed a set of social interactions that can be negotiated (Lefebvre 1992). In his notable conception of the production of social space, Henri Lefebvre saw space as an entity that does not exist in itself, but rather as the product of continuous human relations, activities and practices. With that being said, space cannot be seen

as a universally unified concept. It is instead contextualized within the specific social and historical background that it is situated in (Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995, 29). Lefebvre identified three key elements that form the main support of his theory of the social production of space. He called it the spatial triad. The conceived space is embodied in the work of those who shape and materialize the produced space. These include but are not exclusive to professionals in the construction fields such as planners and architects (Merrifield 2004, 174). On the second side of the equation, there exists the means in which groups and individuals feel and create their social space. This is known as the lived space and “it is experienced through complex symbols and images of its ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ and ‘overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (174). The perceived space is the interaction between the different individuals through their spatial practices, thus it is the lived space as perceived by others (175). The triad is however in imbalance in the way spaces are produced as the conceived remains the dominant one and the lived experience of people is at most unaccounted for by authorities. Almost a decade before the conception of Lefebvre’s theory, Harvey criticized the discontinuity between the designing and planning of physical space on the one side, and the social complexity on the other side. In an attempt to criticize the indifference of geography and urban planning in the face of social issues, he indicated that art and architecture can hold different symbolic meanings based on the ways in which they were implemented. For that he gave the example of the building entrances which can say much about the way that social relations function among distinct people inside these entrances. Planning and design, including architecture, is therefore “symbolic of our culture, symbolic of the existing social order, symbolic of our aspirations, our needs and our fears” (Harvey 1973, 76). Based on this idea, he urged planners and designers to consider social groups and their various mental maps, behaviors and patterns in the city. He referred to those who

attacked spatial environmental determinism before him and stressed on the idea that “what people want is important” (44). Going one step further beyond these criticisms, Hillier and Hanson produced graphic models that have the potential for “an effective analysis of social order in space” (Hillier and Hanson 1989, 25). In its study “space is desocialised at the same time as society is despatialised” (9), and that is why their model which they called space syntax was aimed to bring back this lost balance between the study of space and society, through a series of symbols and diagrams that allow for the graphic representation of space to be altered and studied from a sociological and anthropological point. In my analysis of the architecture and layouts of contemporary apartments in Beirut, I utilize this form of graphic syntactical analysis.

Entering the Domestic Field: Methodology and Positionality

I spent a period of approximately one month (from the 6th of April until the 2nd of May) in Beirut residing in the apartment of my parents who at the moment employ a FMDW from Bangladesh. Additionally, I visited my maternal grandmother who employs Goudla, a FMDW from Kenya for several days each week. This time, the customary acts of staying with my parents and spending time with my grandmother on each visit to Lebanon comprised a crucial part of the research. Having lunches and conversations over a cup of tea or coffee with family members and FMDWs, usually consisting banal parts of daily life, became an experience of participant observation that reveals much about the employer-worker relationship. My mother was supportive of the idea, stating that “*the topic is really important, and I really think that architects should consider creating a change*”. My sister, sharing my opinion towards the topic, read over some of the field notes and participated in debates between my father and me over the issue of live-in domestic work and its slavery-like conditions. Shima and Goudla, with whom I am on friendly terms, were also okay with my research and did not mind me using their names as they

knew that it is a study work. On the one hand, my limitation as a researcher is that as a daughter and granddaughter of the employers, Shima and Goudla were possibly restrained in their conversations with me. None of us is either a pure victim or a pure oppressor, but for most of us it is quite easy to identify in which ways and occasions we have been underprivileged. When it comes to our supremacies however, the picture becomes murky and more challenging to assess (Collins 1993, 26). In addition to that, I could not extend my research beyond two households as the accessibility of the private lives of families would not be possible unless I was a close family member. On the other hand, as an activist, I perceive the challenges activists face in changing the society's perception towards the issue as I observed this difficulty from within my own home.

In merging activism with research, I volunteered at the Beirut division of the Migrant Community Center (MCC), a cultural space for migrants founded by an acquaintance with whom I was active in the past in a former feminist collective called *Nasawiya*. As some of the classes in the center were lacking teachers, I participated as a substitute teacher for French and English lessons on each Sunday for students who are male migrants from Sudan and migrant domestic workers mainly from Ethiopia and the Philippines. I also attended their cultural events taking place in April which were a Sunday afternoon spring market in which some of the women sold their products, and an Ethiopian lunch prepared by one of the main members of the Center who is an illegal freelance domestic worker. Furthermore, my sister and I volunteered for the preparation of the May Day Workers' Parade (which we also attended), an annual event combining a protest calling for the change of the *Kafala* system, and a cultural program of markets and national dances performed by the workers. While the latter activities do not entirely relate to the methodology of this thesis as such as I focus on the private sphere, it remains an important venue for getting to know the field as the future extension of the topic will focus on

public space and the FMDWs' collectives (churches, markets, NGOs etc.). Nevertheless, my experience with MCC granted a supplementary space to talk to the FMDWs about their experiences with their employers. In this case, the limitation was that it was a one-sided observation (on the part of the workers only with the absence of the employers). In addition, as domestic workers are constantly being interviewed by journalists and researchers, they expressed a feeling of indifference and even at times annoyance with this intellectual interest that does not eventually contribute to improving the conditions of their lives. This particular feeling was exhibited on part of one of the domestic workers when being approached by a university student who wanted to interview FMDWs for her university class paper. While I was not only a researcher to them but also an activist and a language teacher who formed friendships with some of the workers, I decided to tone down the interview format and rely more on casual conversations.

The third part of the field work was a collection of semi-structured interviews conducted with architects and marketing employees in major construction and real estate companies in Beirut being *IMAR Properties*, *Accent Design Group*, *General Engineering and Contracting Company* and *FFA*. I interviewed in total six individuals, four of which are architects and project managers, and two of which are employed in the marketing departments. I began the interviews first by asking general questions about the apartments, the general needs of the clients, followed by more specific questions about the maid's quarter, the logic behind its size and location, and a more informal part of the interview that attempts to explore the opinions of the architects and marketing employees on the discourse of discrimination surrounding these designs.

The division of the thesis follows the logic of the questions that attempt to create a dialogue between the architectural aspect and the more personal aspect of stereotypes, behaviors

and attitudes. Thus after the introduction, the first chapter deals with the architecture of contemporary apartments in Beirut, providing an analysis of the blurriness between private and public space within the home. The second chapter, based on ethnographic accounts, explores the ambiguous worker-employer relationship and how the blurriness in the spatial division mirrors the various tensions.

Chapter 1: Molding Private Space

The Maid's Quarter in Contemporary *Beiruti* Apartments

Among April's featured properties on the webpage of Ramco, one of Lebanon's biggest real estate companies, an advertisement announced a "very rare opportunity to own at USD 760,000" (Ramco 2016) an apartment in a renovated old building at a central location in Beirut. This apartment following a traditional layout, is of 225 sqm and comprises a *Dar* (the principal common hall in a Lebanese traditional home), three bedrooms with two of them sharing a common bathroom, a kitchen, and a mezzanine. The posted description, boasting with the apartment's high ceilings and beautiful arches, suggested a flexible functionality to some of the spaces, proposing to its potential client to turn the third room into a "bedroom or a living/family room", and to use the mezzanine "either as a storage area or as a maid's room" (Ramco 2016).

The latter, that I ironically came across while looking for examples of layouts with a maid's bedroom, hints at the nonchalance with which FMDWs are accommodated. Moreover, it shows that the availability of a space to house a domestic worker is crucial information for buyers or renters. This chapter explores the standardization of a maid's quarter in the contemporary architecture of Beirut. The professionalization of domestic work, the increase in the demand on domestic labor among the Lebanese middle class, as well as the shift in the family living arrangements as well as the architecture itself (from traditional to modern) are all major factors that contributed in the creation of this new quarter. The size and placement of it in the apartment not only reveals the various conflicting attitudes that employers and their families have in regards to FMDWs, but also a shift in the boundaries of the interior and exterior within the apartment.

From Precarious Arrangement to Standardized Spatial Experience

In the summer of 2014 *The Journal of Developing Areas* published a study by two Lebanese scholars who had collected quantitative socio-economic data on Lebanese households.

The aim of the research was to understand the major reasons behind the decision of whether to hire a FMDW or not. It was concluded from the findings that aside from the fact that having children or a disabled member in the family is a strong determinant, the space of the residence plays a key role in the hiring decision (Fakih and Marrouch 2014, 340). While on the one hand it was found that the surface area of the dwelling is irrelevant, the number of rooms (meaning the possibility to give the domestic worker a separate room) is on the other hand a very important criteria (348). In the past tradition of domestic work already discussed in the introduction, finding an adequate space did not constitute a concern for the Lebanese aristocracy who was at the time the large majority of employers. A special floor or wing, either detached or included in the main residence, was reserved for the servants, gardeners, drivers, and cooks of the household. Marwan, a project manager at *General Engineering and Contracting Company*, stated that “*maids were mostly employed in big houses such as villas and palaces, places that only the very rich could afford*” (Marwan).

During this period it was not very common to find maids in middle-class homes, yet these cases were not entirely absent either. On many occasions, the presence of maids in households that are financially secure enough was determined by “moral and humanitarian factors” (Jureidini 2009, 86). It was often the circumstance that battered women of lower economic status who left or were expelled by husbands or parents sought protection by trustworthy middle-class families in exchange for domestic work. Places of accommodation varied from family to family. Domestic workers often slept in children’s bedrooms, in vacant chambers or on the kitchen or living room floor. Aline, a property sales and marketing manager at *IMAR Properties*, recalled the time when her parents employed a maid with a hint of irritation, excusing herself before

offending them by stating that “we are one of those families who need to be burnt” (a Lebanese saying to indicate that someone is a hopeless case):

They did not have a mattress [for her]. She used to sleep on the floor I remember very well. We had one called Sobhiye from the area of Akkar [North Lebanon] she was Lebanese. And back then there were no rooms for maids. Yes she used to sleep on the living room floor. (Aline)

Families were often aware of the less than ideal situation, in which the maids are accommodated, such as in the case of Aline. They however either did not have the power to do something about it or they did not want to. These precarious spatial arrangements were not exclusive to Lebanon in the region. Social anthropologist Dan Rabinowitz, who has written extensive ethnographic accounts on Palestinians in Israel, recaptured reminiscences from the time when a Palestinian “Ozeret – Hebrew for (female) help” (Rabinowitz 1997, 102) lived in their family home. He described the space allotted as her own which he called “The Cave”:

The Cave was not quite a room. Roughly 3 metres long and one and a half wide, it had been designed as a passage between the western, more public section of the apartment, where visitors would enter through a little ante-room into a set of these large guest salons, and the eastern wing which had the bedrooms. But we never used The Cave as a passage. Its western end was blocked by a permanently locked door with thick translucent but distorting glass frames. The eastern end remains wide open to the corridor connecting the living area with the bedrooms. It had no door, no partition (103).

The lodging arrangements for domestic workers, whether in upper- or middle-class households, were individualized based on available space and personal taste. The consideration of a ‘maid’s space’ was not a necessity for architects and engineers in the initial design of the dwelling. In contemporary Beirut however “no self-respecting architect or builder in the Middle East would design an apartment without maid’s quarters” (Jureidini 2009, 98).

The reasoning behind this change is multifold. This trending phenomenon of hiring migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, as explained in the introduction, brought forth the

creation of migration industries. Migration industries, as defined by Sorensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, refer to both the facilitation and restraint of mobility of individuals across borders (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sørensen 2013). Recruiters, present in the form of individual ‘brokers’ or recruitment and placement agencies, the strong involvement of embassies as well as the “rescue industries” (NGOs and other organizations providing protection and political lobbying for migrant domestic workers) all point to a strong professionalization of domestic work which in itself motivates the standardization of a maid’s quarter in architecture.

In addition to that, this enlargement of services surrounding domestic help and the ease with which it can now be acquired increased the demand for it even further among middle-class homes and even sometimes families of low incomes. This upsurge paralleled with a continuous competitiveness in the field of real estate, means that the neglect of an architect for this phenomenon in their design is a commercial loss.

Another factor that also created the standardization is the change in the living arrangements of families. A traditional *Beiruti* residence, typically of two or three floors, was characterized by a red tiled roof and a façade of “a wide double or more commonly triple arcade opening” (Makhzoumi and Zako 2007, 3). Traditional here refers to the nineteenth century detached villa with a central-hall (or the *Dar* mentioned earlier in the text) typology that started gradually disappearing until the second half of the 20th century (3). This type of building usually housed the larger family: parents and their married direct descendants, with each part of the family occupying a floor. Today families increasingly live more dispersed from their parents and direct relatives in smaller apartments that are gradually shrinking in size. In Lebanon, much like in other postcolonial contexts, a greatly impacting element is thus the “contemporary notions of

privacy and ideologies of the nuclear family, especially in the more confined space of the apartment” (Qayum and Ray 2003, 520).

Layouts of Contemporary Apartments

The contemporary apartments of Beirut catered to middle-class and upper-class clientele usually range in size on average between 120 and 200 sqm. What goes smaller than 120 (50 to 100 sqm) are for the most part one-bedroom large studios that target young and childless couples. Apartments larger than 200 sqm on the other hand are the more luxurious and high-end versions and new residences reaching 500 sqm are rarely to be found in the capital. All architects and developers confirmed in the interviews that while the needs typically vary between clients (old and young couples, couples with or without children, middle income or high income etc.), there is a tendency for preferring an apartment with maximized functions rather than few rooms with very spacious area. Contemporary layouts in Beirut typically include almost the same functions with a few variations. Entering from the main entrance door, the apartment regularly contains a small reception area or corridor that leads to the various parts of the dwelling. The open living area or in other words what characteristically consists of the living room, the dining space and sometimes even the *salon* (French for drawing room and in Lebanese households a fancier version of the living room reserved for hosting guests) occupies a large part of the apartment. The *salon*, a heritage from older Lebanese layouts, is becoming less and less popular in present-day architecture. In some designs architects are even opting for a living area that is inclusive of an American-style open kitchen, but that is not the most desirable layout for Lebanese families. The kitchen is therefore preferably an enclosed part of the apartment and most often connects to the maid’s quarter (to be described later in the text). Other parts of the apartment that frequently occupy the surrounding space of the living area are a spacious main

balcony or terrace in more high-end apartments (or even little green areas on the lower floors) as well as a guest bathroom. The rest of the space is occupied by the master bedroom and its bathroom, a 2nd bedroom also with its own bathroom and sometimes even a third bedroom and bathroom for the bigger sized apartments. The more common layouts are simplexes but duplexes also exist without much difference in their division (with the exception that the bedrooms and their bathrooms are simply on a separate floor).

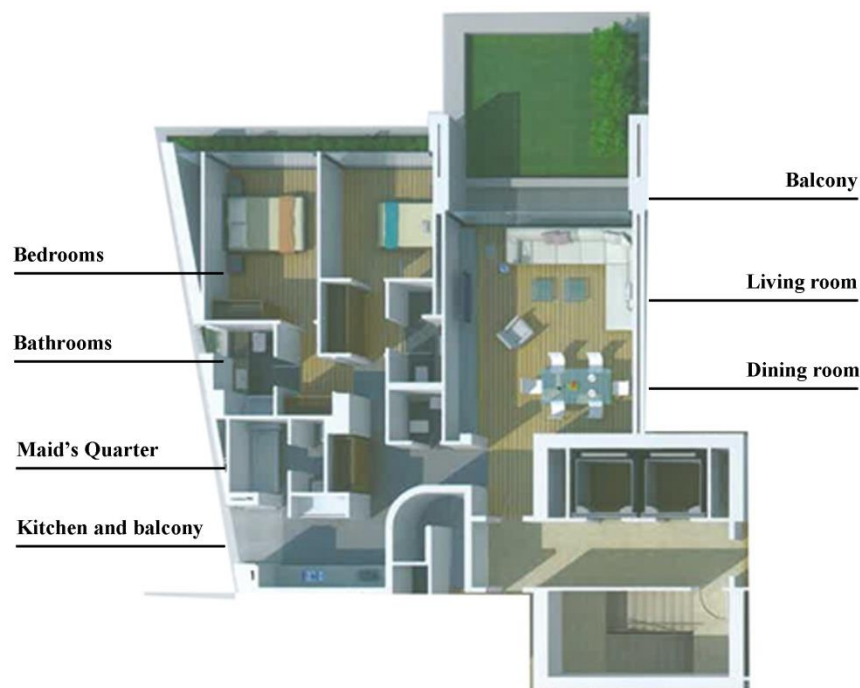


Figure 2: Example of an apartment Layout; *Saifi 477* Project by *IMAR Properties*; 1st to 6th Floor
Source: *IMAR Properties* [Brochure]

Beirut apartments are continuously shrinking, for it was common in the earlier days for a family to have a residence ranging between 200 and 500 sqm. The reason behind this compression, according to Nathalie a senior architect in *Accent Design Group*, is the increasing

competitiveness in real estate prices and space. Average current prices of apartments in Beirut range between 3000 dollars per sqm up to 6000 dollars:

The cost of the real estate also changed a lot, especially in Beirut. The prices are going up with the whole economic crisis they didn't really drop. Some big apartments we are also dividing into two apartments. (Nathalie)

Cause they are not selling? (Dalia)

Yes, because if you sell a sqm for 6000, how many clients can pay for 300 sqm? (Nathalie)

The Size and Location of the Maid's Quarter

Several functions that did not exist in the past became a necessity in today's buildings. Underground car parking, private storage rooms in the basement as well as security are a natural requirement and indoor swimming pools, gyms and green spaces are an indulgent expectation in high-end development. The maid's quarter, rather located inside the apartment unlike the rest of these other functions, is an equally important commodity in both middle- and upper-class new residential spaces. The maid's sleeping place, which hardly can be called a room, is a rectangular-shaped area of a width of 1.5 m by a length of 1.9 to 2 m. Crammed up between two walls with a claustrophobic feel, it is natural that this space scarcely fits anything other than a single bed and a tiny closet or few built in shelves. I asked in the interviews whether there are any minimum requirements: *"There are minimum dimensions. First of all it needs to fit a bed and a closet, and then it becomes a question of proportion."* (Nathalie). According to Aline, there are certain guidelines and regulations that the municipality of Beirut requires in order to grant the permit. The municipality surveys not only the building's general procedures but also the interior design documents. As an example the balcony can never be bigger than the living area. The minimum standards of a maid's room do not require a window to be present. It is

therefore up to the designer to decide whether to include a small window or not at all. The room is thus in many cases quite dark and having very poor ventilation. Connected to or right next to the sleeping area a maid's bathroom is placed. The bathroom, slightly smaller than the sleeping room, contains no more than a sink, a toilet seat and a small shower tray. A small laundry or storage room is often also included in this quarter but that is not necessarily always the case.

Similar to the size, the location of the maid's quarter is almost always the same in contemporary apartments; either connected to or taking a part of the kitchen area which itself is usually located in one of the corners of the residence. In Figure 2 (page 25) for example taken from the *Safi 477 project* by *IMAR Properties*, the kitchen is located at the south-western corner of the flat and can be accessed through a corridor that connects it to the living area on one side and to the bedrooms on the other side. The maid's quarter, along with a small balcony right next to it, is situated behind the kitchen and can be only entered from it. The kitchen balcony, rarely absent from the apartment layouts, can also be considered a unit that is included in the maid's quarter. At times the access to the maid's quarter is created in a slightly different manner. In the *Uptown Badaro* project by *FFA* (Figure 3) the architects placed the roofed balcony as a transitional space between the kitchen and maid's area. So in order to enter the maid's quarter one has not only to pass through the kitchen but also the balcony.

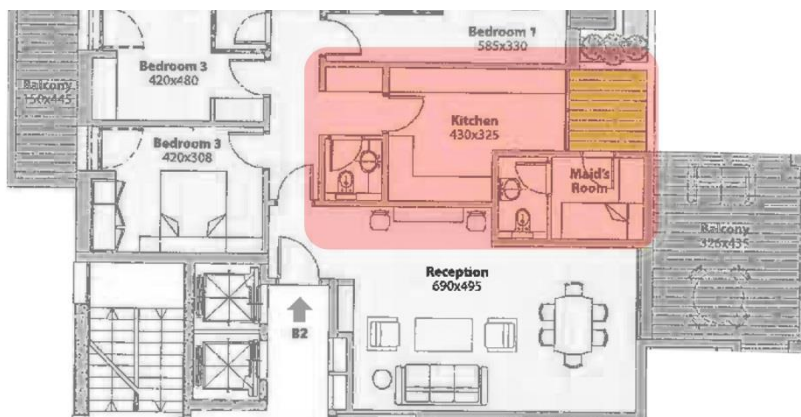


Figure 3: The balcony (in green) acts as a transitional space between the kitchen and the maid's room. *Uptown Badaro* Project by *FFA*; 1st Floor Block B Apartment B2. **Source:** FFA [Brochure]

Based on the interviews, the logic behind situating the maid's quarter near or inside the kitchen was quite clearly for two major reasons:

Her work is in the kitchen, and also at the corner of the house, because they don't like the maid to be in the main circulation of the home, so she's always at the margin of the house so that she doesn't create an interference with the movement of the home especially at night. This way she's more secluded (Marwan).

Since the kitchen (and the laundry room, if present) is the place where nearly half of the domestic work takes place, it makes sense for the architects and the clients from a practical perspective for the maid's quarter to be located there. But that is not the sole reason. As witnessed in Marwan's words, locating the maid's area in or close to the kitchen also serves the aim of isolating it from the rest of the apartment.



Figure 4: The maid's quarter (highlighted in color) a marginal space with a claustrophobic feel ; *Badaro 4741*
Project by *RC International* ; 1st to 7th Floor , Apartment A
Source: www.rci.lb

In order to maintain their privacy, families do not appreciate to have the maid's bedroom next to their own or their children's. In one exceptional example from *Accent Design Group's* apartments, Nathalie told me that one client became very annoyed once he realized that the

maid's quarter happens to be located between the master bedroom and the children's bedroom. The architects tried to defend this position: *"you are any ways accessing your guests all the way to here so this is more of a central space than an in between bedrooms. But, it annoyed him. They [the clients] don't like it [the maid's room] to be between bedrooms."* (Nathalie). On the other hand, placing the maid's quarter rather to the side of the living area and far from the kitchen, even if not close to the bedrooms, would still meddle with the family's privacy when they are hosting guests: *"Even when they are sitting and there are guests and so forth, they don't like to for example have a maid opening her bedroom door and going out to the living space. It annoys them"* (Nathalie).

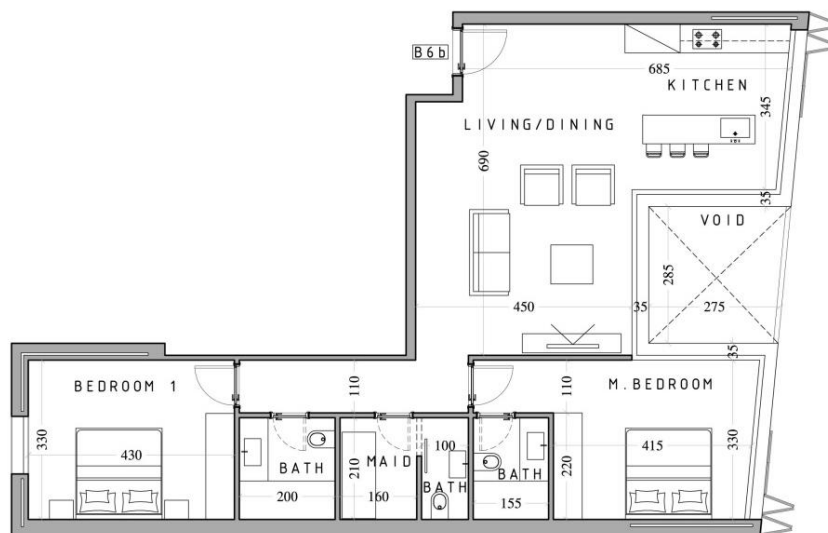


Figure 5: The client complained about the maid's quarter being located between the bedrooms; *Allée des Arts* Project by *Accent Design Group*; 6th Floor, Block B, Apartment B6b

Source: www.har-properties.com

Spatial Dynamics

The notion of privacy is the key point to analyzing the dynamics of the apartment in the presence of a FMDW. Coming back to the story of the Palestinian maid Shoshana, Rabinowitz

highlighted in his narration the lack of her privacy in “the Cave”. In a clear categorization of social positions and a power imbalance between the Palestinian domestic worker and the Israeli heads of the household, the former’s spatial position within the latter’s realm is bereaved of agency to negotiate privacy (Rabinowitz 1997, 105). The home is not only a physical entity but also an emotional and mental space. The needed intimacy and protection are typically believed to be bounded by the private sphere. The home however, can also be “a site of oppression because of patriarchal practices” (Hardill 2002, 64) such as domestic violence, or because of other inequalities. Thus the accommodation of a worker within the family weakens the boundedness of the private space; this was obvious in Nathalie’s words when she denoted the living area as ‘public space’. The presence of the maid’s quarter blurs the boundaries between interior and exterior, private and public, and molds the apartment into a *mélange* of conforming and competing spheres for both the family and the FMDW.

The analysis of these shifts in the private sphere is possible based on the model of space syntax. As mentioned in the introduction, “a great deal of social 'meaning' seems to be invested in space” (Hillier and Hanson 1989, 5) whether it is urban, rural, architectural or domestic. There is a general assumption that common psychological and social forces take place in shaping space, and that the only difference is that between the scales of the city and domestic space different number of people and physical entities are involved. In reality however, the space inside the boundaries is not a continuous system but rather “a series of – potentially at least – separate events” (144).

In this analysis, the different layouts of the mentioned apartments will be selected. In order to conduct the syntactical analysis, the apartment layouts will be simplified into graphs. The graphs’ symbols appropriated from the space syntax model are the following: a circle

“conceptualizes a subdivided cell [in the apartment]” (Hillier and Hanson 1989, 147) or in other terms a unit such as a kitchen or a bedroom. The lines on the other hand, represent the links between the different units. As an example, a room with one access is illustrated as a circle having only one line connected to it. A room with two accesses is drawn as a circle with lines on both of its sides. A black circle represents the movement spaces meaning hallways and corridors, and the circle with a cross is the entrance or the main point of access in the apartment.

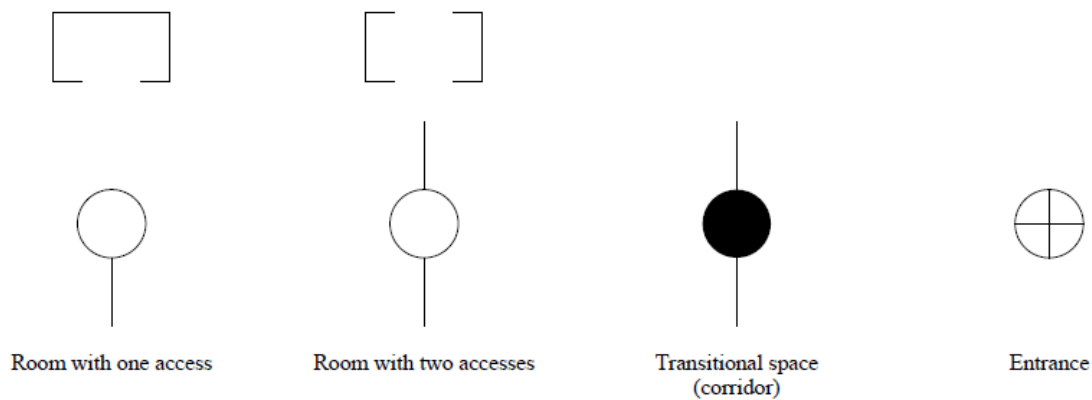


Figure 7: Legend explaining the Diagrams' symbols based on diagrams in *The Social Logic of Space*
Diagram by: Dalia Zein

This syntactical analysis (in the following figures) maps the relation between inhabitants and visitors, as well as between inhabitants being the family members and the other type of inhabitant being the FMDW. By contrasting these different examples of apartments, it can be noticed that there is a certain pattern that repeats with slight variations. Firstly, while the number of connecting spaces differ from layout to layout (as in some apartments there are more corridors than in others), the bedrooms are in all cases separated from the rest of the apartment by at least one corridor. Second, as we progress inside the apartment gradually from the entrance zone, the

closest is always the living area as well as its balcony or terrace, followed by the kitchen and the maid's quarter being the second closest, and finally the bedrooms being the farthest.

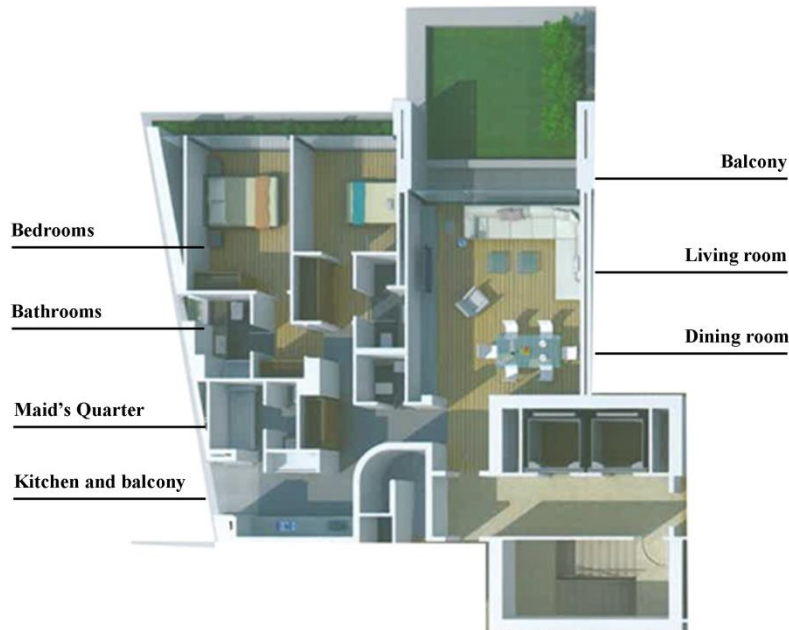


Figure 8: *Saifi 477* Project by *IMAR Properties*; 1st to 6th Floor

Source: *IMAR Properties* [Brochure]

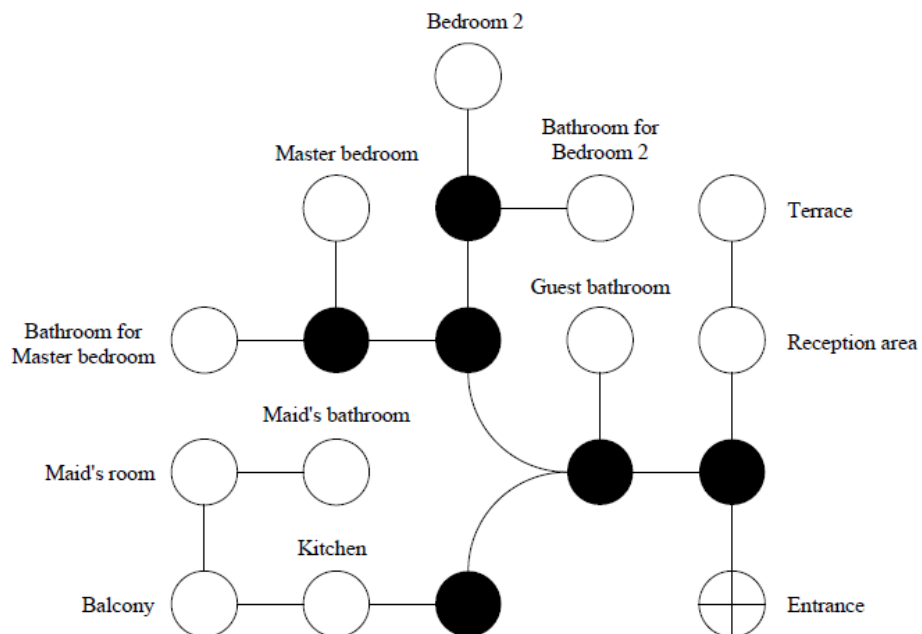


Figure 9: Syntactical analysis of the *Saifi 477* layout (presented above).

In order to reach the bedrooms from the entrance, one has to approximately walk through four different transitional spaces.

Diagram by: Dalia Zein.

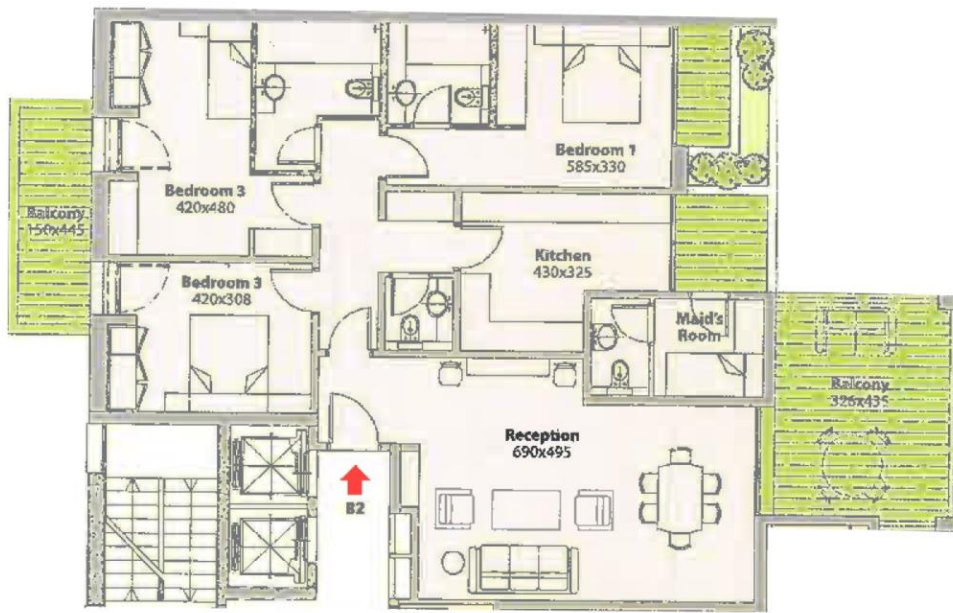


Figure 10: *Uptown Badaro* Project by FFA; 1st Floor Block B Apartment B2.
Source: FFA [Brochure]

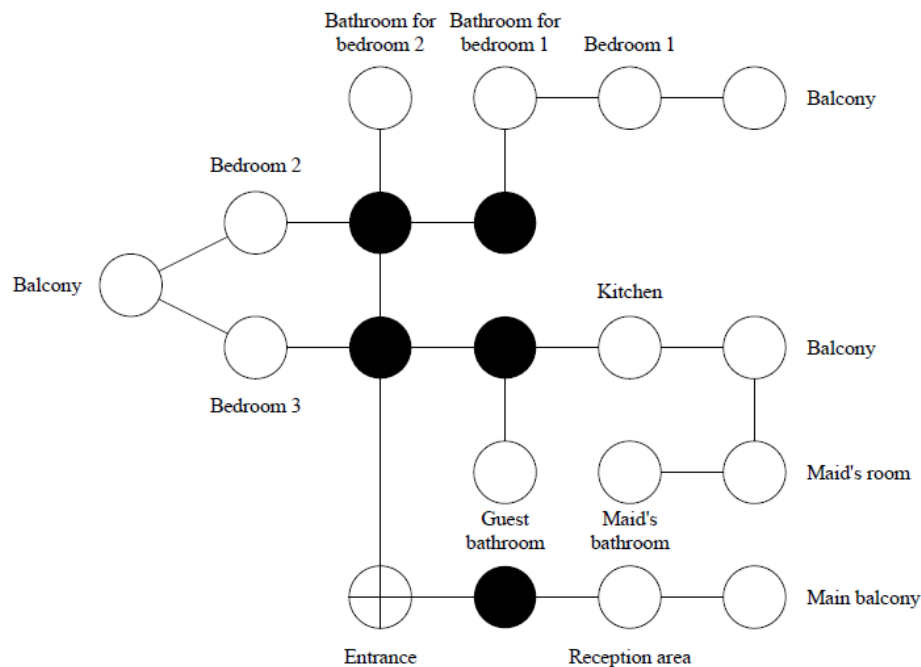


Figure 11: Syntactical analysis of the *Saifi 477* layout presented above). The closest area to the entrance is the reception area, followed by the kitchen and maid's area. The farthest and most private area are the bedrooms and their balconies.
Diagram by: Dalia Zein.

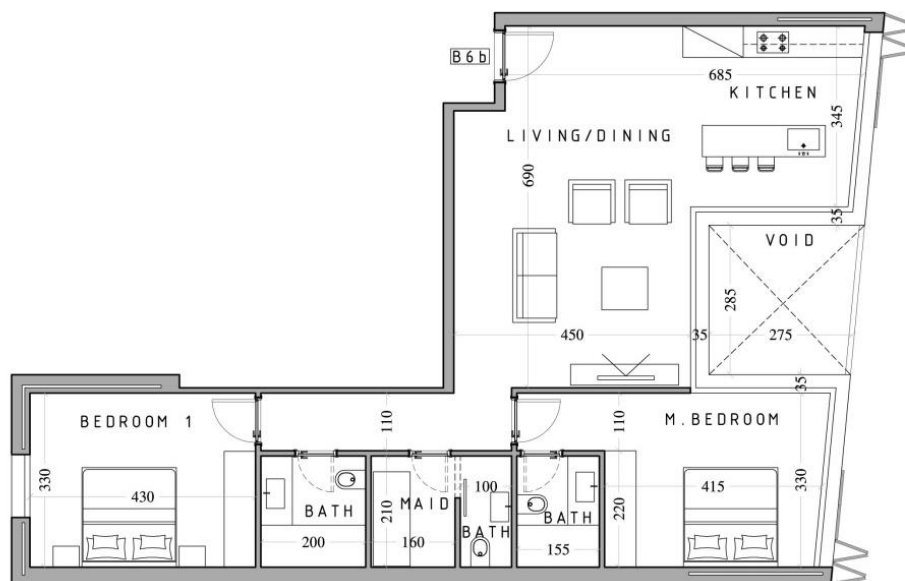


Figure 12: *Allée des Arts* Project by *Accent Design Group*; 6th Floor, Block B, Apartment B6b
Source: www.har-properties.com

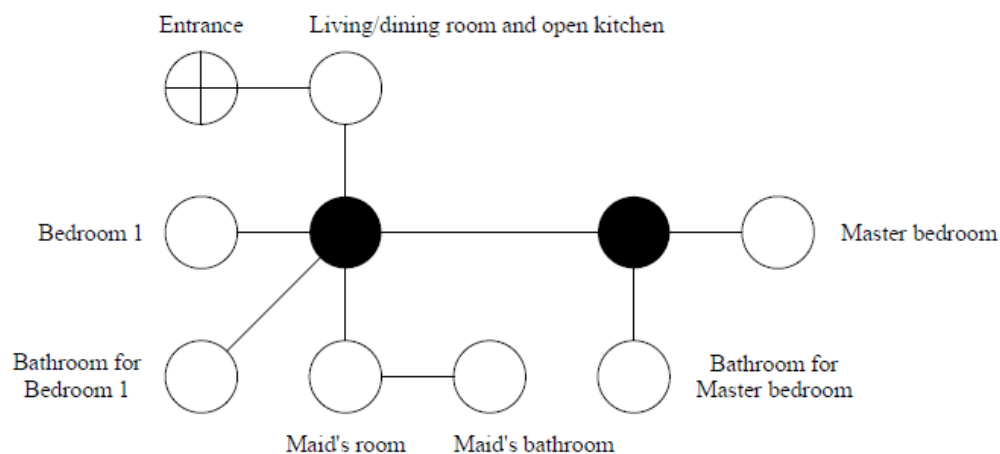


Figure 13: Syntactical analysis of the residence presented above. This apartment, representing a peculiar design including an open kitchen, offers a layout in which the maid's quarter is placed in between the two bedrooms. This challenge to the privacy of the family, is the reason why the client objected to this layout.

Diagram by: Dalia Zein

Based on these examples, it can be concluded that the apartments' units can be grouped into four categories. The first category is the public space of the apartment or the 'hosting space': this is the living area (living room, reception, dining, and terrace) and it is usually the most open and sometimes also constitutes the focal point of the residence. The second category, being the semi-private (semi-public) area or what I call the functional area, is the kitchen as well as the maid's quarter. The third group being the private space or intimate space is the bedrooms including their bathrooms and balconies if present. The fourth category is the transitional spaces and those are as mentioned earlier the corridors connecting the other three groups.

The maid's quarter thus, as seen from this analysis, creates in its presence a sharper partition between the bedrooms and the living area, turning into an in-between or what I called earlier the semi-private space. The maid's quarter, in its situation in the functional area, can never transform into a fully private space. The FMDW, being a temporary visitor in the inhabitant's space but not quite fully a visitor, "has a legitimate reason to cross the boundary [of the apartment] but less than inhabitants, in that they have no control over [it] and their social individuality is not mapped into the structure of space within..." (Hillier and Hanson 1989, 146).

By being constantly confined to the private sphere where they both live and work with their employers, FMDWs do not experience the true feeling of a home. The concepts of public and private then do not hold the same meanings for live-in FMDWs who may often find their home in the encounters in public spaces rather than in the house where they are constantly surveilled and controlled (Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Huang 1998, 585).

The four partitions presented above are not solid, and they are in constant change depending on the activity taking place. As an example, the private space (or the bedrooms) is off-limit for the domestic worker unless she is cleaning it. In this case, the spatial power dynamics

are inverted for a brief time in which the domestic worker holds a stronger access. The domestic worker might ask the household's children for example to temporarily leave their rooms as she is cleaning them. Furthermore, within all three of the private realm, the semi-private and the public, balconies act as a visual gateway to the exterior public space. These balconies remain however physically subjected to different accesses (the kitchen's balcony versus the master bedroom's balcony). The private space, maintaining the notions of emotional security and family warmth, remains hidden from visitors as well as the resident-visitor, at least until the latter accesses it for functional reasons.

The public space, comprising the reception, living room, dining room, *salon*, terrace and guest bathroom, serve as the social mediator within the apartment. It is the place where family members are most likely to gather as well as the space where non-inhabitants are hosted when they access the apartment. The domestic worker is allowed access to the public part of the apartment at all times to clean, serve guests and in some cases maybe even spends some of her free time there watching TV (when family members are not using the space). As Nathalie had noted in the interview (mentioned earlier), family members do not appreciate it when guests are present and the domestic worker is walking around. Unless she is serving the visitors, the domestic worker must remain confined to the kitchen, the kitchen balcony or her sleeping space. Respectability is attained by shying away domestic work from the eyes of the public as visitors only have access to the polished entrances and halls assigned for visitors (Roberts 1990, 257).

It is obvious then, that the FMDW spends most of her time in the semi-private or functional area of the apartment, the area of the "unseen servant" (Roberts 1990, 268). The sleeping place and the bathroom, although they are the two most private units of the functional area, are however spaces where the worker does not spend the majority of her time. Aside from

spending the night, she might use her room to read or rest. But due to having very little free time, and due to the unit being overly constrained, the kitchen and balcony are more desirable spaces for leisure. In the interviews with FMDWs and based on my observation in households employing domestic workers, the kitchen is the most preferred space. This is not only because it is the unit where most of the work is concentrated, but also because it is the place where family members spend the least of their time. Kitchen balconies are in addition crucial spaces for FMDWs. As many are constantly confined to the private space and not granted a day off, and as others only leave the household on Sundays or otherwise to accompany the employers and their families, balconies become their only link to the exterior world. Balconies, even recognized by the employers as being the workers' territory, do not only serve as an escape of surveillance and control but also as a space of socialization with other domestic workers occupying other balconies. Scholar Amrita Pande called this form of socialization "balcony talks":

The balcony transforms from a *marginal space assigned to restricted live-ins* to an *avenue for forging strategic dyads with workers in the neighboring balconies*. This is where the most restricted live-ins hold long sessions of balcony talks with MDWs in neighboring apartments and share information on salary, contracts and access to passports. The balconies are *the first step in forming a community* and finding broader support structures, especially in cases of extreme confinement (Pande 2012, 393).

The Symbolic of Architectural (In) justice

While the analysis of architectural space can tell much about the supposed social order, it showcases simultaneously a top-down approach that is discontinued from the aspirations, needs and fears of certain groups. This disregard mostly touches upon the users who are considered to be at the bottom of the social rank, such as in the case of FMDWs. Accommodating domestic workers in a marginal and very small space in the kitchen of the apartment does not only reflect the desire for privacy from the side of the family, but also an unjust spatial distribution that is based on a set of social discriminations.

In one of the hallways of the Migrant Community Center hangs a graphically represented testimony about the living conditions of one of the migrants. She wrote in Lebanese dialect: *“bnem ana wel ghasseleh sawa, wejjehe bwejj l heit, w ma fi tal’aa mnel beit”* (I sleep together with the washing machine, facing the wall, and I cannot leave the home). Meant to be a general representation that creates awareness about such harsh spatial arrangements (similar to the figure presented in the introduction), it reflects a general unhappiness of FMDWs with the space that they are provided. Lily, a migrant domestic worker from Ethiopia who is currently working as an illegal freelancer, recalls her living arrangement as a live-in domestic worker with clear dissatisfaction: “looking back at it now, I understand more that I didn’t really have a room. You know? It was really really small” (Lily). Shelbi, another domestic worker from the Philippines, felt that she didn’t really have room for leisure: “the TV room is always occupied by madam and her husband. So I spend most of my time in the kitchen. I don’t have a chance to watch TV” (Shelbi). But while the distress that domestic workers feel in such a situation is much expected, architects and developers express conflicting feelings towards their implementation. In an interview with *FFA Real Estate* with three individuals, Jad, an engineer, Naji, a project manager and Jim, a marketing and sales employee, the viewpoints were incompatible:

“In Lebanon we all know that there is discrimination” (Jad)

“It’s not that! There is no space to be honest” (Naji)

“No I think yes, a woman comes to work in the house, she’s supposed to be treated as part of the family. But there is no budget so they place her next to the kitchen in a small room; they want her to be separated. The option of her living on her own is more expensive for the family because they would have to pay her more so that she can afford accommodation outside.” (Jim)

“There is definitely discrimination. Some people even lock the door and don’t let her out. They don’t consider her to be an employee but rather...a possession or something like that, almost as if she is a washing machine or something” (Jad)

It was clear from the interviews that there is a strong tension between the personal beliefs of architects and developers and their implementation in real estate. On the one hand, they were almost all quite aware of the inhumane conditions of the maid's area. Nathalie stated that in her opinion no one would ever want to sleep in such room *"the people who design it, I bet you no one would sleep in it. I will not sleep one minute in the maid's room"* (Nathalie). Marwan, another architect who designs apartments with maids' quarters, stated that he is against the idea of a live-in domestic worker:

They place her in...It ought to make a person crazy....they place her in a room 3 by 2 m, this is the maximum, between two walls, she cannot move, she cannot sit, she cannot watch tv, she cannot go to the bathroom comfortably, this is the problem. On the other hand if she had her own lobby, she can work for eight or ten hours then go down to her own space, lie down, relax, eat and drink. She would feel that she has her own privacy (Marwan).

On the other hand, they were all aware that for commercial reasons it is not possible, at least for the time being, to enhance the quality of the maid's living space. According to them, it is unrealistic to think that a client would be willing to pay a large sum of money for the maid's quarter since the sqm costs an average of \$4,000 in Beirut. Moreover, none would sacrifice their spatial comfort for the sake of the worker's. It was mentioned that on several occasions clients would complain about the size of the room but without suggesting to enlarge it, for they know that doing so means having to reduce the kitchen or the reception area. Nathalie mentioned that clients start commenting: *"oh why so small, no the room should be bigger what if I got another housekeeper"* (Nathalie). So even in their expectations of a larger room the imaginary of the worker's comfort is not necessarily present.

Aline also pointed out an attitude merged with racism and commodification towards FMDWs, jokingly calling the room the maid's closet, where you *"dump her in and close it"*. *"It's because we never grew up to a black kid next to us at school. This black kid served you*

food” (Aline). She in addition indicated that in her opinion the fact that we were *“brought up to hate other religions during the civil war makes it very easy for us to think that the maid is a lesser human than us”* (Aline). These attitudes and prejudices will be further explored in the following chapter.

It is also important to note that according to the findings having a more luxurious home does not necessarily mean more space and privacy for the maid. Some of the interviewees tried to justify the small size of the maid’s quarter by the lack of space, and when asked about how large is a maid’s room in a penthouse or villa of 500 sqm to 1,000 sqm, it appeared that it was still not larger than 10 sqm and usually catering for two maids rather than one. There are certainly few exceptions when in large villas outside Beirut the client opts for a separate wing containing a room, a bathroom and a kitchen in the lower floor, yet these remain the minority. Furthermore, villas are usually present in a rural setting where it is not the norm to hire FMDWs. This explains the statistical result that families with apartments are more likely to hire a FMDW than families with a detached house (Fakih and Marrouh 2014, 348).

While the focus of this chapter is on the architecture of contemporary apartments and its social significance, there still remains a large number of families who live in older settings such as modernist buildings or even the few remaining 19th century villas of the upper classes. In these cases, the employers have to be creative and come up with accommodating solutions such as in the advertisement mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The absence of a maid’s quarter does not invalidate the presence of a change in the apartment or the house’s public and private boundaries, yet the maid’s quarter presents a more controllable spatial regulation of these shifts. The space of the home, in its blurred *mélange* of private and public, reflects a spatial translation

of a blurred relationship between the worker and the family, an in-between the ‘fictive kin’ and the ‘unreliable stranger’. The next chapter explores this relationship.

Chapter 2: Fictive Kin or Unreliable Stranger?

Dynamics of the Private Sphere

Last summer, my Syrian maternal grandmother, mother and I were sitting on the balcony talking about our common experiences of living in separate countries from our siblings, when my grandmother shared with me for the first time the story of one of the domestic workers who used to live and work in her parents' house. Fatma was the daughter of two poor farmers from the neighboring rural areas of Aleppo, Syria. She was brought by her father to my grandmother's parents so that she would be cared for by a reputable family in exchange for handling domestic chores. Fatma was about six years old at the time, and was treated by the family like a sister and a daughter while learning how to wash and clean. My grandmother recalls that the first time Fatma washed the dishes she was too short to reach the sink and had to stand on a little stepping stool. About ten years later she left the house to get married and grandmother and her siblings felt as if they had just lost a sister. This story of a live-in child domestic worker, both strangely touching and quite alienating to my mother and I as this is no longer a contemporary phenomenon, reflects what Ray Jureidini calls a relationship of "fictive kin" in which "kinship obligations towards them [domestic workers] and dependency upon them constitutes a significant part of the dynamics of everyday family life" (Jureidini 2009, 76). While in the new system FMDWs are no longer treated as adopted daughters, they still play an important role in the construction of the family and the proper class and gendered roles in the household. In fact, many of the dynamics in the home imply a certain allusion to the continuation of the traditional system of fictive kinship. The sponsorship law suggests to a certain extent a construction based upon the traditional model and that is obvious in its naming. For the term *kafala* (meaning to sponsor) was a term that was used to refer to the protection granted by the head of the household (the father) in an aristocratic family to the maid. In the previous section, the contemporary apartments of Beirut are analyzed in order to determine the ambiguity of the spatial privacy that

is produced amid the presence of the maid. In this chapter, I argue that this spatial blurriness mirrors an equally contested employer-employee relationship. This relationship, constantly bouncing between two spheres being the ‘fictive kin’ and what I call the ‘unreliable stranger’, is examined in this section based on three key aspects being invisibility /otherness, intimacy and control. The intersectional analysis, contrasted with the traditional system of Arab domestic labor, shows how the ambiguity between fictive kin and the unreliable stranger extends the class-based and gendered dynamics to include a third layer being the racialization of the relationship.

Describing the Familial Context

In my twenty two years living with my parents, mom had made the choice of not hiring a live-in domestic worker. She had always viewed it as an invasion of our privacy. *“I cannot imagine myself sitting face to face with a stranger all day long, with her watching my every move”* she would say. Throughout the years, she did occasionally hire freelancers who would come once every two weeks to help her with the ‘grand cleaning’. This year however, after a conflict arose between my paternal grandmother and her maid, mom decided to host my grandmother’s maid for the remaining years that she would like to stay in Lebanon. The reason she decided to break her own rule of not wanting a live-in is mainly because she, along with the rest of father’s family, are always in need of help during the summer when the entire family resides in a large collective house in rural South Lebanon. Shima is a Muslim woman from Bangladesh in the beginning of her thirties. Divorced and the mother of two daughters, she decided to work first in Dubai and then in Beirut to support the education of her daughters as well as the maintenance of the household. She has been working in Lebanon for the past four years, three years in my paternal grandmother’s house, in the family rural house in the summer, as well as in my parents’ house over the last year. My family resides in a 1960s modernist

building that is not equipped with a maid's quarter. Shima sleeps in the vacant bedroom of my brother as he has been living abroad in the past years. The bedroom is located at one of the corners of the apartment, right next to the living room. The living area is separated from the other two bedrooms, used by my parents and sister and previously myself, by a small door and corridor. The individuals currently living in the apartment are my father and mother Faysal and Diana, my twenty year old sister Lynn who is a university student, Shima, and Lynn's two partridge bird pets Tabboush and Baldie. My brother Mohamad and I are living abroad and stay in the apartment when visiting Lebanon. Having no little children or an elderly member to take care of, Shima's responsibility is solely to take care of domestic work which means cleaning and helping mom in cooking. She usually wakes up around 7 am and goes to bed around 10 or 11 pm. During the day she dresses in a housekeeping uniform, typically worn by domestic workers in Lebanon and widely criticized by activists for its 'objectifying nature'. The uniform consists of matching pants and a button down shirt. She has three uniforms each in a different color: light blue, light pink and yellow. When going out, she wears casual clothes and a scarf covering half of her hair which for a long time we had mistaken for a veil only to realize from her that it is simply a traditional habit. In her leisure time, she sometimes rests in her bedroom, but her preferred spaces of leisure are the living room where she watches drama series on an Indian channel with Arabic dubbing, and the kitchen where she listens to music on her phone. She recently received a smart phone by my mother which enables her also to chat with her family and call them for free using *whatsapp* and other applications. She has almost every afternoon off and occasionally some other days. She however only leaves the house accompanying the family and refuses to go out alone. I will talk about the reason behind that later in the section.

After several disappointments with previous domestic workers, my Syrian maternal grandmother whom we call *Nana* (Nana is the word for grandmother in Aleppo's dialect) had decided not to hire any live-ins anymore. She however changed her mind a year ago due to pressure from one of her sons, "*she is in her eighties and she needs someone to stay by her side*" he insisted. Widowed since the 1980s and never remarried, Nana currently lives alone with a woman from Kenya. Goudla is a Christian single woman in her twenties. Having no husband or children, she works abroad to support her parents as well as to save money for constructing her own house one day. Similar to my parents, Nana lives in an old building in a two-bedroom apartment with no maid's quarter. Goudla now uses the small guest bathroom as her own, and sleeps in the guest bedroom but uses a single portable bed instead of sleeping on the double bed present in the room (the reasons behind this will be discussed below). She also wears housekeeping uniforms and takes care of cooking and cleaning. Unlike Shima however she is not interested in watching TV and spends her free time mostly reading newspapers or sitting at the kitchen's balcony and watching passers-by on the street below. As this is her first time working in the Arab world, she only spoke English when she arrived last year and impressed everyone by learning the language incredibly fast using Arabic learning books that she brought with herself and practicing with newspapers and conversation. She also does not leave the house alone.

The way Shima and Goudla address the different members of the family very much depend on age. My sister and I are called by our names as we are on 'friendly' terms with them. They both call grandmother *Mama* (mother in Arabic) and call mom Madam as she is not their mother's age. The ethnographic cases described in this chapter are few of many encounters that take place between the family and the workers on a daily basis, and were selected based on their

significance in highlighting the various social boundaries, and the way they reflect race, gender and class distinctions.

Invisibility and Otherness

It's my first day back home during the start of the fieldwork. I'm tired from the night flight and wake up later than usual (around 11 am) and everyone has already had breakfast. I go to the kitchen and greet Shima as she prepares lunch. The tea is still warm in the pot. I sit down at the table with my *Mana'ish* (Lebanese thyme pies) and cup. Shima says: *"I am making food from my country; it contains carrots, cabbage, egg, green coriander and spices."* *"Do you eat eggs?"* (She asks this knowing from before that I was a vegetarian and hearing from mom that I turned vegan). I answer that I do not but that it's okay if she would like to add it. She smiles and replies: *"It's okay without eggs"*. I smile back. We then start a conversation about Bangladeshi food, my love for meals full of spices, and the fact that mom has been sending me some of the recipes she has been making. She laughs and says: "Lynn loves it the most". She then shows me her collection of spices which she brought from Bangladesh. Mom enters the kitchen to take a glass of water and asks: "why are you sitting here alone?" "I am not alone" I reply, pointing at Shima.

As explored previously, this new commodification of employer-employee relationship in the case of foreign domestic work is all the more awkward considering that the majority of Lebanese families live in small apartments in the city. So how do employers cope with what mom identified as a "constant invasion of the private space?" The invisibility of the domestic worker is one way through which the family's privacy is reclaimed. While for the man in the household this state is easy to achieve as very little interaction happens between him and the worker, the women in the household as well as the worker share the "social construction and

assignation of femininity” (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 9). This commonality is nevertheless interrupted by the social hierarchies structuring this encounter, such as race and class (10). Moreover, the neglect of the domestic worker’s presence is made possible through the mechanical nature of domestic work (7) that associates the domestic worker with another commodity in the house.

A state of otherness is produced not only in the spatial separation and commodification, but in the distinction with the usage of daily objects that is often even absurd. As mentioned earlier, Nana’s apartment is not equipped with a maid’s quarter. In a conversation in her living room over a cup of Arabic coffee, I asked: “*Where is Goudla sleeping?*” knowing that the two possible options are either that she is sleeping in the guest bedroom or that she is using the available portable bed, placing it in the living room. Nana’s answer was a peculiar combination of both expectations, as she answered: “*she’s sleeping in the guest bedroom, on the portable bed*”. The obvious next question was to inquire why she is not simply using the room’s bed, and the answer was: “oh no, it’s not really appropriate! It is the guest bed, imagine I have a guest over and they have to sleep on it after the maid.” Assumptions about the domestic workers’ alien culture and level of cleanliness create a tension in the employers’ safe private haven. In a National study conducted by KAFA and the American University of Beirut on the attitudes of employers towards domestic workers, it was found that based on racial prejudices 27% of the employers think that domestic workers are not clean although they are the ones cleaning their house and cooking their food (KAFA 2016). Keeping separate plates for the worker while she washes all the kitchen’s utensils, and not feeling comfortable with her sleeping on the guest bed while she does the laundry are some of the contradictions that occur as employers cope with the idea of the racialized stranger working and living at once in their residence.

On the worker's part, the cellphone is probably the most significant tool of coping with living with strangers away from the familial home. Shima spends hours speaking and chatting with family members in Bangladesh. Having no clear schedule separating her working hours from her free time, being on the phone delineated for the rest of us in the home a clear separation of her own personal boundaries. This boundary could be broken solely by her whenever she would decide to share this personal exchange with one of us, showing photos sent by her family members. Sharing and displaying photos for migrant domestic workers, especially mothers, "enables to imagine the possibility of return and future reunification" (Fedyuk 2011, 71). Conversations with the family present life in the employer's household as an "empty limbo in which time doesn't move, life is not lived but only work, and the pain of separation with the family is present at all times" (72). The pain of separation in particular heightens during times of family crisis. In one of the days Shima was speaking loudly on the phone and crying in her room. Following her phone call mom and I, greatly worried about what might have happened, inquired about the phone call and Shima told us that her brother might be divorcing his wife. She as a divorced single mother was hoping that the marriage would be saved as she did not want his family to go through the same thing hers did. This was not a good day. We all felt bad and concerned, except that Shima was heartbroken for her own brother and his family and us over a family we do not know except from Shima's family photos. The domestic worker and the employer's family are constantly engaging with "the production of well-being, livability, amiability and comfort", even "in the instances where this is not intended" (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 4).

Employers constantly repeat that *"as long as she lives here, she is part of the family and must be treated as such and feel comfortable"*. This feeling of her being "part of the family" is

nevertheless interrupted by a shifting barrier drawn by the employer over which share of the family's life is she welcome to. In our family, Shima joins whenever we go out for lunch or go to the cinema, yet mom would invite me to join her when she shops for her own clothes as she needs someone else's advice but would not invite Shima. Needless to say, when Shima needs new clothes and mom takes her out shopping it is in an entirely different shop with cheaper prices and lesser quality. It is not always clear where the barrier between the domestic worker's inclusion and exclusion stands. One day while eating lunch together Shima asked me: "*when is Rayane's wedding?*" I replied by saying that Rayane, who is one of my cousins, was getting married the next Saturday. I assumed that she would be invited but discovered later that day from mom that she isn't. "*Why wouldn't they invite her I don't understand?*" Mom replied in a sarcastic disappointed tone that "*they [my cousin and her parents] were really thoughtful*". "*Well they didn't even invite THEIR maid. Imagine her seeing Rayane leaving the house that they share in her wedding gown, knowing that she was not important enough for her to share her happiest moment*".

Complicated Intimacy

In one of the weekends during my stay we decided to spend a couple of days in the village and Nana and Goudla joined us as well. Shortly after our arrival to the rural house in South Lebanon, mom suggested to give Nana, Goudla and I a tour of the garden to show us what Shima and her had been planting this spring. Nana at first resisted the offer, as the topography of the hill where the house is located makes the connection between the house and the leveled garden not very elderly-friendly. She finally agreed to walk to the garden with help, and as mom and I approached and held her arms from each side, she ordered us in a joking manner: "*oh leave me we will all fall together, you don't know how! Goudla will help me*". Goudla then laughed

and with a bright smile rushed to hold Nana's arm as they walked together. Few hours later, we had lunch on the balcony. Finishing my cup of fresh orange juice, I asked mom if there's still any left. She replied that the oranges that we had were only enough for each person to have one cup of orange juice. At that moment, Nana who had brought the oranges suddenly said with surprise *"that's not possible! It was 3 kilos of oranges. Oh I am sure that Goudla forgot some of them in Beirut or ate some of them."* She called Goudla to inquire how the oranges mysteriously evaporated into only seven cups of juice. Already dreading my craving for a second cup as I might be the cause of a conflict, Lynn turns to me and says *"oh you and your orange juice"*. Goudla defended herself by saying that she did not forget any oranges, and the conflict was eventually avoided as I explained to Nana, almost in a pseudoscientific manner, that it's the end of the season and the oranges now probably give less juice. I had no idea whether this is even logical, but Nana seemed to believe me.

In a stretch of no more than four hours, two events happened in which Nana first couldn't trust us with assisting her and favored Goudla, followed by an instant doubt and accusation of Goudla that was toned down by her granddaughter's vague explanation. This story highlights an intricate web of intimacy that on the one hand confuses domestic work with care work (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 4) which in its turn makes the domestic worker a more legitimate care-taker than the rest of the family. On the other hand, the employer is caught in a sense of constant alert about the possibility that the domestic worker's care might be unreliable, a bogus, and a mask, breaking the "part of the family myth" and the belief that the domestic worker could ever truly be trusted (Bonnin and Dawood 2013, 58). Caring is in addition perceived to be influenced by culture. As the stereotype that Arab culture, including the Lebanese culture, as being emotional and affectionate persists, some employers prefer the old days when they felt that

they could trust more the domestic workers' care: "They were different. They were different in terms of their affection. And then there was more loyalty and more sensitivity. The Lebanese maid is like us, after all. We share the same feelings...." (as cited by Jureidini 2009, 94). Employers therefore engage with the narrative of "the affectionate Lebanese" to create a boundary between 'their' (the Lebanese) intimacy, and the intimacy of the racial other.

As family members, we lead different time schedules and daily tasks, which often makes sitting down together at meals an important, and even the only, common activity. Whenever the four of us, mom, dad, Lynn and I, were present in the house at lunch or dinner time it was indisputable that we would be eating together in the dining room. For Shima however this was not the case. Whenever dad was present she did not feel comfortable joining, especially if it was only mom and dad eating alone. If we had guests for lunch or dinner, or visiting in general, she would not join and remains in the kitchen. If it was only mom and I or Lynn who were going to eat together, we would not bother setting the table in the dining room and we would just sit in the kitchen. In these informal meals, we usually ate together with Shima. In Nana's case the situation is different. Although she lives alone together with Goudla, they never sit down together for a meal as Nana has very clear boundaries about not liking to eat with the maid at the same table. To some extent in the beginning the reason why was not really clear for me, until I asked mom about it and she replied that "*it's what she got used to during her childhood back home in Aleppo*". Unlike us, Nana comes from an aristocratic background. The employers' choice of eating, or not eating, together with the domestic worker differs much according to age (the younger the family member the more carefree they are about their boundaries) as well as according to class-based attitudes. These boundaries however, are not solely drawn on the employers' part. Domestic workers might very often prefer to "eat in their own private zones,

away from the madam's gaze" (Bonnin and Dawood 2013, 68), hence contributing to the conditionally created borders.

The gendered nature of the home is in addition a layer that complicates the dynamics of the home's intimacy in the presence of a domestic worker. Feminist geographers, historians and architects have shown in numerous studies of gender and space that the private sphere is traditionally denoted as being of a feminine nature, while the public sphere is perceived as the masculine world of politics and work (Hayden 1980; Roberts 1990; Rose 1993; McDowell 1999). This gendered divide also prevailed in some of the architects' discourses such as modernist architect Adolf Loos. He wrote about the facades of his buildings: "the exterior of the house should resemble a dinner jacket, a male mask, as the unified self, protected by a seamless façade, is masculine" (Colomina 1990, 13). In addition, his interiors "resembled the warm and intimate setting of feminine clothing" (Shapira 2004, 16). With that being said, the man in a household with traditional gender divided roles as well as a live-in domestic worker is the least interactive person with the worker and the most restrained due to her presence. As mentioned earlier, Shima did not feel comfortable to eat with the family whenever dad was present, and during my stay in April they interacted very little. One main reason for the latter is that since mom is not employed, she is the main responsible person for the home-related chores, and therefore Shima's work is supervised solely by her. The other reason however is due to a continuous state of caution. One day in the morning, dad knocked on my bedroom's door telling me that he can't find one of his shirts and that it is probably in the ironing basket. The ironing basket is usually placed in my brother's bedroom, currently used by Shima, as this is where she frequently irons while listening to music. My dad thus requested from me to go and ask Shima if she could find the shirt for him, describing to me how it looks like. This discomfort on both parts reflects the

feeling from the worker's side, of being an outsider to the couple in the family, and from the man's side of a constant presence threatening his intimate life with his wife. In one of the days I was having a conversation with mom in the living room she informed me that one of our distant relatives is divorcing her husband after discovering that he was having an affair with the maid. The oddness of the situation of living with "the other woman" who is both "fascinating and threatening" (Vlieger 2012, 249) is indeed another factor that stands in the way of an intimate unity of the home.

Control

In one of the afternoons in which I was having coffee with Shima in the living room, I told her about the fact that I will be volunteering every Sunday for language lessons at the Migrant Community Center, and asked if she would like to attend any classes or simply to visit the Center. She expressed her interest in learning English and I promised that I would inquire about the beginners' classes. In a later evening when informing my parents about this possibility, my dad disapprovingly stated that I should *"leave people be happy their own way, and not cause trouble for the family"*. When I explained that she did in fact feel interested in learning a new language and perhaps meeting other Bangladeshi migrants he expressed concern over the fact that this might shatter her good working relationship with us, which led to an argument which ended with him accusing me of being reckless in looking over peoples' welfare, especially that they were soon traveling to visit my brother, and Lynn who has finals will stay behind alone with Shima for a couple of weeks. In a similar conversation, Nana expressed the same feelings when I wanted to invite Goudla to join for the May Day Workers' Parade, saying that they won't be in Beirut that weekend anyways, but even if they did she'd be worried about her meeting someone who might convince her to run away.

For the employers, one of the most significant means of controlling the FMDWs' boundaries is through the restriction of their access to public space. In a study investigating the recruitment and working conditions of Bangladeshi and Nepalese domestic workers in Lebanon, 96% of the workers stated that their passport and residency papers were taken from them by their employers (Allaw 2014, 45). The confiscation of identity papers is one mean of controlling the workers' movements and putting pressure on them not to run away. According to the Lebanese *Kafala* law, the "runaway" worker becomes illegal as soon as she escapes from her sponsor's house (Jureidini 2002, 6). Another method of control is deciding when and how the worker can access public space. Throughout the week, these women are confined to the private sphere with the little exceptions of going out to throw the garbage, buy groceries, walk the dogs, go out with the family etc. And in most cases, even these rare ventures to the 'outside world' are under surveillance by the employer. Some employers grant the domestic worker the freedom to go out on her day off, usually nevertheless while imposing a curfew.

As discussed in the introduction, as control over the once 'defenseless' domestic workers of the lower classes began to collapse due to the increased militarization during the civil war, Lebanese upper- and middle-class families sought after the alternative migrant domestic laborers starting from the few years after the beginning of the war. Employing migrant domestic workers renders the employers' anxiety over having to face a competing dominance from the workers' family. In one interview conducted by Jureidini, one employer who has experience with hiring in the past a Lebanese domestic worker and employing a migrant domestic worker at the moment expressed her preference for the latter group. "Now there is a guarantee that your maid won't run away: you have her passport, and if she runs it happens only once, while with the Lebanese, every time she goes to visit her family you're afraid she won't come back." (Jureidini 2009, 94).

Thus in an atmosphere of increased instability and lack of state control paralleled with a strengthening of political familism, the absence of the workers' families is a key factor in ensuring control over the workers' lives.

Racial prejudices contribute in addition to the lack of trust in migrant domestic workers' presence in public space. When arguing with Nana and trying to convince her that there is no danger in Goudla meeting other individuals from her community, she answered by saying "*btenfesid*". This term, meaning "she will be spoiled", is repeatedly stated by Lebanese employers in defense of their restrictions towards FMDWs. Employers constantly fear that their maids will be convinced by other illegal workers that running away and becoming freelance domestic workers is a more economically profitable and emotionally liberating lifestyle. This fear is rooted in the assumptions that these women are of a lower moral background, therefore deeming them as 'unstable teenagers' who may easily be affected negatively by other encounters and fall in the wrong crowd. Aline from *IMAR* mentioned that in an absence of state control, the act of migrant domestic workers living on their own produces a chaos due to the fact, in her opinion, that "*they [the migrants] have no social structure or no understanding of it*" (Aline).

In her objection of granting FMDWs the freedom of living in separate apartments, Aline disregarded the fact that male migrant workers in Lebanon, such as Sudanese men who work in the construction area or as concierges, are never live-in workers. The perception of migrant domestic workers as 'unstable individuals who need to be supervised' is hence not only racialized but also gendered. A friend of Nana had once stated that after finding contraception pills in the possession of the migrant woman working at her place, she decided to ban her from going out any longer on her days off. The fear of sexual involvement with men and the risk of getting pregnant is another major reason why employers restrict the movement of FMDWs.

Employers therefore, if they allow the worker to go out on her day off, encourage her to participate in what is deemed to be ‘appropriate’ activities such as going to the Sunday Mass in the church rather than mixing with male migrant workers and becoming “a social nuisance” (Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Huang 1998, 591). Employers also attempt to influence their workers by tricking them into believing that accessing public spaces on their days off does more harm than good. This strategy entails warning FMDWs of the dangers of being in public spaces by bringing up stories of sexual harassment that women, especially those of another race, constantly face by Lebanese men. According to a story told by a relative, the Filipino maid who used to work at her place was afraid to go out on her day off after this relative had told her of harassment accidents that took place with other domestic workers. Similarly, when I asked mom why Shima does not go out on her own, she mentioned that Shima fears to be out alone in public space. *“I see how domestic workers are treated by Lebanese workers when they go out to buy groceries in shops, it’s sickening”*.

Accompanying Shima to her first English lesson at the Migrant Community Center, I felt on her face a sudden discomfort as we arrived to the Center and greeted the other migrants waiting for the lesson. They were three Sudanese men and two Ethiopian women. Shima turned to me and whispered quietly with a worried expression *“I did not know that there will be men here!”* Not realizing that this would be a problem to her, I apologized about not making it clear that it’s not a women-only migrant center and asked her if she would like to leave. She answered that it is okay and stayed for the lesson. Two hours later as we met again after the end of her class she said that she enjoyed the lesson, but will probably not be able to keep up as soon the summer will come and the family will move temporarily to South Lebanon. I replied that my sister Lynn has offered to drop her off at the center for her weekly lessons after I come back to

Budapest, she replied that it's nice of her but that it will probably not work. Following the lesson as Shima and I had dinner in a nearby Lebanese restaurant, Shima spotted a female migrant worker cleaning the floor in the restaurant and turned to me saying: *"I would never want to work outside the home"*. I asked her why and she said, *"I don't know, I just wouldn't feel comfortable"*. Connecting public spaces with danger has long been a strategy to keep women confined to their homes while ironically women are much more subject to abuse within the home (Valentine 1989; Roberts 2013), on the hand of a partner or an employer in the case of FMDWs, rather than in public spaces.

Resistance

A large majority, in addition to working more than 12 hours per day, are not granted a day of rest or are locked inside the house and forbidden to leave even on their day off which is usually a Sunday. Malnutrition, verbal, physical and sexual abuse, imprisonment, isolation are among the main violations of human rights that lead FMDWs to seek resistance in spaces marked by cruelties. What I referred to in the previous chapter as balconies of socialization transform to suicide balconies where a migrant each week ends her life by throwing herself from the balcony of a tall residential building (Pande 2012, 383). A couple of years ago, a FMDW stabbing the little daughter of her employer to death in her sleep led Leila Abdel Latif, a popular Lebanese figure in the media to urge Lebanese families to place surveillance cameras in the bedrooms. The resistance of FMDWs can however take the form of fighting for their rights to have a private life, to go out into the city where they meet other migrants and form their social networks as well as political collectives.

INTO PUBLIC SPACE

The aim of this thesis is to determine how the architecture and spatial social dynamics of the apartments in Beirut in the presence of live-in FMDWs are at the same time shaped by and shaping the different hierarchies and intimacies based on the intersecting race, class and gender identities. The maid's quarter, in its standardization, creates a sharper partition between the bedrooms and the living area, an in-between that molds the private unity of the home into a blurred *mélange* of private and public. This contemporary architectural arrangement does not only reflect a discriminatory attitude towards the worker but also a mirroring of the tension that arises from her ambiguous position in the home. The myth of the fictive kin, deeply entrenched in the traditional landscape of Arab domestic work, is constantly challenged by the various strategies of invisibility, otherness, complicated intimacies and control that parallel the FMDW with the unreliable stranger. The size and placement of the maid's quarter on the one side, and the social attitudes, embedded in class-based, gendered and racial prejudices, on the other side, are not two constants in a linear equation in which one determines the other. They are rather two variables engaged in continuous dialogue.

Analyzing migrant domestic work in relation to space contributes to the existing academic literature in several aspects. First of all, the theoretical importance of the work would be mainly the emphasis on the significance of the 'spatial' side of the story. Domestic worker and architecture are not two keywords that are usually found together in abundance, and therefore the prime theoretical aim is to bring together the gap between the sociology of space and the field of migration and gender in its study of domestic work. Secondly, the research holds an empirical importance. Migrant domestic work in Lebanon has been for the past decade or so a prevalent topic of study of Lebanon-based psychologists, researchers of migration as well as

NGOs. The aspect of space in this thesis however, sheds a light on the way Lebanese intersectional attitudes towards domestic workers (reflected in dynamics of the private sphere) is in a strong correlation with the change in the Lebanese architecture. While an intersectional analysis that takes into consideration race, class and gender was put in place, the time and space limitations of this thesis did not allow for a broadening of this intersectionality to engage with two additional important layers being nationality and religion. Further development of the topic can hence explore how the relationship of the employer to the worker can also change based on which nationality she comes from, for example, whether the treatment of a Filipina domestic worker is different from that of a Bangladeshi. Furthermore, “space is also produced through religion” (Bonnin and Dawood 2013, 68) and whether the employer and the worker share the same religion or not is an additional layer that merits examination in the Lebanese case.

The tensions between the employer and the live-in domestic worker very often remain unchallenged. Nevertheless resistance can result, at its worst, in producing spaces marked by cruelties. Imprisonment and isolation are among the main violations of human rights that drive many FMDWs to suicide, murdering of a member of the family, psychological disorders and escape from the employer’s house. At its best, resistance can take the form of seeking a “home away from home”, a place where warmth, family and all the qualities associated with it can be met away from the hierarchical and restraining conditions encountered in the private sphere. Resistance also takes the shape of political mobilization that seeks to empower, influence and change. This change is not limited to lobbying for an alternative of the *Kafala* system, but also involves a continuous effort to break the discriminatory and overlapping race, class and gender stereotypes that surround FMDWs. If the maid’s quarter is shaped by and shapes these attitudes, then addressing this architecture of injustice makes an integral part of political action. If

confinement to the employer's private sphere can neither produce a home in its emotional meaning for the worker, nor lead to political mobilization, then public space becomes the promising venue where FMDWs can reclaim their rights as full individuals and legitimate users of the city. On the 1st of May 2016, migrant workers and domestic workers, along with Lebanese and non-Lebanese activists, marched together in the center of Beirut to demand from the Lebanese government to approve and implement the International Labor Organization Convention 189 "convention concerning decent work for domestic workers" (International Labor Organization 2011). Banners making statements such as "*domestic work is work!*" and "*KAFa Kalafa System*" ("enough Kafala system": *kafa* meaning "enough" in Arabic is also the name of a Lebanese NGO fighting for women's rights including those of FMDWs) merged with flags of Senegal, the Philippines and other countries in a political and cultural march. The parade followed by a cultural program of food and merchandise sold by migrants, and dances and plays prepared and performed by FMDWs, reflects a potential in using public space to reposition the "spaces at the margin" (B. S. A. Yeoh and Huang 1999) of FMDWs. Using public space for political protest as well as the reinvention of the home in migrants' collectives such as churches and community centers offers a productive point of research, as well as a moment of liberation for FMDWs, a space for hope.

Two caged partridges in my parents' home: Two years ago dad brought to the house a male and female baby partridge birds. Convincing him to set them free in the forest now that they are old enough contains a lot of parallels with my debate with him over the access of FMDWs to public space. Yes the world out there is a dangerous wild place, forests contain predators, but domestic confinement and caged captivity do not protect. They keep life from going; they freeze time within, enshrouding the confined in a circle of mist through which they watch the outside world.

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