



**BEACH LEISURE LIFESTYLES AND MOBILITIES  
ALONG LEBANESE SHORES**

*Unveiling Complexities, Particularities and Intricacies*

**Jihane Adeimi**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2020

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

---

I Jihane Adeimi hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that this work has not been submitted for any other academic degree or professional qualification.

Jihane Adeimi



## **ABSTRACT**

---

This research explores the differentiated beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities of local beach goers in Lebanon belonging to different ethno-religious communities. Following the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, this study is the first of its kind to primarily examine the complex synergy between gender, race, lifestyle, power relations, mental constructions and beach geographies, exposing the various forces at play behind the beach leisure dynamics in Lebanon. Beach leisure is rediscovered from the point of view of ‘what is escaped’, ‘what is avoided’, ‘what is hidden’, ‘what is overlooked’, ‘what is silenced’, bringing to the fore a different perspective and a less known, quite ‘darker’, side of beach leisure in Lebanon. In terms of research design, a case study approach has been adopted, using two qualitative research methods, namely in-depth interviews and participant observation (personal accounts), with the aim to report various ‘voices’ on the ground as well as personally experience local beaches with an autoethnographic lens. Research findings have revealed a hybrid and liquid seaside, made up of racialised, gendered, sexualised, politicised, ‘religiosed’, classed and lifestylised Lebanese beaches. These findings shed light on how these beaches and practices are being represented, experienced, performed, navigated and negotiated by locals and how these complex beach leisure dynamics are reflecting the complexities and particularities of Lebanese society and the contradictions found within it. It is concluded that understanding these beach leisure dynamics can, possibly, push us to restructure some of our mental constructions, reconsider our own perceptions, question our taken-for-granted knowledge, as well as redefining our understanding of ‘Lebaneseness’.

**Key Words:** Beaches; Beach leisure; Lifestyle; Mobilities; Practices, Identity; Imagined geographies; Lebaneseness

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

A PhD journey feels like a boat voyage in the time of ocean explorers, travelling from a known destination to an unknown one, despite waves, icebergs, storms and pirates. With me being the captain, I relied on maps, books, stars, deep knowledge, intuition, faith and a team, including supervisors, family, friends and more, who provided much needed assistance, whether emotional, financial, material or logistical, and without which I would have most likely gotten lost in the middle of the ocean. A strong support system was key in making my PhD journey a successful one. All the ‘You can do it Jihane’, ‘Keep focusing on your PhD’, ‘You are nearly there’, ‘We are here for you’, ‘Do not give up’, ‘Do not worry’, ‘You have cracked it now’ and the like, are still resonating in my head; as simple as they may sound, these touching words have kept me motivated throughout my long and quite challenging PhD journey in good times and bad times. This page is for all the ones in the forefront and behind the scenes without whom I wouldn’t have reached the stage of writing these sincere acknowledgments now.

Above everything else, I am deeply grateful to my Lord who has granted me the brain, abilities, health and willpower to accomplish this doctoral research.

My greatest and deepest appreciation goes to Prof. Paul Lynch and Dr. Ahmed Hassanien (current supervisory team) as well as Prof. Kevin Hannam and Dr. Ian Lamond (former supervisory team) who have offered me tremendous help and provided me with much knowledge, wise guidance and constant support which kept me on the right path. Their patience, understanding and valuable supervision is much appreciated; I can’t count the number of times I felt blessed and lucky for having them as part of my supervisory team. More than being simple supervisors, they were career mentors, life coaches, from whom I learnt a lot, both at personal and professional levels. Working with all of you was a real delight. After five years of enriching and intense interactions with you, I came out of this journey feeling different,



stronger, wiser, and I thank you for your positive impact on my life which will always be remembered.

A precious and affectionate thank you to my loving family, my 'rock', who have always stood by my side through thick and thin. Your greatest love and support have been an unlimited source of energy and strength, which was much needed during this journey. Your words of encouragement have always put a smile on my face when going through moments of doubts and helped me overcome difficulties by always believing in me and repeating again and again this inspirational saying I shall forever live by: "Where there is a will, there is a way". To my beloved father Joseph I say, no words could express my gratitude for your tremendous financial support without which I would not have been able to pursue my doctoral studies. Thank you for investing and believing in me. You knew I could make it...and I made it. I shall forever make you proud.

I would like to extend my gratefulness to all the participants who took part in this study by sharing their stories, opinions, lived experiences and feelings with me, without which this research would have never seen the light. A big thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your trust and time.

My warm thanks also go out to all my dear friends who knew how to share my joyful moments, soothe my pain and reduce my stress, who were always available when needed, who lent a listening ear and who never stopped encouraging me. David Judson, having you in my life was such a blessing and your loss a painful memory. Thank you for being there for me, for considering me as your 'daughter' in the UK when I was away from my family all through my PhD years. Your loving smile and wise words will never leave my mind. May your soul rest in peace.

And last, but not least, I would like to acknowledge all those who have entered my life and have had a positive impact on me, whether knowingly or unknowingly, making me the woman I have become today. These people include school teachers, university lecturers, employers, students, conference speakers, writers, and many more. You have all been an inspiration to me.

In loving memory of Michel Adeimi (1935 – 2019), my grandfather, who would have loved to share my joy of finishing my PhD but who, I hope, is proud of his granddaughter from where he is now.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Author's declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Aknowledgments .....	iii
List of Tables .....	x
List of Figures .....	xi
<b>Chapter One – Introduction: Setting the Scene .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Me, Myself and my Research .....	1
1.2 Defining the Research Topic .....	4
1.3 Case Study: Lebanon, a Mosaic of Communities, Identities and Lifestyles .....	10
1.4 Thesis Structure .....	13
<b>Chapter Two – Bodies, (Im)Mobilities, Performativities and Beach Leisure Practices..</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Body, Embodiment and Bodily Image.....	15
2.3 (Im)Mobilities and Performativities .....	29
2.4 Performing Beach Leisure .....	42
2.5 Conclusion .....	55
<b>Chapter Three – Hybrid Lifestyles and Beach Leisure Practices in the Arab World ....</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	56
3.2 Understanding Arabs and their Leisure Lifestyles.....	57
3.3 Performing Beach Leisure on Arab Shores: Beyond ‘Sea, Sun and Sand’ Pleasures .....	73
3.4 Enjoying the Beach with an Islamic Ethos .....	82
3.5 Conclusion .....	92
<b>Chapter Four – Research Strategy and Design.....</b>	<b>94</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	94
4.2 Research Paradigm – <i>Interpretivism/Constructivism</i> .....	95
4.3 Research Approach – <i>Qualitative/Inductive</i> .....	99
4.4 Conceptual Framework.....	100

4.5 Research Methodology – <i>Case Study</i> .....	102
4.6 Qualitative Research Methods .....	107
4.7 Data Analysis .....	114
4.8 Reflexivity – <i>Researcher-as-Bricoleur</i> .....	118
4.9 Moral and Ethical Considerations.....	120
4.10 Research Limitations .....	122
4.11 Conclusion .....	123
<b>Chapter Five – (Re)Discovering Beach Leisure in Lebanon: A Personal Story .....</b>	<b>125</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	125
5.2 Beach Leisure Through Childhood and Stereotyped Lenses: <i>How it used to feel</i> .....	126
5.3 My Lived Beach Experiences on Lebanese Shores: <i>There is more than meets the eyes</i> .....	131
5.4 Battle Between Imaginaries and Realities on the Beach: <i>To belong or not to belong?</i> ...	147
5.5 Conclusion .....	149
<b>Chapter Six – Voices from the Field: Exploring the ‘Other’ Face of Lebanese Beaches Beyond Sea, Sand and Sun.....</b>	<b>152</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	152
6.2 Gender Segregation on the Beach: Away from the Male Gaze .....	153
6.3 The Nostalgia/Modernity Nexus on the Beach: Away from the Ordinary .....	164
6.4 Racism on the Beach: Away from the ‘Other’ Body.....	179
6.5 Lifestyle Intolerance on the Beach: Away from Burkinis or Bikinis .....	185
6.6 Conclusion .....	203
<b>Chapter Seven – Critical Discussion of Research Findings .....</b>	<b>205</b>
7.1. Introduction.....	205
7.2 How Do <i>My</i> Beach Leisure Experiences Relate to <i>Theirs</i> ?.....	206
7.3 Territorial Thinking and Otherness: Stereotyped, Gendered and Racialised Lebanese Beaches .....	209
7.4 Hybridity and Fluidity of Beach Leisure in Lebanon .....	216
7.5 Understanding Lebanon’s Particularities and Complexities Through Beach Leisure .....	222
7.6 Conclusion .....	224

<b>Chapter Eight – Conclusions .....</b>	<b>226</b>
8.1 Introduction.....	226
8.2 Revisiting the Research Findings.....	227
8.3 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge.....	233
8.4 Pathways for Future Research .....	234
8.5 Reflections and Final Thoughts .....	235
References.....	238
Appendices.....	258

## **LIST OF TABLES**

---

Table 1. Research in a nutshell .....	9
Table 2. List of interview participants in Lebanon .....	112

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1. Satirical bathing laws .....	71
Figure 2. Satirical drawing making fun of a Muslim cleric .....	72
Figure 3. Conceptual framework design .....	102
Figure 4. Fieldwork area in Lebanon .....	104
Figure 5. Cartoon about the importance of qualitative research .....	107
Figure 6. Cartoon about the importance of qualitative data.....	108
Figure 7. An adult-only resort similar to an open-air club where swimming cannot be practiced but dancing, singing, having a drink and ‘showing off’ is common.....	132
Figure 8. Themed pool party in an adult-only resort: Sophistication and luxury. Britain was celebrated on this day.....	133
Figure 9. Signpost at the entrance of the ladies-only resort.....	135
Figure 10. Rusty, broken materials: This retro resort has not changed much since the 60s..	137
Figure 11. Even original signposts from the ‘Golden’ age were kept .....	137
Figure 12. Outer walls still bearing the scars of the Lebanese civil war .....	138
Figure 13. Simplicity on a northern public beach in Enfeh offering basic facilities .....	139
Figure 14. ‘Anforini’, imbued with Greekness and Lebaneseness .....	140
Figure 15. Burkinis, bikinis and other ‘modest’ beach outfits sharing the same beach .....	141
Figure 16. Tyre public beach with its tent-like restaurants and the city in the background ..	142
Figure 17. Western side of Tyre public beach (Cloud 59) known for its liberal atmosphere	143
Figure 18. Simplicity on a northern public beach in Chekka: that is where mundane life and beach leisure meet.....	145
Figure 19. Myself on a northern public beach during my fieldwork in Lebanon .....	151
Figure 20. What is being escaped on Lebanese shores? .....	204



## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

---

*--- A beautiful thing is never perfect (Egyptian proverb)*

### **1.1 Me, Myself and my Research**

It is said that perfection is the enemy of ‘done’. I never really understood the depth of these words until I embarked on this doctoral journey which stretched my mind and pushed me to find the right equation that can lead me towards my ultimate goal, i.e. the successful completion of my PhD. And here I am, presenting to you my study which is definitely the product of a determined mind and coming from the heart. Despite the limited time frame and all the challenges that came along my way, I feel satisfied with what I have achieved, offering you a one-of-a-kind study that I hope you will enjoy reading as much as I have enjoyed working on it. However, before going to the heart of this study, let me first unveil what is lying behind the choice of this research topic that focuses on the beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities of local residents in Lebanon. This topic did not come out of ‘nothing’; it finds its sources in my childhood experiences and my readings which are closely related to my current research interests. As a Franco-Lebanese, who has lived in various countries including France, Lebanon and the UK, I have always been confronted, as far as I can remember, with the need to (re)define, and (re)question my identity as well as (re)think the lifestyle I was following. As years passed by, my interest in my identity grew and spread further, beyond the borders of my own self, to become a more general interest in identities, lifestyle choices as well as the sense of nationhood. I sometimes find myself examining the blurry borders between how I have been raised, what I have been told, what I have been led to believe about destinations, practices, beliefs, people, and how I actually am experiencing and perceiving these things, finding myself face to face with my own contradictions and complexities as a Franco-Lebanese woman.

During my childhood years, I recall feeling interested in what looked ‘different’, whether in terms of look or practices. The differences in the lifestyle choices and resulting practices - whether between westerners and non-westerners, between Christians and Muslims, between Christians themselves, between Lebanese and French people, between Lebanese people themselves, etc. - have always stirred my curiosity, wondering why other people were displaying a lifestyle that was miles away from the one I had. On the beach, these thoughts became even more pertinent. As a child, I could perceive and sense the lifestyle differences but my lack of maturity and understanding of the real reasons underpinning these differentiated lifestyles between people has made my mind a fertile ground for stereotypes, not realizing that someday I would undertake a doctoral research about lifestyles.

However, how has this research topic matured in my mind? It all started following the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings hit the Arab world. As an avid reader with a strong interest in the socio-political situation in the Arab region, I have felt the need to read a number of articles that tackle the impact of the ‘Arab Spring’ to make up my own mind regarding the unexpected turn of events. Among the articles that I came across, one specific article discussing the calls for the halalisation of beach tourism in Egypt particularly caught my attention as it discussed how Islamists took advantage of this ‘wave of change’ to impose their own vision about beach leisure. The following words pronounced by the Egyptian cleric Yasser Bourhami have left me pensive:

A five-star hotel with no alcohol, a beach for women – sisters – separated from men in a bay where the two sides can enjoy a vacation for a week without sins...The tourist doesn’t have to swim with a bikini and harm our youth (cited in Michael, 2011).

This provocative statement has resonated in my head, leaving me wondering about the differences of perception regarding beach leisure and about the ways these people have in mind to de-westernise, de-liberalise beach leisure as well as reminding me that even the practices that we consider as a given can be criticised and questioned. As I was reading the article, a childhood scene flashed through my mind, taking me back to the day when I was seven or eight years old, innocently swimming in a pool with friends when I suddenly saw a Western-looking lady wearing a thong and standing next to the pool with an apparent carelessness that can hardly be forgotten. The scene hit me hard, and I remember saying to myself: How dare she? Confused, I could not take my eyes off of her, wondering how inappropriate her attitude was, defying our local culture and traditions. These were not the thoughts of a Muslim, but of a Christian; and I was not the only one experiencing such feelings, as I still remember the surprised faces of my friends who were trying to hide their discomfort with smiles. Years have passed since then, and now looking back at this event, I cannot but connect it to the Burqini controversy that is dividing several western societies, where this Islamic bathing suit is being fiercely criticized in the name of respect of the local culture, the very same arguments that are, ironically, used by several conservative Muslims in the Arab world with regards to the western tourism practices. These events, along with my personal life experiences, have certainly led me to developing this research topic, giving it an emotional value that some other ready-made research topics would lack. In light of this, this study, whose aim and objectives will be defined in more detail in the following sections, has been viewed through the lens of a young, female, Christian Franco-Lebanese.

## **1.2 Defining the Research Topic**

Building a research topic is not an easy task as it should embrace several important elements; it should be timely, feasible, interesting, and unique. Undertaking a study without a research aim defined in advance is like a quest for which you have no map, compass or northern star to guide you. Research aims are like a ‘common thread’, binding the research all together. This thesis aims to critically examine the differentiated beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities of local beach goers in Lebanon belonging to different ethno-religious communities, as well as assess the significance of beach leisure practices in experiencing personalised and negotiated versions of Lebanese-ness. Having this in mind, specific research objectives have been set and formulated in a way that accurately defines the type of study and the specific actions that will be taken in order to reach this aim. Research objectives are as follows:

- To critically explore the body of literature on bodies, lifestyles and leisure with an emphasis on the Arab world;
- To critically investigate the motives behind the differentiated beach practices, beach choices as well as the lived beach experiences of beach goers in Lebanon by undertaking on-the-ground research;
- To critically examine the collected data and evaluate what findings teach us about the beach leisure dynamics in Lebanon as well as to what extent they are reflecting the complex socio-cultural realities of this country;
- To lay the groundwork for future research on beach leisure dynamics in Lebanon with a focus on other interesting elements such as generational differences, class differences, etc.

By undertaking this kind of primary research, I will be able to answer the following research question: *How are beach leisure dynamics on Lebanese shores reflecting the complexities, particularities and intricacies of the Lebanese socio-cultural fabric?*

On a different note, my thesis title includes the term ‘lifestyle’ – a key notion found in my research – which is subject of much interpretation and debate. Therefore, I find it useful to provide a short explanation of what is meant by this term. As the American scholar Michael Sobel rightly states,

*Lifestyle* is currently one of the abused words of the English language. Social scientists, journalists, and laymen use it to refer to almost anything of interest, be it fashion, Zen Buddhism, or French cooking...If the 1970s are an indication of things to come, the word *lifestyle* will soon include everything and mean nothing, all at the same time (Sobel, cited in Chaney, 1996:3 - original emphasis).

The above prophecy may not have come literally true but the term is used a great deal, rendering it quite ambiguous and nebulous. In our everyday social life, we employ the notion of lifestyle without necessarily having to explain what we mean as we assume that the term is self-explanatory. As Chaney (1996:4) rightly states, “were we to be challenged we might find it difficult to go beyond a halting and very general description of the sort of things lifestyle refers to.” In fact, lifestyles are clearly features of our modern world, helping us make sense of “what people do, and why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others” (Chaney, 1996:4). These sets of practices and attitudes differentiate people and make sense in particular contexts but these contours of distinction are now blurred in eras of rapid social and physical mobility which encourages new forms of distinction to be continually elaborated.

Moreover, it is also important to explain how my study about beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in Lebanon is filling a ‘research gap’ in the field. In fact, notable scholars have conducted innovative research in the field of beach leisure and their findings – which will be addressed more in detail in the literature review chapters - have valuably contributed to our understanding of its economic, socio-cultural and political dynamics in societies as well as the nature of the link between beach leisure and lifestyle, opening up radically new avenues in tourism and leisure studies. My extensive review of the literature has revealed, to the best of my knowledge, some important limitations in the study of beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in the Arab world, and more specifically in Lebanon; a country where beach leisure keeps being reinvented and negotiated in light of the societal changes over the years. Indeed, no studies have so far been made about the beach leisure practices of local beach goers in Lebanon, and the meanings lying behind them. This research would provide an interesting insight into the complex power equations as well as a useful perspective to view the intersection between beach leisure, identity and politics. On a more general note, this study is timely given the existing controversial discourses on some practices on the beach (burkini, etc.) and on how to negotiate and manage these ‘alternative lifestyles’ that have made their way into the beach leisure sphere.

### 1.2.1 Originality and Contribution

The originality of this research lies in the choice of the topic, in the methodological approach, and in the design of the conceptual framework which looks like no other. Indeed, contrary to many studies about beach leisure which focus on ‘what is sought’ on the beach, this study takes an opposite course and offers a new look on the beach leisure dynamics by focusing on ‘what is escaped’, what beach goers stay away from, what they avoid on the beach. In terms of methodology, no other study about beach leisure in Lebanon has followed a multi-sited case

study approach the way I have done it. First, the focus isn't on one specific beach – which is usually the case when researching beach leisure – but on a multitude of beaches scattered along the Lebanese coast from North to South. Second, my research transcends common research practices by combining my own voice (personal accounts) with the voices of others (interviews). Indeed, whilst some studies only rely on personal accounts while others rely on informants, I have decided to go beyond the traditional divide between 'what the researcher says' and 'what participants say' by including both 'my' voice and 'their' voices in one study. By doing so, the study is taken to a 'next level' as both the researcher *and* the participants are 'part' of it. In short, this 'multidimensional originality' makes this study unique in the sense that it not only explores a 'new territory' in the world of research by bringing to the fore a less known darker side of beach leisure in the Arab world, in this case Lebanon, but also explores a previously unexplored way of doing research about beach leisure, at least not to my knowledge.

On a different note, it is also important to explain how my study about beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in Lebanon is filling a 'research gap' in the field. In fact, notable scholars have conducted innovative research in the field of beach leisure and their findings – which will be addressed more in detail in the literature review chapters - have valuably contributed to our understanding of its economic, socio-cultural and political dynamics in societies as well as the nature of the link between beach leisure and lifestyle, opening up radically new avenues in tourism and leisure studies. My extensive review of the literature has revealed, to the best of my knowledge, some important limitations in the study of beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in the Arab world, and more specifically in Lebanon; a country where beach leisure keeps being reinvented and negotiated in light of the societal changes over the years. Indeed, no studies have so far been made about the beach leisure practices of local beach goers in Lebanon, and the meanings lying behind them. This research would provide an interesting

insight into the complex power equations as well as a useful perspective to view the intersection between beach leisure, identity and politics. On a more general note, this study is timely given the existing controversial discourses on some practices on the beach (burkini, etc.) and on how to negotiate and manage these ‘alternative lifestyles’ that have made their way into the beach leisure sphere.

### 1.2.2 Key Points At-A-Glance and Theoretical Ideas

- Scope of the research: Beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities along Lebanese shores from the perspective of what is ‘escaped’
- Nature of research: Exploratory
- Philosophical stance/Paradigm: Interpretivism/Constructivism
- Methodological approach: Qualitative, Inductive, multi-sited case study
- Country: Lebanon
- Research methods: In-depth interviews and personal accounts based on autoethnographic experiences

Although my research findings rely on raw data gained from this auto-ethnographic fieldwork, prior knowledge about important concepts found in literature is key to building a solid, well-grounded, interdisciplinary research that focuses on gender, race, whiteness, at the Lebanese seaside. By focusing on the concept of ‘coastal liquidity’, the spatio-cultural dynamics and meanings along racialised, gendered, culturalised and lifestylised Lebanese shores can be understood and explained. Through the performative and mobilities lens, the researcher can examine narratives of beach experiences which include stories of exclusion, subjugation, resistance, tolerance, conviviality and intercultural exchange.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BEACH LEISURE LIFESTYLES AND MOBILITIES ALONG LEBANESE SHORES</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unveiling Complexities, Particularities and Intricacies</p>		
<p><b>1</b> <i>I have reviewed the body of literature on the body, power, lifestyles, mobilities, performativity, and beach leisure.</i></p>	<p><b>Literature Review</b></p> <p>General outlook</p>	Chap. Two
<p><b>2</b> <i>...Then, I have focused on how these scholarly concepts were examined in Arab environments.</i></p>	<p><b>Literature Review</b></p> <p>Focus on the Arab world</p>	Chap. Three
<p><b>3</b> <i>...Then, a suitable research methodology was designed, taking into account the philosophical approach, aims/objectives, financial/time constraints and environmental context.</i></p>	<p><b>Design &amp; Methodology</b></p> <p>Interpretivist/Constructivist approach</p> <p>Qualitative, Case study in Lebanon, (Auto)ethnography</p>	Chap. Four
<p><b>4</b> <i>...Then, I have collected data in Lebanon, following the green light given by the research ethics committee.</i></p>	<p><b>Data Collection on the Ground</b></p> <p>Participant observation</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>(Beach goers and key informants from the private/public sector)</p>	
<p><b>5</b> <i>...Then, I have critically analysed the data collected during fieldwork and found key themes.</i></p>	<p><b>Data Analysis / Findings</b></p> <p>Fieldwork data categorised into themes</p> <p>Crystallization / Coding / Mind mapping</p>	Chap. Five/Six
<p><b>6</b> <i>...Then, I have combined the findings (personal accounts and interviews) and examined them in light of the relevant literature.</i></p>	<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Inter-relationship between data and intra-relationship between data and body of literature</p>	Chap. Seven
<p><b>8</b> <i>...Then, I have summarised my research with a focus on how the findings can advance knowledge.</i></p>	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>Contribution to knowledge / Possible future pathways / Final reflections</p>	Chap. Eight

Table 1. Research in a nutshell

### **1.3 Case Study: Lebanon, a Mosaic of Communities, Identities and Lifestyles**

‘Switzerland of the Middle East’, ‘Gate of the Arabs’, ‘Crossroads of East and West’...That is how Lebanon has been defined, pictured and socially represented by westerners and Arabs since its independence from France in 1943. Bordered by Syria and ‘Israel’<sup>1</sup> (See appendix I), the geography and history of Lebanon, at the crossroads of civilisations and continents, made this country attractive to foreign invaders - Greeks, Romans, Ummayad, Crusaders, Ottoman, French, etc. – as well as persecuted religious communities who found in the rugged mountainous lands of Lebanon a safe haven; all brought with them their cultures, beliefs, practices and skills to a place they made theirs (Salibi, 1988). This rich, tumultuous past has left profound marks on the Lebanese nation, making it what it is now: a mosaic of 18 ethno-religious communities including Maronites, Armenians, Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholics, Chaldeans, Sunni, Shia, Druzes, among others (See appendix II). This unique blend of cultures and mixture of influences is well described by the British Journalist Ian Henderson:

Out of my Beirut hotel window the jumble of history is everywhere. A ruined Ottoman fort and an exquisite Maronite chapel are immediately outside. Concrete blocks from the infamous ‘Green Line’, which used to divide the city, are scattered among fallen Roman columns. On the skyline, mosques and churches - there are around 18 official religions in Lebanon - frame the skeleton of the old Holiday Inn, a favourite target for anyone with a rocket launcher during the civil war (Henderson, 2012).

Constitutionally an Arab country, Lebanon - a founding member of the Arab League - has historically maintained strong ties with the West. However, this openness to the East and West, this rich cultural diversity, and this mosaic of communities - each with its own distinctions, specificities, ethnic connotations, and cultural divergences, predilections and aspirations - were

---

<sup>1</sup> Lebanon does not formally recognize the state of Israel.

at times a blessing, and at other times a curse as it made Lebanon a deeply divided nation where Lebanese people have been struggling over what constitutes ‘Lebaneseness’. The sectarian divisions culminated in a 15 year multisided, bloody civil war (1975 – 1990) whose consequences are still shaping the country's face today. Sectarianism has definitely played a pivotal role in the fueling of the Lebanese civil war, to such an extent that a new word “Libanisation” [Lebanonism] formally entered the French language in 1991, defined in Larousse as:

Processus de fragmentation d'un Etat, résultant de l'affrontement entre diverses communautés [Process of fragmentation of a state, as a result of confrontation between diverse communities]<sup>2</sup>.

In fact, the sense of belonging to a sect or confession has shaped the identities of Lebanese people for hundreds of years, usually transcending the sense of nationhood. One of the fathers of the Lebanese constitution, Michel Chiha, once warned: “A nation is a guarantee for confessions but confessions are not a guarantee to the nation” (cited in Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2012). In Lebanon, you are never simply Lebanese; you are Sunni, or Maronite, or Durzi, or Shia, or...etc. That is the reality of Lebanese society, a reality reinforced by confessionalism - the political framework that is tearing the country apart still. But “confessionalism is what makes Lebanon, for better or worse, what it is” (Muhanna, 2010). Confessionalism eventually became its identity, its *raison d'être*:

If you de-sectarianise Lebanon, it ceases to exist. For the identity of Lebanon is sectarian.

It's a Rolls Royce with leather seats, flat screen TV in the back, a cocktail cabinet – but

---

2 [<http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/libanisation/46955>]

square wheels...Beautiful, luxurious, coveted, it doesn't work. But thank God it's got the Lebanese people [...] The Lebanese are their own heroes (Fisk, 2016).

Though this civil war has officially ended, sectarianism is still raging within Lebanon which is a confederation of competing identities and worldviews living cheek-by-jowl in this multi-communitarian society characterised by perpetuity, rootedness, diversity, and everlasting fluidity and movement.

Given the composite nature of the Lebanese nation, cultural hybridity seems to be the rule rather than the exception:

This is the essence of Lebanon and its multifaceted millenarian identity and history; a cacophony of peoples and narratives, rooted in everlasting motion and change, obstinately clinging to their congenital diversity, relentlessly defiant in the face [of] reductive nationalisms (Salameh, 2010:16).

In his novel *Le rocher de Tanios*, the Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf pays tribute and pledges fealty to Lebanon's hybridity and complex mosaic of identities while criticizing those advocates of reductionist identities, of banal reductive labels likening them to 'howling jackals' in the conclusion of his book (cited in Salameh, 2010:17). This complex hybridity, this *métissage*, this mixing and blending of identities and cultures has also been celebrated by some famous Lebanese artists who sing "Lebanon the mixture, Lebanon the mélange, Lebanon East and West and neither of them, Lebanon Christian and Muslim and both of them, Lebanon the in-between" (Kraidy, 2005:137). Lebanese people have been navigating a cultural realm that irrevocably slipped into hybridity in a country pictured as a "house of many mansions", to repeat the words of the famous Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi (Salibi, 1988).

## **1.4 Thesis Structure**

The structure of this thesis is similar to that of an unfolding story in a book, which starts with an introduction followed by a main body in which the reader is taken through the different stages of the research process, gradually leading to a conclusion. This thesis consists of eight chapters. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the research topic within an international context, including the rationale behind the choice of such a topic, and presented the aims and objectives of the study, as well as introducing briefly the research strategy with a short description of Lebanon, the chosen case study. Chapters two and three present an extensive literature review, which is the ‘backbone’ of my research, by critically reviewing the theories, concepts and findings that are relevant to my research topic. Whilst chapter two offers a general picture, chapter three narrows the analysis down to the context of beach leisure in the Arab world. Then, chapter four outlines the philosophical and methodological approach to my research and discusses the ethical and moral considerations as well as reflecting on my positionality as a researcher. Chapters five and six, which are the empirical part of research, present the findings of primary data, i.e. interviews and participant observation, that were collected during my fieldwork in Lebanon. Chapter seven discusses the findings through the lens of the existing literature. Finally, the last chapter summarises the key elements of this study, and highlights its contribution to the body of knowledge and provides recommendations for future research as well as offering some personal reflections on my whole PhD journey which made me re-discover myself and my country in a new light.

## CHAPTER TWO – BODIES, (IM)MOBILITIES, PERFORMATIVITIES AND BEACH LEISURE PRACTICES

---

*--- It all depends on the skin you're living in (Sekou Sundiata)*

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will critically review the literature on the bodies, (im)mobilities, performativities and the performance of beach leisure, with the aim being to outline the theoretical background of this research. The philosophical underpinnings of some relevant theories and concepts have been explored following an interdisciplinary approach. First, an overview of several concepts/notions found within the body and mobilities scholarship is presented with much attention given to feminist writings about the female body and gendered identities as well as racialised discourses. Then, beach leisure lifestyles are explored through works on lifestyle beach destinations, haptic beach experiences and gendered/racialised identities and practices on the beach. Linking scholarly works on the body and (im)mobilities is key for this research as one cannot have a deep understanding of the ways we perform beach leisure without an initial understanding of the human body, of the way it experiences the environment and of the way we, human beings, embody our lifestyles as well as a good understanding of the intersection of complex mobilities in this ever-changing 'fluid' world where places are always 'in play'. Clearly, researching leisure and tourism mobilities is crucial as it involves an understanding of how mobility informs and is informed by leisure as well as how "bodies perform leisure and leisure puts bodies into motion" (Rickly et al., 2017:6), opening up possibilities of investigating areas of overlap between tourism/leisure and lifestyles.

## 2.2 Body, Embodiment and Bodily Image

Throughout the ages, philosophers have analysed the relationship between the body and the mind or spirit. Some societies were disgusted, inconvenienced, threatened, excited or intimidated by the body. In fact, a number of notable ancient Greek philosophers regarded everyday practices, such as eating and food preparation, as being beneath philosophical study, or in other words, not worth being studied philosophically as they threatened pure thought and disturbed their cogitations. According to Plato, the true philosopher must stringently try to ignore the bodily pleasures and adornments in his pure quest of truth and knowledge: “The body intrudes once more into our investigations, interrupting, disturbing, distracting, and preventing us from getting a glimpse of the truth” (cited in Lupton, 1996:2). This mind-body dichotomy has remained pervasive in western philosophy. Indeed, the philosophy of Descartes, extremely popular and fashionable throughout much of Europe during the Enlightenment period, claimed that the human being was essentially a ‘thinking thing’, a *res cogitans*, an immaterial mind or spirit united to a body but separate from it. Indeed, Cartesian dualism posits the mind and the body as two distinct substances, with the mind being prioritised over the body which was simply regarded as an inferior biological machine. In the same line of thought, Francois Poullain de la Barre famously asserted in 1673 that “the mind has no sex” (Thatcher, 2016:65). Interestingly, this dualism between mind and body is also found in most religions which stress the need to release the spirit by transcending the body. As Bordo (2003) states, “that which is not-body is the highest, the best, the noblest, the closest to God; that which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self-realization” (2003:5). According to Christian teachings, for instance, “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). The more we transcended the body, the closer we become to God for the distinguishing characteristic of God is that He is without body. In modern times, mind/body dualism has been viewed as more than just a philosophical proposition; it is a practical metaphysics “that has been deployed and socially embodied in

medicine, law, literary and artistic representations, the psychological construction of the self, interpersonal relationships, popular culture and advertisements” (Bordo, cited in Cregan, 2006:169).

### 2.2.1 The Civilised/Socialised Body

From a classical sociological perspective, the body is divided into two distinct sides: the natural and the cultural (Obrador Pons, 2003; Grosz, 1995). According to the British sociologist Bryan Turner, one of the main common themes in sociology is the idea that,

Man has been wrenched from the natural world by the creation of civilized societies which require institutional regulations of violence (especially the control of sexuality). The growth of civilization requires simultaneously the restraint of the body and the cultivation of character in the interest of social stability. The growth of instrumental rationality as the main principle of rationalization requires the suppression of desire, but is also the wellspring of art, imagination and creativity (cited in Obrador Pons, 2003:54).

There have been differences between civilisations in terms of ‘socialisation’ of the body, resulting in a wide range of bodily practices spread around the globe. In the West, mankind was believed to be universal. In eighteenth century France, while there was a great interest in the remote peoples of the earth, in the unfamiliar civilizations of the East, in the races of America and Africa, people were shocked to discover the heterogeneous bodily practices and manners of the ‘Other’, some of which were perceived as uncivilised, even ‘barbarian’ (Soler, 2018: 176-7), by a number of writers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu who looked down upon the Hurons or Persians but hold up the glass to Western manners and morals. On another hand, other thinkers took the pen to defend Dryden's ‘noble savage’, or what we now call cultural relativism. In his famous essay *Of Cannibals* (1580), the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne reported that the Tupinambá people of Brazil ceremoniously eat the bodies of their



dead enemies as a matter of honour. However, he reminded his readers that cannibals are neither noble nor especially good, but not worse than 16th-century Europeans who behave even more barbarously when they burn each other alive for disagreeing about religion: “One calls ‘barbarism’ whatever he is not accustomed to”, wrote Montaigne (cited in Pape, 2016:200). Indeed, as Cave (2007) explains, these ‘cannibal’ practices “make sense” in their own right and are contrasted with “modes of behavior in the France of the wars of religion which appear as distinctly less attractive, such as torture and barbarous methods of execution.” (2007:81-82). Furthermore, in his pamphlet *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America* (1784), Benjamin Franklin deplored the use of the term ‘savages’ for Native Americans: “Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs” (Franklin, cited in Reilly et al., 2003:105). One French travel writer, the Baron de Lahontan, described Adario, one Canadian Indian who was perhaps a figure of the ‘noble savage’, in these terms:

Adario looks with compassion on poor civilized man - no courage, no strength, incapable of providing himself with food and shelter: a degenerate, a moral *crétin*, a figure of fun in his blue coat, his red hose, his black hat, his white plume and his green ribands (...)

The Savage obeys the will of Nature, his kindly mother, therefore he is happy. It is civilized folk who are the real barbarians (cited in Hazard, 2013:13-14 – original emphasis).

Modern civilisations have changed our perceptions of bodies. From being a product of nature the body has become a product of art that can be used to convey preferred social meanings (Soler, 2018). Indeed, we use, deform and abuse the body for fitting into a homogeneous cultural mould. There is today, as Thompson and Hirschman (1995) argue, a form of socialisation that inspires,

a deeply internalized duty to discipline and normalize one's body. To be thinner, more toned, less gray, and less wrinkled, and to hide a variety of imperfections are acts of self-care that serve to discipline the body that has, without conscious consent, deviated from valued cultural norms of appearance (1995:150).

In the 1970's, female body modification became a major theme in feminist writing. As the American feminist Andrea Dworkin states, "in our culture not one part of a women's body is left untouched, unaltered ... From head to toe, every feature of a woman's face, every section of her body, is subject to modification, alteration" (Dworkin, cited in DeMello, 2014:174).

Nonetheless, the female body that we call 'civilised' ignores the heterogenous manners of other civilisations. This delicate question triggered controversies since, fundamentally, other practices of the body are always perceived to be 'uncivilised' and criticised in the name of the hegemonic discourse of human rights:

When we hear talk of female genital mutilation, we, in our part of the world, shudder; when we think about the atrophied feet of Chinese women over the centuries (that is no longer practised) or of the neck or the lips of certain African women...we raise our eyebrows (Soler, 2018:177).

On a different note, education has been used to tame the body, to make it enter into the collectivising practices of the body. Indeed, we transmit social conventions to the child by teaching him how to eat, how to present himself, etc. and we bend the child to *habitus* in order to observe good manners, to use the famous term of Pierre Bourdieu. As the french philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault explains, one's body has been interpreted by Western cultures as a material sign of the moral character 'within' (cited in Martin et al., 1999:166). This is evident in children's television and books whereby "the wicked witch and evil giant are ugly and the heroic prince and virtuous princess are attractive. In advertising, attractive

endorsers appear in positive settings (e.g., fancy cars, fashionable clothes)” (Eagly et al., cited in Martin et al., 1999:166). Clearly, the existence of the body as a living entity is not acknowledged; the body appears, instead, as a subordinated term from which and upon which the mind-subject operates. In fact, Foucault’s concept of ‘docile bodies’ (McLaren, 2002) illuminates the idea that the body is a malleable object on which disciplinary force is acted. Foucault stresses the importance of modern power - non-authoritarian, non-conspiratorial, and non-orchestrated – in producing and normalising bodies to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination (Bordo, 2003). Indeed, we need to stop imagining ‘power’ as something people ‘have’ and instead as a network of non-centralised forces. In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault offers the reader an account of the eighteenth-century soldier’s subjection to discipline:

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body...posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, read at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit (cited in Raber, 2004:57-58).

Apart from military, Foucault focuses on a range of institutions from prisons to schools where docile bodies, capable of being manipulated, shaped, trained, are disciplined through “mechanics of power” which define “how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes” (Foucault, cited in Clark, 2016:88). Furthermore, bodies can be disciplined through individual self-surveillance and self-correction to norms, without the use of any kind of physical restraint or coercion:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising

to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself (Foucault, cited in Bordo, 1999:253).

Drawing on the work of Foucault, feminist attention focused on the power relations working through the disciplinary practices shaping female bodies (see Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1993). 90s feminists' accounts stress the way in which women actively discipline their own bodies not only to avoid social punishments, but also to derive certain kinds of pleasure. In the same vein, Thompson and Hirschman (1995) stress the importance of the complex cultural ideology of the body - manifested through mass media, advertising, everyday beliefs, scientific pronouncements, interpersonal relationships, and the course of social encounters - in shaping the ways individuals interpret the symbolic meanings of the body and in underlying their sense of an ideal or more desirable body and the consumption activities that these self-perceptions motivate. In this sense, it becomes natural for the individual to become an agent of surveillance of his/her own self, even when not being actually observed by another; it is the mind that "observes its body, critiques its appearance and form, and engages in activities – such as exercise, surgery, dieting - to transform the body into a more desired form" (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995:139). However, this interiorising gaze is distinctively gendered as female bodies are subject to this disciplinary gaze much more than male bodies.

### 2.2.2 The Lived Body

Breaking with the Cartesian dualistic mind-body view, the postmodern philosophical view regards the body as a source of knowledge, blurring the boundaries between body and knowledge and effectively ending the long-standing tradition of marginalising the lived-body.

Indeed, concerns have been expressed over the predominance of ‘social constructionism’ in social theory that marginalises lived body-subjects:

The de-realization of the body-subject through representation leaves it (as flesh) marginalized. The consequence of this situation is that, within discourse, the lived body is rendered knowable only through the constructions that are its multiple realities, but its existence as a lived entity is effectively denied (Radley, cited in Wheatley, 2005:69).

At the centre of phenomenological accounts of embodiment, i.e. the lived experience of the body, is our mode of being-in-the-world (Young, 2005:9) and the way our bodily experiences - gendered, raced, classed, differently abled and differently aged bodies -play a role in our subjective sense of self. Simply put, instead of referring to the body as if it was an external thing or speaking about carrying our bodies or having bodies, we talk about *being* a body, which sees, feels, hears, perceives, touches, smells, and holds our everyday world. It would be equally sensible to speak about “the ways in which we do our bodies, since we are embodied” (Turner, 1997:18-19). The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty – influenced by the work of Heidegger and Husserl – has questioned the long philosophical tradition of placing consciousness as the source of knowledge by advancing the argument for embodiment. According to Merleau-Ponty (1968), the body is the primary site of knowing the world, making body and mind inseparable. To put it in his terms, “they could not be given to us as ideas except in a carnal experience” where knowledge has “been acquired only through its commerce with the visible, to which they remain attached” (1968:150). He talks about the human being as a lived body, or what he terms as un *corps vécu*. Indeed, the body is not itself “a thing, an interstitial matter, a connective tissue, but a sensible for itself” (1968:135). The primacy of embodiment has even led him towards what he was to call the ontology of “the flesh of the world” (*la chair du monde*). In other words, the body is not only written, but it also writes; it has an active role in the configuration of human experience and its meaning and utopias

(Obrador Pons, 2003). Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty (2002) notes that the lived experiences of the body are not of such a pure kind as they are experiences of bodies in situations in which it is impossible to disentangle nature and culture, matter and meaning:

Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being—and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life (2002:220).

Contrary to a biological account of embodiment, the body is regarded as the subject of culture (Merleau Ponty, 2002). Similarly, Moi (1999) argues that the lived body is always a body in a situation, a body always subjected to culture. In other words, the body is simultaneously situated and a situation; situated as it is always inhabiting particular spaces and time and a situation as it will always be conditioning our lives and making them possible.

As to whether or not the subject is separated from the body, views greatly differ. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argues that the subject and the body are not One since having a body is decided at the level of the use we can make of it (Soler, 2018) while the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel considers the self as the body: “I do not make use of my body. *I am my body*” (cited in McGuire, 1990:285 - emphasis added). Echoing the writings of Lacan, Soler (2014:177) puts it in these terms:

Discourse gives us our bodies (...) The subject, the one who speaks, in contrast to the animal, is not his body. We see this in the fact that he ... survives it for a time in memory, whereas his body is returned to dust.

Questioning the impact of modernity on our lived bodies, Lupton (1996) warns that modern life has been imposing itself upon the ‘natural’ rhythms and process of the human body, with ‘civilization’ becoming a retreat from authenticity, “a false patina over the ‘real’ self and body”

(Lupton, 1996:86). Yet, Grosz (1995:108) states that body and space are mutually defining, making therefore a “two-way linkage that could be defined as an interface”. In the same vein, Veijola and Jokinen (1994) argue that the body provides a point of ‘affordance’ between ourselves and our surroundings. In Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) views, the body also spatialises in that it ‘creates’ places by means of uniting us directly with people, spaces and things through its own ontogenesis, i.e. through the stages of its development as organism (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:136). With the publication of *The Second Sex* (1949), the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir provides a complex account of the intertwining of the material and the cultural in the formation of our embodied selves. Along with other phenomenologists, de Beauvoir recognizes that “to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world” (de Beauvoir, cited in Coole, 2013:171). What is central to her account is that such bodily existence and the point of view it provides, is lived differently by men and women.

However, in her phenomenological work on raced and gendered identities, Alcoff (2006) stresses the importance of the visual bodily markers, what she calls ‘visible identities’, in determining social identities and how one perceives and is perceived by others. Even though both race and sex are socially produced,

[they] operate ineluctably through their bodily markers; they do not transcend their physical manifestation because they are their physical manifestation (...) They are most definitely physical, marked on and through the body, lived as a material experience, visible as surface phenomena (2006:102).

In this sense, Moi (1999) suggests that categories of both sex and gender should be replaced with the category of the ‘lived body’ for the lived experience of the body plays a crucial role in defining our sexed identity.

### 2.2.3 The Gendered Female Body

The female body came to prominence in 19th century feminism in Britain through the campaign led by Josephine Butler who defended ideas of individual rights such as rights over one's body. Her arguments were picked up later by other feminists who stressed women's rights to decide and control what happens to their bodies. In its most extreme example, this lack of control over one's body was experienced by slave women whose bodies became literally the property of another:

Her back and her muscle...pressed into field labour where she was forced to...work like men. Her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the white man and his family...Her vagina used for his sexual pleasure...the womb...the place of capital investment...the resulting child the...surplus worth money on the slave market (Omolade, cited in Bordo, 2003:22).

Following the same line of thought, de Beauvoir provides a phenomenology of the female body as lived throughout the different stages of a woman's life. During childhood, the young girl's body is experienced in a different way from that of the young boy. Indeed, while the boy is encouraged to climb trees and play rough games, the girl is encouraged to treat her whole person as a doll, "a passive object ... an inert given object" (de Beauvoir, cited in Sayers, 2016:390). As de Beauvoir notes, women live their bodies in an objectified way, internalising the gaze of the other and producing their bodies as objects for others. According to the French feminist, the objectification of the female body is caused by the education given to young girls who learn to please others; the consequence of which being an inhibition of spontaneous movements and, what she calls "exuberance of life".



In the 18th century, Wollstonecraft saw the dangers of this 'objectification' of female bodies for others' appraisal and questioned it in her ground-breaking work of literature *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which provides a clear example of the disciplining of the female body, as Foucault ever articulated:

To preserve personal beauty, woman's glory! The limbs and faculties are cramped with worse than Chinese bands, and the sedentary life which they are condemned to live, whilst boys frolic in the open air, weakens the muscles and relaxes the nerves... artificial notions of beauty, and false descriptions of sensibility have been early entangled with her motives of action...Genteel women are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies, and glory in their subjection...women are everywhere in this deplorable state...taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison (Wollstonecraft, cited in Bordo, 2003:18).

Similarly, Bartky (1990) provides a detailed account of this self-surveillance which shows how women are subject to the pressures of 'beauty' which make them obedient to patriarchy:

The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has cake or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless, self-surveillance (Bartky, cited in Richardson, 2016:12).

Biologically speaking, men do not age any 'better' than women but the signs of age are culturally accepted, if not even respected or exalted in men while they are denigrated in women. As Davis states, it is "difficult to see men as the new victims of the 'beauty myth'" (cited in

Richardson, 2016:13), although men are also being increasingly subject to the tyranny of beauty (Bordo, 1999).

On a different note, Young (2005) focuses on distinctive aspects of female embodiment that yield distinct ways of being in the world. In her accounts about ‘Pregnant Embodiment’, ‘Breasted Experience’ and ‘Menstrual Meditations’, she suggests that it is such everyday ordinary experiences of embodiment, variable as they are, that constitute women's sense of their identity as women. Echoing de Beauvoir, Young (2005) argues that women often experience their bodies as things “looked at and acted upon” (2005:39) and “as a burden, which must be dragged and prodded along, and at the same time protected” (2005:36). For both de Beauvoir and Young, such experiences of female embodiment are not a consequence of anatomy but rather of the situation of women in contemporary society. However, Alcoff (2006) stresses that such phenomenological accounts of female bodies “require a cross-indexing by cultural and ethnic specificity” (2006:107). Unlike de Beauvoir, who believes that “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman” (2010:293), corporeal feminists such as Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz have stressed the specificity of the lived female body by prioritising the materiality of the body, nature over culture. Indeed, Braidotti claims that sexual difference is ontological: “‘being-a-woman’ is always already there as the ontological precondition for my existential becoming a subject” (Braidotti, 2011:271-2). In the same vein, Grosz (1994) insists on “the irreducible specificity of women's bodies, the bodies of *all* women, independent of class, race and history”, ruling out the possibility of men to “feel or experience what it is like to be, to live, as women” (1994:207). In this sense, biological materialities are the condition which makes such sexed identities possible but, however, do not yield sexual identities for these will be historically and socially variable.

#### 2.2.4 Bodily Imaginaries

Body image is commonly defined as a “mental construction” in its contemporary theoretical usage (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995:150) which can “deviate substantially from a person’s objective physical characteristics” (Myers and Biocca, cited in Thompson and Hirschman, 1995:150). According to Cash (2004), body image refers to “the multifaceted psychological experience of embodiment, especially but not exclusively one’s physical appearance (...) ‘Body image is body images’. It encompasses one’s body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes, including thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors” (Cash, 2004:1-2). From a phenomenological standpoint, Merleau-Ponty (2002) views body image, or in other words body schema, as the total awareness we have of the shape or form of our body in the inter-sensory world. Such body schemas constitute our sense of ourselves as corporeal beings and make our living bodies dynamically engaging with the world: “The body image is finally a way of stating that my body is in-the-world” (2002:115). Similarly, Sartre (2004) argues that imagination is a fundamental mode of human existence for it is by means of the imagination that we are able to best experience the freedom of consciousness. Indeed, he believes that “‘being-in-the-world’ is the necessary condition of imagination” (Sartre, 2004:186). However, the problematic resilience of the imagination and its resistance to change has been highlighted by Spinoza who claims that such ways of thinking can only be changed through the use of affect for we cannot change people's way of experiencing the world simply by offering them contrary facts; we need instead to offer them alternative pictures which make emotional (imaginative) and not only cognitive sense: “No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect” (cited in Lennon, 2015:64). In the same vein, Sartre explains how image and affect are internally related: “If the image of a dead one appears to me suddenly...the ache in my heart is part of the image” (Sartre, cited in Lennon, 2015:56).

From a feminist perspective, Irigaray (1997) and Grosz (1995) point out the impossibility to separate ourselves from the mental representation of our bodies. Indeed, our body image is formed by the way the body is experienced and emotionally invested rather than cognitively represented; some of our bodily zones and shapes are significant to us, while others are barely noticed. Challenging the negative imaginary of the female body, Irigaray (1997) argues for the need to reconstruct an inter-connected imaginary of the female body which is livable and positive for women. Irigaray (1997) criticises the privileging of the masculine (*Phallus*) in the construction of meaning in Western philosophy - what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls 'phallogocentrism' – and suggests that this thinking would be different if we took a re-imagined female body as a starting point instead of the male body. This respect for nature, or in other words, importance given to the materiality of the imaginary female body is also found in the work of Battersby (1998) who explores “what happens to the notion of identity if we treat the embodied female as the norm for models of the self” (1998:38); natality makes evident that identity “erupts from the flesh” (1998:39). However, Spivak (1988) warns of a tendency of some western feminist thoughts to consider Western women as ‘universal’ women, ignoring the very particular experiences of ‘Third World’ women, while Whitford (1991) calls for a creative description of the female body, instead of an ‘accurate’ one, to enable women to both feel and think differently about their embodied form. On a different note, Gatens (1996) explores the notion of the imaginary body which is a culturally constructed ideal self-image, in which the historical and cultural specificity of masculinity and femininity becomes apparent:

It is to the imaginary body that we must look to find the key or the code to the decipherment of the social and personal significance of male and female biologies as lived in culture, that is, masculinity and femininity (1996:12).

### **2.3 (Im)Mobilities and Performativities**

The ‘mobility turn’ has shaken the world of social sciences by breaking down some long-held beliefs and well-known concepts. Indeed, categorical ways of thinking of home/away, host/guest, work/leisure, among others, have been strongly challenged and pushed into new trans-disciplinary terrain (Hannam, 2009; Rickly et al., 2017:1). Thinking in terms of ‘mobilities’, places are like ‘ships’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006:214), moving around, travelling quickly or slowly such as, for example, stations, hotels, motorways, resorts, airports, leisure complexes, cosmopolitan cities, beaches, galleries, roadside parks and so on. These ‘places of movement’ depend upon what is practiced within them, making them implicated within complex networks by which “hosts, guests, buildings, objects, and machines are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times” (Sheller and Urry, 2006:214). Since the age of Aristotle, writers, thinkers, performers and activists have wrestled with what ‘performance’ is all about. How performances become ‘performative’? These traces of these key terms can be found everywhere: in the theatre, in the streets, in philosophy, in questions of race and gender, in the sentences we speak. Performativity is profoundly bodily (Crouch, 2009), emphasising the importance of the expressive body. People’s bodies matter. Through performativities, individuals make sense of the world; they are able to feel, think and rethink. Performativity is simply not about ‘being’ or ‘belonging’ but rather about ‘becoming’ as performativities can open up new, reconstitutive possibilities. In fact, the significance of ‘becoming’ tends to be considered in terms of a profound rearrangement of the self:

The reconfiguring, or reconstitutive potential of performance, is increasingly cited in terms of performativity, as modulated life and discovering the new and the unexpected, in ways that may reconfigure the self, in a process of what life (duration, memory,

consciousness) brings to the world: the new, the movement of actualization of the virtual, expansiveness, opening up, enabling the unexpected (Crouch, 2009:90).

The ongoing and multiple interrelations of things, space and time result in multiple routes of 'becoming' (Crouch, 2009). Identities then are complex whose knots of complexity are performatively brought into being and, as Stuart Hall asserts,

are not that transparent or unproblematic. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (cited in Nayel, 2017:16).

In fact, the power of the performative to disrupt normative identities and values means that, as Vigo (2010:65) suggests, "performativity...is about "confusing order". In this sense, performativity can constitute a "cultural act, critical perspective, a political intervention" (Roach, cited in crouch, 2009:90) and "only in the performative can new strategies be constituted" (Patton, cited in Crouch, 2009:90). Clearly, performativity demonstrates that power reaches into the very grain of individuals, as addressed extensively by Michel Foucault, touching their bodies and inserting itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives. Therefore, it is said that performativity goes beyond culture as 'doing' and ethnicity as 'being' towards situating power relations that define culture, ethnicity and identity. Following this line of thought, Judith Butler (1990) and Dolan (2001) maintain that the concept of performativity constructs non essentialised views on identities which is essential for understanding both gender and race performativities.

### 2.3.1 Performing Racialised and Gendered Discourses: Segregated Bodies Along Visible/Invisible Lines

Conventional wisdom has it that segregation – characterised by unevenness, concentration and (a lack of) diversity - divides people along religious, ethnic, gender or lifestyle lines, among other things. Although ‘de jure’ segregation – the kind that is enforced by law – is gradually becoming a thing of the past, ‘de facto’ segregation, the one experienced on the ground as a result of custom, circumstance, or personal choice, is still thriving, often driven by fear, hate, or lack of comfort. According to Jackson (2011), “the centre needs its margin; hence the paradox that the ‘others’...are marginalized but also given their own places: the slum, the ghetto, the zenana, the harem, the colony, the closet, the Third World, the private.” (Jackson, 2011:57). Aside from physical, visible borders, other invisible boundaries affect human behaviour and keep individuals in place, such as the boundaries enclosing ghettos and ethnically segregated areas but also the glass ceilings placed above professional women, not to mention the insidiously powerful boundaries which often lie within the female psyche as a result of women’s socialisation. Indeed, as the American feminist Susan Brownmiller puts it, “femininity itself has been defined as ‘a tradition of imposed limitations’” (Brownmiller, cited in Jackson, 2011:57).

In terms of racialised lines, the USA can be taken as an example where many think of racial segregation as something that is in the past because it was legally outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but the reality is quite another. During the Jim Crow segregation era, which lasted another one hundred years after the formal end of slavery in 1865, the newly freed, formerly enslaved Black bodies have been subjected to pressure and kept under strict surveillance by using a set of tools and strategies coordinated to provide, “both literal and symbolic policing of Black bodies, controlling where Blacks could live, which schools they could attend, and even the days of the week they were allowed to swim in the community pool, if they were allowed

to swim at all” (Hattery and Smith, 2018:6). These segregatory practices have been experienced not only in the Deep South but also in other northern American cities. Indeed, the race riots in Chicago in the summer of 1919 were sparked by an incident that many of us today would consider it inconceivable. The story of Eugene Williams, a seventeen-year-old Black youth, who was swimming in Lake Michigan is not an isolated case:

Unbeknownst to him, the lake had a racial dividing line (Twenty-Ninth Street), and as he was swimming he crossed over into what was known by custom as the “white” swimming area. There was no actual marker or set of buoys indicating the line. Rather people, especially Blacks, were supposed to just “know” where it was...Several white men who were standing nearby threw rocks at him. Several of the rocks hit Eugene, he lost his grip on a railroad tie he was holding on to, and he drowned (Hattery and Smith, 2018:29-30).

While accounts vary, the coverage in the New York Times has revealed that young Williams was doing nothing more than swimming and was accosted by white men who did not want him crossing a racial divide and coming close to the “white” part of the segregated lake. Intolerant people resort to racial profiling to police bodies and protect the ‘invisible’ boundaries of whiteness (Hattery and Smith, 2018). On a different note, the so-called ‘white flight’ segregation – caused by white residents choosing to move to the suburbs rather than live with black residents - is a good illustration of this perpetuation of segregation which moved away from the legal realm; changing laws is something but change people’s hearts and minds is a different story.

These invisible boundaries are also experienced by women so that the remaking of spaces is central to much feminist work. In fact, women’s mobility in public spaces is still curtailed by cultural ideologies of respectability, modesty, purity as well as the practice of sexual harassment – which is called ‘eve teasing’ in India - or even aggression. In South Asia, for instance, both



Hindu and Muslim women have historically been subjected to various forms of *purdah* which refers not only to the covering of the female body, but also to the practices of gender segregation, ranging from minor restrictions on women's mobility to total incarceration within the home. Literally meaning 'veil' or 'curtain', *Purdah* expresses "the symbolic, physical and economic demarcation of the universe along gender lines" (Kabeer, cited in Germanà, 2011:79). South Asian feminist writers such as Anita Desai and Shadi Deshpande, have challenged traditional Hindu conceptions of women's 'place' in the physical world and in the social order by writing empowering novels which feature female protagonists who are unwilling to abide by the patriarchal status quo. Desai has progressively expanded the geographical settings of her novels, "gradually giving her female protagonists more space – more physical space, more psychological space, more space to move and think freely" (Jackson, 2011:59). Interestingly, Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* reveals that negotiating these invisible gendered lines may be even more complex for South Asian women living in the West:

Overturning the popular western perception of 'Third World women' – particularly Muslim women – as repressed and secluded in their countries of origin, Nazneen [a Bangladeshi immigrant who arrives in London as a bride in an arranged marriage] is actually far more enclosed in her domestic setting within the London housing estate than she ever was in Bangladesh (Jackson, 2011:64).

In her controversial novel, the narrator highlights the intricacies of the everyday life of her female protagonist whose space is metaphorically as well as literally constricted during her first years in London, by describing for example how Nazneen understood that "she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (Ali, cited in Jackson, 2011:64-65). The domestic interior was Nazneen's world and her neighbourhood seems to have an invisible boundary which she rarely crosses. This *Purdah*

experience in London is in sharp contrast to the everyday life of her sister Hasina in Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh, a country...[with] strong norms of purdah...women appeared to have abandoned old norms in response to new opportunities...by contrast, in Britain...Bangladeshi women were largely found working from home, in apparent conformity with purdah norms (Kabeer, cited in Jackson, 2011:65).

Critique of this patriarchal entrapment is also found in the work of the Moroccan feminist writer Fatima Mernissi who writes that “Muslim sexuality is territorial” and that a woman has no right to use male spaces since “if she enters them, she is upsetting the male’s order and his peace of mind” (Mernissi, cited in Germanà, 2011:68-69). However, she suggests that the very notion of segregation is naturally “accompanied by an increased aura of transgression, which is bound to the idea of trespassing such boundaries.” This notion of gendered territoriality is also found in the writings of Sarah Graham-Brown:

Sexual segregation and seclusion did not mean simply the creation of a boundary between public and private space but the control of women’s movements and visibility whether they were at home, at work in the fields or walking in the street (Graham-Brown, cited in Germanà, 2011:68-69).

In fact, the presence of a female body can upset accepted patriarchal norms and gender roles with regard to segregation. More generally, a body can be the site of conflict and untold battles, “at once intensely visible, but at the same time unrecognised” (Upstone, cited in Germanà, 2011:67).

On a more positive note, some segregatory practices have become have become ‘trendy’ and are sought after. As a matter of fact, the voluntary separation of men and women occurring in many countries as a matter of personal choice according to socio-cultural norms is commonly

found in settings like private clubs, interest-based membership organizations, professional sports teams, religious organizations, and private recreational facilities. Segregation matters. However, whilst segregation conjures up images “of intolerance, of acts of injustice, of inequality of opportunity” and of outright intolerance (Harris and Johnston, 2020:3), it is fair to say that geographical clustering and the concentration of particular groups into particular places can have both positive and negative consequences (Harris and Johnston, 2020:3). Indeed, these enforced territorial divisions can be critically examined without being systematically vilified, without the presumption that segregation is invariably a bad thing.

### 2.3.2 Performing and Gazing within Tourism/Leisure Contexts

Part of the reaction against the passive ‘gaze’ of visitors has been to incorporate the language of performativity into the tourism literature to describe the active practices and embodied experiences through which tourism itself is constructed as well as social identities. Through the prism of performativity, tourists are active participants in the phenomenon of tourism, and are ‘coproducers’ of places in which tourism occurs or, to put it slightly differently, “tourists participate in the co-production of the value of their tourist experience” (Sherlock, 2014:190-191). Following his study of tourist photography in northern Europe, Larsen (2005:425-26) reveals that “places are not only or even primarily visited for their immanent attributes but are also, and more centrally, woven into the webs of stories and narratives people produce when they sustain and construct their social identities”. In the same vein, Edensor (2001:71) recognises that “tourist performance maps out individual and group identities”. This means that not only is tourism itself performed, but also individual and group identity is performed at tourism sites. Considering places as fluid and created through performance, Coleman and Crang (2002:10) advocate for “a sense of performativity of place rather than just performance in place”, challenging the often unquestioned assumption that place itself is stationary and stable.

From a Butlerian perspective, tourist performances are re-enactments of prior performances, opening up the possibility for resistance. Indeed, Edensor (2001:60) notes that “this (re)production is never assured, for despite the prevalence of codes and norms, tourist conventions can be destabilized by rebellious performances”. There is always a possibility for disruptive, innovative, resistant performances to dislocate normative values, identities and meanings:

Locals and tourists also, from time to time, exercise power – performing...against or bending the ‘scripts’ of tourism organisations and of wider discourses. Tourists practices are never completely determined by their framing since there can be unpredictability, creativity, and embodied performances where tourist staff and tourists enact and inscribe places with their own stories and follow their own paths...Bodies are simultaneously written upon or preformed *and* performing (Larsen and Urry, 2011:1113 - original emphasis).

These ritualised tourism practices and the re-citation of such cultural commodities always involve the potential for resistance; not only are these normative tourist practices and experiences potentially disrupted by the power of these subversive practices, but so are the social identities normatively associated with commodified tourism. In short, tourists decode past texts but are also part of creating new ones, making their playful ritualised behaviours partly constrained and partly innovative.

Interestingly, Larsen and Urry (2011) suggest that ‘performing’ and ‘gazing’ are not contradictory but rather complimentary. They believe that there are in fact many similarities between the paradigms of gaze and of performance; they both “‘dance together’ rather than

stare at each other at a distance” (Larsen and Urry, 2011:1110). The embodied and multisensuous nature of gazing is explained in the following quote:

While the visual is not the only sense, it is the organising sense. It organises the place, role, and effect of the other senses... The distinctiveness of the visual is crucial for giving all sorts of practices and performances a special or unique character. The most mundane of activities such as shopping, strolling, having a drink, swimming or river rafting appear extraordinary and become ‘touristic’ when conducted against a striking or unusual visual backcloth (Larsen and Urry, 2011:1111).

Contradicting the idea of an asymmetrical power relationship where the *gazer* powerfully consumes a powerless and passive *gazee*, Maoz (2006) argues that the ‘local gaze’ or, in other words, the ‘mutual gaze’ brings out the resistance and power of hosts whose performances can be active and manipulative when interacting face-to-face with tourists:

The local gaze is based on a more complex, two-sided picture, where both the tourist and local gazes exist, affecting and feeding each other, resulting in what is termed ‘the mutual gaze’...[it] makes both sides seem like puppets on a string, since it regulates their behavior. ... There are no defined ‘dominators’ and ‘dominated’, as both groups simultaneously undergo and exercise power (Maoz, 2006:222-225).

Furthermore, *Other* tourists can also influence and discipline the tourist gaze. The presence of different tourist ‘gazes’ can turn a place into a contested space where tourists try to distinguish themselves from copresent others by denouncing, for example, their superficial, snobbish, or boring behaviour:

Tourists have ample time to observe other tourists and fellow travellers, while standing in line, sitting in a cafe or by the pool. Such situations may turn us into amateur sociologists, constantly observing and judging the behaviour of other tourists, but it also produces rich opportunities for daydreaming, fantasizing about the lives of the strangers surrounding you. What about the couple over there, the family down by the pool, the group of Japanese tourists crossing the piazza? We invent secret lives; compare our own situation with that of others (Löfgren, 2008:94).

Clearly, the (embodied) tourist gaze is actually more complex, performative, and interactive by recognising that there are many intersecting, responsive gazes between locals and tourists, between tourists themselves, and so on. Gazing is embodied, multimodal, and involves a set of performative practices; it is never disembodied travelling eyes.

### 2.3.3 Gendered Leisure/Tourism Mobilities

Tourism/leisure mobility has a clearly gendered history. Since time immemorial, men and women have had different movement and travel patterns, whether locally, nationally, or internationally (Cresswell and Priya Uteng, 2008; Enloe, 2014). Many cultures throughout the world have limited or circumscribed women's ability to travel and to move. Indeed, cultural fashions such as foot-binding in China, corsets in the Victorian era, or high-heeled shoes in the modern era are understood as limitations upon female mobility and as a fetishisation of female immobility (Sheller, 2008). Furthermore, religion has also played a major role in limiting and controlling the mobility of women through the various religious practices associated with female modesty such as veiling, *purdah*, or general separation of the sexes. Some policies - based on some specific interpretations of religious texts - prohibit women from driving cars

(Hannam, 2017) or even travelling without being given permission or being accompanied by a male family member. Interestingly, the male body is culturally performed as a more mobile body, while the female body is more restricted and spatially circumscribed. More freedom was often accorded to boys than girls “to move around their neighbourhoods, to engage in unsupervised walking or riding bicycles to meet with friends, to go camping, fishing or hiking, or to ride on public transport.” (Sheller, 2008:259). Furthermore, from a scientific perspective, the anthropologist Emily Martin notes that gendered mobilities are mirrored by the language of scientific textbooks describing the human reproductive process. Indeed, the mobility of sperm is described with awe while the relatively stationary egg is equated with passivity:

It is remarkable how ‘femininely’ the egg behaves and how ‘masculinely’ the sperm. The egg is seen as large and passive. It does not move or journey, but passively ‘is transported’, ‘is swept’ or even ‘drifts’ along the fallopian tube (Martin, cited in Plante, 2015:92).

Along with cultural practices, limitations on women’s mobility have also been closely linked to threats of harassment and violence both in western and non-western societies. In fact, women cannot,

come and go as they please, but have to make careful choices about where they spend their leisure time, and about who they spend it with...not only was travelling to leisure venues a problem for women...many women did not feel comfortable inside such venues (Green, Hebron and Woodward, cited in Aitchison 2003:68).

One of the first studies to look at gendered leisure space was undertaken in Leeds where women bingo players, in response to the male domination of public leisure space, have carved out a spatial sanctuary in the form of the bingo hall (Aitchison, Macleod and Shaw, 2000). Women’s policing of their own behaviour was dominated by their desire for ‘safe’ leisure which meant

“going where there are other women, good transport, and a few or no men” (Deem, cited in Aitchison, 2003:68). This spatial inequity is the result of unequal power relations between men and women and, as the leisure scholar Chris Rojek explains, “one cannot separate leisure from the rest of life and claim that it has unique laws (...) the object of leisure is subsumed by the subject of culture” (cited in Aitchison, Macleod and Shaw, 2000:118). The concepts of ‘spatialised feminism’ and, more recently, ‘gendered space’ have been developed as a means of illustrating this complex interrelation between gender, sexuality, spatiality and power. More specifically, these spatial dimensions of power relations between sexes include the differential use, control, power and domination of space and place and can often be seen in the representation and consumption of leisure-related spaces and places (Aitchison, 2003).

Viewed from an international perspective, tourism has developed and spread around the world on the basis of patriarchal ideas and gendered performances. Women have been the main victims of this system:

It is not simply that ideas about pleasure, travel, escape, bed-making and sexuality have affected women in rich and poor countries. The very structure of international tourism *needs* patriarchy to survive (Enloe, 2002:270 – original emphasis).

Women may experience tourism mobility as simultaneously liberatory and coercive, enabling self-development yet constraining them into unavoidable gendered practices. Clearly, the dialectics of fixity and flow – of place and mobility - constantly reaffirm and reproduce the power relations that produced these differences in the first place (Cresswell and Priya Uteng, 2008). According to Enloe, tourism is rooted in a political history of mobilities that is obviously one that men and women have experienced differently: “Tourism is as much ideology as physical movement (...) it is a set of presumptions about manhood, education and pleasure”



(cited in Cresswell, 2006 :207). Until recently, there was a sense of impropriety connected with women traveling away from home for leisure purposes (Cresswell, 2006:207). In the 19th century, Thomas Cook began to organize cheap train travel to the seaside for working-class men but women of this era were deemed to be morally suspect for indulging in tourism mobility without being accompanied by men. However, a letter written by Four Lincolne sisters of Suffolk, who wished to explore the beauties of the Rhine and the fabled cities of the Continent in a way that would not do them dishonor, reveals the societal pressures on women wishing to travel and the precious help provided by Cook who realised the business potential of respectable travel for women:

How could ladies, alone and unprotected, go 600 or 700 miles away from home? However, after many pros and cons, the idea gradually grew on us and we found ourselves consulting guides, hunting in guide-books, reading descriptions, making notes, and corresponding with Mr. Cook...Tis true, we encountered some opposition – one friend declaring it was improper for ladies to go alone – the gentlemen thinking we were far too independent....But somehow or other one interview with Mr. Cook removed all our hesitation and we forthwith placed ourselves under his care...Many of our friends thought us too independent and adventurous to leave the shores of old England, and thus plunge into foreign lands not beneath Victoria's way with no protecting relative, but we can only say that we hope this will not be our last Excursion of the kind. We would venture anywhere wih such a guide and guardian as Mr. Cook (cited in Enloe, 2014:53).

Following the Lincolne sister's experience, Cook contributed to the democratisation of travel for women. Thomas Cook's 1907 magazine, *The Traveller's Gazette*, featured on its cover a vigorous young woman bestriding the globe.

## **2.4 Performing Beach Leisure**

*Voices from the beach can be hard to hear. They can be snatched from the lips by the wind or drowned in the white noise of the waves. But there are beaches, too, on which voices are hard to hear because of the silence. - Greg Denning (Beach Crossings, 2004)*

In Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Hammamet, Barcelona, Nice, Bournemouth, Sharjah and Beirut, millions of people flock to the beach. While some prefer splashing in the waves, others enjoy sunbathing on the sand or building sandcastles. However, a day at the beach has not always been a cultural ritual. From antiquity up through the 18th century, the beach stirred fear and anxiety in the popular imagination. Indeed, the wrath of the ocean is a major theme in classical mythology; the beach is a bearer of misfortune: “Tears flow on Homer’s shores while monsters lurk in the surf: Scylla surrounded by her barking dogs and Charybdis swallowing the sea only to spit it out again in a boiling whirlpool” (Blei, 2016). In his book *The Lure of the Sea*, the French historian Alain Corbin puts it in these terms: “With few exceptions, the classical period knew nothing of the attraction of seaside beaches, the emotion of a bather plunging into the waves, or the pleasures of a stay at the seaside” (1994:1). In western imaginary, the shoreline was the symbolic edge of the unknown and synonymous with dangerous wilderness where biblical flood engulfed the world, shipwrecks were found and natural disasters occurred. Indeed, according to Corbin (1994), the image of the ocean in the popular consciousness was coloured “by Biblical and mythical recollections of sea monsters, voracious whales, and catastrophic floods. It was perceived as sinister and unchanging, a dark, unfathomable force inspiring horror rather than attraction” (Corbin, 1994:Introduction). Pirates, crusaders, colonizers, the Black Death and smallpox gave the sea its threatening aura.

However, at the turn of the 19th century, the Enlightenment profoundly changed human ideas about the shore with the works of Romantic writers and artists, such as J. M. W. Turner and Caspar David Friedrich, contributing to “the irresistible awakening of a collective desire for the

shore” (Corbin, 1994:53) which was seen as a site of transformative experience with the promise of self-discovery for the individual. As Urbain (2003) states: “Unlike the countryside, the beach is not so much a place of return as a place of new beginnings...It is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, an abstraction” (Urbain, 2003:7). The modern embrace of the beach for the purposes of health, hedonism, recreation and retreat came with the development of urban, industrial societies in Europe; The coast “lost its association with danger to become a place of pleasure” (Gillis, 2012:122). The first seaside resort was born on the Eastern shore of England in Scarborough, catering to sea bathers touting the curative qualities of sea bathing to treat a number of conditions: melancholy, rickets, leprosy, gout, impotence, tubercular infections, menstrual problems and ‘hysteria’ (Blei, 2016). Then, the seaside resort made its way, over the course of the 1800s, across Europe to Normandy, Southwestern France, Italy, parts of Scandinavia, and northern Germany (Walton, 2000). The beach entered the collective imagination of Europeans as an escape from the city; a retreat from modernity; a shift facilitated by the development of transportation and the tourism industry which democratized travel. The tourism industry, films, postcards and novels such as Garland’s *The Beach* (1997) portray the beach as an earthly paradise, “a place so benign and beautiful and good...that the imperative to preserve or restore it could be questioned only by those who ally themselves with evil” (cited in Obrador Pons, 2016:48). Interestingly, in sailors’ jargon, “on the beach” – which connoted poverty, being stranded or left behind – now conveys health and pleasure.

Nonetheless, the arrival of the masses on the Baltic, the Adriatic, and later the Mediterranean and Atlantic reshaped the coastal landscape, denaturing and depriving the beach of its own natural and culture character. According to Gillis (2012), the problem in these modern meanings of the shore lies in the popular perception of the beach as a ‘non-place’, devoid of history and intrinsic value. In her unfinished novel *Sandition*, Jane Austen satirizes the fashionable beach town with its sublime shoreline as a capitalist distortion; the end of normal life in a traditional

fishing community. According to Gillis (2012), following the rise of modernity, the seashore went from being a source of food to a site of amusement and recreation, making it a place within the global 'pleasure periphery', beyond the boundaries of quotidian life. In short, contrary to the popular belief which once saw it as an empty, eternal place, the shore is dynamic, has a history and is now recognized as having a socio-cultural meaning with its own dynamics of gender, race and class. As Rachel Carson nicely puts it, "in every outthrust headland, in every curving beach, in every grain of sand there is the story of the earth" (cited in Winkler, 2015:141).

#### 2.4.1 Lifestyle Beach Mobilities

Styles of beach consumption became one way for individuals to perform their identities, lifestyles, as well as obtain social distinction. (Metusela and Waitt, 2012). As such, seashores are being transformed by the tourism industry into 'ideal' beachscapes to suit the needs of tourists. For instance, the Seychelles were represented as the 'islands of love', the Caribbean were known for their 'hedonism' resorts, Mykonos famed for its gay clubs and nudist beaches and Ibiza was popular for its beach parties. In her study of ecotourists on beaches in Belize, Duffy (2004) points out how ecotourists are keen to distinguish themselves from mass or package tourists through consumption of a holiday they perceived to be more challenging. They were not, as some ecotourists stressed, the 'Cancun types':

Ecotourists viewed their leisure time as a matter of personal status and held that consumption of a holiday in a particular destination, with carefully chosen activities, is one way in which people can project an image of themselves to their peer group (Duffy, 2004:36).

As Duffy (2004) explains, ecotourists continually made and remade their identities through performing different roles (independent travellers, rugged trekkers, scuba divers, etc.), which

shows how people in postmodern societies exchange one identity for another and perform their identities in relation to a place. To take another example, Ayia Napa - a major beach destination consumed by those seeking fun, nightlife, and play - enjoyed an enhanced reputation as the coolest club scene in the Mediterranean (Sharpley, 2004). As Cadwalladr states,

this [Nissi Beach] is a beach unlike others in the Mediterranean. There are no families, no children...it's much *cooler* [than Ibiza]. Much more glamorous. Much more Dolce & Gabbana and Moët & Chandon and Versace and looking good (cited in Sharpley, 2004:30 – emphasis added).

Indeed, from the late 1990s, Ayia Napa became renowned as a 'cool' nightscape, dominated by performances of youth tourists in the 'garage clubs' by night and on the beach by day. One Freestyle brochure, for example, headlines its Cyprus section with the following words: "Top DJs and promoters have flocked to Ayia Napa and with all the gorgeous beaches, bodies and bars who can blame them?" (cited in Sharpley:2004:31). However, the so-called 'new Ibiza' has been losing its 'coolness', causing the 'cool' clubbers to move on to the next cool place since Ayia Napa has become 'uncool' and thus making it "the Mediterranean's second 'notspot' after Falitaki (Rhodes)" (Sharpley, 2004:24).

#### 2.4.2 Embodied Beach Pleasures

Pleasure is central to the culture of the beach but sensual pleasure has been generally neglected in tourist studies which overemphasised dematerialised visual experience at the expense of embodied beach experiences (Obrador Pons, 2016). The portrayal of the beach as untouched and removed from civilization has 'de-materialised' it, reducing it to visual logic even though the three S's of tourism 'Sun, Sea and Sand' suggest that "the beach appeals to the sensual body more than the penetrating eye" (Obrador Pons, 2016:48). Indeed, Obrador Pons (2003) notes that an embodied account of the beach is incomplete if "it focuses exclusively on the social

importance of having a suntan, or on the exhibition of bodies that take place and the presentational rules that prescribe them” (2003:55). Along with being a cultural signifier of values and norms, the body is also a means through which people can escape from social norms and adopt a more natural way of life. As Urbain (2003:7) states, the beach is “a theatre in which society unveils itself, lays itself bare (literally and metaphorically)”. This is the case of nudist beaches where tourists escape from the clothing rules that oppress the body, and attempt to become ‘one’ with nature, and to quote Obrador Pons (2003:55), “what is more natural than dressing like you were when your mother brought you into the world?”.

By emphasizing touch over detached observation, Obrador Pons (2016) stresses the importance of the sensual element as it provides “a valuable route for bringing back life to the beach as it offers the opportunity to develop insights into its sensual richness, its embodied pleasures and displeasures as well as the interlacing of the body and the environment” (2016:49). The popularity of the beach depends on embodied pleasures such as sunbathing, swimming, surfing, or building sandcastles; it is a place where the body lives, experiments and desires. Indeed, the desire to be in the water or to put one’s feet or body in the sand can be understood “as meaning embodied – feel, touch, fluid – and possibly not speakable.” (Game, cited in Obrador-Pons, 2003:56-57).

Sunbathing is definitely one of the most pleasurable beach experiences. Allowing the sun onto the body, warming the skin and feeling relaxed are some of the main delights people find in sunbathing. In Obrador Pons’ (2016) study of haptic beach experiences, sunbathing is described in haptic sensual terms as pleasurable, relaxing and beneficial for the body and soul. Swimming and bathing in the sea are activities with the strongest haptic experience and, unlike sunbathing, are predicated on the senses of movement, bodily position, balance and temperature rather than straightforward cutaneous touch. In hot summer, the freshness of the water can be a blessing and the sensual feel of the sea can give a sensation of freedom and the rhythmic sound of the

waves can induce relaxation. In Evers' (2009) study on the embodied pleasure of surfing, the author stresses the close sensual relationship surfers have with the sea that is in a constant state of flux. Unlike other forms of colonisation of nature, surfing does not tame the sea; rather, it makes surfers become 'one' with the sea. As Evers (2009) puts it, "surfers ride with waves, not simply on them. They are part of our bodies and our bodies are part of them" (2009: 898). "Body that surfs" is the result of the attunement of the body, including its position and balance, with the rhythms and textures of a liquid environment (2009:898).

However, while tourists on the beach are actively savouring the embodied pleasures of being touched by the sun or touching the sea, they are also passively "struggling to fulfil the beauty cannons that society imposes upon us" as well as probably "suffering the uncomfortable presence of smelly seaweed and threatening jellyfish that compel them to remain in the much safer swimming pool" (Obrador Pons 2003:56). Indeed, the sensuality of the beach refers to displeasure as much as pleasure. Unpleasant sensation or experience can include the pain of sunburn, the boredom of inactivity, the touch of unpleasing textures (octopus, etc.) or the feeling of shame that goes with undressing the body (Obrador Pons, 2016).

#### 2.4.3 Gendered Beach Leisure

Seen through the lens of gender, the beach is a gendered and sexualised place where various gendered beach practices have been 'in play'. Once a 'puritan' place where female bodies were covered, the beach has become a quite 'liberal' place where modern femininity is being performed, with women being expected to act in a manner that is glamorous, fashionable and sexually desirable, rather than acting shy and demure. In the British empire, for example, Victorian social etiquette encouraged bourgeois women to bathe at resorts fully clothed to conceal the contours of their bodies (Metusela and Waitt, 2012). In fact, (semi)naked bodies at

the beach were understood as obscene, immoral and lacking control by the civilised and thought of as a threat to “the ‘purity’ and ‘strength’ of middle-class bodies” (Metusela and Waitt, 2012:XX). This sort of ‘puritanism’ on the beach was also found in Australia where some bathing ordinances aimed to restrict sexual culture in public and discipline the naked bodies of bathers by regulating bathing costumes (Metusela and Waitt, 2012). Yet, these conventions of respectability were challenged by the fashion industry with the creation of ‘daring’ bathing suit designs as well as Hollywood stars reconfiguring notions of femininity and popularizing totally new ways of dressing up for the beach. In fact, displaying bodies on the beach has become a common, even desirable leisure practice which is symbolic of modernity and a ‘valued life’. The sensuous pleasures and full therapeutic benefits of exposing the body to sun necessitated challenging religious sensibilities that insisted on covering the body in public and considered the public sexual culture of the beach as indecent. In their study of Australian beach cultures, Metusela and Waitt (2012) argue that the old traditions, habits, routines and dress codes of the beach were challenged by Hollywood stars who were used to sell ‘modern’ beach resort fashion from North America, Britain and Europe where neck-to-knee bathing costume regulations were no longer enforced. Indeed, dressing up for the beach “provided possibilities to play out the gendered roles of glamorous American movie stars at Australian beach resorts” (Metusela and Waitt, 2012:122).

However, this promise of social liberation brought by these new bathing costumes was also accompanied by bodily constraints and a new form of bodily imprisonment:

Women who slip into revealing bathing suits quickly discover that the freedom to wear skimpy clothing is not the freedom to deviate from normative expectations. Before women can reveal their bodies on the beach they must remove the hair from their underarms, legs and pubic region, and they must firm their legs, thighs and buttocks. Such



bodies require strict dietary, exercise and personal grooming regimes, no less repressive than the whalebone, steel and leather corsets (Metusela and Waitt, 2012:18).

The display of slim and taut female bodies on beaches - impacted by the new beauty standards - have been mirroring an objectification and sexualization of the female body: “White femininity was sexualised through pitching bathing costumes that offered greater ‘loveliness’ and control of the body.” (Metusela and Waitt, 2012:140). Yet, this view is challenged by Bell and Holliday (2000) who explain that “the normalisation of nudity effectively desexualises it...the body is re-naturalised and simultaneously de-sexualised” (cited in Metusela and Waitt, 2012:19). Furthermore, other kind of studies have been made about sun tanning and pubic hair removal as a female practice. According to Ahmed (1997, 1998), the production of tanned and gendered bodies relies on the mobilization of certain gendered and racialized ‘truths’ which are ‘written’ on the skin. By sun-tanning, the white woman, she writes, “may appropriate and domesticate the hypersexuality which is signified by Black skin, rendering the presence of colour a temporary aberration” (Ahmed, cited in Burdsey, 2016:70). On a different note, the question of pubic hair removal as a potential gendered practice has been investigated by Braun et al. (2013) who found that the act of keeping pubic hair private, out of sight, was highly gendered as it was typically judged to be more offensive on women, more so than for men. This difference is due to the fact that ladies swimwear tends to be more revealing. However, CristenConger suggests that “the gender gap in body hair removal...is narrower than you might think” (cited in Braun et al., 2013:7).

From a touristic perspective, the sexualisation of the female body is represented in the tourist imagination “as the quintessence of the exotic . . . something to be experienced” (Enloe, cited in Johnston, 2001:186). Swain notes that predominant tourism brochures sell feminized images whereby “men [are] associated with action, power, and ownership, while women are associated with passivity, availability, and being owned” (cited in Johnston, 2001:186-7). In

the same line of thought, Pritchard and Morgan (2000) write that the language of seduction and sensuality is used by national tourism bodies of the Caribbean, Fiji, the Seychelles, Tahiti, among others, to promote beach destinations. Jamaica is, for example, a destination where the people are clearly entwined with the feminine, sexualized Jamaican landscape: “As it melts into the tranquil Caribbean sea, *tempting* sunsets appear as girls with *cinnamon-coloured skin* walk the beach wearing *bikinis the size of butterflies*. This is your Eden. Welcome to Negril” (Jamaican Tourist Board, cited in Pritchard and Morgan, 2000:895 - emphasis added). National tourism board brochures of the Caribbean abound in terms laden with feminine sexuality, revealing “this naturalizing of gendered power relations and legitimizing of sexual inequalities” on the beach (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000:894-5).

#### 2.4.4 Racialised Beach Leisure – *Performing Whiteness on Beaches*

Along with being genderised, the seaside was also found to be a racialised place which, to put it in Price’s (2013) terms, “can become inhibitorily sticky, entrapping racialised bodies, fixing them in space, excluding or immobilizing them” (cited in Burdsey, 2016:71). Indeed, beaches can become spaces of stasis and immobility for many minority ethnic communities such as asylum seekers and refugee groups who, as Burdsey (2016:71) suggests, are “least able to engage in liminal behaviours and coastal liquidity because of restrictions on their leisure time”. Another form of racialisation of the coast is also found on many beaches around the world. In fact, there is a tradition of white domination and sovereign violence embodied in the white body on the beach in several countries, including Jamaica, Australia, Hawaii, USA, to name a few. In Hawaii, one of the first possessive performances by the white body occurred on the beach when white Australian and South African surfers decided to invade the Native Hawaiian surfing beach of the North Shore of O’ahu during the late 1970s. In fact, flowing with the waves was an integral part of the Native Hawaiian culture for more than 1,500 years; surfing was not

considered to be a competitive practice. For the Native Hawaiian surfers, the invasion of their beach by white male surfers was a performative reiteration of the invasion by white American marines supporting the white patriarchy that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy in 1890. Therefore, these white male surfers were confronted by members of Hui 'O He'e Nalu who asserted their sovereignty over the beach:

Native Hawaiian surfer resistance eventually earned the respect of the International Professional Surfing organization, which conceded to a reduction in annual competitions at North Shore. Despite the assertion of Native Hawaiian sovereignty over the waves and the beaches, white Australian and South African surfers staked a possessive claim, colonizing surfing by riding the waves, “conquering”, “attacking”, and reducing them to stages on which to perform aggressive acts. This became the dominant form of professional surfing whereby surfers represented their respective nations by embodying the violent attributes of patriarchal white sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2011:64).

In colonising Australia, white British bodies took control and ownership of indigenous lands, causing the removal of native Kamegal and Gwegal bodies from the beach through containment, disease, and death. Whilst the indigenous body was represented as being terminal and abject, the white bodies only truly mattered on the beach. Nowadays, despite the apparent promise of open access and use, the beach continues, although not explicitly, to be controlled by white men. As Moreton-Robinson puts it, “these originary performative acts by the white male body would later become an integral part of Australian beach culture within modernity” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011:59-60). On December 11, 2005, the beach once again became a stage where whiteness was performed; a place where transgression, violence, and white possession were on display. On that day, at Cronulla beach in Sydney, a racialised beach conflict took place between Lebanese male beachgoers and white male surf lifesavers over the alleged bashing of a surf lifesaver by Arabic-speaking youth; the white male body performatively

repossessed the beach through anti-Arabic resentment, mimetically reproducing the racialized colonial violence enacted to dispossess indigenous people (Burdsey, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). As Bursdey (2016) explains, this developed within established local beliefs purporting that,

the presence of Lebanese men on the beach made white Australian women feel unsafe. These men were also deemed to dress inappropriately (by wearing everyday clothes as opposed to beachwear) and to behave in a manner contrary to normative cultural and spatial practices (e.g. by playing football on the sand). This all took place in a climate of racism and Islamophobia, manifest in a defensive white localism that claimed beach spaces as belonging organically to certain groups and not others (Burdsey, 2016:141-2).

Local white “Aussies” were sort of “reclaiming” the beach by attacking these Lebanese beach goers. This is history repeating itself as the same thing happened to Indigenous Australians who also have been marginalised historically from the country’s beaches through the racialised and often violent control of space. But, according to Ghassan Hage (2011), what framed the Lebanese men as “out-of-place” at the seaside was not actually their difference; it was quite the opposite. As he explains, “beneath the complaint that the boys were not well-assimilated and well-integrated was really the fear that the youths acted as if they were completely assimilated and integrated despite their cultural marginality and difference” (Hage, cited in Burdsey, 2016:142-3 - original emphasis). Interestingly, in Hage’s (2011) view, the real problem is not necessarily racialised difference, but a perceived case of cultural similarity through engagement in common activities, that is seen to threaten white dominance at the seaside. The real issue is, according to him, that these Lebanese beach goers were feeling very much at home, rendering whiteness “always potentially at threat from racialised others through contamination and dispossession” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011:66). This is most clearly signified by the pervasiveness of the wearing and waving of the Australian flag and claims to white possession

printed on T-shirts, inscribed on torsos with body paint, and written on placards waved before media cameras during the protest, including “We Grew Here: You Flew Here,” “We’re full fuck off,” and “Respect locals or piss off,” and “100% Aussie pride” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011:66).

In postcolonial Jamaica, many resort beaches have been treated as private property and closed to local access; even the ‘open’ resorts were not really accessible to locals due to the unaffordable access fees (Henshall Momsen, 2005). Not until 1998 was the issue of access to the beach publicly debated, in a movement led by the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust but the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association and the enclave resorts on the north coast objected to the open access policy, viewing it as “a threat to the privacy and safety of their guests” (Henshall Momsen, 2005:201). Legally, under the Beach Control Act of 1956, locals have unrestricted access to only public beaches which are generally poorly kept unlike the other resorts, making the public very hostile towards the restrictive coastal access (Henshall Momsen, 2005).

Issues around racialised beach bodies are also especially germane to the South African beaches which were segregated legally under apartheid, permitting exclusive use by dominant white communities. While ‘non-whites’ were allowed access into quite dangerous beaches that are unfit for recreation, ‘whites’ were allocated more and better beaches than other racial groups. Even after the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, many beaches operated as “white-only sanctuaries, places where blacks were trespassers and interlopers” (Booth, 2001 cited in Burdsey, 2016:145). While whites could visit ‘black beaches’, the reverse was still not the case even following the dismantling of the segregation laws. In the city of Durban, for example, Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon (2001) stress how beaches have been experienced as,

the legitimate preserve of white families and as under threat from black beachgoers who were regarded as ‘violating’ or ‘corrupting’ the beach as a ‘family space’ by undertaking ‘inappropriate’ activities, such as political protest in the 1980s and other group practices that were deemed ‘uncivilised’ and ‘out of place’ in the 1990s (cited in Burdsey, 2016:145).

Some American beaches were also whitened during the segregation era in America where the consumption and enjoyment of seaside landscapes became strictly regulated along racial lines. Indeed, as wealthy whites had designated and exclusive resorts, black people’s roles at the seaside became increasingly limited to service positions, such as nannies, waiters, and entertainers. Lines of segregation were not only drawn on the beach itself but also into the water, with ropes fixed onto the seabed at Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, forming what was known as “The Coloured Wall”. African Americans were restricted to their own racially designated beaches and those who dared breaking the rules surrounding the normative spatial regime of coastal ‘white territories’ were often repelled violently by the police and white mobs alike. In fact, several 1960s Hollywood movies such as *Beach Party*, *Muscle Beach Party*, and *Bikini Beach* “naturalised whiteness as an organic element of the beach”, constructing it as an “insulated geography” (Burdsey, 2016:138). In the USA, “few images were more threatening to the emerging Jim Crow order than that of a black family relaxing on a beach, books in hand, in silence” (Kahrl, 2008 cited in Burdsey, 2016:135).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter is a stepping stone for the development of the conceptual framework that is best suited for my research. A body of scholarship on the ‘Body’ and ‘Mobilities’ have been critically reviewed given their importance to our in-depth understanding of lifestyles and lived experiences on the beach. Indeed, various key theories and concepts about the body – how we experience it, relate to it, view it, control it, discipline it - have been explored, namely “socialised body”, “lived body”, “gendered body”, “racialised body” and “sexualised body”. Thought-provoking debates around mind/body dualism, gendered and racialised identities as well as gendered and racialised stereotypes have been stressed, with a focus on the notions of masculinity/femininity and whiteness/non-whiteness, which are viewed as being socially-constructed or biologically-created, with an array of views in between. Attention to embodiment has extended beyond a simple reductionist picture of the relation between mind and body, to consider an embodied self, embedded within an environment. On a different note, the concept of ‘mobilities’ - discussed here in works about gendered, sensuous, racialised and tourism/leisure mobilities – highlights the fluidity and hybridity that is characteristic of our world and stresses the blurring line separating the everyday and holiday, the before and now, the here and there. Such mobilities are stratified by gender, age, social class and ethnicity. Finally, the examination of literature on bodies and mobilities has led the way towards a deeper understanding of the works on the ways people perform beach leisure and the dynamics within beaches. The next chapter reviews in more detail research about beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in the Arab region.

## CHAPTER THREE – HYBRID LIFESTYLES AND BEACH LEISURE PRACTICES IN THE ARAB WORLD

---

--- *No one today is purely one thing (Edward Said)*

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the hybrid lifestyles of Arab people living in the Arab world, with a focus on their beach leisure practices in various countries, as well as beach tourism development in the region. An in-depth understanding of the place of leisure in Islam, of what is *halal* and *haram*, of orientalist imaginaries, of how hybridity has been shaping arabness, of the commodification of piety on Arab shores, and the controversial practices resulting from it, is essential if we are to understand the hows and whys of some beach leisure practices in Lebanon. The Arab world is not to be confused with the ‘Middle East’, which is a controversial and unacceptable term for some scholars living in the region, seeing it as ‘Eurocentric’. Indeed, the term ‘Middle East’ is a strategic designation birthed during the days of the British empire, encompassing non-Arab countries such as Israel, Iran and Turkey (Hanafi, 2000). An imagined linguistic and cultural space, the Arab World stretches along the southern side of the Mediterranean from the Maghreb to the Gulf, incorporating the ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ into its web of history, memory and flows (Obrador Pons et al., 2009b; Löfgren, 1999). At the crossroads of civilisations, the Arab World is one of the most dynamic and fast-changing regions in the world; a land of wealth, diversity, complexity, and, of course, instability and hostility. Since gaining their independence, Arab countries have been following the path of modernisation and national economic development with tourism, as a leading source of hard currency, being used as an engine of economic liberalisation and a means to promote peace between rival countries, regional stability as well as reshaping external relations, of which Jordan/Egypt is a good example (Hazbun, 2008). Funded by international investors, local capital, and abundant petrodollars, the region’s sunny beaches, picturesque deserts, biblical



locales, architectural ruins, ‘exotic’ cultures, and native hospitality have been used by tourism boosters to generate new sources of wealth, resulting in the reshaping of coastal landscapes, cultural fabrics, heritage sites, and built environments. As explained by the Lebanese scholar Waleed Hazbun in his book *‘Beaches, Ruins, Resorts: The Politics of Tourism in the Arab World’*, the region has experienced,

a series of hotel-building rooms, which produced blocks of generic whitewashed hotels along sunny beaches in North Africa, renovated clusters of old buildings in Damascus into boutique hotels, and gave rise to a wave of new luxury palaces in Amman, Beirut, and Dubai (Hazbun, 2008:xi).

### **3.2 Understanding Arabs and their Leisure Lifestyles**

An intersectional approach to performativity – which encompasses cultural, historical, linguistic and relational factors - opens the way for a greater understanding of the leisure lifestyles and performativities on the beach found in the Arab world, bringing to the fore complex identities as well as contributing to further halt and alter essentialised stereotypical approaches around ‘Arab’. As the American philosopher Judith Butler states, performativity, as an expression of a continuously constructed identity, has the potential to “open the signifiers to new meanings and new possibilities for political re-signification” (cited in Nayel, 2017:126) hence transcending identity borders and creating the potential for new identities and belonging. Interestingly, performativity makes reference to those who are at risk of not being qualified as a subject of recognition, those who are alienated or sidelined. With the impossibility of full recognition, there are often different ways of allocating recognisability, by displaying performativities other than the mainstream dominant one, and by making visible ‘other’ identities. This situation applies to beach goers in the Arab world who may display some uncommon or unrecognisable beach performances. For instance, following this approach helps

us unpack the multi-layered nature of the performativity of Muslimness on the beach and investigate the ways in which these altered beach performativities articulate differences and contestations as well as exposing societal realities. This alternative Muslim performativity disrupts powerfully established discourses on Muslimness and challenges the rigid Western understanding of Islam and Muslims. In short, by focusing on performativities, we can understand how beach goers are multidimensional beings, bearing the full set of contradictions implied by their religion, gender, class, race as well as a heterogeneous set of historical, cultural and contextual variables and beliefs, all of which have diverse effects on their beach lifestyles.

Who are the Arabs? There is not one single criteria or characteristic that defines an Arab. Indeed, one can be considered an Arab by ethnicity ('Pure Arabs') or by the use of the Arabic language and the adoption of Arabic traditions ('Arabized-Arabs'). Those who are considered to be 'pure Arabs' are the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula who commonly believe that they are descendants of Shem, the son of Noah, which explains the importance of lineage in the Arabic culture. Surnames are preciously kept as some lineages can be traced far back to ancient times. The other 'Arabized-Arabs' come from North African or Middle Eastern countries outside the Arabian peninsula, including some parts of Mesopotamia, the Levant, Berber lands, Moors, Egypt, the Sudan and other African Arabs. While Arab history is closely intertwined with Muslim history, there are significant non-Muslim communities in the Arab world, most of whom are Christians (Stebbins, 2013). Despite the ethno-religious and lifestyle differences, Arabs – in the cultural sense of the term - share a common Arabic language, knowing that many of them speak other languages, such as Assyrian and Coptic. As members of the Arab Nation (*al-umma al-'arabiyya*), the Arabs are defined as a 'cultural group' with an enduring cultural heritage, as illustrated by their contributions in medieval times to philosophy, literature, medicine, architecture, art, mathematics, and the natural sciences; some of which were made by non-Arabs living within the Islamic empire.

### 3.2.1 Orientalist Imaginaries of Arabs and the Arab World

From at least the time of the Crusades, the Occident has shown theopolitical, geopolitical and cultural interests in the Orient which led to well-established travel flows to the Arab world and the publishing of writings reflecting Western imaginaries (Al Mahadin and Burns, 2007). In his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*, the Palestinian-born scholar Edward Said (1978) points out the simplistic stereotypes of Arabs - portrayed as devious, corrupt, tyrannical, backward and “congenitally undemocratic and violent” (Said, 1978:343) - which are all reductive and demeaning clichés dreamed up by the Western imagination to justify power over the 'oriental', an imagined 'non-Western other'. These stereotypes - fuelled by the media - have clearly not faded away as some westerners still nowadays picture the Arab/Islamic culture as 'tyrannical' and backward (Aziz, 1995). The popular Western image of a romantically simple, but inferior, Orient is well described in the following passage:

My host had become a civilised man, who sat on chairs, who ate with a fork, who talked European politics, and who had learned to admire, if not to understand liberty – liberal ideas! and was I not flying from such things? (Burton, 2012:51-52).

In Egypt, for example, the French invaders saw themselves as carrying the banner of the Enlightenment which needed to be spread on Egyptian land. The Palestinian American scholar Joseph Massad explains it in these terms: “As culture was used as a synonym for humanity, reason and freedom, the European spectators of the Orient had to define Islam as ‘unculture’...So the missionary aim was no longer Christianization but modernization” (Massad, 2007:4). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tourists visiting the Levant imagined themselves coming to a place frozen in time where the cultural landscape had not changed since antiquity, or since ancient biblical and byzantine times. Tourism posters and advertisement contributed to the construction of this imagery by generally romanticizing “an Orient that had remained

unchanged for millennia, thus marginalizing centuries of change and transformation, especially during the recent periods before the ‘European discovery’ of the Orient” (Daher, 2007:7).

In response to these orientalist imaginaries, Arab intellectuals and scholars unearthed evidence that contradicted, questioned, and interrogated the Orientalist claims and conclusions that placed the Arab ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ low on the European civilisation scale. Analogous to European concepts of ‘Renaissance’, Islamic intellectuals in the nineteenth century fell back upon a ‘Golden Age’ of Islam (Massad, 2007:5). Although impressed with the scientific interests of the French, the Egyptian chronicler of the Napoleonic invasion, Abd al-Rahman al-Abarti (1754-1826), described their ‘liberal’ mores in controversial terms: “Their women do not cover themselves and have no modesty” (Massad, 2007:4). This lack of modesty and prudishness of westerners, as viewed by some Arab intellectuals, is exactly what the West has been associating the Orient with: a place of ‘desires’ and ‘pleasures’ and the escapism of sexual fantasy where one could look for sexual experience that is forbidden in Europe. Drawing on Foucault’s view, which considers that no power is exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution, or retention of knowledge, Daher (2007:6) writes that “the exercise of power over the Orient could not have been made possible without the production of knowledge about the Orient” - in the form of maps, narratives, investigative reports, art, demographic studies, archaeology, social narratives and studies, military surveys, photography, postcards, etc. - by the European travellers, scientists, and geographers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to North Africa (the *Maghreb*) and the ancient *Levant* (the *Mashreq*). As an illustration, an article entitled ‘France in Algeria: The Romance of Algeria’, featured in one of Thomas Cook’s 19<sup>th</sup> century newsletters *The Traveller’s Gazette* (November 1928), developed the colonial theme of “an ancient Roman land in Algiers rescued from barbarism and transformed into a ‘happy country by the French’” (Hunter, 2003:164). Within the psyche of western European thought, the term ‘Arab’ has in the past connoted multiple meanings: on the

one hand, the mythologies of Lawrence of Arabia's and Wilfred Thesiger's 'noble savage' version of the Bedouin, and on the other, less flattering notions of tribalism, anti-progress and a duplicitous nature (Burns, 2007).

### 3.2.2 Leisure in Islam: *Halal* and *Haram*

There is an essentially positive view of leisure and recreation in Islam. This religion "never sanctified time or frowned on leisure activities" (Ibrahim, cited in Martin and Mason, 2004:6) as it acknowledges the needs and desires of a human being: "Allah has created human beings with needs and desires, so that they need to eat and drink, they also need to relax and enjoy themselves" (Rahman, cited in Martin and Mason, 2004:6). According to Islamic hadiths, Prophet Muhammad has clearly endorsed and encouraged the practice of various kinds of sport: "Teach your sons the art of archery, swimming and riding" (Hanafy, cited in Martin and Mason, 2004:6). In fact, the importance of leisure in the lives of people has been strongly emphasised given its physical, mental and social benefits:

Islam and Islamic education emphasises the good usage of leisure time for the development of the individual physically, mentally and socially for the good and welfare of the individual and society (El-Sayed, cited in Martin and Mason, 2004:6).

However, leisure practices should not be done at the expense of religious duties such as for example praying 5 times a day:

The mind gets tired and so does the body, so there is no harm in Muslims relaxing the mind and refreshing the body with permissible sport or play. This should not, however, be at the expense of religious obligations (Hanafy, cited in Martin and Mason, 2004:6).

Indeed, leisure practices are strongly impacted by religion and culture which shape the way of dressing as well as the way of behaving in public spaces. For example, Islamic moral sensibilities do not permit nudity in accordance with the following Holy Quran verse: “O children of Adam! We have revealed unto you clothing to conceal your shame” (Sura VII:26, cited in Stillman, 2003:11). Interestingly, during the Islamic Golden Age, traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, leisure was naturally part of people’s everyday lives. While quite pious, they liked to have fun and take part in a variety of leisure activities whenever they had free time. Leisure spaces in the public sphere were divided between male and female; a division adopted into Islam from Late Antiquity. Interestingly, leisure practices became a way of distinguishing among elites, the faithful masses and other People of the Book, i.e. Christians and Jews (Spracklen, 2011). However, the *Halal* and *Haram* guidelines have been subject to various interpretations throughout the centuries. Some Muslim scholars argued for a change of jurisprudence based on the acknowledgment that,

the orthopraxy of the seventh-century Arab world was no longer completely useful and ethically correct for an *umma* that stretched across so many different cultures, which encompassed so many large cities filled with a host of people, religions and languages (Spracklen, 2011:75 – original emphasis).

On a different note, some leisure practices lie in the uncertain area, the grey zone, in between halal and haram and their acceptability (or not) is often influenced by the dominant school of Islamic thought in the area concerned, and the level of interaction between Islam and the cultural practices of the home country, noting that Islamic texts “can be read and understood in various ways and their interpretations are often controversial and contested” (Pfister, cited in Stebbins, 2013:92). Such interpretations can significantly limit the leisure activities of women in many Islamic countries; even the permissible leisure activities and physical recreation may be unacceptable if they go “against the grain of traditional culture” (Stebbins, 2013:91) relating to

modesty and dress codes. Nonetheless, some Arab women living in large cities in countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco are challenging the imposed lines and attempting to shift them (Stebbins, 2013).

### 3.2.3 Contemporary Lifestyles and Leisure Practices of Arabs

In the Arab world, Muslims lead very different lifestyles, depending on whether they live in urban or rural areas as well as on their levels of affluence, social status, education; these differences are clearly reflected in consumption behavior and leisure practices. In practice, followers of Islam do not always strictly adhere to the Sharia, literally meaning 'path' or 'way', although it is common in Muslim societies. Indeed, the adherence to the Halal commandments do vary greatly between nations, communities and individuals, with some Muslims being more liberal than others, and vice versa. Interestingly, for some Muslims, travelling abroad presents the opportunity to take part in activities that are Islamically unacceptable (*haram*) in the home country, such as drinking alcohol and gambling or swimming in a bikini. Yet, differences are not only found between Muslims, but also found in the consumption practices of a Muslim who may choose very carefully restaurants that sell halal food while not minding putting his savings in conventional un-islamic banks (Salehudin, 2010).

In fact, the Islamic concept of 'halal' has always been an integral part of the lives of Muslims, guiding their behaviour and decisions. What seems new, however, is the way this concept is being used by officials and tourism businesses - travel agencies, hotels and resorts, airlines, etc. - to attract Muslim consumers by increasingly offering Halal-friendly goods, services and experiences. Interestingly, a growing number of Muslim travellers is proudly displaying their differences and values, making their Islamic identity and alternative way of life more visible to the world. Nowadays, not only do Muslims want to eat halal, but also want to holiday in a halal way (Battour et al., 2011). This craze for Halal holidays is clearly reflected in the continual

growth of the Halal Tourism industry, which is gaining momentum among people, including Nasreen Suleaman, a BBC journalist and a halal holiday consumer, who wrote about her experience at a Halal resort in Turkey:

My taxi driver was not impressed with my choice of hotel. ‘Do you like a beer?’ (...) This hotel I take you to it is no good, no beer is available.’ It didn't seem to occur to him that I might have chosen this resort for that very reason (Suleaman, 2010).

However, it is important to mention that there are different interpretations of what halal tourism is (or should be) which mirrors the extreme heterogeneity of the Muslim world and the different views of what is halal, even between neighbouring Muslim-majority countries, noting that this loose definition and lack of full institutionalisation can create mistrust or suspicion among Muslims (Carboni and Idrissi Janati, 2016) as well as be a challenge for tourism businesses to cater to this heterogeneous market. Interestingly, Shaza Hotels, an affiliate of Kempinski, encounters similar challenges when discussing with investors their expectations of what makes a hotel Muslim-friendly. As Chris Nader, vice president of development at Shaza Hotels, stresses, “what is halal for one investor could be different for another” (cited in Hashem, 2016). In the same vein, El-Gohary (2016) explains that what is promoted as halal by businesses is not necessarily 100% Halal. In fact, some Halal tourism packages offered in non-Islamic countries and even in Islamic countries (e.g. Egypt) fail to be fully compliant with the rules and guidance of the Halal concept and Islamic Sharia. However, Halal tourism is not only exclusive for Muslims unlike popular belief (El-Gohary, 2016). Indeed, it can also be freely enjoyed by non-Muslim conservative religious groups who prefer using Halal tourism products and services as these are more in line with their religious beliefs and lifestyles such as for example Jewish families who would like an alternative to kosher food when on holiday.



On a different note, understanding the values, attitudes and practices of Arab Millennials is vital for a fresh insight into modern-day Arabs and the changes that has occurred in the region as they constitute a large demographic segment with nearly 200 million young people living in the Middle East and North Africa. Generally, they are tech-savvy, trend-conscious consumers who tend to spend most of their money on outings, constantly worry about their appearance, highly value traditional values and consider faith to be the most important defining factor (Arab Youth Surveys 2008; 2016). Businesses – such as food, fashion, cosmetics, hospitality, banking, travel, etc. - are increasingly measuring the importance of this young Muslim market and the demand for halal products. The power of the young Muslim consumer is stressed by the British writer Shelina Janmohamed in her insightful book *Generation M: Young Muslims Changing the World* (2016) where the voices of many young *Muslims* are echoed: “Muslims are saying: ‘Hello, we’ve got lots of money to spend, we’re young, we’re cool, please can you deal with us in the same way you deal with everyone else?’” (cited in Sherwood, 2016).

#### 3.2.4 Hybrid Arabness

*I, too, have ropes around my neck. I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose...Do you hear? I refuse to choose - Salman Rushdie (East, West, 1994)*

In today’s world, the concept of hybridity is key to understand the lifestyles of Arabs and local leisure practices since cultures have had interdependent influences and have been constantly reimagined and reconstituted throughout history to produce the hybrid lifestyles we find today in the Arab world.

As Malak (2000) rightly states, globalisation has created new cultural forms and identities produced through the experience of being in relationship with another:

As individuals cyberlink, economies “globalize”, and cultures cross-fertilize, hybridity manifests an inevitability that at once destabilizes entrenched exclusionist ethos and entails a métissage of competing or conflicting values that interbreed and give birth too, in Rushdie’s flamboyant phrase, ‘bastard [children] of history’. (Malak, 2000:140)

Therefore, it is impossible for Arabs’ lives to be wholly determined by one culture or religion, as they will always exist in a third, hybrid space that combines several religious and cultural influences. Cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity, embracing East-West, classical-modern, and urban-rural influences, have been tackled by a number of Arab writers such as in Ahdaf Soueif’s writings whose work “fuses a number of discursive trajectories involving such complex polemics as Arab and Egyptian nationalisms, gender politics, and Muslims’ response to both modernity and hegemonic prejudices emanating from the West” (Malak, 2000:140). In the highly-acclaimed novel *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992), a quasi-autobiographical *bildungsroman*, the heroine, Asya, is portrayed as a cosmopolitan, multi-layered hybrid Egyptian woman. Interestingly, her name, Asya, is representative of this cultural hybridity that can be experienced by Arabs in their everyday lives. The name actually means Asia in Arabic and, in the Muslim tradition, it is the name of the Pharaoh’s childless wife who adopted and loved the baby prophet Moses (Malak, 2000:145-46). Consequently, the fact that the name integrates Pharaonic Egypt with Judaism and Islam along with the fact that an Egyptian, whose country is situated in Africa, is given a name that recalls another continent, Asia, suggests that Asya’s feelings, experiences, and worldviews extend beyond religious and geographical borders.

In a published interview with Ahdaf Soueif, the author’s response to a provocative question “Asya is not really Egyptian, is she?” is tellingly revealing:

Yes, she is, in the sense that I am Egyptian. There are so many hybrids now, people who are a little bit of this and a little bit of that. The interesting thing is what we make of it, what kind of hybrid we become and how we feel about it (cited in Malak, 2000:148).

According to Soueif, the modern Arab woman should not deny or overlook conflicting or paradoxical elements making her identity and lifestyle, but to accept, comprehend, and even, when possible, fuse them. In one sense, the roots of these paradoxes seem to stem from the ambivalent affiliations to Arab-Muslim cultural ethos on the one hand and to acquired European intellectualism on the other. Clearly, hybridity is embedded in the leisure practices of Arabs whereby, to quote Malak (2000:142), “cultures coalesce, compete, and conflict simultaneously”, resulting in a melange of diverse values that cause “confusion and clarity, contest and collaboration, enrichment and impoverishment”.

On the identity and lifestyle of the Arab youth, Dr. Maisah Sobaihi, a university professor in Saudi Arabia, thinks that globalisation is inevitable and that Western influence is a given, thus suggesting that “the greatest challenge to the Arab youth is in integrating with the outside world while maintaining the identity, religion and values they strongly believe in” (cited in Arab Youth Survey, 2008). As clearly explained by Dr. Sobaihi, Young Arabs are struggling to find themselves within the multicultural transformation that’s happening all around them. These views are echoed by Mohammed Saeed Harib, Founder of Lammtara Productions in the UAE:

A lot of...young Arabs struggle to discover their identity, because they are very proud of their culture and don't want to lose sight of it in the face of increasing globalization (...)  
It's a balancing act. We try to learn from the best of the world who come here and at the same time we're trying to find ourselves. We want to embrace globalization (...) but retain our values and traditions and show our culture to the world (Arab Youth Survey, 2008).

This versatility and adaptability of Arab youth are also pointed out by Shelina Janmohamed, who thinks that generation M has one over-riding characteristic “which is that they believe that being faithful and living a modern life go hand in hand, and there is absolutely no contradiction between the two” (cited in Sherwood, 2016). According to this Muslim female writer, young Muslims are proud of their faith and of their lifestyle as well as being enthusiastic consumers, dynamic, engaged, creative and demanding; this makes them constantly juggle between the values of the past and the opportunities of tomorrow.

### 3.2.5 Beach Leisure Representations in the Arab World

Beach leisure has been a major controversial topic across the Arab world and has received frequent media coverage. Media do more than record, describe or promote. As observers of the public space, they also represent and simulate, in the words of John Hall, the spaces “in which people could try out, at first or second hand, different social roles” in “a lively sphere marked by the spread of new codes of manners” (Hall, cited in Armbrust, 2003:102). As one can imagine, women have always been pointedly included in beach representations, or else there would be nothing to say or represent. As Armbrust (2003) rightly notes, these are not just representations of women in public space but also “attempts to sanction behaviour that clashes with traditional social practices relevant to gender roles” (2003:103). In Egypt, for example, beach leisure has been extensively covered by the Egyptian media, specifically the practice of men and women going to mixed-gender beaches, providing insights into the range of issues and opinions found in the Egyptian society, and possibly Arab societies. In 1992, the picture of a Middle Eastern looking woman reclining on a beach towel on the cover of *Ruz al-Yusuf*, one of Egypt’s largest and oldest mass-circulation weeklies, accompanied by the title ‘Aristocratic Girl for a Pack of Cigarettes’, clearly illustrates the local representations of this emergent Egyptian bourgeoisie and their beach practices. With bare thighs, long voluminous hair and sunglasses,

the same picture is found inside the magazine, along with the following text written by Adil Hamuda, a well-known columnist:

Eyes born of the temptations of the night...The hunger of the sun for the water of the sea. Passion. Caprice. Quenching the thirst. Satisfaction. Sunset. Pain. Boredom. Departure. Waiting for the winter to wash away the sins of summer. This is the story of every summer in al-Agami. Firdus: beach of hot bikinis, excessive liberty, the madness of pleasure reaching into the brain. This is the private beach, only for the rich (cited in Armbrust, 2003:104).

This imagery has been ubiquitous in Cairo for decades, and present to varying degrees in the rest of Egypt and the Arabic-speaking world (Armbrust, 2003:104). This decadent private Firdus beach – where “rich foreigners in scandalous ‘French-cut’ bikinis expose most of their backsides...alongside similarly attired corrupt Egyptian elites” (Armbrust, 2003:105) - is viewed as a product of the *Infitah*, Egypt’s post-1973 ‘open door’ economic policy and is in marked contrast with the other modest public beaches:

There are public beaches on either side. The distance from those beaches to the public beaches takes you from one world to another; from an exciting beach – naked, wealthy – to a modest, crowded beach from which women enter the water wearing *galabiyyas*. The line between the two beaches appears to be imaginary, but it really isn’t. It divides between whiskey and *mi’assil* [a honey-steeped tobacco associated with a more modest lifestyle]; between arrogance and humility; between debauchery and sedateness; between the motor boat and the raft. But in the end all of them are swimming in the same sea (Hamuda, cited in Armbrust, 2003:106 – original emphasis).

The contradictory images of extreme modesty and extreme bodily exposure or, in other words, ‘the juxtaposition of flesh and modesty’, are well documented in Yusuf Shahin’s semi-

documentary film ‘Cairo enlightened by its people’ which shows the Egyptian city groaning under the weight of its contradictions and ripe for trouble (Armbrust, 2003:106). Sexual frustration, seedy foreigners on sex vacations and the ever-present lurking menace of fundamentalism run together throughout the film. Released in 1969, *Papa’s up a Tree* – Husayn’s Kamal first popular film – is a beach film giving a much more detailed exhibition of the 1992 beach discourse invoked by “Aristocratic Girl”. The movie elaborates “a representation of what happens, in media fantasy, on the ‘other beaches’ located on either side of the decadent locale” (Armbrust, 2003:110) and focuses on what the beach should be with respect to middle-class ideals.

Beach leisure has been the subject of a consistent discourse going back at least to the 1930s. In summer issues, the beach was a favourite site for cartoons making fun of the western-looking *nouveaux riches*. On a different note, the mocking of religious figures was evident in the advertisements and articles found in the magazines of the time, revealing the complex relationship between religion and leisure. In the 1934 *al-Ithnayn* magazine, an interesting article entitled ‘Train of the Sea, or Train of the Resurrection’ (*qitar al bahr aw qitar al-hashr*) – accompanied by a drawing illustrating hordes of people descending on the beaches of Alexandria – is about an Egyptian man who, after having bought 24h in advance a newly discounted summer train ticket to the beach, went to the train station half an hour early to buy more tickets for friends, only to find the place packed with people. In the train, he finds himself surrounded by a crowd of bureaucrats from various government ministries, with the exception of the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Suddenly, the man meets Zaki ‘Ukasha (presumably the Minister of Religious Endowments); a meeting that will later turn his mind upside down. Indeed, he discovers that the rugs the minister is carrying are actually not for prayer, as he had previously assumed, but to furnish the villa he has rented at the shore, which revealed to him

that the “Minister of Religious Endowments, it seems, is no pious prude but something of a high roller” (Armbrust, 2003:118).

### Laws for Bathing

- Article 1: –Everyone must obey the law.  
Article 2: –Male and female bathers must be good.  
Article 3: –“Good” means that boys must be handsome and girls pretty.  
Article 4: –Those who are not “good” can swim under the following conditions:  
a. they are rich  
b. they are cultured  
c. they are lighthearted  
Article 5: –Those who do not meet the conditions of article 4 will be expelled from the beach at the first sign of disagreeableness.

### Old People (*shuyukh wa-'aga'iz* )

- Article 6: –God created them to cause fear.  
Article 7: –They can come to the beach under the following conditions:  
a. they leave their “irritated faces” at home  
b. they wear one of the protective masks used in the military club [presumably a fencing mask]  
c. they can prove that they were once handsome  
Article 8: –An old woman can come to the beach only on the condition that she drown herself in the water (*tighraq*).  
Article 9: –If she cannot meet the conditions of article 8 she must stand far away so as not to bother the girls and the children.  
Article 10: –We assume no responsibility for lost items such as false teeth, glass eyes, wigs or the lives of any other old women (*al-baqi min 'umraha*).  
Article 11: –Before swimming with wives and children, men must know that morals are old-fashioned.  
Article 12: –Pray for the deceased spirit (*al-fatiha 'ala rub . . .*) of modesty and jealousy.

This law has been issued for the shore, and is in effect 15 minutes after coming onto the beach.

Signed: Minister of Waves (*wazir al-amwag*);  
Sultan of the Jinn (*sultan al-ginn*).  
(*al-Ithnayn* 8 [August 6, 1934]: 26)

Fig. 1 Satirical bathing laws (*Al-Ithnayn* 8 - August 6 1934:26)



Fig. 2 Satirical drawing making fun of a Muslim cleric (*Al-Ithnayn* 8 - August 6, 1934:26)

The magazine also included some funny ‘laws’ for bathing to make fun of some teachings and beliefs of religious authority, accompanied by the drawing of a bearded Azharite *shaykh* in robe and turban, strolling on the beach among reclining beauties conversing with boys in swimming trunks. The caption by the *shaykh* says, “what is this ‘unveiling’ the women want? Isn’t it supposed to mean that they’re taking off their long dresses?!” (cited in Armbrust, 2003:121), as if the woman lying on the sand next to him with the shoulder strap on her bathing suit slipping off – an affront to standards of public decency – was not already exposed enough.



### **3.3 Performing Beach Leisure on Arab Shores: Beyond ‘Sea, Sun and Sand’ Pleasures**

The Arab world has witnessed a rapid standardisation of beach tourism – characterised by a white concrete hotel along the beach with a swimming pool, buffet meal, a bar and optional leisure activities – which has made it substitutable from place to place across the Mediterranean. (Hazbun, 2008). Arguably, mass beach tourism seems to suggest that beach tourism practices can only be ‘exported’ into non-western regions, based on the view that these places are devoid of their own indigenous local beach leisure practices (Hazbun, 2010). Yet, while swimming might not have been part of the local traditions, going to the beach is not new or due simply to foreign influence. In fact, this seeming lack of local beach leisure traditions along the Arab shores of the Mediterranean has often been explained “as a product of religious strictures that limit the exposure of the body, prevent mixing between the sexes, or even ban beachside sports and recreation” (Hazbun, 2010:215). During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, cultured British travellers often encountered models of beach practices that were very different to their own:

In the course of their Grand Tour, British tourists came across native bathers in the Mediterranean joyfully splashing in the cool, clear waters, playing for hours in the waves like bands of dolphins. To these northern travellers, sights such as these seemed to re-create legendary sea frolics from classical mythology (Lencek and Bosker, 1998:93).

Interestingly, some scholars have questioned popular belief by unveiling a counter-history of beach tourism along the southern Mediterranean or, to put it differently, by revealing alternatives to the dominant ‘diffusion’ narrative which considers Europe as the ‘birthplace’ of beach leisure and reduces beach leisure in the Arab world to western-style resorts catering to European mass beach tourism. Waleed Hazbun, for example, who focused on the local beach leisure traditions in North Africa, explains that there are in fact alternative local origins for the practice of sea bathing that have been unfortunately overlooked by mainstream discourses. While swimming might not have been part of the local tradition, “going to the beach is not new

or due simply to foreign influence” (Hazbun, 2010:216). Clearly, this is suggestive of an alternative history of sea bathing that is ignored by a European-centered master narrative which fails to recognize the diverse, hybrid forms of beach leisure and is therefore blind to the complex forces and influences as well as interactive processes that have shaped beach tourism development.

In this sense, instead of viewing the Mediterranean region “in terms of gradations of modernity”, with the North being more modern and the South being less modern, we can explore the culture of the Mediterranean “in terms of how all its elements are in constant flux, resonating with the waves carrying diverse flows emitted by sources near and distant” (Chambers, cited in Hazbun, 2010:214). Indeed, Chambers (2008) explains that we are likely to discover cultural practices around the Mediterranean basin that have no clear origin but rather reflect influences that can be traced to many locations, back and forth across the Mediterranean since ancient times. This non-linear version of modernity, following a ‘circulation’ approach, is nicely expressed in the opening passages of Chambers’s (2008) book *Mediterranean crossings: the politics of an interrupted modernity* through the way of cooking of a chef in Naples, who observes that “nobody invents anything; everything is already in circulation in one way or another” (Chambers, 2008:1).

### 3.3.1 Testing Morality on the Beach – The Case of Egypt

The ethnographic film *Marriage Egyptian Style* puts the light on a specific beach leisure tradition in Egypt, which involves the families of futures brides and grooms. The purpose of such beach outings is for the two families to get to know one another better prior to the marriage, in a leisurely setting while the groom’s family is observing “how the prospective bride behaves in a potentially licentious public setting” (Armbrust, 2003:107). The beach, as a public space, is viewed as a place of temptation and is therefore used as a test for a bride’s morality. In the

film, an old divorced woman – who hopes for remarriage and for her children’s marriages - and her son, and the family of a prospective bride take a trip to the beach: “On the beach the two families mix freely with other bathers. Some of the women in these scenes wear bathing suits, and some appear in more modest dress. Most of the men wear swimming trunks” (Armbrust, 2003:107). The movie shocked the local media and was welcomed by a series of critical articles, despite the widespread existence and adoption of such practices in the country. However, the objection was less about the content of the movie, and more about the involvement of foreigners and its screening in the West. The film was depicted as a scandal and instantly labelled as a “national shame” and, of course, fingers were pointed at the West. As one journalist argues, “An Egyptian researcher helped to produce the film” and “the director was a British woman” who “chose everything that was wretched, disgusting, and ugly, and photographed it” (al-Gamal, cited in Armbrust, 2003:107). This wasn’t how real Egyptians lived, in the opinion of Egyptian journalists, implying that such beach leisure traditions were not ‘Egyptian’ or those adopting them were not ‘real Egyptians’.

### 3.3.2 Pushing Religio-Cultural Boundaries on the Beach – The Case of Morocco

In Morocco, going to the beach has also been a local practice long before the emergence of the beach monoculture brought by westerners. Indeed, the Moroccan bourgeoisie living inland in big cities such as Fès and Marrakech had the habit to leave these cities sometimes, pushed by the need to run away from the weight of traditions which regulated almost every aspect of their social lives as well as prevented spontaneity, and head towards the sea (Berriane, 1993). In the coastal cities, such as El Jadida, Essaouira, Asilah, Tanger, people are not bound by everyday social norms; the burden of traditions can be lifted from their shoulders and moral standards can be temporarily relaxed. Then, in the 1960s, the beach also provided some freedom for youths visiting the coast in groups, sometimes against the will of their parents. As Hazbun

(2010) notes, beaches have been places providing ‘relative’ freedom where family members could engage in activities together and with other vacationers that might not be tolerated at home. Ironically, the burden of religion and conservative cultural traditions have, in a sense, played a role in the development of beach leisure in Morocco. Far from being static, the local beach leisure practices have gradually changed over time. The separation of sexes was quite common on the beach, before the mix of sexes became the norm. Families made sure to keep themselves as far away as possible from the crowd while children, who were the only ones allowed to enter the water, enjoyed the pleasures of the sea. With the democratisation of beach leisure, Moroccans have reinvented the beach by adopting some European leisure practices while adapting their own local traditions, which shows the flexibility of the Moroccan society and “a great facility of assimilating and integrating these elements into its own culture” while getting “a grip on the modern world” (Berriane, cited in Hazbun, 2010:217-18).

### 3.3.3 Negotiating Modernity and Cultural Traditions on the Beach – The Case of Tunisia

As part of the Grand Tour, Tunisian shores have long attracted the European bourgeoisie; the coastal town of Hammamet was known as a destination for various intellectual and artistic travellers such as Gide, Flaubert, and Klee. Following independence, Tunisia’s initial beach tourism strategy was to make the Tunisian littoral a modern, western-style resort destination in the mould of a Mediterranean Riviera resort as found along Europe’s southwest shores. Indeed, the former Tunisian president Habib Bourghiba believed that the “reorientation of Tunisia towards the West would represent progress and prosperity, the very objectives that an independent Tunisia aspired to” (Bergaoui, 2003:53). Beach tourism was used as a tool to modernize the country along western lines and make it a more ‘open country’, therefore diminishing “its markers of otherness and lack of modernity” (Hazbun, 2010:212). However, given the difficulty to compete against other top-class European beach destinations offering

luxury tourism facilities, Tunisia sought to turn towards ‘mass beach tourism’, which was at the time the largest and fastest growing type of international tourism. The coastal tourism zones soon became dominated by mid-range three star hotels that catered to cheap package tours, all lined up around Hamammet, Sousse and Djerba (Hazbun, 2010). Yet, these western, mass beach tourism practices were highly alienated from the culture of the indigenous community. Indeed, geographically and socially, these beach resorts represented a ‘foreign enclave’, in other words, a zone outside of the local cultural fabric. Following his survey of the population around one of the major tourism resorts in Tunisia, a French researcher observed that “unfortunately these large tourist cages [i.e. the hotels] are, in the eyes of the local people who have no other basis for comparison, true symbols of the life-style of the highly industrialized, developed countries” (cited in Hazbun, 2010:213).

Far from being spaces of ‘modernity’ (in the western sense of the term), beaches were in fact spaces of cultural negotiations where many young Tunisians working at these beach resorts had to negotiate between “the society of their parents, restricted and monitored, and the one of their work lives that turns on semi-nude beaches and brilliant nightlife” (Waltz, cited in Hazbun, 2010:213). On a different note, ethnographic research on the beach leisure practices of Tunisians revealed that their motivations and experiences, even for Tunisians staying in the same mid-range hotels as foreign tourists, are different from those of foreign tourists (Pfaffenbach, 2001). Indeed, they are more likely to travel in extended family groups, spend more time in local towns and shops, express disapproval of the behaviour of western tourists as well as “see their own socially-beneficial behavior in contrast to pleasure-seeking leisure of foreigners” (Hazbun, 2010:216). Interestingly, modernity is not perceived as a characteristic of the West as local Tunisians tend to perceive their beach leisure practices as an innovation of traditional ones such as summer family travel to the shore (Pfaffenbach, 2001).

### 3.3.4 Resisting Occupation on the Beach – The Case of Gaza Beach, Palestinian Territory

Gaza beach is ideal for exploring Palestinian struggles, desires, hopes and subject positions assigned by power relations, beyond the prevailing discourses on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Gaza beach is the only place where the 1.4 million Palestinians, literally fenced inside the densely built and overcrowded Gaza Strip, can go camping and spend time outdoors; a place where they can enjoy a sense of freedom in an open-air prison. No wonder why Gaza's nickname is *al-cijon*, meaning prison. During summer time, Gaza beach is stormed by local Gazans with their own colourful tents, makeshift shelters, food and cooking facilities turning it into a vibrant camping zone:

Scents of roasting chicken and fish, strong tea and apple-flavoured hookahs fill the air amidst sounds of laughter and dashing waves. Countless swimmers seek relief in the sea from the hot sun; others enjoy themselves in tent-like beach cafés and rentable bungalows, which private entrepreneurs pitch on the beach every summer (Junka, 2006:419).

Condensed between the sea and the overcrowded and impoverished Palestinian cities and refugee camps, Gaza beach looks like a smooth space of joy and escape for Palestinians that is worth defending. Unlike others, some camp in large UN or Red Crescent refugee tents furnished to many families during the Intifada after the Israeli military had demolished their homes. For some families, the tent represents a second affirmation of their condition as refugees:

In 1948, the Qasirs were forced to flee their home in what is now recognised as Israel and begin life as refugees in Gaza. In 2003, they lost their home again when the Israeli military demolished their house after a member of their family killed four settlers and became a martyr. Their grandmother was also killed, as she refused to leave her home during the demolition. And yet, leaning back in the shadow of the Qasirs' large refugee tent, drinking

tea and watching the blue sea where children play and laugh, it is almost possible to forget that Gaza is occupied and practically in a state of war (Junka, 2006:420).

Camping on the beach is seen as a form of ‘tactical’ everyday resistance to the occupation “by transforming the prison-like spaces left to them into spaces of joy and hope” (Junka, 2006:422). Indeed, by camping on the beach, Palestinians not only defy representations that reduce them to passive victims but also affirm their right to everyday life, fun and land against the occupier:

If what is at stake in Palestine today is the very possibility of life itself and the ability of Palestinians to exercise control over their colonised bodies and spaces of everyday life, then the affirmation not only of death but also of life and pleasure becomes a meaningful aspect of the Palestinian struggle (Junka, 2006:422).

However, the beach has not always been considered as such. During the first *Intifada*, an austere and strict discipline was followed, based on the belief that only once an independent Palestinian state existed would there be time for leisure. Hence, a typical reply to an invitation for a daytrip to the beach was “For Palestinians, there are no holidays and picnics now!”, followed by an affirmation that only once an independent Palestinian state existed would there be time for leisure (Junka, 2006:423). In fact, those who went picnicking on the beach risked denunciation, accusations of collaboration and even confrontations with militants. The change of perception and the abandonment of the strict discipline characteristic of the first *Intifada* led national resistance movements in Gaza to re-think and adapt their strategies of political mobilisation to the Palestinian desire for life. All major political groups in Gaza have set up their own public tents on the beach, which are used mainly for leisure activities such as organising free summer camps for children and adolescents who can choose whether “to play volleyball with Hamas, go swimming with the Islamic Jihad or fly kites with Fatah”; Many children “choose them all” (Junka, 2006:426). In short, understanding this relationship between space, power and

resistance is especially helpful for making sense of the different ways in which Palestinians have approached the beach during the two *Intifadas*, or in other words, the different circumstances behind the suspension of everyday leisure life on one hand, and the affirmation of it on the other.

### 3.3.5 Expressing Lifestyles on the Beach – The Case of the Sinai, Egypt

From a tourism standpoint, the Sinai is being developed as a beach paradise following a western generic tourist model of a tropical Caribbean paradise or the beaches of the Mediterranean rather than something Middle Eastern. The actual location of the Sinai in an Arab and predominantly Muslim country is a sharp contrast to the tourist imaginary of a beach of freedom, tanning and casual sex, mainly frequented by scantily-clad beach-going Europeans:

The Sinai of course is a desert, which does not fit the usual image of paradise, but thanks to its tropical coral reefs, palm trees (date, not coconut), sandy beaches, year-round sunshine and friendly natives, it can easily appropriate the imagery to suit the expectations and tastes of its visitors. It is not strictly speaking an island either, but as a peninsula it is sufficiently surrounded by sea and far enough away from large population centres to be experienced as one (Jacobs, 2010:47).

Beach destinations in the Sinai fall between what Dann calls ‘paradise confined’ and ‘paradise confused’ (cited in Homa, 2007). Visitors to Sharm el Sheikh for example fall into the ‘paradise confined’ category. As Homa (2007:242) explains, such a visitor “flies into the local airport, goes to a multi-million dollar hotel complex to relax by the pool and then leaves via the same route a few days later.” Spread out along over 35km of coast with coral-rich seas and lined by long stretches of date-palm beaches, Sharm el Sheikh is a large (ever expanding) modern tourist resort, with many bars, nightclubs, over 50 diving centers and more than a 100 three to five star high-end hotels such as the Hilton, Sonesta and Four Seasons, some of which are all-inclusive



gated luxurious hotels with villa and apartment complexes and even their own transport systems. On the other end where ‘paradise confused’ is found in Dahab or Nuweiba, travellers attempt to deal directly with the ‘natives’ by entering locals-only zones: “natives as seducers, natives as intermediaries, natives as familiar” (Dann, cited in Homa, 2007:242).

By the time the Sinai had been returned to Egypt in 1982 following the Camp David Accords, Dahab, located on the East coast of the Sinai, had turned into a popular traveller destination providing “a ‘hippy’ hangout for those looking for a relaxed atmosphere and the ability to partake in a drink of choice or readily available marijuana or hashish with friends.” (Homa, 2007:257). Unlike tourists in Sharm el Sheikh who are “generally satisfied staying within the confines of their hotel”, travellers to Dahab often seek out what they believe to be an authentic Bedouin experience and thus are willing to stay in low-end traveller accommodations in the likes of the Fighting Kangaroo or the Mohammed Ali Camp (Homa, 2007:240). The Mzenia Bedouin had long spent time along the ocean near present day Dahab. In contrast, Sharm el Sheikh, with no natural source of water, was never a Bedouin village and was barely influenced by Bedouins due to the new ‘security wall’ separating Sharm el Sheikh from the surrounding Bedouin settlements. Interestingly, despite terrorism and regional turmoil, the ‘ultramodern’ resorts like Sharm El Sheikh have continued to grow, perhaps as Steiner suggests precisely because they lack the “spatial, historical, and social embeddedness” (cited in Jacobs, 2010:42) that would lead to them being imagined as Islamic, contrary to more traditional heritage tourism sites such as Luxor and Petra which suffered from some decreases. Dahab’s popularity with backpackers made it “a firm fixture of the backpacker circuit that many people started to move to the Bedouin beach huts on the quieter beaches of Nuweiba” (Jacobs, 2010:41).

The pace of life in Dahab has remained much slower despite some resort development, due to perhaps,

its distance from Cairo, the paucity of coral reef to attract divers and the political deadlock with Israel that has led to a failure of the *Red Sea Riviera* project that optimistically aimed to link Taba (to the north) with Eilat in Israel and Aquaba in Jordan (Jacobs, 2010:41).

Clearly, the Bedouin-run camps in Dahab and Nuweiba qualify as what Edensor calls 'heterogeneous' tourist space while the hotel dominated resort of Sharm el sheikh is closer to what he has termed 'enclavic' tourist space (cited in Jacobs, 2010:97). In Jacobs' (2010) study of the ethno-sexual tourist-local encounters between Egyptian men and western women, it was found that, while many women settle for the bright lights and built-up hotels of Sharm el Sheikh, others prefer the Bedouin tourist village of Dahab and the Bedouin beach camps that are dotted around Nuweiba as they felt attracted to the lifestyle of the Bedouin, associating it with 'masculinity' and the sexually constructed idea of 'real man'. Interestingly, the stereotypical fantasies of the romantic Arab and Bedouin masculinity are based on the "romanticisation of the faraway primitive", or in other words, an orientalist geographical imagination of the Sinai as a desert wilderness, where one can become one with nature, away from civilisation.

### **3.4 Enjoying the Beach with an Islamic Ethos**

Globalisation is a 'double-edged sword', a contradictory phenomenon, as it "helps to create new spaces of commonality, but also new spaces of difference" (Smith, 2009:14). Indeed, the specificity of globalisation is that while it is connecting nations and eroding strong cultural boundaries, it is also offering the possibility for people with similar backgrounds and/or sharing the same values to come together and to 're-build' lost boundaries in new spaces. This point is supported by Waters (1995:136) who believes that "globalisation...is a differentiating as well as a homogenising process". The booming of halal beach leisure can provide some interesting

insights as to how this globalisation is encouraging the development of alternative lifestyles, alternative ways of doing things. Western-style resorts, alcohol and bikinis are nowadays part of the global tourism landscape, even in the furthest reaches of the globe. Yet, an increasing number of Arab countries are attempting to resist this popular one size-fits-all beach tourism model through the halalisation of beach leisure practices. This trend is a response to this western cultural supremacy and stems from people's need to "accord greater relevance to their civilizational identity" (Huntington, 1996:67) and "to re-interpret their culture as western values and beliefs become more pervasive" (Wearing et al., 2010:56). Interestingly, the sociologist Steve Bruce (1996) formulated the concept of 'cultural defence' to explain how defensiveness can bolster religiosity. In fact, in the Arab world, mass beach tourism oriented to European desires "proved an especially ripe target for Islamist tracts against westernizing and secularizing government policies and social trends toward consumerism and materialism" (Hazbun, 2008:47). In other words, Islamists have declared their opposition to "the cultural colonization" of the Islamic world through Westernisation (Hazbun, 2008:48) and planned to re-Islamise Arab societies. In the views of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood candidate Azza al Jarf, "tourists don't need to drink alcohol when they come to Egypt; they have plenty at home." (cited in Jensen, 2011). Interestingly, these conservative views resonated with many Tunisians and Egyptians, among others, who considered Islam as a source of identity and moral guidance and therefore identified themselves with the country's Arab-Islamic heritage instead of the Mediterranean or western identity that appealed more to the country's Westernised elite. In this sense, the 'islamisation' of beach tourism through the creation of new halal touristic spaces can be partly understood as "a reaction of the (much) weaker part in the aggressive process of cultural globalization, to define and to protect one's own culture and cultural heritage" (Al-Hamarneh, n.d.). With the emergence of a new breed of holiday under the slogan 'Sun, sea and halal', Muslims are given the opportunity to enjoy "the same things as everyone

else on the beach, bar a few concessions, and minus the alcohol”, as worded by Suleaman (2010). The Burqini - a swimsuit that covers the whole body except the face, the hands and the feet - has made its way into the beach, enabling Muslim women to dress modestly and be more involved in beach-related family activities (Battour and Ismail, 2016). Apart from Muslim women, an increasing number of non-Muslim women are also recognizing its multiple benefits, including sun protection, flexibility and modesty.

#### 3.4.2 Muslim-Friendly Resorts on Arab Shores

Unlike Turkey which is a halal beach tourism hub, beach destinations in the Arab world are somehow missing out on the lucrative halal beach tourism market given their lack of halal beachfront hotels and resorts. As Nabeel Shariff, founder and director of Luxury Halal Travel, rightly notes,

Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt are all yet to develop similar levels of product that would not only service an international client but their local travel market as well. I would like to see halal resorts opening in places as mentioned, but also in Jordan, Oman, the UAE, Malaysia and Indonesia to name a few (cited in Thomson Reuters/DinarStandard, 2016:36).

Dubai, for example, has a reputation for high-end beachfront hotels, yet most of them are not specifically catered to the halal market. Interestingly, while efforts have been put in developing muslim-friendly hotels in UAE, centred on urban tourist experiences, beach resorts have been somehow left behind even though there is a desire among Muslim visitors “for the same offering and respect of their personal religious rules at these beachfront properties”, remarked Scott Booth, director of travel and tourism research (cited in Hashem, 2016).

During the World Halal Travel Summit in Abu Dhabi, Mr Seyidli, the chairman of HalalBooking.com, expressed similar views:

If you look at halal beach resorts there are none in the UAE. Turkey is one of the few full service beach resort destinations that offers separate beaches for women, women-only swimming pools, pools for women with sons and family pools. They also offer prayer rooms close to the entertainment among other halal attractions (cited in Scott and Sahoo, 2015).

However, this lack of muslim-friendly beach resorts has been acknowledged by UAE officials and thus they are now working on it with developers and hotel operators in an attempt to address this gap (Scott and Sahoo, 2015). In Oman, for example, Shaza Hotels, an affiliate of Kempinski, has launched its first Muslim-friendly beachfront resort, one of 12 hotels in its pipeline in Salalah, which is comprised of 200 rooms and 75 villas, each with a plunge pool and an optional shutter-like system for additional privacy (Hashem, 2016).

Interestingly, a 2016 Salaam Gateway report about muslim-friendly beach resorts, made by Thomson Reuters and Dinar Standards, points out that there is a significant potential to launch resorts in countries that have developed a halal-friendly ecosystem, such as UAE. The report clearly recommends existing resort owners to “open new locations dedicated to Muslims in popular destinations such as the UAE...where there is significant demand and can target middle-income households and non-Muslim customers” (Thomson Reuters/DinarStandard, 2016:37). In fact, as Battour and Ismail (2016) note, Egypt and the UAE are trying to become more muslim-friendly by creating women-only pools and welcoming the Muslim full bathing suit. In fact, while Muslim-dedicated halal beach resorts fully focus on the core faith-based needs of Muslim travellers, Muslim-friendly beach resorts, on the other hand, meet those specific needs to a lesser extent as Muslims do not represent their core target customer segment.

Interestingly, apart from Muslim markets, Muslim-focused beach resorts can also appeal to non-Muslim customer segments through emphasizing universal values, such as family friendliness (Thomson Reuters/DinarStandard, 2016). Indeed, one regional business group, for instance, has expressed its interest in developing Shariah-compliant luxury branded resorts in the Middle East and South East Asia, with the aim to also attract western tourists whose motivations focus on well-being, cultural appreciation and a health-conscious lifestyle (Stephenson, 2014).

### 3.4.3 Ladies-Only Resorts Through Arab Customers' Eyes: The Case of *La Femme Beach*, Egypt

Located on Egypt's north coast, about 150 miles north of Cairo, La Femme ladies-only resort attracts women who would like to swim, tan, and even shimmy to the sound of Arabic music while remaining pious in God's eyes. It has become the place to be for wealthy, young Egyptian women wearing hijab who want to enjoy the beach away from men's prying eyes. Inside the resort, women transform themselves as veils are taken away, skin is revealed and femininity is uncovered (Gauch, 2006). Nermine, an accountant in Cairo who hasn't hit the beach in her swimsuit since she began wearing hijab 10 years ago, explains it this way: "I feel free... You can do whatever you want here; you can swim, dance." (cited in Gauch, 2006). Similarly, Safa, a Cairo resident in her 60s, states that "it is an excellent idea to have a beach reserved for women only" since, from a religious perspective, "it is 'haram' (forbidden in Islam) to strut around in front of men in a swimsuit" (cited in The Sidney Morning Herald, 2008).

Interestingly, ladies-only resorts not only attract veiled women but also those who want to experience the unique atmosphere found inside such places where one is free to wear any kind of swimsuit, from the most matronly one-piece to the most revealing string bikini, noting that the quality of the service on offer is another big feature ranging from free cooking

demonstrations to yoga and belly-dancing classes to beauty competitions where women compete for the title of Miss La Femme (best all-round), Miss Congeniality, and Miss Elegance. Although not veiled, Mona Ahmed, a Cairo homemaker, prefers La Femme to mixed-sex beaches and would like to find such kind of resorts on other Egyptian shores: “I’d like to see these beaches in Alexandria, Sharm el-Sheikh, Hurghada, wherever there are beaches in Egypt” (cited in Gauch, 2006). Clearly, while many women seek out segregated beaches like La Femme out of religious considerations, others consider such places for comfort and peace of mind as La Femme was never meant to be a totally Islamic beach, as explained by the owner Khaled Fouad (Gauch, 2006).

On the experience of women in mixed beaches, Dina El Mougy, an oil company administrator from Cairo, says that women are faced with the indecent stares of men checking out their bodies which objectifies women and limits them to being sexual objects to be desired and examined by prying male eyes: “Men go to the beaches to watch the swimsuits...It's a kind of fashion show and very annoying. When I go to mixed beaches, I can only touch the water with my feet” (cited in Gauch, 2006). Ladies-only resorts allow women to be themselves on the beach as their bodily practices are not restricted by religious guidelines and male desires. As Marwa states, “the 'sharia' swimsuits are not practical” hence she prefers ladies-only resorts where she is as happy as a ‘fish in water’ and where she feels she can be herself (cited in *The Sidney Morning Herald*, 2008). The only moment of concern for Marwa is when young men riding jet skis try to get closer to the coast to sneak a view of the women. However, for those who cannot afford the quite expensive price of ladies-only resorts, some other options are being considered such as for example wearing the dreaded full-body Islamic swimsuit that cover them from the neck down to the ankles in mixed beaches or finding a completely secluded beach or hitting the beach earlier than anyone else or swimming in their clothes. Some took a radical decision: they simply stopped going to the beach at all (Gauch, 2006).

### 3.4.4 Controversies over Bikinis and Burqinis - The case of Algeria

From abortion to clothing choices, the debate around women's bodies traverses continents, and the current controversy around the bikini and the burkini is just the latest example of this fixation on the covering or uncovering of women's bodies (Aziz, 2016). In the Arab world, both bikinis and burqinis became powerful tools for women to express themselves, display identities and beliefs and challenge norms. Funnily enough, the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* asked “Can we get through the summer without the inescapable hubbub over the burkini and the bikini?” “Certainly not.” (cited in Ghanmi, 2017). In Algeria, where, until recently, mixed beaches and swimsuits were the norm, the beach has become an important space of personal expression, a battleground between different ideology holders. According to Rahou, Algerian society is caught “between the hammer of Islamist extremists who want beaches for women under the watch of police squads... and the anvil of turning women’s bodies into market products as some unbridled form of modernisation by Westerners’ wants” (cited in Ghanmi, 2017). In 2017, it was reported by western media outlets that thousands of Algerian women flocked to Algerian beaches in bikinis to protest against conservative norms and harassment. According to the French daily *Le Parisien*, “It is a kind of bikini revolt that is staged in Algeria in reaction to a campaign launched to stigmatise women who do not hide their bodies on beaches” (cited in Ghanmi, 2017). As Yasmina Chouaki, an Algerian feminist activist, explains,

women’s bodies had no place in public spaces... When women were obliged to leave their private spheres, they were forced to entirely cover their bodies... Today women and their bodies seek to win place in all public spaces. On the beach, there is a kind of bargaining between the woman and society through clothing (cited in Ghanmi, 2017).

Interestingly, a controversial article in an Algerian newspaper claimed that ‘nudity’ on public beaches had turned them into no-go areas for families; Algerian women were criticised for wearing “skimpy swimsuits as if they were on foreign beaches” and for “displaying their bodies



full of tattoos” (cited in The National, 2016). Some Algerian women cover up against their will due to social pressure. In Zeralda, a seaside resort in western Algiers, few women dare to wear a swimsuit, let alone a bikini, on public beaches. Manel, a biology student, feels resigned to cover up to avoid the male gaze: “I love swimming but if I wear a normal swimsuit, people look at me as if I’m a Martian” (cited in The National, 2016). Similarly, Siham also feels obliged to wear cycling shorts under her one-piece swimsuit to “avoid being stared at” (cited in The National, 2016). These changing social mores have given a boost to ladies-only beach clubs such as the Marina Club east of Algiers which are not affordable for everyone but this segregation has been criticised by Saida, an English teacher, who states that “the walls have been put up between those who can pay to tan on a private beach and those who, by conviction or obligation, swim in an outfit society deems decent” (cited in The National, 2016). Yet, some women prefer defying the changing social mores like Katia, who wears the bikini ‘on principle’:

I put on weight when I was pregnant, but I refuse to accept the diktat of society...When the Islamists banned women from going to the beach, we didn’t yield. We went with family and friends and we wore our swimsuits (cited in The National, 2016).

However, despite societal pressure faced by some Algerian women, local journalists who scouted the country’s beaches reported a familiar scene of coexistence between women wearing various swimming suits. Following her visit of beaches at Annaba, Tarf, Skikda and Jijel, Wahida Bahri of L’Expression wrote: “Bikinis and burkinis are side by side in tolerance” (cited in Ghanmi, 2017).

### 3.4.5 Criticism of the 'halalisation' of Beach Leisure

Opponents of the Muslim-friendly beach leisure practices criticised this 'Muslim gathering' in so-called halal hotels/resorts which they consider as environments conducive to 'communitarianism', potentially leading to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism within the host country (Carboni and Idrissi Janati, 2015; Girit, 2014). In Egypt, the tourism minister, Munir Fakhri Abdul Nour, expressed his concern regarding the impact of religious edicts (*fatwas*) on tourism, saying that it is as bad as the impact of Egypt's instability and lack of security which translated into reservation cancellations: "The tourism industry is facing a double challenge: security ... and the fatwas" (cited in Al Arabiya, 2011). As Fayed (2012) states, many actors involved in the tourism industry fear the industry will never fully recover from the crisis that followed the popular uprising if the skimpy swimwear and alcoholic drinks are banned. In the view of the Lebanese sociologist Dalal al-Bizri, Egypt is gripped by "a sort of religious hysteria" and ladies-only beaches like La Femme "reflect the general mood in the country" (cited in IOL, 2008). However, the Muslim intellectual Heba Raouf points out that ladies-only resorts are purely business-oriented places and are not Islamic in any way: "I only see capitalism and consumerism, women wearing designer swimsuits and showing off their wealth... This is not Islam, hiding yourself from men while exposing yourself to women. This is a spectacle" (cited in Gauch, 2006). Interestingly, a security guard posted outside a ladies-only resort in Egypt shares similar views as Mrs. Raouf as he sees such places as just another form of 'decadence' and thinks that these "these women should fear God, not men", asking why they could not keep the belly-dancing for home and family events (cited in IOL, 2008). On a different note, Karim Mohsen of the Egyptian Travel Agents Association warns of the negative consequences of the islamisation of tourism on the unemployment rate in Egypt: "Ban bikinis and alcohol and live with the guilt of at least 4.5 million people out of work in Egypt... People will take to the streets." (cited in Fayed, 2012). He pointed to Saudi Arabia as a cautionary tale,

stating that it has “the best virgin beaches, with soft sands...but not a single tourist goes except for the Muslim pilgrimage” (cited in Fayed, 2012).

Just for the sake of comparison between countries, some views expressed by Turkish scholars regarding the halalisation of Turkish shores will be mentioned below given the popularity of Turkey for halal beach leisure. According to Yasin Aktay, a Turkish sociologist and scholar of Islam, there is a link between the rise of halal beach tourism activity and the growing importance of conservative Muslims in Turkey (Duman, 2011). The ruling party, Justice and Development Party (AKP), is blamed for supporting the development of halal seaside hotels and resorts hence creating an alternative way of life, an alternative lifestyle on the beach against the western way of holidaying. Some sector representatives pointed out unlawful discrimination between domestic and foreign tourists, genders, bachelors and married tourists, alcohol consuming tourists and others. These hotels are especially criticised for using public beaches for their own purposes by creating private spaces for men and women (Duman, 2011). However, an interesting study initiated by Carboni et.al (2014) in the Tunisian city of Djerba revealed that a 'virtual segregation' has already appeared in some tourist destinations, even before the development of 'Islamic tourism'. Indeed, findings showed that the coexistence between the different tourists visiting Djerba is limited. A segregation, initiated by tourists themselves, has taken place over time: international tourists (mainly westerners) stay at big hotels/resorts, while Muslim tourists (mainly Libyans) typically prefer apartments and villas. Interestingly, even before the expansion of the halal tourism concept, many tourists of different backgrounds and religious faiths have preferred not to mix.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the lifestyles and specifically beach leisure practices of Arabs. Contrary to orientalist imaginaries, the Arab world is much more than being the land of instability, terrorists, bedouins riding camels, veiled women, and the “pleasure periphery of Europe” (Turner and Ash, 1975:100) where resorts covering the Arab shores overtly appeal to a generic image of paradise. Being the dominant tourism model in the Arab World, mass beach tourism has undoubtedly played a significant role in erasing the specificities of the regional cultures and traditions as well as challenging Islamic values. Interestingly, far from only being fun places, beaches in Arab countries have been sites where cultural traditions have been (re)negotiated, morality has been tested, religious beliefs have been questioned, occupation has been resisted, lifestyles have been expressed, and religio-cultural boundaries have been pushed. Influenced by the popularity of halal beach leisure in non-Arab countries such as Turkey and Malaysia, some Arab beach destinations have been working on improving their ‘Muslim friendliness’, in an attempt to cater to the Muslim market whose needs have been overlooked for so long. Offering Muslim consumers the opportunity to enjoy the beach in a halal way then becomes a differentiating criteria for such resorts which decided to surf on the wave of Islamic Tourism despite critics pointing out that beaches are being turned into places of worship, places that fuel Islamism. The emergence of halal beach leisure has fuelled long-standing debates about the covering or uncovering of women's bodies and the place of religion in the public sphere, with the latest burqini/bikini controversy showing that the female body remains a hot topic that arouses passions and a fixation on it is far from belonging to the past. Clearly, the beach leisure practices of Arabs are contextualised by local socio-cultural environments, local policies, the beliefs and lifestyles of beach goers, and what religion, culture and traditions prescribe and proscribe, Yet, the fluidity and hybridity found in Arab societies have contributed to absorbing the shock between several systems of values and lifestyles, allowing some local

communities to reinvent the beach in ways that suit their own needs and lifestyles. The next chapter will discuss the methodology adopted for the research, including the research philosophy, strategy, methods, the ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN

---

--- *We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are (Anaïs Nin)*

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the way this research has been designed and the strategy lying behind such a design. As a first step, the research paradigm will be introduced and its philosophical underpinnings. Then, the methodological approach is discussed, including the conceptual framework derived from the chosen paradigmatic lens, followed by a detailed justification of the research methods employed to meet the objectives of this study. As a reminder, research objectives are as follows:

- To critically explore the body of literature on bodies, lifestyles and leisure with an emphasis on the Arab world;
- To critically investigate the motives behind the differentiated beach practices, beach choices as well as the lived beach experiences of beach goers in Lebanon by undertaking on-the-ground research;
- To critically examine the collected data and evaluate what findings teach us about the beach leisure dynamics in Lebanon as well as to what extent they are reflecting the complex socio-cultural realities of this country;
- To lay the groundwork for future research on beach leisure dynamics in Lebanon with a focus on other interesting elements such as generational differences, class differences, etc.

Next, data analysis procedures used to interpret the data are outlined, followed by a deep reflection upon my fieldwork experiences which provides valuable insight into my positionality as a researcher. Subsequently, research ethics and research limitations are discussed in an effort

to demonstrate the researcher's awareness of the ethical standards and issues as well as the shortcomings and external influences that are out of control which may limit the research findings.

#### **4.2 Research Paradigm – *Interpretivism/Constructivism***

The practice of social science and philosophical reflection are intrinsically connected with one another as the social scientist “is not simply a practitioner of a scientific discipline, but is at the same time also a philosopher of social science” (Delanty and Strydom, cited in Munar and Jamal, 2016:4). As such, exploring my own philosophical stance is a crucial stepping stone towards the successful completion of this study, bearing in mind that “the way in which we [the researchers]...interpret what we see, will bear our own signature” (Eisner, 1998:34). In the academic arena, paradigms constitute a lens to examine complex and conflictual processes of knowledge formation in the field, “similar to placing a torch inside the black box of knowledge production” (Munar and Jamal, 2016:2). Acting as an umbrella, a paradigm is defined as “the constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on” (Tribe, cited in Dann and Jamal, 2015:30) which can act as “sense-making, identity-crafting tools” for scholarly communities and “help to position oneself in a complex research landscape” (Munar and Jamal, 2016:3). In the Encyclopedia of Tourism (2nd edition), Tomas Pernecky explains the concept of paradigm in the following terms:

The contemporary use of the term paradigm suggests that it plays a specific role in the research process. As a system of views and beliefs, it is interconnected with ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Taken together, these form the research design: setting the parameters for what it is possible to know, while acknowledging researcher's philosophical assumptions about reality, and their attitude towards the research problem.

To determine under which paradigm they operate, it is thus necessary to immerse

themselves in the underpinning ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions, which in turn guide the researchers' actions (Pernecky, cited in Munar and Jamal, 2016:3).

This research is grounded in the interpretivist research tradition which has a long and rich history within social science; it finds its source in Max Weber's '*Verstehen*' concept, meaning 'understanding' situation-specific meanings or in other words, 'understanding' the meaning of social phenomena (Schwandt, cited in O'Brien, 2011:40-1). As a major anti-positivist stance, the goal of interpretivism is to understand the complex world of lived experience through the eyes of those who live it, with an abiding concern for the world of lived, constructed realities, "for the emic point of view...for grasping the actor's definition of a situation" (Schwandt, cited in O'Brien, 2011:40). In short, for *Verstehen*. Rejecting the idea of universal laws and theory-neutral observations as in science, interpretivists believe that "the world is too complex to be reduced to a set of observable 'laws'", making "generalizability less important than understanding the real workings behind 'reality'" (Gray, 2004:31). On a different note, a key principle of Geertzian interpretivism is that interpretive research entails layers of interpretations which involves researchers attempting to interpret how research participants interpret this world of meaning in their everyday lives, what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls 'webs of significance' (cited in Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010:969). In short, the interpretivist interprets what actors interpreted.

From an epistemological perspective, interpretivism is closely linked to constructivism since "the world is interpreted through the classification schemas of the mind" meaning that "there is no, direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (subjects) and the world (object)" (Gray, 2004:20). Generally known for being an epistemology telling us about the nature, possibility and scope of knowledge, constructionism is not self-explanatory and needs to be defined by the researcher given the variety of constructivist approaches in the research arena (Pernecky, 2012).



As Michael Lynch puts it, “although it may be impossible to define what adherents to the various constructivist approaches hold in common, at least they have the word ‘construction’” (cited in Pernecky, 2012:1120). While some researchers are of the view that constructionism dismisses reality completely and makes us believe that we live in an “imaginary” world (Pernecky, 2012:1119), many constructionists are not in the business of dismissing reality and would not object to the claim that “we are surrounded by objects which exist, are tangible, and visible to the human eye” (Pernecky, 2012:1123). Burr (1998) questions the mistaken popular criticism of constructionism: “Critics of constructionism appear to be contesting the idea that the world is a figment of our imaginations and has no materiality, which was never constructionism’s claim” (Burr, cited in Pernecky, 2012:1123). Pernecky (2012) clearly explains how realism is not to be confused with objectivism:

Constructionists do not necessarily dispute reality *per se*, what many a constructionist does reject, is the possibility of objectivism and ‘objective knowledge’: a view that truth and meaning dwell in phenomena independently of consciousness, and thus knowledge independent of the inquirer, the social processes, and culture (Pernecky, 2012:1124 – original emphasis).

My research follows this approach which considers the world as real yet can only be experienced “through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions, beliefs and values” (Walliman, 2011:22), resulting in multiple perspectives and interpretations of social phenomena. In a similar vein, Gergen (2009) argues that constructionists only question the objective existence of meaningful reality, and not reality itself:

Constructionism makes no denials concerning pollution, poverty, or death. Constructionists don’t say, “death is not real”, for example; nor do they make any

affirmations (...) constructionism doesn't try to rule on what is or is not fundamentally real. Whatever is, simply is (Gergen, cited in Pernecky, 2012:1123).

Following the view that constructionism in epistemology is actually compatible with realism in ontology, Patomaki and Wright (2000) write, "the question is not of whether to be a realist, but of what kind of realist to be" (cited in Pernecky, 2012:1123). One needs to distinguish between reality on the one hand, and construction of meaning on the other. Loseke (1999) makes this clear by stating that "humans live in two worlds: the physical world and the world of meaning" (cited in Pernecky, 2012:1124). In short, "to say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real" (Crotty, cited in Pernecky, 2012:1126) and "those who contrast constructionism and realism are wide of the mark" (Crotty, cited in Pernecky, 2012:1124). More specifically, tourism is inherently socially constructed for without being meaningfully constructed and transmitted as such, it would cease to exist. In fact, constructionist thinking in tourism studies is intertwined with a list of social problems which themselves, in constructionist terms, are socially constructed such as race, gender, poverty and sustainability. In the tourism literature, there are increasing calls for the need to understand the construction of meanings in touristic experiences (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005), and open new doors to 'seeing' the world from which can emerge different social realities. Indeed, research underpinned by constructionist philosophies can encourage the development of "conceptualisations of tourisms that encompass multiple worldviews and cultural differences as well as research praxis that recognises and reflects the plurality of multiple positions, practices and insights" (Ren, Pritchard, and Morgan, cited in Pernecky, 2012:1127).

### 4.3 Research Approach – *Qualitative/Inductive*

There are two broad approaches to doing research, namely quantitative and qualitative, with the former following a deductive reasoning (top-down) and the latter being frequently associated with an inductive reasoning (bottom-up). Whilst deductive reasoning commences with theory and is concerned with testing and or confirming research hypothesis, the inductive approach, unrestricted and exploratory by nature, is based on context-specific observations that may lead to broader generalisations and theories (Feeney and Heit, 2007; Holowchak, 2007:277). For this research, a qualitative approach has been adopted given the need for an in-depth understanding of what is happening on the Lebanese beaches in terms of practices and lived experiences with an inductive analysis grasping these multiple socially-constructed realities that cannot be predicted *a priori* (Riley and Love, 2000). Taking into account the variety of definitions of what qualitative research indeed is, or ought to be, qualitative research has been defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) as a,

multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Drawing on social constructivism, qualitative research focuses on experience, understanding, and meaning-making. In other words, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how people construct their worlds and how they make sense and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009). In fact, there is one definition that I particularly like as it explains quite well the essence of qualitative inquiry, which focuses on in-depth understanding:

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting (Patton, cited in Merriam, 2009:14).

Clearly, understanding social phenomena is not possible without understanding people’s interpretations of meanings, perceptions of the world and complex motivations, formed through various cultural and social influences which are only attained through non-positivist approaches (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Interestingly, the tourism field has been gradually moving away from the early, positivist ‘moments’ of qualitative research by embracing the creativity, hybridity, messiness, transdisciplinarity and criticality of later moments (Wilson and Hollinshead, 2015:31). The use of qualitative inquiry has provided a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and political connectivities within tourism as well as more critical ‘playfulness’ (Wilson and Hollinshead, 2015).

#### **4.4 Conceptual Framework**

Frameworks are the foundation of good scholarship. They are structures made of a set of broad concepts (Pearce, 2012) that guide research and provide support “although the frames they offer may vary from a stick to an edifice” (Moseley, cited in Pearce, 2012:7). In qualitative research, the conceptual framework helps researchers connect ‘forward’ into the problem by giving direction on how to collect and analyse data as well as connect ‘backward’ into the literature and larger theoretical frameworks (Shields and Tajalli, cited in Pearce, 2012). Essentially, the conceptual framework is a structure that presents in a logical format “the key factors, constructs or variables” under investigation and “the presumed relationships among them” (Miles and

Huberman, cited in Pearce, 2012:13). Yet, whilst some presumed links between particular concepts or variables are outlined, the actual existence and strength of the relationships remain to be identified through investigation. According to Brotherton (2015:98), “both constructs and concepts help us to simplify a complex world because we can group together related things or items to convey a quite complex idea more simply”. By coherently linking academic concepts, conceptual frameworks can help situate the research being undertaken, delimit its scope, and communicate the assumptions and beliefs of the researcher. Given the complexity, multidisciplinary and multifaceted nature of beach leisure, the concepts that structure the conceptual framework come from various disciplines, knowing that conceptual pluralism is a key feature of what can be considered a conceptual framework. Following my extensive literature review, the conceptual framework below has been designed for my research which investigates the beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in Lebanon, with a focus on lifestyle, gendered, racialised and faith-based practices on the beach which are impacted by a number of inter-connected concepts, acting like foundational pillars supporting the whole structure. Like housing construction, much critical thinking and planning must be put into developing a ‘blueprint’ for data collection strategies and procedures, which ultimately becomes the structure upon which the fieldwork is based.

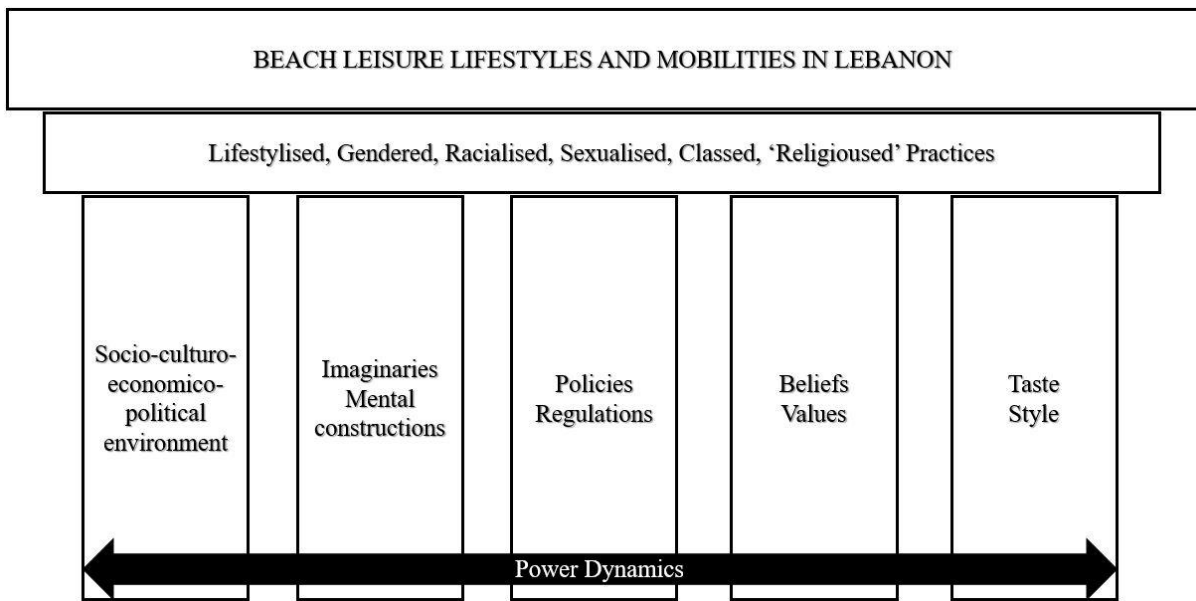


Fig. 3: Conceptual framework design

#### 4.5 Research Methodology – *Case Study*

Undertaking an on-the-ground research in Lebanon through an ethnographic lens, with a focus on the main beach destinations along the Lebanese coast, has been considered to be the best methodology for this study, allowing me to reach data saturation and answer the research question within a reasonable time frame with minimal cost (Fusch et al., 2017). Particularistic, heuristic and intensely descriptive, a case study can investigate the complexity and uniqueness of a particular entity, phenomenon or social unit in a ‘real life’. Indeed, according to the American social scientist Robert Yin, a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (cited in Parker-Jenkins, 2018:21). This in-depth, multifaceted investigation can document multiple perspectives, explore contested viewpoints as well as demonstrate the influence of key actors and interactions between them.

Unlike other methodologies, the aim of the case study is to understand the case itself in context rather than making generalisations. Priorities are reversed as we try to capture the ‘essence’ of the particular instead of making generalisation the ruling consideration in our research. According to Simons (2009:167), “the tension between the study of the *unique* and the need to generalise is necessary to reveal both the *unique* and the *universal* and the *unity* of that understanding” (original emphasis). In other words, we should engage with “the paradox within the case, the tension between the universal and the particular, and the ambiguity or conflict it presents” (Simons, 2009:167). Interestingly, she suggests that this is experienced in the world of art and literature:

When you think about how we gain insights from artists, poets, novelists, it is when we recognize something in what they have said or portrayed which communicates an essential ‘truth’ about the human condition or social context of the times (Simons, 2009:167).

According to MacDonald and Walker, a case study merges the styles of the artist and the scientist:

Case study is the way of the artist, who achieves greatness when, through the portrayal of a single instance locked in time and circumstance, he communicates enduring truths about the human condition. For both the scientist and artist content and intent emerge in form (MacDonald and Walker, cited in Simons, 2009:20).

On a different note, a case study is flexible in that it allows the researcher to take a self-reflexive approach to understanding the case and themselves as well as shift his/her focus and be responsive to unexpected obstacles during data collection. The flexibility of a case study is particularly useful for exploring and understanding the process and dynamics of change as well as the range of variability within a population being studied (Simons, 2009).

#### 4.5.1 (Auto)Ethnographic Case Study in Lebanon

By approaching my case study (auto)ethnographically, the fieldwork can be conducted in multiple beach destinations through condensed/intense periods of time in the field to explore beach leisure practices of culturally-diverse Lebanese communities and what are thought to be ‘contrasting examples’ (Abercrombie et al., cited in White et al., 2009:22). In fact, the technique employed is associated with long-term ethnography but which is limited in terms of scope and time spent in the field” (Parker-Jenkins, 2018:24). However, the researcher needs to keep in mind that these short-term, condensed ‘multi-sited ethnographies’ reflect the ‘now’ but may not fully mirror all the changes that can occur over time. In fact, the hybrid term ‘ethno-case study’ can be used to acknowledge that it is a first-hand case study located within a richer, wider context and conducted with an ‘ethnographic sensitivity’ (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Interestingly, an ethnographic case study like this one offers the researcher the possibility to make contextualised, polyphonic voices heard, giving space to a hidden reality, previously silenced voices, which have been repressed by discourses.

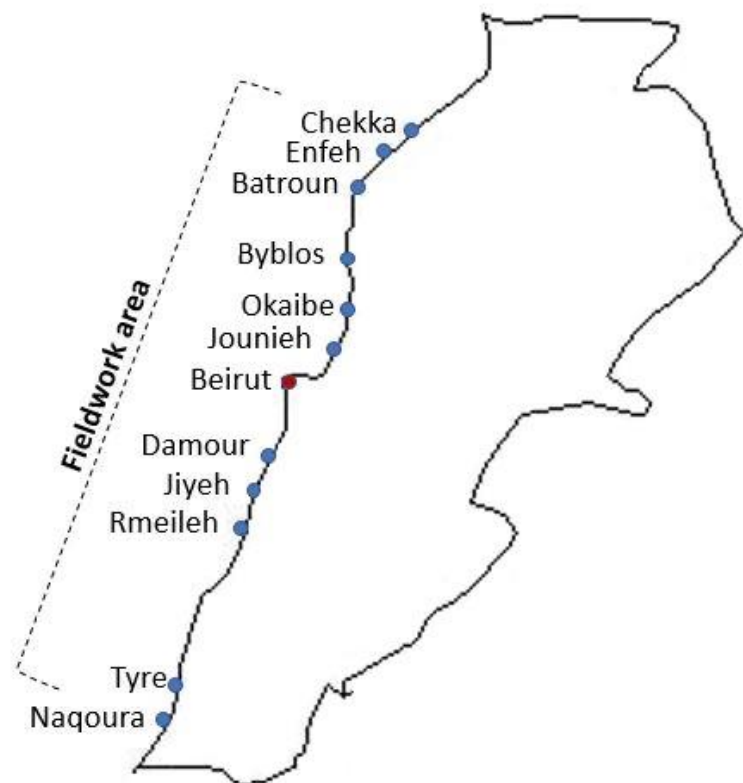


Fig. 4: Fieldwork area in Lebanon



#### 4.5.2 The Self as Data

“What happens *within the observer* must be made known...if the nature of what has been observed is to be understood”, the ethnographer Ruth Behar once stated (cited in Spry, 2001:711 – emphasis added). Drawing on the view that valuable data can also be found within the self, my personal experiences will be included in this study as they can provide data of a richness and detail that are difficult to obtain from a more traditional positivist ethnographic approach which keeps the ethnographer in the background, only considering him/her as a reporter of facts. Indeed, by turning the ethnographic gaze inwards while maintaining an outward, critical perspective, researchers can understand the larger context where self experiences occur. In other words, we must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience (Ellis et al., 2010), blurring distinctions of personal and social, self and other while connecting the personal to the cultural:

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze: First through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis, 2004:37).

Autoethnography acknowledges the self as a rich source of data, opening up a wider lens on the world and “challenging the construction of master narratives” (Spry, 2001:720) by reintegrating the marginalised voice of the self into academic writing. According to Hayes and Fulton (2015:6), the centrality of the researcher to the process can shape and guide the research process by providing structure to the process of reflexivity:

They are right there in the centre, shaping and guiding the process. In traditional ethnography, whilst it is recognised that the researcher can influence the process, they

tend to be on the side lines looking in, whereas the autoethnographer is central and often is the one directing the process.

During the write-up process, autoethnographers write retroactively as embodied persons in an autobiographical, first-person voice (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), drawing reflexively upon his or her own lived experiences and resulting in highly personalised, critically reflexive and often emotionally-charged writings. However, these ‘epiphanies’, remembered moments, have to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake (Behar, cited in Spry, 2001:713). As Mitch Allen, a publisher of autoethnographies, explains, an autoethnographer must,

look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story—and that's nice but people do that on Oprah [a U.S.-based television program] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story,' then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV? (cited in Ellis et al., 2010).

Indeed, the exposure of the self has to take us somewhere we could not otherwise get to and make us learn “previously unspoken, unknown things about culture and communication from it” (Goodall, cited in Spry, 2001:714). Thanks to the use of aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience, this autobiographical genre brings readers ‘into the scene’ and allows them to identify with the researcher, to “experience an experience” (Ellis et al., 2010). As Spry (2001:709) puts it, “though emotion and poetics constitute scholarly treason, it is heresy put to good use”.

#### 4.6 Qualitative Research Methods

In ‘soft sciences’, words and pictures rather than numbers are used by the researcher to convey what has been learned about a phenomenon (Bryman, 2008). Fluid in nature and designed to involve the researcher directly or indirectly in the research process, different qualitative research methods can be employed on the ground, generating rich and complex raw data which are subsequently analysed and classified by the researcher into themes and patterns. For my research, bits and pieces of information from in-depth interviews and personal accounts have been combined and ordered into larger themes. These chosen qualitative research methods allow the researcher to be a witness of and to understand the ways the studied others “perceive, feel and act in order to grasp these seeings, feelings and actings fully and intimately because only through direct experience can one accurately know much about social life” (Lofland and Lofland, 1995:3).

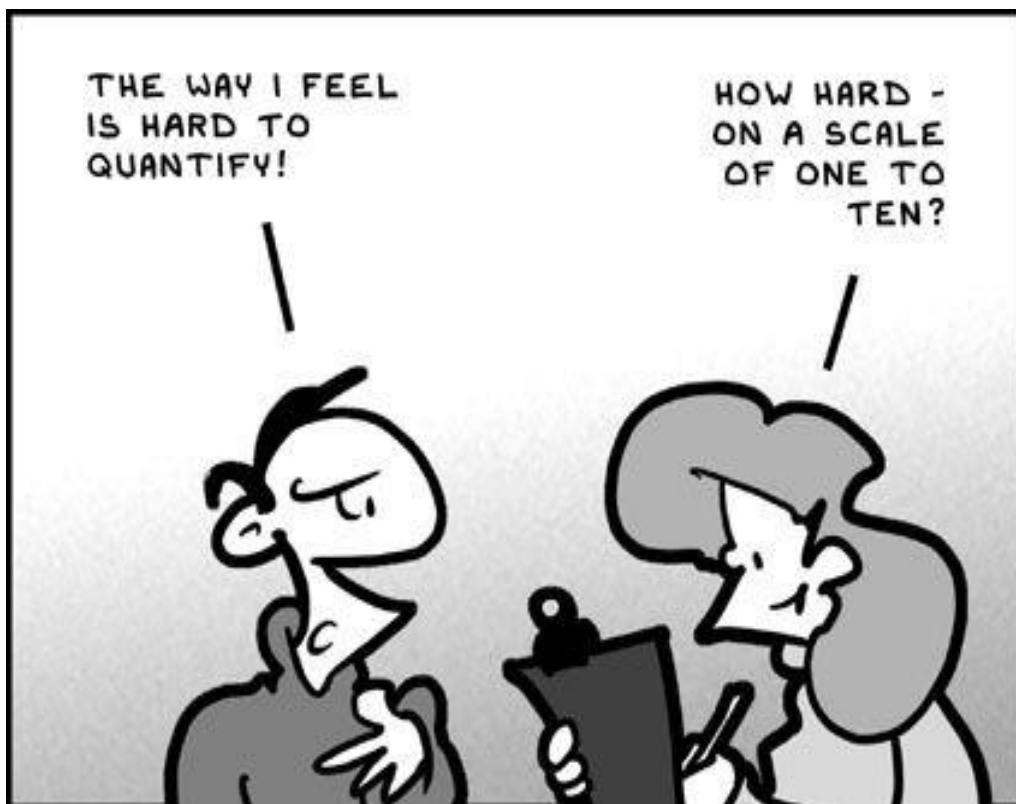


Fig. 5: Cartoon about the importance of qualitative research

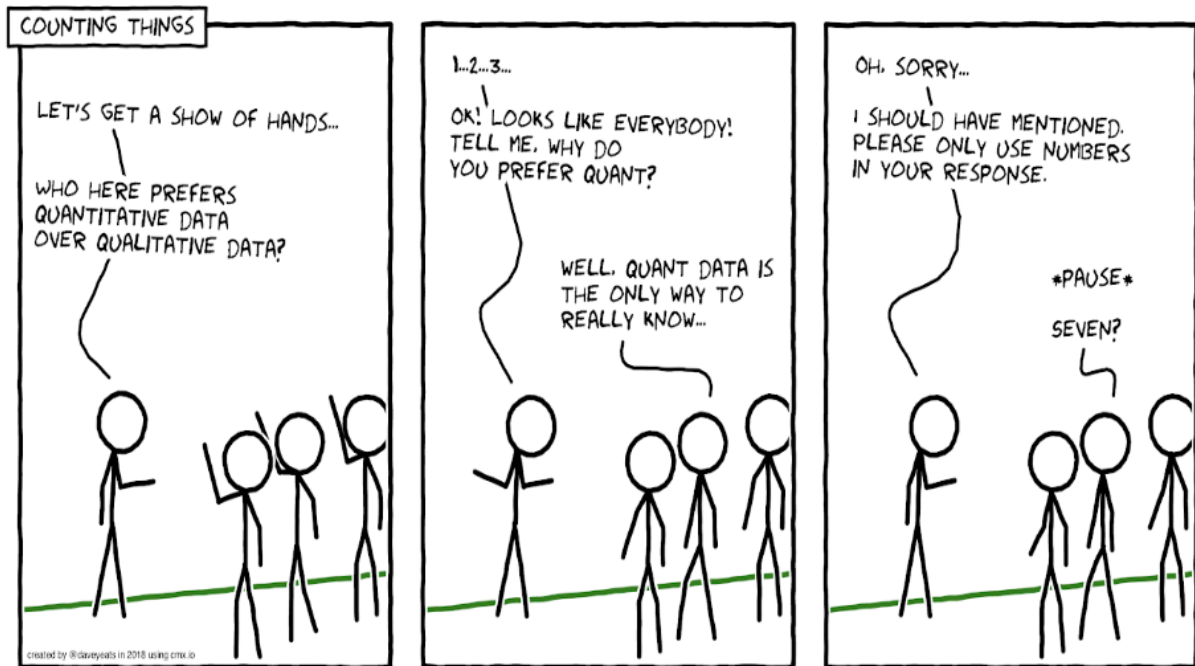


Fig. 6: Cartoon about the importance of qualitative data

#### 4.5.1 In-depth Interviews

Considering it as a key element of my fieldwork, a series of in-depth one-to-one interviews have been conducted in Lebanon with local beach goers and key informants involved directly or indirectly in the beach leisure field. The in-depth interview process is,

a meaning-making endeavor embarked on as a partnership between the interviewer and his or her respondent. The degree of division and hierarchy between the two collaborators is typically low, as researcher and researched are placed on the same plane, though variations occur (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006:119).

In fact, in-depth interviews allow participants to develop their own thoughts and outline their lives in their own words (Denscombe, 2010). However, as Kohler Riessman (2006) rightly notes, inviting participants to ‘tell their stories’ is not enough as experience always exceeds its description and narrativisation. As such, “only with further questioning can participants recall the details, turning points and other shifts in cognition, emotion and action” (Kohler Riessman,

2006:190). Therefore, as part of contemporary ethnographic techniques, the ‘narrative interviewing’ method has been adopted for my study as it can offer a higher level of intellectual stimulation by actively engaging both sides in an evolving conversation; the narrator and listener/questioner, collaboratively, produce and “make meaning of events that the narrator reports” (Kohler Riessman, 2006:189-190). In other words, the standardised model of a “‘facilitating’ interviewer who asks questions, and a vessel-like ‘respondent’ who gives answers, is replaced by two active participants who jointly construct narrative and meaning” (Riessman, 2008:23) in order to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements. This contemporary perspective on interviewing is also supported by Fontana (2003) who refers to ‘postmodern informed’ qualitative interviewing which has the following characteristics: it allows for multiplicity of meanings rather than as a vehicle for conveying preconceived categories of meaning; is ‘dialogic’ and ‘polyphonic’; blurs traditional boundaries between interviewer and interviewee (cited in White et al., 2009:23).

### *Participant Sampling Technique*

In terms of participant sampling, both purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Babbie, 2011) have been employed to identify the participants who should take part in this study about beach leisure in Lebanon.

- Key stakeholders from the public and private sector: These key informants (officials, syndicates, etc.) have been carefully selected by using the ‘purposive sampling’ method.

Purposeful sampling is a useful technique in qualitative research that involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011), in this case the beach leisure field in Lebanon. This non-random sampling method has enabled me to generate

a diverse set of key informants from the public and private sector, ensuring rich data and a variety of perspectives.

- Beach goers: Beach goers have been selected by using the ‘snowball sampling’ method. At first, some acquaintances residing in Lebanon, known for being beach goers, have been initially chosen by the researcher to take part in this study and then some other potential participants have been suggested by these acquaintances by word of mouth. The snowball kept rolling until I have reached ‘data saturation’.

Snowball sampling - seen as a non-probability sampling technique - is frequently used during exploratory research. It offers great flexibility in that it allows the researcher to interview members of a specific community/population who are difficult to reach and/or locate. Thereafter, the researcher inquires whether those individuals can provide the information needed to identify and perhaps locate other members of the population whom they happen to know (Babbie, 2011). First, the growing suspicions and lack of trust towards journalists and researchers regarding their motives makes the recruitment of willing participants quite challenging in Lebanon, unless the people have been introduced to the researcher through a person of trust, someone they know very well, who can act as a safe intermediary. Second, the sensitivity of the research topic makes it difficult to spontaneously ask people on the beach if they are willing to take part in a study about their beach leisure lifestyles, given the potential intrusiveness of this approach and the risk of bothering them and hurting their private beach leisure moments.

Overall, a total of 44 interviews were conducted which was dictated by the repetitiveness of the data being collected and the recognition that data saturation had been clearly reached.

### *Time and Location of Interviews*

The in-depth interviews with participants have been carried out in Lebanon during the summer months of June, July and August 2018. These interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes and took place in various locations across Lebanon such as, for example, Beirut, Byblos and Jounieh. While the interviews with the key informants have taken place in their respective workplace, beach goers have been interviewed on the beach of their choice, making them engage socially, emotionally and sensually with the physical environment during the interview. Those who preferred doing it outside beaches have been interviewed in various coffee shops.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS		
Participant 1	Christian, Male, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 2	Christian, Female, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 3	Christian, Male, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 4	Druze, Female, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 5	Muslim, Male, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 6	Christian, Male, 30s	Beach goer
Participant 7	Christian, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 8	Syndicate of Seaside Apartment Owners	Stakeholder
Participant 9	Muslim, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 10	Koa resort	Stakeholder
Participant 11	Veer resort	Stakeholder
Participant 12	Christian, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 13	Christian, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 14	Long beach resort	Stakeholder
Participant 15	Syndicate of Seaside Resorts	Stakeholder
Participant 16	Muslim, Female, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 17	Christian, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 18	Muslim, Male, 30s	Beach goer
Participant 19	Muslim, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 20	Muslim, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 21	La Voile Sur Mer resort	Stakeholder
Participant 22	Muslim, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 23	Association of Travel and Tourist Agents	Stakeholder
Participant 24	Damour City Council	Stakeholder
Participant 25	Muslim, Male, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 26	C Flow resort	Stakeholder
Participant 27	Muslim, Male, 30s	Beach goer
Participant 28	Damour resort	Stakeholder
Participant 29	Christian, Female, 50s	Beach goers
Participant 30	Sands Rock resort	Stakeholder
Participant 31	Senses resort	Stakeholder
Participant 32	Muslim, Female, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 33	Muslim, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 34	Christian, Male, 60s	Beach goer
Participant 35	Muslim, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 36	Muslim, Female, 40s	Beach goer
Participant 37	Muslim, Female, 30s	Beach goer
Participant 38	Muslim, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 39	Muslim, Female, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 40	Christian, Female, 20s	Beach goer
Participant 41	Lazy B resort	Stakeholder
Participant 42	Muslim, Male, 50s	Beach goer
Participant 43	Chekka resort	Stakeholder
Participant 44	Laguava resort	Stakeholder

Table 2. List of interview participants in Lebanon



#### 4.5.2 Participant Observation (Personal Accounts)

Far from being a passive observer, the researcher undertaking participant observation is a 'player' in the action by taking on the role being studied (Veal, 2006:202) such as, for example, becoming an eco-tourist in Costa Rica, working in a hotel in Greece, travelling with the bedouins of the Sahara desert, volunteering for a charity in France, or taking part in the religious rituals of a Muslim community in Egypt. In my case, an immersion into the various beaches in Lebanon (public/private, mixed/ladies-only, etc.) has provided me with insightful information, which completed the data extracted from the in-depth interviews. My personal accounts not only include thick descriptions but also my own lived experiences on these beaches and the informal discussions I have had the pleasure to have with the people randomly encountered during participant observation. In fact, I made sure to remember that there was the word 'participant' in 'participant observation':

In many so-called participant-observation studies, the 'participatory' element is ignored, with the researcher referring more to what he/she observed, with very little about what he/she personally experienced, rendering many of these studies to be more of an outside observation than participant observation (Beeton, 2016).

The use of a research diary was a handy and beneficial way of recording witnessed events/scenes, behaviours, words heard, the beaches I have visited, my mobilities along the Lebanese coast, my encounters, difficulties during data collection as well as my thoughts, emotions, doubts, questions, and critical ideas (Crang and Cook, 2007; Gibson and Brown, 2009). As a reflective tool, the research diary is a free space where words are not bound by methodological rules or political correctness therefore I have given my personal reflections much importance as they can provide me with new perspectives and possibilities (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

## **4.7 Data Analysis**

Unquestionably, data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all of the phases of a qualitative research. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to understand how new knowledge evolved out of raw data, almost as if researchers “left the raw data out overnight and awoke to find that the data analysis fairies had organised the data into a coherent new structure that explained everything” (Thorne, 2000:68). New knowledge does not ‘appear’ by creating a rich database and simply ‘looking’ at it; a qualitative researcher must engage in active and demanding analytic processes to generate findings.

### 4.6.1 Data Transcription and Coding

#### *Transcription*

Data can be transcribed in many ways, depending on research purposes. Following the completion of the fieldwork, all the recorded interviews were translated from Arabic to English and transcribed into Word documents by the researcher without the help of any interpreter or paid transcriber. My main concern was to stay true to the original meanings found in the transcripts without twisting, misrepresenting or misquoting the participants. The statements made by the participants, including their swearing words, are as blunt as I have transcribed them out of belief that ‘political correctness’ can sugar coat a reality which is not useful for the researcher when analysing data. Moving back and forth between recordings and transcripts was an integral part of the transcription process, allowing the researcher to perfect the transcription by addressing (or re-addressing) the way words were translated when necessary. On the whole, the process of transcription proceeds in tandem with repeated examination of recorded data, noting that the advent of audio recording devices “made it possible to review language data many times over to produce transcripts of naturally produced language” (Davidson, 2009:44). In fact, researchers have to make choices and decide what to transcribe and what needs to be

left; this selectivity is a practical necessity since “extraneous information makes a transcript difficult to read and might obscure the research purpose” (Davidson, 2009:38). Given the differences in the meanings of words in different countries, words were at times omitted or replaced by a more appropriate word to facilitate the reading and understanding of quotes, ensuring all original meaning is maintained. Voice intonations (sarcastic tone, etc.), laughs, hesitations, gaps in talk, noises in the background, accents, and repetitive questions/answers were not transcribed as they were not considered as useful for the study. In the words of Ochs (1979), “a more useful transcript is a more selective one” (cited in Davidson, 2009:38).

### *Coding*

Coding is a crucial aspect of data analysis. The choice of words or short phrases symbolically allocates “the amassed, prominent, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data” (Saldana, 2009). Whilst code is, for some, a “dirty four-letter word” (Saldana, 2009:8), others consider coding is analysis in itself (Miles and Huberman, 1994). By adopting a thematic analysis method, the researcher is able to elicit key words, themes and specific patterns within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which are then reported and critically analysed. The researcher is free to make interpretations and choose what is important or not, depending on research objectives. Indeed, as Sipe and Ghiso (2004:482-3) state, “all coding is a judgment call” as we bring “our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks to the process of selecting data coding methods”. Specifically, my interview transcripts were coded using open coding and axial coding techniques; the former is concerned with labelling and categorising data by asking questions such as ‘What is this about?’, ‘What does the respondent really want to say?’, ‘How is it said?’ and ‘What does it mean?’ while the latter consists of identifying relationships among the open codes/categories (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). My diary notes, on the other hand, were analysed using the ‘mind

mapping' technique which simplified, clarified and highlighted the various themes which mirror my own observations and experiences. In fact, data coding was done manually using highlighter pens (different colours) since this approach was considered more appropriate than a computer software such as NVIVO. Unlike computers, the researcher heard the voice tones and saw the facial expressions of participants which can be useful when their words are being analysed. Manual coding can uncover hidden meanings behind the responses and gather more subtle details as the researcher can sometimes read between lines and understand what is meant. The coding process took place both during and after data collection and followed a cyclical pattern – several cycles of data analysis - until the themes reached 'maturation' and were perfected (Saldana, 2009).

#### 4.6.2 Data Trustworthiness

Generally used in qualitative inquiry, triangulation is typically a strategy for strengthening the study and improving the trustworthiness of research as well as the evaluation of the findings by combining multiple methods or tactics in social science research (Patton, 2002:247). However, as Richardson (2000:943) rightly argues, data validity is not about a 'triangle' – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object - but about a 'crystal' which “combines symmetry and substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach”. 'Crystallization' offers far more than just 'three sides' from which to interpret research data, recognizing “the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life” (Janesick, cited in Decrop, 2004:166). Interestingly, this approach offers deeper, thickly described interpretations of meanings about a social phenomenon (Ellingson, 2009) and allows us to both “know more and doubt what we know” so that “we know there is always more to know” (Richardson, 2000:943). The difference between triangulation and crystallization is clearly explained by Richardson (2000:943):

In triangulation, a researcher deploys “different methods” – such as interviews, census data, and documents to “validate” findings. These methods, however, carry the same domain assumptions, including the assumption that there is a “fixed point” or “object” that can be triangulated. But in postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate; we crystallize.

On a different note, crystallisation offers different ways of knowing about a topic by opening the way for multidimensional thinking. Ellingson (2009) explains it well in the following passage:

I came to crystallization out of necessity. I needed a framework, a methodological path that I could follow that would enable me to construct and articulate multiple lived truths, rather than force me to choose among them (...) While I never felt any internal conflict between my personal narrative work and my inductive qualitative analyses, others did, including my doctoral committee. ‘you can’t have it all; pick something’ was the initial consensus (...) I divided my ethnographic work up into autoethnography, narrative ethnography, feminist critique, and grounded theory analyses, all while conducting participant observation at a local cancer center. I felt confused, even angry for a while. Why did I have to choose? (Ellingson, 2009:XI).

In terms of my own research, the various data generated by the different methods were critically examined and compared in a variety of ways for the purpose of making findings clear, meaningful and credible. With that being said, validity is after all a matter of perception and trustworthiness is above all a state of mind, which requires a balance between creativity and rigour and between art and science (Decrop, 2004:166).

#### **4.8 Reflexivity – *Researcher-as-Bricoleur***

Reflexivity is an essential part of the research process as we are pushed as researchers to acknowledge and question our taken-for-granted beliefs, assumptions, stereotypes, biases, values, ideologies and our social relationships which traditionally inform knowledge claims. In fact, “the better a researcher is able...to discern the presence of personal lenses, the better one is able to hear and interpret the behaviour and reflections of others” (Fusch et al., 2017:925). However, this is not a child’s play; I realise as I am writing this section that it is easier said than done. Practicing reflexivity is pushing me out of my comfort zone by forcing me to look at myself in the mirror in ways I have never really done before, examine my worldviews and hybrid identity, recall life experiences and remember some childhood moments - hurtful, joyful or intense - all of which being elements that have shaped the researcher I am today. Yet, looking back at my whirlwind life with retrospective eyes is a necessity which, I believe, will do more good than harm.

Being a *bricoleur* is what my life taught me to be from a very young age; that is what made me overcome some personal challenges and my identity crisis stemming from the rich, complex and unstable life I have had. Moving from one country to another, one city to another, has been a blessing and a curse, all at once. Torn between the East and the West, my life has been a sort of ‘laboratory’ that is marked by thought-provoking lived experiences which constantly pushed me to find ways to rethink my identity and redefine it around eclectic socio-religio-cultural elements, ultimately shaping who I am today: a Christian, Catholic, Maronite, Franco-Lebanese, internationally-educated, politically-moderate, trilingual woman raised in a middle-class environment in Lebanon and in France, who attended both Catholic and public schools, who studied at internationally-oriented universities in Europe and the USA and who is currently following her own blended lifestyle – made up of arabo-western elements - but who keeps herself open to other different religions, cultures, beliefs, worldviews and lifestyles.

Unsurprisingly, I was not immune to stereotypes about westerners, about Arabs, and about non-Christians, especially Muslims; they were pictured as the ‘Others’, the ones who had some different beliefs and lifestyles that were at best intriguing and at worst puzzling. At times, protecting myself against these ‘external influences’ felt like a duty, out of respect for the upbringing I had and education I was given and the environment I belonged to. I had to keep my guard up to avoid being ‘badly’ influenced by what did not seem to fit into my own lifestyle and system of belief. In Lebanon, I was immersed in an environment where fear, concerns and a number of stereotypes and ideas have been alive in the minds of Lebanese people at least since the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), ranging from ‘Better to avoid Muslim areas when you wanna go to the beach’ to ‘ladies-only resorts are only for conservative Muslims’ to ‘Islamic beach practices are a threat to the liberal essence and openness of Lebanon’ to ‘let them wear burqinis in their areas and stay away from ours’ to ‘they are harming our youth and values by drinking alcohol on our beaches’. The civil war between Lebanese communities may have ended on paper, but it is still far from ending in the minds. It was definitely on my own mind, influencing my behaviours, beliefs and imaginaries to a certain extent. However, there is usually a ‘turning point’ in life and mine was my master journey in Oxford in 2012. Indeed, interacting with international students with different ethno-religious and cultural backgrounds has changed me in ways I have never thought possible. From being a quite conservative person with some radical views, I have become a quite open-minded one, advocating tolerance of differences and generally viewing the world with different lenses. Yet, I am well aware that years of upbringing in my ‘conservative bubble’ in Lebanon cannot be fully taken out of my identity equation, despite all my insightful lived experiences.

The way I have designed my qualitative research, as an (auto)ethnographic case study, certainly flows from my conscious need to ‘break free’ from all these hegemonic beliefs and clichés which, I feel, have been controlling my mind and keeping my own voice in check. Telling my

own story itself becomes a “transgressive act—a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced—an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics” (Linda Park-Fuller, cited in Spry, 2001:706). Indeed, expressing myself by sharing my own ‘voice’, my own lived experiences on various beaches, is a way for me to liberate myself from the chains of a certain ‘conditioning’ and from cultural and familial identity scripts that have deeply structured my life as well as experience ‘Lebaneseness’ differently, away from ‘master narratives’ (Spry, 2001). As a woman, this need to share my personal bodily and emotional experiences through this study is even greater given the patriarchal system that is still characteristic of Lebanon. Having said that, I realise that there is definitely a part of subconsciousness playing a role in why and how I am conducting this research that I still could not put my finger on in spite of this reflexive thinking.

#### **4.9 Moral and Ethical Considerations**

The fundamental ethical principle of social research - which involves interaction and enquiry with people - is to protect human participants and respect their dignity (Marczyk, David and David, 2005). As Miles and Huberman (1994:288) rightly argue, we need to “consider the rightness or wrongness of our actions as qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives we are studying”. In qualitative research, ethical criteria range from procedural ethics (pre-research) to relational ethics which involve an ethical self-consciousness through which researchers are mindful of their own character, actions, and consequences on the researched and the surrounding communities (Ellis, 2007; Tracy, 2010). This research was conducted in line with the research ethics requirements and principles of Edinburgh Napier University (See appendix V). Indeed, my research participants were provided with necessary information about the researcher and the research and were informed that their confidentiality and the data were



strictly protected during and after the research process. Lifestyles, views and opinions of all the participants, whether Muslims, Christians or Druzes, were fully respected, regardless of the community they belonged to or the religion they followed. For the sake of privacy, all names of interviewees and other participants, whose words were recorded into my research diary, were anonymised by using alternative names. All the faces of beach goers on the pictures taken during my visit of the beaches were blurred and made unrecognisable. Further, given the nature of my research which involves culturally-sensitive topics and issues that deal with the woman's body, religious beliefs, race and politics, questions were formulated with extra care, keeping in mind the political situation of the country and the religio-cultural atmosphere in the visited region. While the cooperation and willingness of participants to take part in this research is important, no pressure of any kind has been made on those who preferred not answering some questions. Besides, fieldwork pictures have been taken in order to act as an aide memoire for my fieldnotes and to occasionally support my study presentations rather than being the subject of analysis and treated as data. In terms of data safety, all recorded data were kept on a secure hard drive which is password protected and can only be accessed by the researcher. Finally, a researcher never has full control over how others perceive his/her research but I seriously considered how best to undertake and present this research while holding myself to the highest ethical standards during and after the research process. Participants have not been regarded as merely impersonal 'subjects' only to be mined for data; they were regarded as persons with dignity who deserved respect and appreciation.

#### **4.10 Research Limitations**

Selectivity is a characteristic of research as researchers have to make choices; they choose what problems to investigate, how to research them and how to report them (Tribe et al., 2015:30), depending on academic (aims, objectives, ethics, etc.) and non-academic constraints (expenses, safety, etc.). Given my academic commitments in the UK, seasonality of beach leisure and limited time and financial resources, I could not visit every single beach of interest in Lebanon, although I would have liked to experience all the beaches on the Lebanese coast for comparison purposes and for having a more detailed picture of beach leisure in my country. However, I made sure to visit many different resorts, as various as possible, located in both Christian and Muslim-majority areas. In terms of sample size, the research would have probably benefited from collecting more data from Druzes whose voices would have certainly enriched my study. It is important to stress that my intention behind this research was to capture a ‘sample’, to reveal a part of what is happening on our Lebanese beaches, rather than offer you a complete picture of beach leisure. On a different note, taking photographs during my fieldwork was a key challenge given the need to respect the privacy of people on the beach, especially women in ladies-only resorts. Some scenes had to be memorised and recorded in my diary, without having pictures supporting my observations. Obviously, I would have preferred taking way more pictures, but my preference was controlled by my ethical concerns. Finally, my own editorial power is a fact that cannot but be acknowledged for I have designed my data collection process in a specific way based on personal choices. Of course, I am fully aware of the fact that the interview questions could have been differently shaped, arranged and presented, with a different list of informants and that the available data could have been differently structured, coded, analysed and interpreted and that I have created, consciously (and unconsciously), particular linkages and divisions between ideas and informants. As such, the conclusions reached are

“personal constructs” from the respective meanings of the lives of the researcher and selected informants (Decrop, 2004:158).

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This methodology chapter has explained in detail how this research was thought out and designed and the strategy lying behind the key elements of the research design, taking into account the goals, objectives, time, energy, available tools, ethical standards, and financial constraints of the researcher. The paradigmatic ‘constructivist/interpretivist’ lens has been determined by my ontological and epistemological assumptions, which involves viewing the world and knowledge as socially constructed as well as believing in the inability of social realities to stand on their own, independently of the actors and the systems which sustain them. In line with this research paradigm, a suitable qualitative methodology has been adopted for undertaking research in Lebanon, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and personal accounts, which, unlike a positivist perspective, focuses on understanding phenomena through the quality and richness of information rather than its quantity. By combining ethnographic and case study approaches, a cultural portrait or account of the beach leisure lifestyles and experiences of local beach goers in Lebanon can be provided with a focus on the main popular beach spots scattered along the Lebanese coast. Given the researcher’s belonging to the Lebanese nation, autoethnographic accounts have been considered as an essential part of this research, moving away from the dichotomy between the researcher and the researched. The multiplicity of voices and perspectives allow for multiple realities to be exposed and challenge prevailing understandings. In terms of data analysis, the ‘Thematic Analysis’ method will allow the researcher to make sense of ‘thick descriptions’ and capture the essence of what was heard, seen and experienced on the ground. In short, my research is clearly inductivist, qualitative and constructionist, with the whole being more than the sum of its parts. The next chapter will

present a personal account of my own lived experiences on the Lebanese beaches which are considered as part of my findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE – (RE)DISCOVERING BEACH LEISURE IN LEBANON: A PERSONAL STORY

---

*--- We depend on stories almost as much as we depend on the air we breathe (Bochner & Ellis, 2016)*

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an auto-ethnographic personal account of my lived beach leisure experiences in Lebanon (See appendix III), including anecdotes, flashbacks, witnessed scenes and embodied feelings. It offers a different perspective, a new dimension imbued by the researcher's humanness that is found within her lived body. Recognising the fact that there are no 'voices' better than or above other ones, this auto-ethnographic account is considered to be a valid research method, having the same level of importance as the other research method used for this study, i.e. in-depth-interviews. The writing style adopted by the researcher, which favours personal pronouns, is only a reflection of this will to put myself at the heart of this narration and reflection. Purposefully, emotions have not been put in check for they are key elements of lived experiences. The rawness of some statements about the researcher's feelings only mirror reality as felt or witnessed - not more, not less. First, my childhood memories on the beach invite the reader to step back in time, paving the way for a better understanding of how beach leisure practices were different and how beach leisure dynamics can be impacted by powerful mental constructions – which were mainly developed during childhood upbringing - about the Other. What follows is an examination of how my upbringing and the 'bubble' I was raised in have shaped my social constructs of beach leisure and affected my restricted mobilities along the Lebanese coast and how moving away from the known beaches in my area and crossing these socially-constructed 'borders' have allowed me to break this 'conditioning' and experience a sort of 'revival'. Then, a detailed account of my lived experiences on various beaches, public and private, is given to the reader to sharpen his/her understanding of the complex realities within our beaches, with a focus on the differences between beach

destinations, on the plurality and hybridity of beach practices and on the dynamics that make beach leisure in Lebanon what it is. Finally, this personal account ends with personal reflections upon my thought-provoking beach experiences and how they have made me rediscover not only beach leisure in Lebanon but also my ‘Lebanese-ness’.

## **5.2 Beach Leisure Through Childhood and Stereotyped Lenses: *How it used to feel...***

### **5.2.1 Exploring My ‘Bodily Self’ on the Shores of My Homeland**

Growing up in a sunny Mediterranean country, the beach agreeably resonates in my memory, in that it played a big role in developing my senses, building my confidence, understanding my bodily powers, pushing the limits of my body, controlling my desires and discovering my femininity. Listening to the waves hitting the shore, walking on pebbles, tasting salty waters, touching the sand, feeling the wind playing with my hair, suffering from sunburn and jellyfish stings, smelling the beach and being tickled by sand between my toes have enhanced my experience of ‘being-in-the-body’ and were generally part of my self-discovery journey. The distinctiveness of the beach lies in its ability to permit a kind of animal being and the embodiment of legendary characters – mermaids! In fact, imagining myself like the Disney’s ‘little mermaid’ helped me hold my breath longer and longer and do some sort of underwater acrobatic figures, forging my ‘beachly’ sense of being. ‘I wish I was a mermaid’ is what I used to tell myself every time I failed to push my limits further but my imagination was always caught by the reality of who I was. The beach is a place where the lines between humans and animals are blurred, where legends teases reality. Paradoxically, my sensuous body was being explored while attempting to disconnect myself from this same human body, from my ‘human-ness’, by performing animal/mermaid-like practices such as underwater swimming. On a different note, the beach was a sort of ‘laboratory’ where parental control was tested and self-control was taught at an early age: stay close to the shore, beware of sun exposure, put on sun

cream, drink plenty of water, wear the hat, do not remove your swim rings, do not go out of your depth...where all instructions that contributed to raising my awareness about potential life hazards as well as taming the intrepid mind that I had - the active, passionate physical being that I was despite some attempts to break some of these 'inconvenient rules' whenever parents had their guard down. On a more feminine note, bikini-wearing made me more self-aware of my femininity, my body image anxiety and, more broadly, gendered bodily differences. I cannot recall the number of times I have waited long minutes in the sea or pool, waiting for the 'right' moment to go back to the deckchair without having the eyes of the other sex looking in my direction. Silly it may be, but this lived experience reveals the battle between 'wanting to look modern and open' and 'not enjoying the display of my nearly-naked body' that is happening in the mind of a young girl who was experiencing her 'body on the beach' as a kind of storm centre around which passions, anxieties, existential questions and social constructions revolve.

### 5.2.2 Enjoying Simple Beach Pleasures Within Societal Norms

One word comes to my mind when I think about how beach leisure used to be in Lebanon: simplicity. The whole beach experience seemed simple, revolving around swimming and sun-basking which used to mirror our 'open-mindedness' as Lebanese people. Beaches were places where bodies used to perform modernity through basic beach practices, without extravagance and sophistication. I recall being surrounded by less disciplined, imperfect bodies that were way more 'active' on the beach; swimming was commonly practiced unlike nowadays where having a drink around the pool bar while displaying 'perfectly' tanned and sculpted bodies seems to be the 'normal' thing to do. Furthermore, lack of prudishness and public display of affection on the beach were frowned upon in times when societal norms were tougher. A childhood scene has just flashed through my mind; I was swimming in one of these resort pools located in Mount Lebanon, near Jounieh, when suddenly I saw standing next to the pool a western-looking

woman proudly wearing a thong bikini. The scene hit me hard, and I still remember how I felt: shocked. And I wasn't the only one to feel this way. All the kids I was playing with in the pool looked surprised with their eyes filled with incomprehension and question marks. The sight of this uncommon 'beachy look' made us stop playing for a short moment as we needed to mentally process what we have just seen. I could not take my eyes off of her, wondering how inappropriate her attitude was while questioning her impertinence which defies our local culture. But she did it, with an apparent carelessness, maybe unaware of her provocative attitude. Years have passed since this telling scene but I can still see myself reaching to my mum for answers: 'Mum, what is that? How can she wear such a swimwear?'. Her words, accompanied with a smile, are still resonating in my ears: 'Do not look at her. Ignore it. She must be a westerner', as if knowing that she was a western woman would have a soothing effect on my confused mind. Looking back at it now, I realise that this was probably the moment that enlightened my mind on how practices on the beach can be imbued with meanings that cannot be fully grasped by an 8-year old girl.

### 5.2.3 Sticking to Nearby Seaside Resorts in Our So-called 'Christian' Area

Rimal, Holiday Inn, Donna Maria... Those are some of the resorts where my beach leisure memories find their roots, and they have one thing in common: All are located in Christian-majority areas. Growing up in a Christian environment, my beach outings were restricted to beaches located in a Christian area, specifically within the Beirut-Jounieh zone, never crossing the borders of our 'imagined territory'. We had 'our beaches' and it felt like it was enough for us. As a child, I have never questioned my parents' resort choices as they seemed logical, even natural to me. Once I reached the 20s stage with the ability to drive my own car, I felt the need to experience new beach environments, away from my familiar area but, before every beach outing, my dad had the habit to ask me about the location of the beach I was going to and,



unsurprisingly, would display this ‘I-am-bothered-and-concerned’ face whenever far away resorts were mentioned which are beyond, what he calls, our ‘Christian region’. ‘No, do not go there. Stay here in our region. It is safer and better...’ were the typical words he would pronounce with a worrying tone and I remember standing in front of him, looking perplexed, trying to convince him not to worry about me and explain to him that I had enough of resorts in our region and wanted to discover other ones, beyond these ‘Christian’ borders. Visiting the same resorts over and over again was boring. I needed to see something new and I was going to do it, whether I was able to change my dad’s state of mind...or not. I was an adult, freshly back to Lebanon after years abroad and filled with curiosity and ‘what is on the other side’ kind of questions; time has come for me to enjoy beach outings the way I wanted and discover beaches I have never seen, without restrictions. After much discussion and thought, I realised that these ‘parental fears’ find their roots in the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) that made each community suspicious and fearful of the ‘Other’. Staying within the Christian or Muslim-majority regions was seen as a wise decision in times when killings and kidnappings between communities involved in the civil war was common practice. Even though the civil war officially ended on paper, it is still living on in the minds of many Lebanese, shaping their social constructions of communities, territories and therefore beach destinations in Lebanon.

#### 5.2.4 Challenging My Own Socio-Geographical ‘Imaginarities’

Curiosity is like a flame that can be hardly extinguished. The more I oppressed it, the more it bounced back until that day when I accepted a beach outing with my group of friends to a southern resort in Jiyeh, located beyond my ‘Christian area’ where I was raised. I remember feeling apprehensive and excited, wondering how this beach would look like, how this new beach experience would feel like. I did not know what to expect but I knew I was making a step that was not insignificant. After a 45 mins drive, here we are inside this southern resort which

did not fail to surprise me. 'Oh wow, I did not know they had resorts like that here!', I told my friend who seemed proud of his choice. I spent my day sun-basking, enjoying the sea waves and playing in the pool, with all my bodily senses on high alert. However, these sensuous beach pleasures felt different to me, not because they were actually 'different' but because experiencing a beach located outside the 'zone' I am used to be in feels different. I broke those invisible 'chains' that were holding me back and I was proud of myself. Here I am about an hour away from my house yet feeling safe and happy. Gone were the days when the coast was a battlefield between war-torn Lebanese communities which led to a sort of 'ghettoization' with each community generally sticking to beaches in their areas. The civil war has ended, so why should I only enjoy the beaches in my region? It did not feel right. As a Lebanese citizen, I felt the need to reclaim the whole Lebanese coast, from North to South, extending about 225 km. It is a basic right. In other words, the whole coast belongs to all of us; it is not *theirs* nor *ours*. My physical presence in this southern resort was like a way for me to make a visible, powerful statement without saying a single word. My visible and powerful body was doing what I could not say out loud: I belonged to this place, too! Towards the end of the day, as the sun was going down, I remember wishing I could spend some extra time experiencing this place but I was sure of one thing: It was not going to be the last visit.

### **5.3 My Lived Beach Experiences on Lebanese Shores: *There is more than meets the eyes...***

#### 5.3.1 Experiencing the ‘Show-Off’ Atmosphere in Adults-Only (18+) Resorts

Hearing about ‘show off’ in adults-only resorts is something, but witnessing it is something else. As soon as I made my way inside one of these resorts, I knew they were not places made for me. What struck me was the size and shape of the pools which were clearly designed for bodies in need for ‘cooling’ rather than ‘swimming’. ‘How old-fashioned swimming has become’, I thought, as I was looking at all these people in the pool having a drink or two next to the pool bar while performing limited bodily movements which is probably echoing this sedentary life of our modern times. These ‘happy faces’ in the pool contrasted with the lack of comfort experienced by my ‘frustrated’ body in the pool that kept trying to make no splashes and avoid bothering those ‘inactive’ bodies that looked half dead. Times have changed; how I miss those days when pools used to be filled with very ‘active’ bodies. I realised that sedentarism has made its way inside pools too, clearly impacting the beach leisure practices of many beach goers in my country. That pool was full of boys and girls drinking and chit-chatting while displaying perfectly tanned, sculpted, toned bodies, beautified with hats, sunglasses and attractive bathing suits – all brands, of course. Being a keen swimmer, I felt a bit disappointed as I could not swim but I did not let it ruin my day. Sun-basking while reading a magazine was an alternative but being questioned about it was unexpected: ‘You have been reading for a while now’, I suddenly heard. My eyes followed the sound of this manly voice and found this young man standing just next to me, looking perplexed. ‘And so ?’, I answered. ‘Well, I just find it strange that you are reading in a resort instead of enjoying the pool and socialising like other women do’. ‘It is not my style’, I replied coldly. A few other words followed before the conversation ended and the man went back to the other side of the pool, leaving me with an uncomfortable feeling, as if reading was incompatible with what this resort was all about. The sight of these people in the pool and the words of this man, who sounded like ‘morality squads’,

confirmed what I have been hearing about these resorts; places where socialising and practicing ‘show off’ is the norm. From being a place for swimming, these kind of resorts rather became ‘socialising’ places for adults - quite similar to street pubs - where drinks are taken around pool bars, contact numbers are shared, public display of affection is common practice and waterproof make-up is checked in bathrooms.



Fig. 7: An adult-only resort similar to an open-air ‘club’ where swimming cannot be practiced but dancing, singing, having a drink and ‘showing off’ is common.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy: [www.beirut.com/l/47968](http://www.beirut.com/l/47968)



Fig. 8: Themed pool party in an adult-only resort: Sophistication and luxury. Britain was celebrated on this day.<sup>2</sup>

### 5.3.2 Embracing Femininity in Ladies-Only Resorts

Ladies-only resorts have been in Lebanon for more than 15 years. Yet the first time I heard about this type of resort was during my PhD fieldwork in Lebanon which made me realise even more how unaware I was of what was happening outside my ‘bubble’. The woman that I am wanted to find out what was happening inside these women’s spaces. As I was driving along the coast, looking for the first ladies-only resort I found online, questions were filling my mind, ranging from ‘How does a ladies-only resort look like?’ to ‘Would I enjoy this gender segregation on the beach?’. The big sign at the resort entrance, signalling that no pictures can be taken nor can boys above the age of 7 be allowed in the resort, clearly sets the tone for the rest of the day. The message was crystal clear: I was entering a woman’s territory where the

---

<sup>2</sup> Courtesy: [www.beiruting.com/England\\_Meets\\_Veer/17715/545943#eventphoto=545974](http://www.beiruting.com/England_Meets_Veer/17715/545943#eventphoto=545974)

needs of women, such as privacy and comfort, are put above all else. The feeling of being ‘cocooned’ has seized me; a feeling that made my initial hesitations fade away. Surprisingly, whilst I expected to experience a conservative Islamic-like atmosphere, this resort in Khaldeh, located in a Muslim-majority area south of Beirut, was far from the orthodox picture I had painted in my mind. Surprisingly, some female bodies were stripped of all prudishness and modesty, revealing even more skin than the ones seen in mixed resorts. Women generally looked more relaxed and seemed to be embracing their femininity by carelessly showing their body hair and stretch marks. How can I not mention the unusual number of women wearing thong bikinis or the sight of this woman in the pool nonchalantly removing her ‘top’ in a liberating way, displaying a sense of empowerment that I have never seen on other mixed beaches. This ‘hedonistic’ atmosphere overshadowed some covered female bodies dressed in strangely-looking beach outfits such as monokinis worn below or above leggings, skirts worn above swimsuits and the like, showing how necessity, i.e. the need to enjoy the beach in a modest way, can lead to imaginative ways of dressing on the beach. It is woman’s territory, where codified beach looks can be easily overlooked and twisted by women whose bodily practices are away from repressive stares of men. How wrong are those who consider that ladies-only resorts are places that are symbols of women’s repression and going against human rights for many women I have encountered seemed to be more at ease in their bodies and less self-conscious while embodying alternative beach leisure lifestyles.





Fig. 9: Signpost at the entrance of the ladies-only resort [Kindly abide by the following rules: Cameras, alcoholic beverages, food and boys above 9 are forbidden entry]

#### 5.3.4 Embodying Nostalgia and Enjoying Simplicity in Retro Resorts

Our powerful imagination cannot only make us visit heavenly beaches located beyond our country's borders, but also make us travel back in time when Lebanon was experiencing its 'Golden Age' from the mid-1950s to 1975. Pictures of women and men enjoying legendary beach hotels in Lebanon - built in the simplistic, concrete style that is characteristic of this period - are stuck in our minds, fuelling a kind of nostalgia for a past long gone when life was simpler and beach leisure relied on basic facilities. This renewed craze for retro resorts mirrors the general witnessed trend which is a slow return to the essential, to the roots, to 'how it used to be'. Despite the old-fashioned and morose atmosphere surrounding these 60s'-style resorts,

they are being preferred over other modern-looking, soulless resorts by a number of beach goers, including some wealthy people, who are drawn by the old beach leisure concept where they can only be offered basic service and lay on low-quality sunbeds on concrete still showing traces of the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war. Belonging to the post-Golden Age generation, I got the feeling that I was touching Old Lebanon's spirit with my finger tips that has changed long before I was born as well as given a 'hands-on experience' of how beach leisure used to be experienced in resorts. Nostalgia overwhelmed me while remembering the 'it-used-to-be-better' kind of words pronounced by some family members, in a place where time seemed to have stopped. Yet, these nostalgic sentiments were accompanied by uneasy thoughts about how the raging civil war was no less sparing of coastal resorts than of the urban buildings located at the heart of the capital. The revival of interest in old iconic resorts, where lived beach leisure experiences remain forever engraved in concrete, is a proof that places can have more than one life. As I was enjoying the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks, this traditional Lebanese song, sang by the iconic singer 'Fayruz', came to mind which characterizes these so-called 'good old days':

*To Beirut...*

*A greeting from my heart to Beirut,*

*With kisses to the sea and houses*

*To a rock, which looks like an old sailor's face...*





Fig. 10: Rusty, broken materials... This retro resort has not changed much since the 60s' (Picture taken by the researcher)



Fig. 11: Even original signposts from the 'Golden age' were kept<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3 4</sup> Courtesy: [www.beirutreport.com/2009/10/lost-beirut-long-beach-plage.html](http://www.beirutreport.com/2009/10/lost-beirut-long-beach-plage.html)



Fig. 12: Outer walls still bearing the scars of the Lebanese civil war <sup>4</sup>

#### 5.3.5 Sensing ‘Lebanese-ness’ in a Greek-Style Beach Setting - Enfeh

Who have not heard of ‘Santorini’, this Greek island which has come to fame thanks to its iconic white traditional Greek houses, bordering turquoise clear waters? Whether in music videos, romance movies, or honeymoon pictures, Santorini is easily recognisable, inspiring other beach destinations beyond Greek borders. About 65km north of Beirut, a laid-back rocky beach shore in the fishing village of Enfeh – which has largely been overlooked by tourists and beachgoers - turned into a simplified replica of Santorini with white and turquoise wooden cabins and chalets overlooking crystal-clear water. This little Greece of Lebanon, locally called ‘Anforini’, was on everyone’s lips and Insta account which is how I came to hear about it. Seen from afar, the wind wheels, scattered among the white cabins, give visitors a feel of being in a totally different country. ‘It feels so Greek’, I remember saying to myself as I was looking around, trying to find a nice spot somewhere between deck chairs and sun loungers which are randomly dispersed on rocks, wooden bridges, passages and balconies bordering the sea. Yet,



the traditional *mezza* served on tables, the locally-renowned songs playing in the background, the hookas next to umbrellas, the locally-produced ‘*Almaza*’ beer in people’s hands, the sound of backgammon dice, the belly dancing moves of female bodies and the familiar accent of beach goers made me re-think the identity of this place: The style was indeed Greek but the character was definitely Lebanese. It was our own Lebanese way of enjoying a Greek-looking beach destination, with our food, our alcoholic beverages, our board games, our music and our dance. All at once it felt home and away, familiar and unfamiliar, mundane and uncommon, banal and original. Santorini was on my ‘must-visit’ list but visiting it wasn’t a ‘must’ anymore as my experience of ‘Anforini’ alleviated my desire to experience this iconic Greek island. This homey, *dolce vita* atmosphere, imbued with Greek-ness and Lebanese-ness is what gave ‘Anforini’ all its distinctive charm, made it the ‘talk of the town’ and put it on the beach tourism map.



Fig. 13: Simplicity on a northern public beach in Enfeh offering basic facilities<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Courtesy: [www.lebanoninapicture.com/pictures/a-wonderful-day-well-spent-at-anfeh-koura-alkoura-anfeh](http://www.lebanoninapicture.com/pictures/a-wonderful-day-well-spent-at-anfeh-koura-alkoura-anfeh)



Fig. 14: ‘Anforini’, imbued with Greekness and Lebaneseness <sup>5</sup>

### 5.3.6 Negotiating Veiled ‘Lifestyle’ Segregation in a Southern Public Beach - Tyre

As we all know, there is a difference between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation; the former being open, forthright bigotry while the latter is the shamefaced kind that is practiced through covert, subtle discriminatory practices guided by unwritten societal pressures. This early summer morning, preparing myself for another beach outing did not feel like usual as I was going to visit a southern public beach in a shia-majority area, known for its rather conservative cultural mores or at least that is what I have been told about it. ‘How should I dress?’ I wondered as I was checking my beach outfits. ‘Mum, does a short look fine or is it too revealing?’ This question may sound ridiculous to any westerner but it did not sound that strange to me given the location of this beach in a ‘territory’ that I have always imagined as too conservative, in comparison with my own area. I did not want to look inappropriate, shock minds and attract unwanted attention. Lost in my thoughts, I actually was not sure whether I would be

---

<sup>5</sup> Courtesy: [www.i.pinimg.com/originals/be/50/8c/be508ca0a4a26064ddf942ad862ca89c.jpg](http://www.i.pinimg.com/originals/be/50/8c/be508ca0a4a26064ddf942ad862ca89c.jpg)



comfortable enough to display my body dressed in bikini or just stick to sun-basking with my clothes on. I did not know exactly what to expect but what I was sure of is that burkinis would be filling this beach given some socially-constructed meanings that are imbued in this environment. As I left my car parked in front of the public beach, I could sense my body moving uncomfortably towards the beach while wondering whether the sight of my skin would be welcomed with questioning stares. Although covered bodies were surrounding me, as expected, my eyes found some western-style bathing suits here and there which made me feel a bit better, a bit more relaxed, more ‘at home’, yet not comfortable enough to remove my clothes and reveal my semi-naked body. Seeing so many burkinis around me has made me feel a lack of comfort that I have never experienced before elsewhere. I suddenly felt ‘immodest’ here, unable to find the courage to remove my short and reveal my red bikini. ‘I wish I was as daring as these women wearing bikinis’, I told myself, who did not seem to feel intimidated by the prevailing modest looks around them.



Fig. 15: Burkinis, bikinis, and other ‘modest’ beach outfits sharing the same beach<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Courtesy: [www.elpais.com/internacional/2016/08/26/actualidad/1472232542\\_845667.html](http://www.elpais.com/internacional/2016/08/26/actualidad/1472232542_845667.html)

As I was resigning myself to staying dressed, a conversation with the owner of a tent-like restaurant bordering the sea changed my mind: ‘At the other side of the beach, there is a western-style atmosphere which you might enjoy. Just check it out.’ The idea of walking all the way to the western side of the beach wasn’t an exciting one, but what made it a particularly unpleasant experience were some misplaced whistles that I have preferred ignoring. Cloud 59 was the name of this cosy spot where western music was playing, alcohol was served in abundance and bodies were far from being covered, making the two sides of this public beach as different as day and night. The contrast was staggering. Had I not known that I was in Tyre, I could have easily felt that I was enjoying my holidays on a Spanish beach.



Fig. 16: Tyre public beach with its tent-like restaurants and the city in the background<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy: [www.pressreader.com/lebanon/the-daily-star-lebanon/20180804/281586651412126](http://www.pressreader.com/lebanon/the-daily-star-lebanon/20180804/281586651412126)





Fig. 17: Western side of Tyre public beach (Cloud 59) known for its liberal atmosphere<sup>8</sup>

### 5.3.7 Encountering ‘Mundane Beach Leisure’ in a Northern Public Beach - Chekka

Planning a beach outing is common in Lebanon. But to the people of Chekka, going to the beach does not require a ‘planning’ in advance for it is part of their everyday life. While many Beirutis are flocking to the ‘clean’ beaches of this northern coastal city to escape pollution (See appendix IV), some locals only need to open their doors to find themselves on the shore. What we consider as a ‘beach outing’ is considered locally as a ‘mundane beach life’, what we consider as ‘vacation’ is considered locally as everyday life. This difference in perception was another proof of how different beach experiences can be between locals and domestic visitors. Extracting salt from the sea is what used to be mentioned when talking about Chekka but its public beaches have been gaining popularity given their relative cheapness, cleanliness, ‘homey’ atmosphere and suitability for beach games. I knew I would enjoy my day there but

---

<sup>8</sup> Courtesy: [www.facebook.com/Cloud59/photos/a.179510965510427/1664930986968410/?type=1&theater](https://www.facebook.com/Cloud59/photos/a.179510965510427/1664930986968410/?type=1&theater)

what I did not expect is witnessing the ‘mundane beach life’ in *El Kfoury* public beach, which I was advised to visit by local people. In fact, the border between ‘beach’ and ‘home’ was as blurry as the lines in an impressionist painting, making it hard to know when home ends and when the beach starts. The sight of household furniture colonising the beach is rarely seen on other beaches in Lebanon and is what gives the *El Kfoury* beach a homely character; bringing plastic tables, chairs, ashtrays, backgammon and cards to the beach is part of the ordinary beach experience for locals.

Interestingly, whilst other beach goers try to disconnect from their everyday life, these locals of Chekka extend their everyday home life to the shore by not only bringing some household items but also by going back and forth between their nearby houses and the beach, sometimes more than two times during the day, making me wonder whether I would have enjoyed living in one of those seaside houses and experiencing the beach in such a local-like way. Of course, many locals move away from Chekka to enjoy other beaches in other regions but that does not change the fact that some of them go to the local beach as if they were going to the ‘next door’ shop to buy beer. Suddenly, my pen that I was using for note-taking ran out of ink, pushing me to nicely ask a man on the beach whether he had a pen to borrow. ‘I can go get you one from my house, which is this one behind you’, he said. ‘Oh I do not want to bother you...Are you sure?’, I replied, ‘Yes do not worry! I went back to the house a few hours ago to get some nuts for my friend and I. It is normal for us to go back to our houses and come back to the beach, several times a day’. ‘How lucky they are’, I thought as I saw him going back to the house to only come back a minute later with a pen in his hand. But towards the end of the day, I started wondering whether I would have truly enjoyed this mundane beach leisure with the beach as part of my daily life. I wasn’t so sure of that as they may not be as lucky as I thought they were, after all.





Fig. 18: Simplicity on a northern public beach in Chekka: That is where mundane life and beach leisure meet<sup>9</sup>

### 5.3.8 Re-connecting with Nature and Witnessing Racial Tolerance on a Public Beach - Okaibe

Nature has this magical power to captivate and rejuvenate minds. The more we distance ourselves from nature, the more we seem to long for it, need it, and seek it; this may be more acutely experienced by people who got lost in their urban lives. Along the Lebanese coast, several (semi)public beaches are riding this craze-for-nature wave, giving these beach goers – who have high needs for reconnecting with nature - a breath of fresh air, in a country where rampant urbanisation is a problematic local issue. In times when civilisation keeps pushing us away from Mother nature, summertime comes as a breath of fresh air as it can be spent in these nature-oriented beaches whereby beach goers can indulge in simple beach pleasures.

---

<sup>9</sup> Courtesy:

[www.google.co.uk/maps/uv?hl=en&pb=!1s0x1521e35f3844ea35%3A0x8373394069019155!3m1!7e115!4shttps%3A%2F%2Fh5.googleusercontent.com%2Fp%2FAF1QipMN3ziBQ](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/uv?hl=en&pb=!1s0x1521e35f3844ea35%3A0x8373394069019155!3m1!7e115!4shttps%3A%2F%2Fh5.googleusercontent.com%2Fp%2FAF1QipMN3ziBQ)

Interestingly, some beaches have judiciously embraced simplicity, with some emulating other foreign 'paradisiac' beaches to satisfy our wanderlust and this renewed craze for simple, natural things. Given my particular penchant for these natural beach settings, I have visited a number of them during my fieldwork, including a (semi)public beach located in Okaibe which is a great, cosy spot for recharging one's batteries, away from the buzz of big cities, as well as reconnecting with the essence of beach leisure in a country that is in the grip of heavy resort development. As I was enjoying a fruity cocktail on my deckchair, I noticed two black women playing in the sea; something I have never seen before on Lebanese shores. The sight of African female housemaids taking care of Lebanese kids of the families they work for is quite common on Lebanese shores, but seeing them alone, without kids, wearing bikinis, and having fun is not common at all. They came to this (semi)public beach for their own pleasure, their own beach leisure time; they were not 'housemaids', they were simply beach goers, as we were. A few minutes later, two other people of colour made their appearance on this beach - a couple, this time. They were holding hands and walking on this pebble beach in a way that can make close minded, racist people grind their teeth. I smiled, as I enjoyed this racial mixity on our beaches, at least on some of our (semi)public beaches; something I have not witnessed in any local private resort before.

## **5.4 Battle Between Imaginaries and Realities on the Beach: *To belong or not to belong?***

### 5.4.1 Questioning My Own Beach Leisure Lifestyle

No matter how strong confidence is, moments of self-doubt come sometimes to disrupt our certainties and question our lifestyle choices. Doubts are part of life; they can weaken or end up actually strengthening what is believed by the person to be ‘the right thing to do’. Experiencing several types of beach destinations in Lebanon, with each having its own atmosphere, customer rules and identity as well as witnessing different beach practices has not only opened up my mind to alternative ways of enjoying the beach but also opened the door for questions about my own beach leisure lifestyle. Far from being ignored, these questions were on the contrary valued as they were considered as part of my enriching experience as a researcher as well as an opportunity to re-think my beach practices that have been taken for granted. The sight of women enjoying ladies-only resorts or enjoying the sea with their burqinis has not left me unmoved. The complex thoughts of how much skin I should be showing and whether I should be in mixed resorts or ladies-only resorts have been following me ever since then: Am I revealing too much of my body? Should I cover myself more? Is my bikini making me look vulgarly ‘sexy’ or elegantly ‘modern’? Does wearing my bikini and displaying my nearly-naked body in the presence of men in mixed resorts make me devoid of moral standards and some prudishness? By going to mixed resorts and wearing bikinis, have I made myself more of a western-style woman and less of a ‘Middle Eastern’ one, more of a pleasure seeker and less of a Christian believer? Is the way I like enjoying the beach against God’s teachings? Am I subconsciously denying my ‘Middle Eastern’ roots and original bible teachings by following western beach lifestyles? Much to my surprise, the beach has triggered an unexpected need for questioning who I was, my way of life, starting with what I should be wearing on the beach and ending with more complex identity questions. Witnessing this sort of ‘halalisation’ of beach leisure, which is generally considered to be going against so-called ‘modernity’, left

an indelible mark on my mind, making me wonder whether the way I was performing beach leisure was in line with my own Christian beliefs and how my ‘body on the beach’ is being a site of expression that is ‘overloaded’ with complex, multiple meanings which intersect and struggle against one another.

#### 5.4.2 Re-thinking Beach Leisure Lifestyles in Lebanon

The beach, with all its complexities and oddities, is a ‘breeding ground’ for re-thinking modernity, deviance, feminism and socially-constructed imaginaries that are so deeply engrained in our minds. What looks like a ‘deviant’ lifestyle for someone might be non-deviant for someone else and what looks like empowerment for someone might be oppressive for someone else for, as is known, deviance is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, pointing fingers at ‘deviant’ lifestyles on the beach is what I have been trying to avoid, following my enriching lived beach experiences during my fieldwork which opened up my eyes to this mosaic of beach leisure lifestyles. There is simply no right or wrong way to enjoy the beach; there are just different ways, amusing or intriguing, which mirror the essence of Lebanon: its paradoxical diversity. Whilst it is not always easy to understand the reasons why some people choose to adopt non-dominant, alternative lifestyles, respecting their beach practices is what truly matters, whether we end up understanding their choices or not. Detoxing my mind from stereotypes is not an easy task; as is known, stereotypes die hard but I have made myself reconsider some of those simplistic beliefs I had by delving deeper into my certainties, in other words, into the ‘I know that’ which gradually became ‘I need to know more’ kind of thoughts. I needed to *hear* what those bodies on the beach were *saying* rather than simply making assumptions based on the bodily practices I was *seeing*. Bodies have voices that need to be heard. Those taken-for-granted assumptions about some beach leisure lifestyles were gradually broken when discovering that part of the ladies-only resorts’ clientele is made up of Christian women, when

seeing bikinis and alcohol on Muslim-majority beaches, when realising that empowerment of women cannot be ‘only’ measured by how much skin a woman shows or how willing she is to exhibit her body in mixed resort. My lived beach experiences have deepened my maturity, trained me to become less judgmental and gave me, above all, the space and time away from my ‘surroundings’ to reflect seriously on beach imaginaries, ‘beachly’ practices and, more generally, beach leisure in Lebanon. In fact, I realised that my sense of belongingness on Lebanese beaches depended more on my conditioning, state of mind and mental constructions than on the socio-cultural environment surrounding the beach.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Writing this personal account of my beach experiences in Lebanon has been like a sort of therapeutic ‘release valve’, the ‘last stone’ of this self-discovery process which initially started with my autoethnographic fieldwork. The precise sequential order followed by this chapter allowed the reader to listen to the voice of the researcher, my unveiled voice, understand my enriching beach journey as a Lebanese Christian woman and grasp how my thoughts, views, misconceptions, stereotypes and imaginaries, which find their roots in childhood upbringing and which eventually changed over time, have deeply affected my beach experiences. Undoubtedly, this autoethnographic journey would have taken a different course, probably focusing on a few beach destinations close to my house within my region, had I not challenged my own geographical imaginaries and broken down barriers of fear which have been fuelled by the ‘do not go there’ kind of statements, keeping me for too long inside my familiar area. And how proud I feel of myself for making this important step which literally has transformed me, way more than I thought it would. As a key element of my findings, my own beach experiences come as a complement to in-depth interviews made with local participants, revealing some other aspects of beach leisure which may not be discovered through interviewing people. Reading

about beach leisure or being told about it is not the same as experiencing beaches with my own body, my own senses, my own 'being' which can unveil what is usually veiled by 'politically correct' informants. These findings take the form of 'Russian doll', nested within each other, some of which complete the data collected during interviews by clarifying some points and adding some extra details while others offer a completely new dimension to the beach culture in Lebanon. In summary, my lived beach experiences have refreshed my mind, making me discover different realities on the beach that I have never been aware of such as, for example, beaches in Muslim-majority areas not being as unsafe, conservative and unwelcoming for bikini-wearers as I thought and ladies-only resorts not being as 'Islamic' as I have imagined. Also, I realised the weight of fear, stereotypes, religion, socio-geographical 'imaginaries' on the practices and mobilities of beach goers along the Lebanese coast in a country where the 'Other Lebanese' is still seen with suspicious eyes and where everything is 'politicised' or seen from a religious lens. In fact, what struck me is how I was able to witness first-hand Lebanon's complexity on our beaches, in terms of culture, beliefs and lifestyles by experiencing a wide variety of beaches where it is not uncommon to find paradoxes, making me wonder about our sense of 'Lebanese-ness'. After having focused on my own beach leisure experiences in Lebanon, the following chapter will focus on the beach leisure lifestyles and experiences of other locals in Lebanon through a critical review of the in-depth interviews that I have undertaken during my fieldwork.





Fig. 19: Myself on a northern public beach during my fieldwork in Lebanon (Personal picture)

## **CHAPTER SIX – VOICES FROM THE FIELD: EXPLORING THE ‘OTHER’ FACE OF LEBANESE BEACHES BEYOND SEA, SAND AND SUN**

---

*--- And all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world (Herman Hesse)*

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses empirical qualitative data relating to beach leisure in Lebanon, stemming from on-the-ground interviews. Both beach goers and other various key informants, from the public and private sector, have taken part in this study by providing information about their practices, mobilities and lived beach experiences as well as offering their valuable insights and thoughts into the state of beach leisure in Lebanon. In fact, it is only by venturing out and interviewing people on the ground that I was able to explore and, most importantly, understand the power dynamics on our beaches. Of course, ethical approval was given to me by my university prior to conducting this study. This ‘green light’ gave me the confidence and motivation to go forward while keeping in mind the responsibility I had as a researcher to follow ethical standards. In fact, interviewing is rarely a smooth process, a ‘quiet river’. Some interviews have taken unexpected trajectories but my flexibility has allowed me to sort of ‘go with the flow’ while keeping in mind that I had to eventually redirect the answers towards my research goals without offending the participants. Far from being rigid and strict, my interviews have given the interviewees some space as I wanted them to feel as free and as comfortable as possible when talking to me. It is inevitable that interviews vary in quality, with some offering less interesting data than others, but that is part of doing research. In terms of content, this chapter starts with an analysis of the significance of gender segregation on the beach which goes beyond the religiously-imbued motivations. Next, the nostalgia/modernity nexus on the beach is examined, with a careful look at the blurry boundaries between old and modern beach leisure. This is followed by a critical look at the ways beaches, along with being



places for emancipation, have been turned into (semi)secluded territories where racism, intolerance, discrimination and segregation are deeply engrained.

## **6.2 Gender Segregation on the Beach: Away From the Male Gaze**

Women's beaches are flourishing in Lebanon, especially along the southern Lebanese coast that is known for being a quite conservative area. At first sight, gender segregation on beaches may be associated with the trendy concept of 'halal leisure', which is becoming increasingly popular among Muslims, including beach goers. Some interviews have revealed that going to a ladies-only resort are not only places frequented by women with religious motives, but also by those who are seeking comfort and privacy. In short, it is not just a matter of faith, but also a matter of comfort not only for Muslims but also Christians. But, these women's territories along the coast are also met with criticism, which shows that there is not unanimity around gender segregation on the beach. What is certain is that the ladies-only concept does not leave indifferent its supporters, nor its critics.

### **6.2.1 Following Religious Beliefs**

Ladies-only resorts offer the possibility for women to enjoy the beach while being in line with religious teachings. Enjoying a day out on the beach has become 'halal', as they say, since beachly pleasures can be experienced with a clear conscience. Aside from being 'hidden' from the male gaze, Muslim women can practice their 'Islam' on site with ease, given the strict Islamic-friendly regulations and the availability of Islamic-oriented products, services and facilities. Given the need for some religious Muslims to pray during the day, the prayer rooms found inside ladies-only resorts are considered as an important element:

*The conservative women go to such places because there are prayer rooms. (Participant 15)*

Also, unlike other mixed resorts, the flexibility of ladies-only resorts in terms of beach outfits is another important factor that Muslim customers seeking modesty seem to be appreciating:

*I go to mixed resorts sometimes but I do have a preference for ladies-only resorts because such places make me feel more comfortable since they do not put regulations on what women can wear or not. I like wearing a bathing suit with a 'short' on top of it. In mixed resorts, I can't wear that. (Participant 19)*

When talking about ladies-only resorts, what may come to mind is the image of the Muslim lady, conservative, veiled, with her body fully covered once outside the resort. But the truth could not be further from this image. Indeed, some conservative Christian women are also part of the clientele as they have found satisfaction in such kind of resorts:

*My wife's friends, who are Christians, go to ladies-only resorts. They belong to a conservative, fundamentalist evangelical church. These church members do not believe that woman can show her body to men on the beach. It is their right. They are shy. They think, why should I show my body? (Participant 1)*

Showing the woman body is not solely an Islamic concern. Some conservative Christian teachings defend modesty for women which explains why the followers of these teachings consider ladies-only resorts to be in accordance with their understanding of what a Christian-led lifestyle is. Of course, religion is a matter of interpretation which can differ from one Christian believer to another.

### 6.2.2 Embracing Womanly Needs

Putting faith on the side, ladies-only resorts are also places where any woman, whether religious or not, can comfortably enjoy the beach without worrying about the sexually imbued male gaze which tends to shamelessly scan her semi-naked body from head to toe, making her

feel rather uncomfortable than desirable. In these mixed beaches, some self-conscious women find themselves under scrutiny as their female body is being checked out and ‘sexualised’ by these seemingly ‘harmless’ gazes, making them feel ‘violated’. That is not the case on women only beaches where the comfort of women is key. This Muslim girl has summarised quite well the importance of these beaches for women wanting to embrace their womanhood and expose their female bodies as they please:

*I think the ladies-only resort is a good idea. Some women, including myself, go there when they are on their period or when they do not feel like waxing or shaving or when they want to tan comfortably. It is very convenient. I go there quite often to take time out for myself and just sit down and relax on the beach. (Participant 35)*

As stated by this beach goer, ladies-only resorts have become the ‘the place to be’ for those who want to tan or perfect their tan, before exposing themselves in mixed beaches. Indeed, they use these resorts as places where bodies can be fully ‘prepared’ to the moment when it has to be revealed to the other gender in mixed beaches. This kind of ‘preparation’ is a necessary step to make the bodies ready to face the male gaze, usually happening before summer time, around the months of April and May, making ladies-only resorts a ‘stop’ in the beach leisure journey of some women rather than the destination itself:

*In ladies-only resorts, you can see women tanning their bodies so they can have a perfectly tanned body before going to mixed beaches with their friends. They perfect their skin tan in ladies-only resorts because they know that no one they know would see them there, especially their male friends. (Participant 9)*

On a similar note, this woman explains how her white skin makes her feel self-conscious about her bodily appearance which is the reason why she favours going to women only beaches up until she becomes confident enough with her skin colour. In her mind, whiteness is not part of

the beach leisure landscape and therefore her white skin should be kept away from those she knows, especially male eyes:

*I go there to tan. I think it is a good place for tanning because I do not like tanlines. In mixed resorts, I wouldn't feel comfortable because I wouldn't be able to wear swimsuits that are suitable for tanning. I do not go to mixed resorts when I am not tanned. Because I am really white. When it is a last minute beach outing. At the beginning of summer, I prefer going to ladies-only resorts because I am really white. There, I can comfortably expose my body to sun, get the tan I want then go to mixed beaches. (Participant 35)*

As pointed out by various scholarly works, a perfectly tanned body is a symbol of the modern, empowered woman leading a lifestyle that is in tune with modern times, which is a far cry from the seaside dresses covering the bodies of Victorian women. More than a simple skin colour, the tan is a powerful symbol of modernity for which women are ready to do what it takes to get the perfect tan, even if that means going to ladies-only resorts, sometimes miles away from their homes. Moreover, the societal pressure of being perfectly shaved and looking neat, on point, on the beach, more like the 'Pamela Anderson style' in Baywatch, is off of women's shoulders inside these gender-segregated beaches. A bit of unshaved hair showing on legs, back or near private parts? That is fine. After all, these women are surrounded by...women, and who else can understand what womanhood is other than women themselves. These 'hairy' bodies will not be harshly judged the same way as if they were exposed to the male gaze in mixed beaches. In other words, some female beach goers turn to ladies-only resorts with the idea that other women, more so than men, are naturally more understanding, less judgmental of 'unpolished' female bodies. This kind of 'sisterhood' that is felt inside these 'women's territories' along the Lebanese coast is key to understanding the popularity of gender segregation on the beach. In short, ladies-only resorts have become a kind of 'haven' for hairy,

untanned, imperfect female bodies where women can expose their womanhood ‘*au naturel*’, without much worry.

On a different note, jealousy also plays a role in the decision of women favouring ladies-only resorts over mixed beaches. Indeed, the image of their wives revealing much of their bodies and being stared at by men is quite hard to bear for some husbands. In order to avoid these jealous feelings, some wives make the choice to stay away from mixed beaches, out of love, out of respect for the partner or out of obligation:

*There are some Christian women who go to ladies-only resorts just because their husbands are very jealous and they want to please them. You know, they want to avoid problems with their husbands and prefer having peace of mind. (Participant 29)*

Comparing to other western countries, Lebanon is still a patriarchal country where displaying the semi-naked body of a married woman to other men is still frowned upon as the body of wives is still very much considered to be the privilege of their husbands’ gaze. as such, women learn to navigate these heightened feelings of jealousy in summertime by taking ‘sensible’ decisions, ready to make extra efforts and compromises to avoid unnecessary marital tensions and save their marriages.

However, these women have actually learnt to enjoy this unique, ‘womanly’ beach setting by making it a pleasurable experience. Being within a ‘woman’s territory’ is not all that bad, after all. It can even be fun and beneficial, akin to ‘girls’ nights’ that are quite popular given their mental and health benefits, ranging from stress reduction to an increase of ‘happy’ hormones:

*I like going to ladies-only resorts with my female friends because it feels nice to be surrounded by women, without having men around us. Sometimes, I need it. It is fun. (Participant 39)*

This 'getting together' between women is sometimes needed, in a place where they feel free to enjoy themselves, 'be themselves', in ways they would not be able to do in other common resorts. These beaches seem to be offering 'freedom' for these women by allowing them to free themselves from the bodily concerns and the chains of media representations of how a woman ought to look on a beach. Of course, guessing the religious background of female customers inside ladies-only resorts is tricky, but a member of the 'seaside resort syndicate' did his own investigation, out of curiosity, to find out about the type of clientele within these women territories:

*Ladies-only resorts are highly frequented by Christian women, even more than Muslim women, because they can comfortably sunbathe the way they want and uncover some parts of their bodies. They can carelessly open their legs. Once, I went to a ladies-only resort and stayed in the parking lot to try to understand the type of clientele who come to such resorts. I saw many women wearing mini skirts walking towards their cars so I realised that many women in ladies-only resorts were actually liberal, not conservative ones. (Participant 15)*

His words confirm what I have been told by other beach goers; ladies-only resorts are not only popular with conservative women, but also with liberal ones. Paradoxically, while a Muslim political party is supporting the development of ladies-only resorts...

*Hezbollah [a conservative Shia political party] supports the development of ladies-only resorts so that Muslim men can send their women to such resorts. (Participant 15)*

...this Lebanese man sees a link between ladies-only resorts and the needs of lesbians in Lebanon, believing that gender segregation on the beach can make the life of the lesbian community easier in Lebanon:

*Need is the mother of creation. In Lebanon, there is a need for more ladies-only resorts so that the lesbians can meet in these gender-segregated places. (Participant 23)*

The paradox speaks for itself.

### 6.2.3 Questioning Ladies-Only Resorts

Despite their success stories, ladies-only resorts have been harshly criticised by a number of participants, pointing out a number of issues which seem to be contradictory. Indeed, while some have questioned the ‘halalness’ of these places from a religious point of view and stressed the ‘indecent’ of some practices happening inside ladies only resorts, others have expressed their annoyance with this gender segregation which is believed to be promoting communitarianism and going against ‘human rights’ and the path of modernity. Initially, ladies-only resorts have been built to meet the needs of women who cannot enjoy beach leisure in the presence of men, mainly for religious reasons. But this ‘male-free’ environment is being nowadays perceived as ‘un-islamic’ by a number of female customers I have interviewed, whether in terms of resort design or in terms of practices. Indeed, some customers have expressed their disappointment with the lack of privacy offered by ladies-only resorts, rendering them not ‘halal’ enough. Her disappointing experience made this muslim woman decide to keep going to mixed resorts as they were not, she believes, much different than ladies-only resorts in terms of privacy:

*I have tried a ladies-only resort but it was not great. It did not feel that it was a resort in accordance with the sharia. Women can still be seen by people living in those high buildings around the resort. There is not much privacy. (Participant 38)*

In fact, the indecent practices witnessed within ladies-only resorts are making some women feel uncomfortable, especially those who have kids. Seeing topless female bodies, for example, has shocked this Muslim woman:

*I dislike women showing their breasts at ladies-only resorts. I once saw a woman who had her breasts uncovered, in the middle of the beach. This shocked me. Children should not see that. It is not right. Women should have manners even when they are only surrounded by women. I can only understand those who need to breastfeed their babies because it is about motherhood. (Participant 22)*

Apart from breasts, the woman's butt is also a source of annoyance in ladies-only resorts. Indeed, wearing the thong bikini, which reveals most of the woman's butt, is being considered as bad given the presence of kids whose eyes and minds should be protected. This woman-only resort manager explains it very clearly:

*In our resort, women can wear thong swimsuits but they have an obligation to be discreet and only be on the extreme sides of the beach. But if a customer is bothered and complains about it, then we tell the woman wearing the thong swimsuit to cover herself. It has happened before because some women do not want their children to see women showing their butts. Our German customers are mainly the ones who like wearing thongs. (Participant 21)*

Naturally, perception of resorts can change over time which can potentially affect beach mobilities along the Lebanese coast. Indeed, whilst some customers has remained loyal to these ladies-only resorts, despite their criticism, others could not bear the level of annoyance they experienced inside these women's beaches, making them seriously reconsider their resort choices. That is what happened to this Muslim young girl who has had enough of ladies-only



resorts and prefers going to mixed resorts, instead. Her lengthy explanation of this change, which includes some personal and social reasons, is a good case in point:

*I used to go to ladies-only resorts but my mind has changed after I became an adult and now I go to mixed beaches. There are many reasons for this change. First, I know myself, I know my religion. I know my limits. I know that I wouldn't do something 'wrong' in mixed beaches. Second, I do not want to look like the 'odd' one with my friends, Third, I feel that many women in ladies-only resorts are 'fake' because they go there to perfect their tan, especially at the beginning of summertime. These women want to look perfectly tanned before going to parties or before going to mixed resorts. Fourth, without sounding very negative, there is a lack of classiness, lack of etiquette, in ladies-only resorts. Some smoke shishas, others throw nuts on the floor, etc. I am not saying everyone is like that. But some do that. Maybe I witnessed that because ladies-only resorts are located in the south of Lebanon. You do not see these 'unclassy' people in top-notch mixed resorts located up north in Byblos, for example. (Participant 9)*

This 'lack of modesty' and 'etiquette' found in ladies-only resorts is the reason why this woman has not enjoyed her experience inside these gender-segregated places and has decided to stop going there:

*I disliked the atmosphere inside ladies-only resorts. Women there feel free to do whatever they want and wear whatever they want because they are only surrounded by women. They are so liberal in their ways which I think is too much. They think that being among women allows them to disregard manners and modesty. But I believe that 'etiquette' is always important no matter where we are, whether we are in mixed or ladies-only beaches. (Participant 16)*

On a different note, ladies-only resorts provide fertile grounds for the expression of lesbianism. Women may have hidden their bodies away from the male gaze but not from the female gaze, which can also be filled with sexual thoughts. Indeed, ladies-only resorts are said to have become a sort of ‘meeting-place’ for lesbians where they can interact and attract each other. Although forbidden, some lesbian bodily practices have been witnessed by some staff members such as this young girl who still remembers this puzzling scene:

*I saw lesbians on several women-only beaches. Once, I saw lesbians dancing and kissing each other in front of the people. I have seen women in the restrooms hugging.*  
(Participant 21)

Also, some key societal questions have been brought to the fore by a member of the ‘seaside resorts syndicate’ who believes that these ladies-only resorts can fuel division between Lebanese communities as well as encourage lesbianism in Lebanon:

*I am against this concept. We should not have closed communities in our Lebanese society. Christians and Muslims have always mingled on beaches. Also, I believe ladies-only resorts are more dangerous than mixed resorts because we will have more lesbians in our society. These resorts will harm our society. I want to teach the conservative women that religion should stay away from resorts. Religion is a vertical relationship between the woman and God while relationships between people is horizontal and religion should not be in-between. When religion can't evolve to catch up with our modern time, then people should do it instead.* (Participant 15)

Perceiving these ladies-only resorts as ‘dangerous’ reminds us of this age-old debate over how religion should be performed in public, specifically the way we do leisure, and reveals this negativism surrounding lesbianism in Lebanon. Although painting the clientele of ladies only-resorts as ‘lesbian’ may sound extreme, this Christian married man seems to be sure of it:

*This ladies-only resorts are spots for lesbians to socialise and 'hunt'. All are lesbians A friend of mine who works in one of those resorts once told me that lesbians go there, because they are all women. (Participant 1)*

Moreover, the question of women rights has been mentioned by another beach goer who linked the dignity and value of a woman to her interaction with men on the beach:

*I think this Halal beach leisure concept reduces the importance and value of the woman. It is a kind of control on her. She is not allowed to do the things that some men do. This concept is against the worldwide trend which is about giving more rights for women. (Participant 23)*

Praised or questioned, the enigmatic female body has long been subject to allegations and fantasies of all sorts, triggering heated debates among the intelligentsia who keep asking the same questions again and again, like a broken record. It is quite often a subject of controversy and ladies-only resorts seem to be another 'element' in the chain of controversy which does not seem to put Lebanese people in agreement. While some view ladies-only resorts with a highly critical eye, others prefer brandishing the right to privacy and difference. But what makes the question even more interesting is that fact that even critics do not seem to be viewing these resorts the same way; to some, ladies-only resorts are being places of 'excessive freedom' and to others, they are places of 'oppression'. Does gender segregation on the beach support women's subjugation or women's liberation? The answer is not clear cut, black or white, but rather complex, depending on the angle of view one perceives reality.

### 6.3 The Nostalgia/Modernity Nexus on the Beach: Away from the Ordinary

Modern times have re-shaped the beach landscape in Lebanon and re-invented beach practices. Simplicity and morality on the beach are losing ground to show off, indecency and sophistication. Indeed, many simple beach settings have been swallowed up by more modern-looking and technologically-advanced resorts that are frequented by many beach goers in search of new sensations, newness and sophistication as if the beach itself, in its essence, has stopped being a source of enjoyment. Yet, simplicity on the beach has not completely become a thing of the past as some Lebanese beach goers are re-discovering its beauty and benefits for the body and mind.

#### 6.3.1 Showing off and Displaying Indecency

In the era of Instagram, ‘show off’ on the beach through the display of sophisticated lifestyles has become very important to many beach goers as it allows them to stand out of the crowd as well as fuelling their feeling of ‘specialness’. Nowadays, Lebanon is closely associated with ‘show off’ and this Christian man regrets what he calls this ‘Lebanonisation’ of beach leisure. He strongly criticises this show off attitude displayed on our beaches:

*In Lebanon, we have become very snobby. The beach experience becomes about who wears what and what wears who and which alcoholic bottle we should drink in front of people...I am not that type. People now drink the rose wine on the beach. The rose wine has become associated with the beach outing in Lebanon. I do not like this whole Lebanonisation of the beach experience. It is something that I have seen in most of the beaches I visited in the past few years. Lebanese people on the beach are ‘fun bunch’. They know how to enjoy themselves. But what I do not like about them is this display of ‘prestige’, this ‘show off’. (Participant 6)*

This snobbery and this extra importance given to appearances is also being questioned by this Muslim girl who feels that beach goers focus more on 'where they are' than on their beach experience. The name of the resort is what matters:

*70 or 80% of the people I know go to the beach for showing others that they went to the beach, for showing that they are in famous beaches, for show off. I hate it. The names of the beaches are more important than the beach experience itself. Once, I went to a known resort in Beirut but I remember feeling uncomfortable and hating every minute there because there was too much show off: Women were wearing that Chanel swimwear, high heels, earrings, expensive sunglasses... Men were smoking cigars and women were skinny. I left after only an hour. (Participant 9)*

Apart from the display of brands and the level of importance of the resort, the display of make-up and nearly naked, tattooed bodies is another element of these 'show off' practices which are found in abundance: on Lebanese beaches:

*You know how Lebanese are. They like 'show off', whether on the beach or anywhere else. Lately, I have been noticing some weird trends, such as wearing make-up on beaches and these thong swimsuits which barely cover bodies. This is too much. Also, many bodies are filled with tattoos. In the past, we wouldn't see someone having a tattoo. Now, if someone does not have a tattoo on the body, he/she is considered as abnormal and strange. Show off is a natural thing for a Lebanese. And he brought this show off culture to the beach. (Participant 3)*

Clearly, some beach goers attempt to draw a marked distinction between themselves and the mass through the use of 'show off' tools, i.e. wearing brands, going to famous resorts, displaying perfectly tanned bodies, etc. Social differentiation on the beach is the key driver for using these 'show off' techniques which are taking beach goers away from the 'essential',

which is the beach experience. However, we need to keep in mind that show-off is a tricky concept; what could be perceived as a boastful display of one's wealth or 'trendy' lifestyle may not be matching the real intention of the person in question. To put it differently, the perceptions may not be in line with the inner intentions.

On a different note, indecency on the beach is also a subject of controversy. In terms of swimwear choices, beach goers are not less virulent in their criticisms of the skimpy swimsuits that barely cover female bodies. Of course, sexiness on the beach is part of the beach leisure landscape. However, some beach goers seem to be going over the top in their choice of swimwear, which are perceived as too skimpy in the view of some beach goers. Bathing suits are becoming skimpier as years go on; a fact that has not escaped the notice of this woman who made no secret of her annoyance:

*Over these past 5 years, I have noticed that beach goers wear sexier swimwear. We have reached the 'brazilian cut', the 'thong swimwear'. Girls and boys are a bit more daring on the beach. 10 years ago, we wouldn't see that on Lebanese beaches. I think this is too much. It feels weird because we are not used to seeing that here. I have been to several beaches abroad, such as Sharm el Sheikh, and I have not witnessed such kind of 'indecency' as found on Lebanese beaches. Only in Lebanon, I saw that. (Participant 2)*

Interestingly, one resort owner has stressed the ambiguity surrounding the swimwear in Lebanon and explained why banning the thong swimwear is a challenge, despite it being perceived as 'indecent' by a number of beach goers in Lebanon:

*Wearing a thong swimwear is not against the law. However, as a syndicate of seaside resorts, we advise resort owners to not accept the thong swimwear but they may not be able to force a woman wearing a thong to cover herself. Once, I saw a non-Lebanese woman at my resort wearing a thong swimwear. Some customers complained so I went*

*to see this woman and told her that the string is not allowed in this resort. She replied: 'What do you have to do with my ass?' After a few attempts, I left her alone because she made me shy. But if I see a topless woman in my resort, I would tell her to cover herself or leave. I would be strict. (Participant 15)*

Furthermore, beach goers who tend to publically display affection have also not escaped the criticism of those who consider it as foreign to Lebanese values and culture. This beach goer considers it as disrespectful and sees it as a reflection of the new generation's lack of moral principles:

*15 years ago, public display of affection started on Lebanese beaches. It increased about 7 years ago with the development of beach parties and pool bars. I dislike PDA [Public Display of Affection] because this is a lack of respect for people on the beach. I think PDA in resorts reveals the lack of moral values of the new generation in Lebanon. (Participant 16)*

The importance of discretion has been stressed by this Christian man who thinks that intimate acts are not bad in themselves so long as they are not seen by everyone on the beach. He considers this lack of decency displayed in public as characteristic of the European culture and therefore should not be transposed into our Lebanese culture:

*Comparing to before, there is more indecency on the beach nowadays. PDA used to be a lot more discreet. Now, people display affection in front of everyone. There are videos I have seen and scenes I have witnessed in person. A couple of years ago, there was this video showing how two girls were going 'down' on each other. They were completely naked. Another video popped up showing two gay guys doing the same. There are so many other videos of intra sexual couples doing things in front of everyone. I consider this as vulgar. Of course, I prefer how beach leisure used to be. I am with open*

*mindfulness but not to that extent. I think this is too much. PDA has to be discreet. People on Lebanese beaches need to be a bit more modest. People should stay respectable. We are not Europe and we do not want to be like Europe. And I actually do not even know if this indecency has reached such a level in Europe. Maybe we exceeded them.*  
(Participant 6)

Based on these facts, a number of conservative families have found themselves having to shield their children from indecency by keeping them away from this ‘morally-questionable’ public display of affection. Indeed, some resorts are being purposely avoided by these families given their immoral atmosphere and instead choose other family-oriented resorts offering a more ‘conservative’ atmosphere where PDA are more ‘under control’ hence more suitable to the eyes of children:

*I like coming to this resort because here children under twelve are kept away from adult pools where PDA could be witnessed. This separation between family pools and adult pools is better for kids. Unlike this resort, PDA is not that controlled in other resorts I went to. My daughter who is 6 years old has been asking me about all this PDA that she witnessed in resorts. It is not right for her to see that.* (Participant 13)

Similar thoughts are expressed by this father, a christian believer, who also has some concerns on possible harmful effects of these indecent practices on the beach on his two young daughters:

*I like moderation. I dislike going to resorts where burqini wearers can be found and I dislike going to resorts where there is obscenity. If I am going to the beach with my family, I do not want my kids to see topless women or public display of affection. I do not want them to witness that at this stage in their life. I want to be in a resort that offers to*



*my children a 'normal' atmosphere for their age. But, if I was alone, I wouldn't mind public affection at all. (Participant 1)*

Interestingly, the question of indecency becomes even more sensitive when it includes homosexual practices which takes the whole debate to a different level:

*Sometimes, PDA is just too much. It is not just a kiss. It is like sex. Once, in a resort in Jbeil, I witnessed PDA between gays. It is good that this is a 18+ resort so children do not see such scenes. (Participant 18)*

In fact, given the importance for families to shield their children from this indecent public display of affection on the beach, the owners of family friendly resorts are acting upon these concerns by adopting a sort selection of customers at the entrance. This selection is a way to protect the 'family friendly' atmosphere of the resort:

*I select my customers because I want to keep this family-friendly atmosphere. I can tell from the bodily appearance, from the look, the psychological background of a person and whether he/she fits in with my resort atmosphere or not. I tell unsuitable people 'sorry can't get you in' because they can have a negative impact on my business. We have families and kids here. The problem is that Lebanese people take this extra freedom on the beach and they stretch it and stretch it and stretch it. I want to keep my resort away from undesirable behaviours between men and women. (Participant 30)*

Clearly, protecting the moral upbringing of children is another key element for parents when choosing a suitable resort for their families. Beach mobilities are not only dependent on the lifestyle of adults but also on the kind of education and upbringing their children are receiving. Kissing in public is still not acceptable in the eyes of many Lebanese families who still consider it as an act that only belongs to the private sphere. Of course, indecency is a matter of

perspective. What is considered as ‘indecent’ varies from one country to another, one community to another, one person to another. Generally speaking, public display of affection is still frowned upon and considered as foreign to our Lebanese culture by a number of Lebanese people. Whether in public places or private resorts, kissing or other overly affectionate practices are still faced by questioning ‘how dare they’ eyes. In the traditional Lebanese mind, public display of affection is an element of the ‘western’ culture, a symbol of moral decay.

### 6.3.2 Reminiscing About ‘Old’ Beach Leisure

The beach has been gradually losing its essence, its function, its *raison d’être*. Western-oriented modernisation has not only re-shaped the beach landscape but also reinvented beach leisure practices. This new way of performing beach leisure is not to everyone’s liking, prompting criticism of this changing Lebanese society which keeps challenging cultural standards as well as pushing further the limits of what is acceptable. A number of beach goers have pointed fingers at the ‘show off’ attitude as well as some ‘indecent’ practices, including the display of affection and the choice of wearing skimpy swimwear which seems to be troubling some Lebanese minds. ‘Show off’ has been driving people away from the natural essence of the beach:

*Beach goers lost connection to nature. The function of the beach has changed. People no longer come to the beach to enjoy nature and connect to it. They only go to the beach to show their bodies, to show off. (Participant 16)*

Here, another beach goer is reminiscing about the days when beach leisure was more about ‘swimming’ and ‘playing’ and less about ‘showing off’ and ‘attracting’ the other gender:

*In the past, beach leisure was authentic. We used to go to the beach to have fun, to swim. Now, we go to the beach because we want to see bathing suits and want to see who is looking at us. This bothers me a lot. The whole beach leisure experience has changed. Now it is all about 'Look at me, I am there', 'Look at my swimwear'. It is not about swimming anymore. (Participant 9)*

In fact, modern resort designs have turned the beach goers from being swimmers into being clubbers:

*Drinking on the beach is so common now. It is nice sometimes to have a beer next to the pool, but nowadays everyone sits around the pool bar and drinks whiskey, vodka, wine...alcohol has become part of the beach culture. I think this is too much. A beach outing has become more about 'having fun', about merriment, rather than just sunbathing and relaxing. (Participant 2)*

The fine line between modern and old fashioned practices is what is making some beach goers rely heavily on their reason when it comes to practicing beach leisure in Lebanon. For this woman, liking modernity is something and adopting what she considers as 'indecent' practices is something else:

*Beach leisure practices of Lebanese people have changed so quickly over the course of 3 years, not even 10 years. Every 3 years, ways of thinking and behaviours are changing. I feel I am old fashioned. I actually like modernity but my reason does not allow me to accept everything. I wouldn't wear a thong swimwear in a resort nor display lots of affection in public, like others do. (Participant 18)*

This statement is echoing the thoughts of this beach goer who has not minced her words, blaming the 'westernisation' process for these 'dirty' behaviours, as she calls them:

*Lebanon has changed. Lebanese people have changed. Values, education, moral standards...we copy the West which makes us lose our identity. Our beaches are dirty because of pollution and because of behaviours. (Participant 18)*

When asked about his thoughts regarding the modern beach culture, this resort owner expressed his disgust towards these indecent behaviours by calling resorts ‘meat markets’ where a seduction game between genders takes place:

*These modern beach settings are not beaches, nor resorts. They are just what I call ‘meat markets’ where men and women meet and seduce each other. Their customers are subject to the ‘meat market’. But my customers are different (Participant 30).*

A similar comment was made by this beach goer who would rather describe this so-called ‘meat market’ as a ‘brothel’ where alcohol is enjoyed and physical seduction is at play:

*Nowadays, people go to resorts to drink around the pool bar. And girls can have free access to resorts before 11 am just because resorts want to have more girls to attract a male clientele. Beaches have become more like brothels, bars. (Participant 9)*

Nostalgia for the days when simple beach games used to be an important part of the beach experience can also be heard in the voice of this man:

*Back in the days, people used to bring small wooden boats or play ball games on the beach. We used to rent a canoe. We barely see people doing that nowadays. Things have changed. Everything has become mechanical and many beaches are now polluted. Since jetskis have become part of the beach landscape, the beach has become annoying because of its noise, bad smell and oil leaks on the beach. It is disgusting. I definitely prefer old times (Participant 3).*

Brothels, bars, meat markets...the words are different, but the same is true with regard to people's perception of many modern resorts which barely left enough space for natural beach settings. Years of neglect and unplanned coastal development have had dramatic consequences not only on the fauna and flora but also on the beach landscape in Lebanon which has been seriously disfigured, with the blessing of an 'absent state'. Indeed, the Lebanese coast has fallen prey to careless resort investors, redesigning the beach landscape at their convenience by fragmenting the Lebanese coast into more or less expensive modern resorts where indecency and show off have been thriving. As a result, beautiful, clean and welcoming simple beach settings have become quite scarce, akin to having a treasure in dire need of protection. Nostalgia has increased the value and attractiveness of old beach leisure in the eyes of those wanting to re-discover the essence of the beach as well as embodying simple beach pleasures, whether in a simple retro resort or in a natural beach setting. As is known, old is gold, even within the beach leisure world.

### 6.3.3 (Re)discovering Retro Resorts and Simple Beaches

Moving away from fakeness, extravagance, sophistication and luxury is what many Lebanese beach goers have been doing, driven by powerful nostalgic feelings for those 'good old days' when beach leisure was just simple. In this context, retro resorts of the 50/60s are back in vogue in Lebanon. This craze for simplicity mixed with feelings of nostalgia have given retro resorts a second wind. Indeed, a number of Lebanese beach goers have been re-discovering run-down retro resorts in a fresh light. The basic facilities and services available at retro resorts may not offer much in terms of comfort but people are seeing beyond the obvious. Nostalgia is a powerful feeling; it can have such a powerful hold on someone's mind and lead him/her to go back to a resort where childhood memories of beach holidays can be relived:

*Many people have beautiful memories here. That is why they like coming to this resort. Believe me, some Lebanese people visiting Lebanon love coming to our resort because they have childhood memories and feel nostalgic of those old good times. The resort hasn't changed much but of course some improvements have been made. (Participant 14)*

Another retro resort seems to be surfing on the wave of nostalgia and seems to be having a special bond with its clientele:

*Unlike other resorts, I know my customers by name. you see the blond lady right there? She is American. She has been coming to this place for 20 years. She does not go anywhere else. She refuses to go anywhere else because she likes the atmosphere in my resort. She has become a dear friend. My customers are like family members. They all know each other because they have been coming here year after year after year. This year we had customers who have not been to Lebanon for 20 years. They live abroad. First place they visited was this resort. They remember this place because their parents used to bring them here when they were babies. They have memories, that is why they came back to this resort (Participant 30).*

Reminiscing over 'the 'good old days' is clearly an important element of the 'retro' experience. Retro resorts have the power to take us back in time. While the old generation can relive memories, emotions and lived experiences, the new generation can picture 'how it used to be' before their birth and picture themselves living in the 60s heyday when Beirut resorts were the jet-set playgrounds. The past is always a safe refuge for youths lacking bearings in a country where cultural markers are gradually becoming blurry. It is about feeling connected to the past and understanding it to better cope with the blurring boundaries that are characteristic of modern times. In other words, rediscovering the past is like a rescue rope for those walking on

the shifting sands of modernity. Retro resorts can feel like home and that is what partly makes it attractive in the eyes of a clientele who want to be cocooned and who are seeking closeness with people, human warmth; things that cannot be found in other modern resorts. This male staff member working in a retro resort could not hide his pride when telling me about what makes this place different to other beaches:

*We attract people from everywhere in Lebanon. Some customers come from faraway cities such as Baalbeck and Saida. About 70% of our customers know each other and ask about each other. It is like a family. If you need something, someone will come and help you. Look, here is one of the resort owners sitting next to the pool, right next to customers. See how humble they are? They sit with customers in a very relaxed atmosphere. It feels like 'home'. (Participant 14)*

Embodying elements of the past somehow re-balances the lack of bearings of the present. But there is more to retro resorts than just soothing nostalgic feelings. The simplicity found in retro resorts is ideal for those wanting to experience beach leisure in its simple form, away from extravagance and complexities. Interestingly, while some people are looking to experience the 'celebrity life' by seeking special treatments and exclusivities in expensive sophisticated resorts, some wealthy people and celebrities, on the other hand, are more interested in re-experiencing the simplicity of life:

*Many important and wealthy people like coming to this retro resort, including several celebrities such as Mayez el Bayah, Rabih el Khawli, Adam and Anwar el Amir. Adam plays racket sport with some customers. Can you see this man there next to the pool? He used to work for the American embassy in Lebanon. He and his family come here. That is just to give you an example of the kind of customers we have. (Participant 14)*

Interestingly, retro resorts have been attracting some Lebanese celebrities in search of some calmness and simplicity, away from the spotlight and the showbiz life. Enjoying the resort in its simplest form helps them disconnect from the fakeness of the showbiz and re-discover the simple pleasures of life. In short, the quote below summarises quite well the singularity of a retro resort:

*I consider my resort to be a 'lost island' in the middle of this stupid craziness here. We are very special. No other resort is like this resort. We are in the middle of the jungle. We are a different breed. (Participant 30)*

On a different note, along with the revitalisation of retro resorts, another emerging trend seems to be growing in popularity: a return to nature, to simple beach settings. Naturalness on the beach is not dead. At least not yet. Taking the 'natural route', away from the buzz of modern resorts, has become a trendy beach lifestyle followed by a number of Lebanese beach goers who feel the need to re-connect with 'Mother Nature'. This resort owner has noticed this change of trend in beach leisure:

*The show off trend is dying. Just give it three more years and it will just fade away. Exclusivities and top class individualised services offered in 5 star resorts do not attract customers as much as they used to. Some classy Lebanese people now feel shy to 'show off'. More and more people are preferring simplicity. They prefer eating on that plastic table on the sandy beach. The heyday of the show off beach culture was between the years 2000 and 2010. But it has become disgusting. It is not classy anymore. My resort hasn't built its reputation on show off, so it is following the right path. (Participant 44)*

The 'show off' clientele seems to be shrinking in Lebanon, which is playing in favour of beaches that are away from this sophisticated 'look at me' atmosphere. Talking about his keen sense for making wise business decisions, this resort owner also shared with me why his resort



has embraced natural elements as well as the oldies beach leisure concept, which he considers as a key element behind the success of his resort:

*Very modern, top class sophisticated resorts have been the 'talk of the town', my resort has instead embraced the ancient beach concept of the 50s, 60s, that used to be in Lebanon, which is all about simplicity. I opened a resort that was the opposite of what was being expected because I can sense that people are going back to nature, to simple beach settings. Everyone told me that my resort concept would not work because it would go against the flow, but I succeeded and the clientele is here. There is a 'return to nature', a craze for simplicity. I do not want my resort to be 'trendy'. I want my resort to be a place where people feel good, where people come for themselves, not for 'show off'. The resorts that follow trends die quickly. Trends are temporary and keep changing every 2 or 3 years. So I keep my resort away from trends because I want it to remain alive.*  
(Participant 41)

Sensing the 'essence' of the beach has become a must, a goal in itself for thousands of beach goers who have enough of being secluded within man-made, themed resorts where the shore is overshadowed by pools of various sizes. Experiencing the beach, in its very natural setting, without all these concrete blocks, pool bars and jacuzzis around, can reinvigorate the bodily senses in ways not experienced in those themed resorts that have mushroomed on the coast and which are more suited to 'partying' than to experiencing the beach. This craze for the beach has put some pool resorts in financial difficulty:

*Top notch, luxury pool-only resorts are struggling financially because people are going back to the beach, to nature where adults and kids can play racket games, build sands, run, etc. (Participant 44)*

Interestingly, this sense of closeness to nature is experienced through playing on the beach. While sipping a cocktail drink at the pool bar and dancing to the sound of trendy music in a jacuzzi is the preference of some, playing beach games on sandy beaches, such as Tyre public beach and the like, makes others happy. A significant number of beach goers are listening to the need of their bodies to be deeply connected to nature and beach games have been found as a good way to do so, as they combine fun with haptic sensations powered by the sun, sand, breeze, sea and pebbles. This Christian girl avoids pool resorts in the so called 'show off' zone, and prefers instead faraway beach destinations located further north which offer her an 'alternative' atmosphere and where beach pleasures can be deeply sensed:

*I avoid the resorts in the Beirut-Jounieh area because they are very commercial. Everyone there is looking the same and doing the same thing. People who go to such resorts only want to show their bodies and socialise. It is not fun. I am not interested in that. I do not want to just show myself. It does not make me comfortable. I want to go to a place where I can play badminton on the beach. It is more fun. I am not interested in only tanning around the pool. It is not my style. So I like going to northern beaches, in Batroun or Chekka, which have a better atmosphere than the one you experience in pool resorts in the Beirut-Jounieh zone because I can enjoy beach activities there and there is no show-off. The kind of people you see in the northern beaches are very different than the ones you meet in pool resorts here. People have a different style. The whole atmosphere is different. People who like showing off wouldn't even consider going to areas that have a beach because they are more into pools where people can dance next to the pool bar. (Participant 12)*

In essence, a day out at the beach is a far cry from the cherished beach memories held by the old generation but an increasing number of Lebanese beach goers are re-appropriating the beach by embracing the 'old' way of performing beach leisure but with a modern twist.

Generally speaking, the old, the natural and the simple are making a strong come back, and the beach leisure world has not been spared by this ‘old good days’ wave, making people reconsider their beach practices and re-inventing their beach lifestyles with a modern take on beach leisure. In Lebanon, the craze for the ‘natural’ and the ‘old’ illustrates this nostalgia for simpler times when the beach was enjoyed in a simple way. To many Lebanese beach goers, going back to old ways of enjoying the beach is a form of escapism from the complexity of our modern times, a return to a comforting past, at least in their own minds. While (semi)public beaches are attracting those with a Robinsonian quest for ‘getting away from it all’, retro resorts, on the other hand, are striking a chord with those longing for the ‘heyday’. This craving for simplicity is being used by both simple ‘natural’ beach settings and retro resorts to their advantage. Nostalgia sells.

#### **6.4 Racism on the Beach: Away from the ‘Other’ Body**

Racism is not an issue unique to Lebanon but rather a worldwide issue. Yet, racism on Lebanese beaches is very much a ‘Lebanese’ issue, sadly revealing the extent to which racist feelings towards ‘black’ bodies and housemaids are impacting beach mobilities and the dynamics of some beach destinations. Although important, racism towards some foreign, non-Lebanese looking bodies is only one side of the ‘intolerance’ coin; the other side being more of a local issue between Lebanese communities themselves. Without intending to condemn or excuse these intolerant minds, the reported ‘voices’ from the ground shed light on some concerns, fears and that ‘superiority complex’ that is very much a characteristic of this nation.

##### **6.4.1 Discriminating Against Black Bodies and Housemaids**

‘Tolerant’ minds may tolerate the sight of difference which ‘racist’ minds cannot bear. Unfortunately, skin colour is still big thing in Lebanon. In the mental schemata of a number of

Lebanese beach goers, 'Black' bodies are still very much associated with housemaids working in Lebanese houses, which causes some kind of uneasiness when it comes to sharing the same pool. These racial-specific clichés are deeply ingrained in mental representations, making them quite hard to uproot. As such, some resort owners, fearful for their businesses, implemented some 'unofficial' rules to satisfy a part of their clientele and match their needs for 'comfort'. Being private businesses, they feel like they have received a 'white card' to do whatever suit their businesses best, to the point of overlooking human rights. Money rules and business comes first. This resort owner explains quite clearly the reason why he avoids having so many 'black' people in his resort. One key element is the comfort and wellbeing of his clientele:

*Once, a group of about 15 housemaids came to my resort. I did not allow them to get in. I had to make up an excuse to avoid hurting their feelings. I told them that my resort only accepts couples or families. Lebanese customers wouldn't feel comfortable sharing the pool with housemaids. I would lose my customers. I am not racist. They are human beings, same as us, but that is how the Lebanese society is. The Lebanese minister of tourism, Mr. Fady Abboud, has fought against these racist policies implemented by resort owners that target housemaids. He tried to end this racial discrimination on our beaches.*

*(Participant 15)*

The way these black women have been described as 'housemaids' reveal that stereotypes and mental images die hard. They may actually be working at local embassies. The fact that they were quickly labelled as 'housemaids' reveals more things about the hotel owner than about these women. The attempt of the Lebanese minister to end this racial discrimination on beaches is met with resistance from some resort owners who do not feel ready to put human rights above their own business interests.

I heard a similar story from another resort manager who considers that allowing housemaids into his resort is not without its risk of undesirable outcomes. Given the ‘bad’ reputation of female African workers in Lebanon, the protection of the family-friendly atmosphere inside his resort becomes a priority of the highest order:

*Housemaids who come with families to our resort can use our pools so long as they wear bathing suits and abide by the resort rules. But a group of Ethiopians, for example, are not allowed in our resort because they would change its atmosphere. There is another resort in Lebanon where groups of Ethiopian women drink and try to seduce men because they work as prostitutes. This is a phenomenon. They go to resorts in groups. We do not want this happening in our family-friendly resort. (Participant 31)*

Interestingly, the acceptance of housemaids in resorts is a business argument used by some resorts to enhance their image in the beach market and differentiate themselves from their competitors. However, this misleading ‘open mindedness’ is just a façade hiding another reality. An interview with a participant has revealed that allowing housemaids in the resort is something and allowing them get into a pool seems to be something else. The clientele has the final say on who is to access the pools or not while resorts are using ‘flexibility’ to meet the needs of their racist customers. The words of this resort manager are highly revealing of this sad reality:

*We respect customers more than our competitor. For example, housemaids are allowed in our resort while our competitor next door does not accept them which caused a controversy. But, we prefer that housemaids stay in the kids pool and not swim in the adult pool because it would bother some customers. If no one complains, we can allow housemaids to be in the adult pool. There are no specific rules. It all depends on what customers say and whether they are bothered or not. Ultimately, we are against racism.*

*A housemaid is a human being and should be respected so we try to overlook the fact that she is in the adult pool but if we get many complaints, we know how to manage the situation. Once, a housemaid, who was in the adult pool, caused much annoyance to several customers. So we had to tell her to leave the adult pool and go to the kids pool instead. She accepted to do it and did not get upset because we spoke to her in a respectful way. We actually told her that the kids in the kids pool needed her presence with them because they might drown. We had to give her this excuse and not tell her the truth because we did not want to hurt her. We did not tell her of the complaints about her presence in the pool but the family she works for directly understood the reason why we told her to leave the pool. Meeting the needs of the customer is key. We are flexible. This is a touristic place, after all. (Participant 14)*

Money speaks louder than rights as the clientele is what keeps a resort afloat in a country badly hit by an economic crisis. The ‘touristic place’ argument mirrors this mindset which puts the wellbeing of customers above anything else, even if this meant discriminating against non-white workers in Lebanon.

#### 6.4.2 Keeping Refugees at a Distance

Intolerance is also targeting a number of unfortunate refugees in Lebanon as they are being kept away from some beaches for the sake of protecting the reputation and the ‘decent’ atmosphere of the beach destination. Indeed, welcoming many refugees may change the sense of place, therefore pushing away some customers who would seek a different beach destination offering a more suitable atmosphere for Lebanese beach goers. A staff member working for a resort has shared with me how refugees are being tricked:

*We try to keep refugees away from our resort because we know that they would ruin the atmosphere and it would bother our customers. You know that refugees belonging to*

*popular classes act in a way that wouldn't match the 'classy' atmosphere we are offering. It is how they look, how they behave on the beach... We want to protect our beach atmosphere so we have to lie to refugees by telling them that our resort can only be accessed by members of the resort. We tell them that they can go instead to a public beach few miles away from our resort. (Participant 43)*

Interestingly, not only does this resort try to keep 'low class' refugees at a distance but also this coastal municipality in charge of a Christian-majority town. During the interview, the mayor has not hidden his racist thoughts when explaining how he is trying to keep some foreigners, whom he perceives to be incompatible with the image of his town and its atmosphere, away from the beaches of his town:

*I avoid opening public beaches in my coastal town because I want to avoid foreigners who would cause troubles on our beaches. You know, public beaches are accessible to anyone. There is no selection. Look at what is happening in Byblos. Their local municipality had to tackle several issues on their public beaches there. I do not want this happening on our beaches. The issue with having public beaches is that many 'foreigners' would come here and cause issues in terms of hygiene, safety and bodily practices. I do not want troublemakers and people wearing clothes to be on our beaches in my town. (Participant 24)*

In his mind, refugees are being associated with troubles and lack of hygiene. But his mental images seem to be based on facts, what he saw happening on another beach, rather than baseless stereotypes. The town has been deprived of public beaches out of the fear of being submerged by refugees who are thought to be incompatible with the quietude and the beautiful beach environment of the town that makes its residents proud. This bad impression of refugees is also

found in the words of this beach goer who stopped going to a beach located in the south of Lebanon due to its proximity to refugee camps:

*I avoid some resorts located in the Jiyeh-Rmeileh area, south of Lebanon, because they are frequented by some people who make the atmosphere unpleasant. These 'troublemakers' come from the refugee camps nearby (Ein el Helweh, Burj el Barajneh and Sabra and Chatila camps). I witnessed 5 fights between men in this area. The risk of troubles is higher in these resorts so I prefer going to other beaches. (Participant 27)*

The question of racism on the beach is quite tricky as there is a fine line between avoiding refugees due to their race and avoiding refugees due to their lifestyles. At first sight, racism seems to be the main reason why some people dislike mingling with refugees but in looking a bit closer, there seems to be an overlapping of elements, including race and lifestyles.

#### 6.4.3 Questioning the Racist Beach Culture

On a positive note, there are voices, whether from the public or private sector, against this racial discrimination on the Lebanese coast which is being perceived as shameful and against human rights. This beach goer, for example, criticises this racist mentality in Lebanon which she considers as outdated and offensive, pointing out the paradox of the Lebanese people who, on the one hand, do not mind having a housemaid living with their family and taking care of their kids but cringe at the idea of sharing the same pool with them:

*In Lebanon, I do not like the fact that black women or housemaids are not allowed to access some beaches. When we see housemaids on the beach, we are surprised because we got used to not seeing them on beaches. In the Arab world, including Lebanon, housemaids have become part of the family. Racial discrimination on the beach does not make sense because they live with us. Some people leave their kids at home with*



*housemaids and go out. In some families, housemaids have become mums to some kids even more than the real mothers. So it is fine having housemaids in houses but we are disgusted to see them on beaches, believing that they will make the beach unclean? Are we still living in the segregation era when white and black people were separated? So housemaids can take care of kids in houses but can't access beaches? It is very offensive. It is racist. (Participant 9)*

As ridiculous as it may sound, skin colour is perceived as a symbol of a greater risk of lacking hygiene or carrying a disease that can potentially spread through the pool water. On a more general note, this racial discrimination on the beach clearly poses some serious ethical questions given its focus on the skin colour, ethnic background and the social status of someone. The danger of such thinking goes beyond how these workers are being treated as it can also encompass any Lebanese resident, child or adult, whose skin colour or facial traits do not match the more traditional 'Lebanese look'. Indeed, the Lebanese society is evolving, with more and more inter-racial marriages happening between Lebanese and foreigners, many of whom are of African or Asian origins, making this racial intolerance even more surprising. Would these mixed-race Lebanese offsprings be 'avoided' and told not to swim in pools? If these 'Lebanese' of colour can access any beach destination they like, regardless of their racial background, then one may ask, why not African/Asian looking 'non-Lebanese' ones? Double standards here are pretty obvious.

### **6.5 Lifestyle Intolerance on the Beach: Away from Burkinis or Bikinis**

Instead of being places of 'getting together' between all residents in Lebanon, some beaches have made seclusion and discrimination their winning card, using it as a tool to satisfy their existing customers and/or to attract new ones. Burkini/bikini wearers and alcohol drinkers have been targeted by this lifestyle discrimination which, in some cases, is more covert than overt.

But some resorts have decided to be more tolerant than their competitors, despite the complaints and nagging voices of some of their customers.

#### 6.5.1 Avoiding the Sight of 'Islamic' Beach Outfits

Western-style swimwear no longer has a monopoly on beach leisure. Other 'alternative' modest swimsuits have been launched in an attempt to meet the needs of those wanting to be 'modest' on the beach. In Lebanon, Islamic beach outfits are part of the beach landscape, going beyond Islamic-majority areas, but not everyone is pleased with it. While some do not mind being surrounded by the so-called 'Islamic-friendly swimwear', others prefer avoiding its sight as it triggers negative emotions and sentiments of frustrations and malaise:

*The sight of women wearing burkinis or clothes on the beach bothers me therefore I avoid beaches frequented by these women. I am against religion and against any extreme religious manifestation. In the streets, the sight of women wearing burkas bothers me. It is the same principle on the beach. Actually, I feel that I would be more accepting of these 'Islamic' beach outfits if they were only displayed in Muslim-majority regions, in their regions. They are free to do whatever they want in their regions. But I would be less accepting of these religious practices on the beach if displayed in other regions where Muslims are a minority. So it all depends on where they are displayed, on the location of the beach. What I mean is that when I go, for example, to Tyre public beach, located in a Muslim-majority area, I feel that seeing burkinis is alright because I am in their 'region'. I feel that I am an 'intruder'. However, my state of mind changes when they are the ones coming to ours. They would be 'intruders'. My perception of the burkini depends on the social context. (Participant 4)*

Our brains have been so much fed with images of western-style swimwear that it becomes difficult for a number of beach goers to accept or be tolerant of a 'different' reality. In the case

of Lebanon, the reasons for this uneasiness are quite complex as psychological, sociological, political, demographical and historical factors are closely intertwined. Being a mosaic of different communities with a long history of sectarian divide, symbols of belongingness to a community may result in others feeling overwhelmed and frustrated and suspicious of the real motives behind wearing this so-called ‘halal’ swimwear. Is wearing it a pure matter of faith or is it also a tool used to ‘attack’ the other ‘western-style’ beach lifestyle by making an ‘alternative’ beach lifestyle more visible on our beaches? This Christian woman is leaning towards the second option:

*When I am swimming, the sight of burkinis bother me because I feel that it is a burden, a limitation not only on her freedom as a woman but also on my own freedom too. I do not mind having beaches in Lebanon to be specifically opened for burkini wearers. They can have their own beaches. I just do not want them to mix with us. Why should burkini wearers be allowed on beaches and not naked bodies? I think that those who want to wear burkinis and those who want to be naked should have their own beaches. All these people who want to adopt uncommon beach practices, out of the ordinary, should have their own specific private places. Burkinis should be banned on beaches where wearing the standard swimwear is the norm. If we tolerate burkinis, it means that we are encouraging people to wear it. I am not against the burkini because it simply covers the female body. I am against it because of what it represents, because of its symbol, the message behind it. The burkini has a religious connotation. It comes from the word burka. It reflects the intolerant mind of the one wearing. She wants to differentiate herself and this reflects her rejection of the ‘Other’. (Participant 7)*

This bold statement is part of a larger ‘communitarist’ discourse which feeds on the bloody historical tensions between the religious communities. Being surrounded by Islamic beach outfits seems to be a reminder for some Christians that they are outnumbered by Muslims and

seems to be reviving inner fears of being less and less visible in Lebanon. The spectre of a decreasing demography is causing anxiety, making some Christians even more attached to their lifestyle and their visibility on the beach. The Islamic swimwear is perceived as a threatening political statement made by Muslims that is targeting the other 'Christian' community: we are here and we are reminding you of our powerful presence on the beach.

In the mind of this Christian man, the 'burkini' itself is not an issue but the number of burkini wearers – whether they outnumber non burkini wearers or not - is what matters to him. In fact, being surrounded by a few burkinis is fine, but being in a minority position can directly affect his sense of belonging:

*If I am in a resort and the majority of beach goers are wearing burkinis, then I may feel that I do not belong here because we would feel that we would have to cover our bodies out of respect for the majority. But if they are a minority around me, that is fine because I would feel that I am represented by other beach goers who look like me. I wouldn't feel alone. (Participant 3)*

From an industry perspective, this sort of uneasiness towards burkinis is the reason why some resort owners are keeping burkinis away from their pools, doing it for the sake of business. Protecting their clientele is what is pushing them to take some controversial actions as they believe that the sight of burkinis would bother their customers and make them leave the resort. Limiting the accessibility of burkini wearers to his pools is what this resort owner has been doing for the sake of his resort image and reputation:

*In my resort, I do not accept customers wearing the burkini because people in the pool would be bothered and would complain. Once, a Saudi man came to my resort with his wife who was wearing the burkini. He got angry because I did not allow his wife to go in the pool, so I told him: why can you look at the asses of our women but we are not allowed*

*to see the ass of your woman? I do not allow burqinis in my resort, same way I do not allow the thong swimwear and going topless. (Participant 15)*

The vulgar words of this Christian resort owner reveal the lack of appreciation towards burkini wearers and the low level of discussion that can be reached to defend the ‘no burkini’ policy. The ‘business’ argument was also used by this Christian resort owner who considers the burkini to be a ‘business killer’ in that it could result in the loss of his clientele due to an unsuitable ‘Islamic’ atmosphere:

*If I allow burkinis in my resort, I would lose all my clients. If I lose clients, I would lose money. And my resort would die. I see in the burkini a kind of arrogance. I have the right to choose which dress code I want in my resort. I only want regular swimwear. The burkini is banned by several Muslim Arab countries. I am not the only resort which does not allow it. Those wearing bikinis would be bothered if they saw women covering their bodies right next to them. If the ministry starts forcing resorts to accept burkinis, then I wouldn't abide by the rule. I would rather close the resort down and re-open one abroad. (Participant 41)*

Another kind of argument was used by a Muslim staff member working in a resort to defend this policy. He told me about a discussion that he had with an angry burkini wearer who was complaining about her inability to get into the pool. He tried to convince this woman by pointing out his own Muslim background and by explaining to her that he would have done the same with his own mother because this is a private place:

*Once, I told the following words to a Muslim woman who was so bothered of the policy: 'My name is Ali and I am a Muslim Shiia. My mum is veiled. If she comes to this resort wearing the burkini, I would tell her to go to the beach. I wouldn't allow her to get in the pool.' Following this discussion, the ministry of tourism contacted the resort to discuss*

*this issue. The resort explained that the beach is public so any Lebanese can have access to it. But pools are private so the resort can have the final word on who can access the pool and who can't. (Participant 28)*

This controversial policy is strongly defended by this Christian man who witnessed a tense discussion between the staff resort and a burkini wearer who was found in a pool:

*Two years ago, I was in a resort in the south of Lebanon. There was a Syrian woman wearing a burqini who got into the swimming pool with her husband. A staff member told her that she needed to get out of the pool because of what she was wearing, which caused an argument between the two sides. The staff member told her that the normal swimwear is the only accepted dress code. The customers were rude but the staff was strict. Then the woman got upset and left the place. But I was happy because I was bothered by her. Even though I believe in freedom, I do not like being in a pool with women wearing clothes. Well, I do not see the burqini as a swimwear. It is a piece of clothes. If a woman wants to wear clothes, she needs to go to ladies-only resorts (...) If the woman does not want to show her body, then she should not come here. What is she trying to do with a burkini? She can't even sunbathe. The sight is disgusting for me. Are they not gonna sweat? I may be wrong but that is how I think. We should not mix a culture that is foreign to our Lebanese one. I still believe that Lebanon is a jewel of freedom in the Middle East. So these women should not impose on us a new culture. (Participant 1)*

The unapologetic calls for segregation against burkini wearers reveal the extent to which a burkini can bother, to the point of reaching the level of disgust. Considering the burkini as an element foreign to the Lebanese culture mirrors the differences of perception between Lebanese people of what 'Lebaneseness' is. In other words, seeing in the burkini a sort of

invasion of a foreign culture actually reveals the fear of being swallowed up by a quite conservative 'Islamic' culture.

However, on a more positive note, some resorts have decided to allow burkinis in pools even if that means annoying some narrow-minded customers with sectarian thoughts:

*We accept women wearing burkinis. They can use our swimming pools as anyone else although some customers express their discontent. They perceive the burkini as 'wearing clothes in the pool' and complain about it but we tell them that the burkini is a swimwear, not 'everyday clothes'. These women have the right to swim. The 'grumpy' customers' ended up getting used to the sight of it and even became 'loyal' customers. I think sectarianism is partly the reason why some of these customers are bothered by the burkini. (Participant 14)*

This intolerance towards this alternative, 'islamic-friendly' beach lifestyle is also illustrated through the exclusionary policies decided at the municipal level. In order to protect the beaches from being 'islamised', a Christian mayor of an important coastal town has taken radical decisions which have proven to be quite effective despite their outrageous nature:

*I advised all the resorts located in my town not to accept burkinis. These are private resorts so we, as a municipality, can't force them to be tough with burkini wearers but most of the resorts followed my recommendations. Of course, some burkinis wearers have complained and caused some issues in one of our local resorts. Also, we, as a municipality, do not want alcohol-free resorts or ladies-only resorts to be built on our beaches. Once, someone wanted to open a resort in our area, but we refused to give him permission. So he opened his resort in a Muslim-majority area. I personally spoke with the minister and told him that I do not want religious manifestation on the beaches of my town. (Participant 24)*

This mayor defends this 'rule' by putting the blame on those who seek 'differentiation' on the beach through their 'provocative' bodily practices. Discrimination seems to be a matter of perspective, at least to this man who bluntly accused burkini wearers for actively provoking this discrimination:

*Discrimination is when someone decides to create a difference between him/herself and others. In this case, on the beach. if we all go on the beach with similar looks, and someone goes there looking different, it means this person is creating 'difference'. And I consider that the burkini is an element of differentiation. So who is being the provoker here....us or them? (Participant 24)*

These thoughts are also found in the mind of this Christian male beach goer to whom this uneasiness about witnessing ostentatious burkinis in the Christian-majority coastal towns is closely linked to the bloody past between the Lebanese communities:

*We are a war-torn country and we have a history of hating the other religion so these religious practices are a sort of an 'attack' on what we represent. (Participant 6)*

Interestingly, seeing in a piece of clothes a sign of 'attack' on our Christian community or a sort of 'invasion' of our territories illustrates quite this apprehension of being dominated by the Other community even in times of peace as well as this inseparable link between community and territory which is characteristic of Lebanon.

#### 6.5.2 Debating the Burkini: Between Annoyance and Acceptance

As is clear, the burkini is leaving no one indifferent, with opinions ranging between acceptance and disdain. These differences of opinions and perceptions towards this controversial invention have been found in the various answers that were given by informants. Those with a negative perception of the burkini have mentioned the following points: the lack of compatibility with



Islam, the sexualisation of the female body and the negative impact on health. This Muslim woman criticises the invention of the burkini as it is not in accordance with Islamic beliefs:

*I dislike burkinis. It is a stupid invention. I do not think it is 'Islamic'. The body shape of the woman is revealed even though the skin is covered. This is not right. I think it is better for women to go to ladies-only resorts instead. (Participant 16)*

Beyond faith, the question of the sexualisation of the female body has also been put forward, linking the burkini concept to the idea of objectified female bodies. The female body shape is being enhanced by burkinis which, according to this Christian man, makes the female body look sexier and hence more attractive to the male eyes:

*The woman should not be objectified, sexualised. I do not stare at women wearing bathing suits. I think it is sexier to have clothes on and swim in the sea. Wet clothes reveal the womanly body shape. (Participant 15)*

Interestingly, to some men, the covered body is sexier than the semi naked one, which raises the question of objectification from a different perspective. In the same vein, this Muslim girl also challenges the idea that a burkini offers modesty to women as, she believes, it catches the eyes of everyone, way more than a 'standard' swimwear. She actually considers that the burkini is far from being a 'modest' beach outfit as it put these women under the spotlight. Canada has been used as an example – the country where she used to live - to illustrate her point:

*In Canada, when I am on the beach, or next to a lake, the burkini wearer stands out. I can assure you that she catches the eyes 100 times more than all the other women wearing bikinis around her. The norm on the beach is to be 'naked', so the one who is wearing clothes will look 'wrong'. You know what I mean? In the streets, if you see a woman naked wearing a bikini, you would feel it is wrong and if she is wearing clothes,*

*it feels right. And on the beach, it should be the opposite. I personally do not like wearing a burkini because I do not want catching eyes and standing up. I prefer melting in the crowd. (Participant 9)*

While some beach goers have questioned the modesty of burkinis, others have looked at this swimwear from a different angle: health. Indeed, this Christian lady has added the health of the burkini wearers into the equation and showed concerns over the wellbeing of the female body:

*Wearing the burkini is not good for the skin. It can burn it because of the strong heat. Plus, it is not healthy. It can cause osteoporosis. Personally, I prefer the concept of ladies-only resorts way more than burkinis. (Participant 18)*

In the same line of thinking, this Muslim young girl stresses the importance of ‘sensing’ the beach and explains how burkini wearers are missing out on bodily beach pleasures, offered by the sun and sea, which are a source of wellbeing:

*Instead of wearing burkinis, women should rather go to a ladies-only resort and enjoy the beach, enjoy the feeling of the water hitting her skin, the sun kissing her skin instead of wearing a burkini that will annoy her and annoy those around her. I think a burkini is hideous to see. It does not look nice. And I can assure you that the woman wearing it is bothered. She is ‘dying’ inside this swimwear because of how hot she feels. I am against the ‘burkini’ because there are ladies-only resorts, which is a good alternative. If there was no alternative, then I would understand the need to wear burkinis. (Participant 9)*

Interestingly, most of these people have tried to imagine themselves in the shoes of a burkini wearer and made guesses about how she feels and what she needs. Generally, critics of burkinis perceive ladies-only resorts as a good alternative, as these places can keep burkini wearers out of mixed beaches, i.e. out of sight. Nonetheless, despite all this harsh criticism, some beach

goers have been less judgmental and expressed their understanding of the need to wear burkinis. The importance of respecting differences and religious beliefs has led this girl to be more accepting of alternative beach leisure lifestyles, keeping herself away from intolerance:

*I think the burkini is a good thing. I am not gonna say that it is a bad thing because this is their religion. If they were taught that they need to wear it to be able to swim, then that is what they have to do. I am neutral. I do not think it is bad and I do not think it is great. If it suits their religion, then it suits their religion. (Participant 17)*

A similar positive outlook has been shared by this Christian guy whose words are a reflection of his tolerant mind and the importance he gives to freedom, despite him not being a big fan of burkinis:

*As we are living in Lebanon, we should let the people do whatever the hell they want. Lebanon has its own ideology which is to respect the beliefs and lifestyles of all its communities. If women want to wear the burkini, then let them. Personally, I am not a fan of burkinis but who am I to limit what people want or believe in. Nuns wear their robes and Muslim women wear their veils so if women want to go to the beach and want to be fully covered then that is their choice. As a Christian, the burkini does bother me but not to a level of me doing something about it because I believe in freedom of speech and freedom of action. Lebanon is a free country so burkini wearers can freely come to our Christian-majority beaches. (Participant 6)*

This open mindedness is also found in the long answer that was provided by this Christian man who considers that stereotypes against burkinis are the fruit of a European way of thinking which only views the European practices as being ‘right’ and ‘civilised’. He is clearly against this stereotyped view and praises the American culture which he considers as being more tolerant of differences and alternative lifestyles:

*The burkini is a personal choice. It is bullshit if I tell a burkini wearer that she cannot go in the sea. She is free to wear whatever she wants. I can't force her to wear a bikini. From a religious perspective, that is what makes her comfortable. She has the right to do it. This is not what you are used to see on the beach but I respect her choice and it does not bother me. if I see a veiled woman walking in the street, I wouldn't try to remove her veil. That is the same thing for a woman wearing a burkini on the beach. I hate the idea of thinking about these people in a bad way and perceiving them as 'uncivilised'. I do not question their bodily appearance nor do I want to put regulations on the kind of swimwear these women should wear. And even in the United States, there are no regulations. There, a woman can wear a burkini and go to any beach. However, in Europe, Europeans want to teach people what to wear, how to think and even which religion to choose. They are so 'narrow-minded'. In the USA, this is considered discrimination. You cannot tell somebody not to go to a beach because of what he/she is wearing. If I do not go to a beach because there are burkini wearers, I would feel that I am discriminating. We have to be open minded. But that works both ways. They also should not force us to wear burkinis like them, of course. (Participant 3)*

The comparison between the European and American ways of seeing 'freedom' is quite interesting as it has taken the debate to a different level. He clearly prefers this americanised perception of 'freedom', and would like all the Lebanese people to be following the same path. Finally, the importance of family moments has been highlighted by this woman who sees in the burkini a useful tool to spend quality time with her family on the beach:

*I think the burkini is a good invention for the Muslim veiled women who want to enjoy family moments with their husbands and kids in mixed resorts. Why should they be forced to only go to ladies-only resorts and be deprived of family moments? It is nice for hijabis to have that freedom to experience beautiful mixed beaches with their families. why*

*should they only experience women only beaches which do not really offer top class facilities? (Participant 35)*

Her words are a strong reminder of the view that is defended by many people, including some feminists, who believe that the burkini, instead of being a tool for oppression, actually enhances the emancipation of women as it takes them out of their seclusion by opening the door of other beach leisure possibilities.

These empathic feelings are also shared by this Christian married woman who believes that the burkini is a good creation as it could be used as another step towards the liberation of Muslim women on the beach:

*I see the burkini as a sign of hope for women. It means mentalities are changing...Of course it is better to wear a burkini than to wear clothes on the beach. I think the burkini is a good step towards 'openness'. Hopefully one day they would start wearing bathing suits that do not cover their bodies as much as a burkini does, such as, for example, bathing suits that show legs, bathing suits that show arms...but they are on the right path.*  
*(Participant 18)*

### 6.5.3 Avoiding the Sight of 'Western' Beach Practices

For some conservative Muslim beach goers, adopting some western beach practices is out of the question as they are believed to be against Islamic ethos. Even the simple sight of semi naked bodies, couples intimately hugging, or people drinking alcohol on the beach is considered as 'haram' and is to be avoided whenever possible. In order to do so, they cunningly play the card of time and/or the card of location; it is all about when to go and where to go. This Muslim Shia man went into details on how he uses 'timing' to satisfy his religious beliefs:

*Those who want to enjoy nice beaches, without wanting to witness their 'open' atmosphere, can go there very early in the day, around 7 or 8 am, before everyone else and leave just before the 'liberal' beach goers make it to the beach. It is a matter of timing. Also, weekdays are favoured over weekends because beaches would be less crowded therefore the risk of having alcohol drinkers and bikinis wearers around us is much less. Tourists usually come on weekends. Of course, there is still a risk of me seeing things I should not be seeing even at 8 am on the beach, but it is not my fault if it happens. At least I tried to avoid it as much as possible. There is a difference between someone intentionally putting himself in a liberal beach environment and someone who tried his best to avoid it. In Islam, what matters is the intention. (Participant 42)*

While some focus on the time of the day or day of the week, others prefer choosing quite 'modest' beach destinations, located down south close to the Lebanese/Palestinian border, where western beach practices are very limited, if not bordering on inexistent:

*My religion dictates my beach practices and what kind of beach environments I can be in. On the days when I feel like enjoying the beach, I favour the one that is the least liberal as its atmosphere would suit my religious beliefs. In the southern coastal city of Tyr, for example, there is a variety of beaches, ranging from the liberal to the conservative ones. Of course, I go to the less liberal beach that is favoured by some conservative beach goers, and it is just a few miles away from the quite liberal one, frequented by many tourists. We, conservative people, also like going to the Bayyada-Naqoura beaches because it is more conservative than other beach environments. Unlike other liberal environments, we do not see there alcohol drinkers or women wearing bikinis, if at all. Some conservative people prefer avoiding the sight of these liberal practices on the beach, especially families with kids. (Participant 25)*

The conservative atmosphere of these ‘Muslim-friendly’ beaches is far from being attractive to more ‘open’ beach goers whose bodily appearances might potentially offend some conservative beach goers and be considered as ‘alien’ to this so-called Islamic beach environment. In fact, according to this Muslim man, women who wear a ‘classic’ swimwear would rather stay away from these beaches as they would naturally feel that they do not belong, despite their right to access any beach in Lebanon:

*Of course, women wearing western style swimwear can come to our beaches. No one would bother them. But I do not think they would do it anyway, given the nature of our environment, which is quite conservative. They usually go to Tyr instead, which is a more open beach destination. (Participant 25)*

Funnily enough, the bikini wearers who decide to go to these ‘conservative’ beaches have to abide by some covert rules which are explained by this Muslim woman through this anecdotal story:

*Although this is a conservative beach destination, a few Christian women wearing revealing bathing suits come to Naqoura beaches but they choose empty spots which are away from the eyes of conservative beach goers out of respect for them and to avoid being harassed. They do not want to bother others and they do not want to be bothered. Once, two Christian women came here and chose a quite secluded beach zone, away from other beach goers. As they were sunbathing, a man came and sat next to them and started to annoy them with some words because they were wearing revealing bathing suits. He told these women to leave this spot but the women told him that he had to leave. This man does not have the right to ask these women to leave because they were here before him. What he did is unacceptable. A local man who witnessed the argument sided with these women because they chose this spot first. If he is bothered by the sight of naked*

*bodies, he can go somewhere else. If he was there first, and these women came and sat next to him, he would have the right to be offended and nicely tell them to choose a different spot. It is all about who comes first. Imagine there is a group of conservative beach goers on the beach and suddenly a woman wearing a bikini puts her towel just next to them to sunbathe. She would be told to choose a different beach zone or at least put something on her body, such as a beach dress, if she really wants to stay, because showing her body can be seen as offensive. We are open minded but local conservative traditions need to be taken into consideration. (Participant 32)*

Even though people displaying alternative beach lifestyles are welcome, this anecdote reveals the sort of pressure that they need to deal with which pushes them to wisely negotiate the environment they are in by choosing, for example, discrete spots on the beach that keep them away from eyes, otherwise they would probably face some resistance.

#### 6.5.4 Breaking Free from Religio-Cultural Constraints

The beach can be a place where religio-cultural constraints are broken down or re-played, depending on the choice of the beach destination. Indeed, while some beach goers find comfort and pleasure in ‘conservative’ beaches that are controlled by the weight of religio-cultural constraints, others prefer fleeing away from this ‘conservativeness’, seeking instead ‘open’ beaches that offer a kind of freedom for the bodies and minds in need of emancipation. For the latter, going to the more ‘western-style’ beaches, mostly found in the Christian-majority region, can be a bowl of fresh air, an act of resistance against intolerant religious minds. The words of this Muslim sunni man shed light on those who stay away from ‘dry’, restrictive beaches that mirror the conservativeness that is found within their community and prefer enjoying instead the ‘Dolce Vita’ atmosphere on other beaches where alcohol is unrestrictedly available and bodies can freely move on the sounds of trendy music:



*I like going to northern beaches in the Christian area, such as the ones located in Enfeh and Chekka. Unlike the beaches in my area, there is alcohol in northern beaches so it is more fun. I enjoy seeing women on the beach wearing bikinis although I know that I should not do it because seeing bikini wearers goes against my culture, tradition and religion as a Muslim. Given my open mindedness, I like the beach atmosphere to be 'open'. (Participant 5)*

These beach goers are after some 'forbidden' (*haram*) beach pleasures that cannot be experienced in their somehow conservative environment. Breaking free from the religio-cultural chains is driven by the need for emancipation, away from the questioning and suspicious eyes. In fact, having fun while keeping one's 'image' clean is quite tricky but feels like a must, in an environment where the '*halal*' and the '*haram*' are still important criteria for judging someone's behaviour and practices. However, this emancipation on the beach does not necessarily reflect a general open-minded attitude towards their own women as what some men allow themselves to do does not always match what they allow their partners or sisters to do. In other words, this open mindedness stops when it comes to women belonging to their community. Given the persistence of patriarchal beliefs, these moments of fun, these moral 'wanderings' cannot be tolerated for women who are generally more restricted in their beach choices:

*When it comes to my personal life, I mean what I can see or do, yes I am an open minded man but of course I wouldn't want my wife or sister to wear the bikini. I actually like the idea of the burkini for women in my community. That is our values. (Participant 5)*

Patriarchy is very much present in beach leisure. Values are sometimes put forward and sometimes ignored whenever it is convenient. Yet, this sort of 'double game' is also being played by some women who prefer jumping above some constraints and wear western-style

swimwear in 'safe' places where the risk of meeting family members or acquaintances is quite low or non-existent. Going to a resort seems to be a way for some veiled women to break free from the chains of religion and culture which dictate their lifestyles. Once inside a resort, the Islamic outfits are replaced with bikinis. A little anecdote has been shared by this resort owner:

*I will tell you something. You won't believe it. Once, a group of 5 veiled women came to my resort. So I told them 'please do not swim in your clothes. But I allow burkinis.' And they replied 'we have no problem'. After long minutes, I started looking around, trying to find these 5 women that I imagined would be wearing burkinis. But I couldn't find any burkini wearer. Guess what? I found these women wearing bikinis next to the pool. I was surprised! They melted in the crowd. Nobody paid attention to them. If they wore the burkini instead, eyes would be on them. They came veiled, wore bikinis, and left veiled.*  
(Participant 30)

Getting away from questioning and suspicious gaze on the beach is also what this young Muslim girl also prefers doing. She prefers avoiding the conservative beach environment, and favours instead some beaches located in Christian coastal towns where she can be herself and have peace of mind:

*I prefer going to northern resorts in Batroun area because I like the atmosphere there. There is beer, for those who want to drink. I do not drink myself but I like more the 'Christian' atmosphere which is more open. I feel more comfortable in this environment. Christians do not focus on what people are wearing. In the Muslim-majority region, people look at each other and focus on what the other is wearing. In the Christian region, you feel you are in a different world.* (Participant 9)

The importance of reputation and what people may say pushes these women to be extra careful regarding the choice of the beach where finger-pointers will not be encountered. Clearly, a day

out on the beach is an occasion to break free from the ‘*halal* bubble’ they live in, only to find themselves back to negotiating the conservativeness of their surrounding environment, once outside the resort.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Reporting voices from the ground is a sensitive process and feels like carrying something very precious, a treasure, that needs to be taken from point A to point B while avoiding as much as possible bumps on the road or outlaws. Not only does the researcher feel the responsibility of echoing the thoughts of people in a faithful way without much distortion to the essence of the message, but also feels the responsibility of connecting the real lived world ‘out there’ and the academia world. Analysing what has been heard in the Lebanese dialect and putting this analysis on paper using academic English words requires much rigour and is intellectually challenging. The amount of trust the informants put in me when sharing their opinions and views cannot be betrayed which explains my determination to report their voices with much respect and great accuracy. The beach has always been a sort of ‘escape’ for people but in the current Lebanese context, this takes on a very special meaning given the entanglement of different elements that are characteristic of Lebanon, namely communitarianism, national identity crisis, religious tensions, refugee crisis, rampant pollution, economic crisis, discrimination and the weight of religion and traditions. In fact, this chapter has explained how beach mobilities along the Lebanese coast is very closely linked to what people are actually ‘escaping’ (see below fig. 20). Is it about escaping the male gaze? Pollution? Refugees? ‘Show off’? Religio-cultural constraints? The buzz of modernity? Burqinis? Public display of affection? The choice of the beach destination depends on what is being escaped, not only on what is being sought. Another important point that has been put forward in this chapter is the way Lebanese beach goers make use of their bodies to mark their territories on the coast,

communicate their differentiated lifestyles, express their religious beliefs, break traditional moral codes, display emancipation and stand out from the crowd. These beach mobilities and bodily practices are not trivial; they convey messages that not only mirror lifestyles but also political stances, moral compasses, perceptions of the ‘Other’ and states of minds ranging from frustrations to nostalgia. The beaches in Lebanon are a sort of interface between powers which are negotiating this coast that is imbued with controversial meanings, akin to ships navigating troubled waters. Indeed, beaches have become ‘battlegrounds’ between these interlocking powers, including inter-clashes between beach goers and other stakeholders from the private and public sphere as well as intra-clashes among beach goers. Lastly, after having reported the findings in this chapter, the chapter coming next will offer a critical discussion of these findings, in light of the relevant literature.

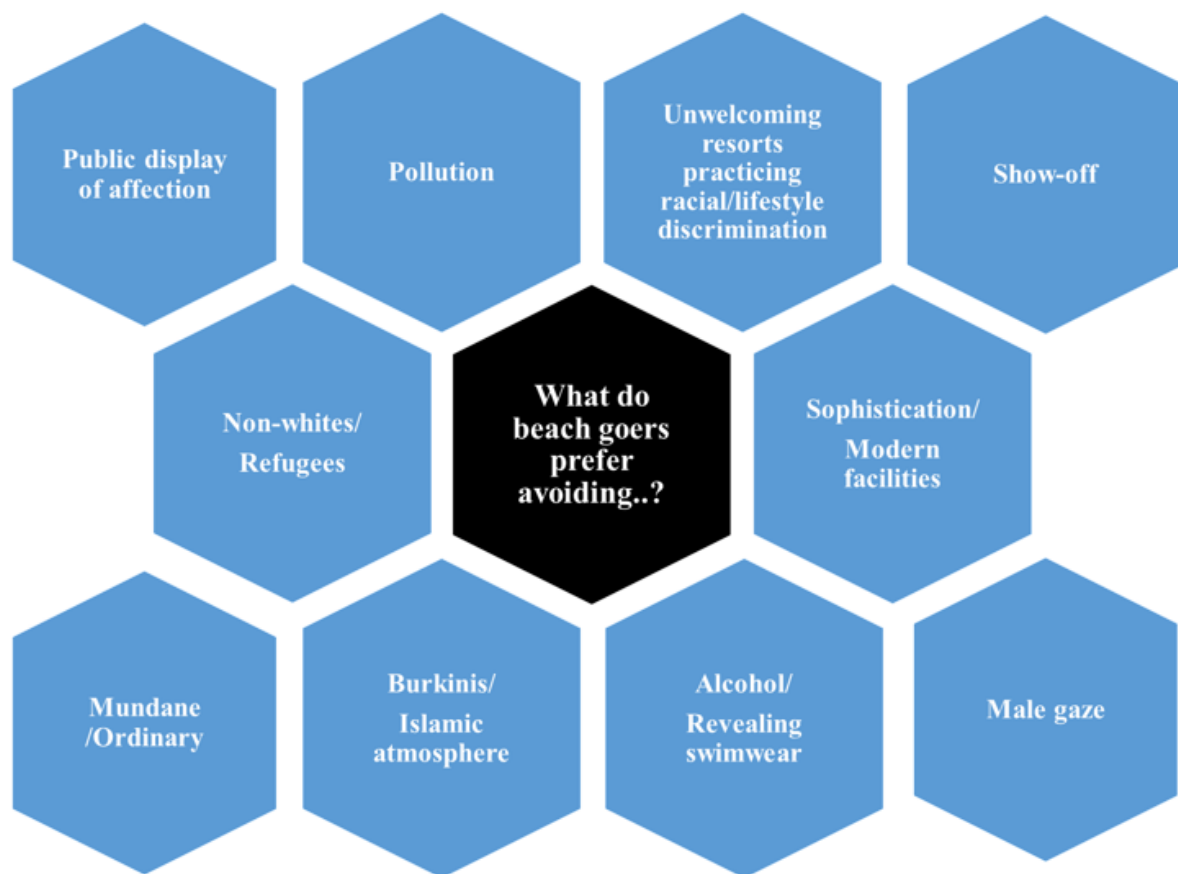


Fig. 20: What is being escaped on Lebanese shores?

## CHAPTER SEVEN – CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

---

*--- A good discussion is like a mini skirt, short enough to pertain interest and long enough to cover the subject (Anonymous)*

### **7.1. Introduction**

Scattered voices are like the scattered pieces of a puzzle which may not make much sense unless put together. Each piece of the puzzle has an element that contributes to the unveiling of the bigger picture and in the research world, it is through an in-depth critical analysis of each and every data taken from in-depth interviews and personal accounts that a comprehensive picture can be drawn which marks the success of a study undertaken by the researcher. Putting it differently, the bigger message delivered by all these voices transcends the various messages delivered by each informant. In fact, this section is not a simple summary of my research findings; it goes beyond the themes that have been unveiled during the data analysis process as the analysis is taken to a greater level of understanding of the complexities of Lebanon as a country, which cannot be dissociated from its tumultuous past, its current unstable situation, and its uncertain future. Discussion is about interpreting findings, about delving into the meaning, importance and relevance of what was found. To emphasise the importance of relationships and correlations, the story below may be told:

A science teacher set up a simple experiment to show her class the danger of alcohol. She set up two glasses, one containing water, the other containing gin. Into each she dropped a worm. The worm in the water swam merrily around. The worm in the gin quickly died. “what does this experiment prove?” she asked. Little Johnny from the back row piped up: “it proves that if you drink gin you won’t have worms (cited in Day and Gastel, 2006).

However, in showing the relationships between data, the researcher does not need to reach cosmic conclusions; seldom will a researcher be able to illuminate the whole social phenomena therefore more often, the best one can do is shine a spotlight on one area of it. This is expressed by Sir Richard Burton in *The Kasidah*:

*All Faith is false, all Faith is true;  
Truth is the shattered mirror strown  
In myriad bits; while each believes  
His little bit the whole to own.  
(cited in Day and Castel, 2006:78)*

My findings are a little piece of the mirror.

## **7.2 How do My Beach Leisure Experiences Relate to *Theirs*?**

Along with wearing the ‘researcher’ hat, I am first and foremost a Lebanese citizen. Therefore, dissociating myself from the study did not make much sense to me and felt like I was silencing the voice inside me. Why should I silence it? I could not see a good reason to do so as the close connection between the researcher and the study has already been explained in the methodology chapter. I am not ‘outside’ the study; I am part of it. Therefore, adding my own voice as a Lebanese citizen into the mix felt like a natural thing to do. Speaking up does not in any way affect my ethical way of doing research and the trustworthiness of data collected through in-depth interviews in Lebanon. Of course, my voice does not lessen the importance of theirs. And vice versa. Evidently, the beach is experienced differently by beach goers. Yet, whilst some answers provided by interviewees are not representative of my way of perceiving beach leisure in Lebanon and are miles away from the kind of answers I would have offered if I was the one interviewed, other spoken words have echoed what I had inside my mind. In fact, some beach experiences described by participants have rung a bell for me, making me feel that

sharing my own ‘voice’ would be enriching to the reader as it would provide some useful clarifications in that respect. Of course, I kept a neutral face and tone during interviews, not wanting to reveal what I thought of the informants’ statements and whether I agreed with them or not, but my thoughts were bubbling up inside of me, especially when I heard shocking statements or recalled my own beach experiences. Naturally, some criticism that has been expressed by some informants – whether about burkinis, public display of affection, show off performances or ladies-only resorts - may not sound ‘legitimate’ to those who do not feel the same way. However, as far as I am concerned, I share the concerns of those who stressed the risk of having a higher level of communitarianism due to an increasing visibility of differentiated beach leisure lifestyles imbued with religious significance, which may possibly fuel even more resentment between Lebanese people belonging to different communities.

As a matter of fact, as I am writing this section, I am realising the difficulty of sharing a single ‘voice’ as I can actually hear several ‘voices’ within me. When it comes to sensitive topics with some politico-religious elements in them, there is a possibility of having a ‘voice within a voice’. Without sounding too philosophical, it is about having a ‘dominant’ voice, rather than a single voice, which is silencing other voices and keeping them in check. In other words, it feels like there is an ‘active’ voice that dominates the other passive ones by putting them in idle mode. Nonetheless, this can be disrupted; a terrorist attack, a political statement, a refugee crisis, the outbreak of war, an argument with a refugee, a discussion with a friend, a controversial tweet from a politician or a shocking picture posted on Facebook can sort of awaken or ‘reactivate’ those other ‘weak’ voices, which we have been trying to ignore or not hear, akin to opinion polls which keep changing with great flexibility as a response to rapidly changing situations. In fact, elastic shifts of opinion are part of our everyday lives. Our minds are not static; they keep evolving and that is part of human nature. For example, my own sentiments about burkinis have shifted from rejection to acceptance but I am fully aware that

my opinion may change once again as the old 'rejection' sentiment is not dead, but rather weaker than the 'acceptance' one. To make things clearer, my perception of beach leisure in Lebanon has been strongly impacted by my childhood upbringing, by what my parents/grandparents told me about the Muslim community, by the stories I heard about the bloody civil war, by the socio-cultural, religious and political context in Lebanon as well as by some worldwide events that hit my mind including but not limited to the burkini controversy in France that sparked heated debates around the world.

My opinion is more volatile than I thought it was. What I used to think before about beach leisure in Lebanon is nowhere close to my current thoughts. I noticed that during periods of relative calm and stability between Christian and Muslim communities in Lebanon, my open mindedness is greater than my fears and concerns. Yet, when community tensions are running high, my sentiments towards religious practices on the beach are more negative than positive. What I am saying is that this fluidity of thought is not only found in me but also, quite possibly, in several people I have interviewed in Lebanon whose answers may not remain the same, weeks, months or years following the interviews, as factors, situations and perceptions can change. Moreover, the power of political correctness and its influence on our minds cannot be overstated. I cannot but remember the number of times I have felt the weight of political correctness on my shoulders whenever I had intolerant thoughts and/or felt negative emotions towards those who looked or acted too conservative or too liberal to my taste. However, the mainstream discourse of respect and tolerance of others' lifestyles constantly reminds me that 'I should not be thinking or feeling that way', making me question my own feelings and perception of the situation. I have had to prevent my fears and concerns from taking hold of me by burying those 'unpolitically correct' voices deep inside myself, and only allowing the acceptable and respectable 'voice' to be the dominant one. In short, my thoughts keep being influenced by both 'internal' forces that are found within the self (moral values, memories,



experiences, etc.) and ‘external’ forces including political correctness and worldwide/national events whose impact are far from negligible. During interviews, I was fully aware of the fact that this could possibly be the case of any informant I had in front of me. These ‘forces’ can make our thoughts ‘mobile’, and that is fine as I am dealing with human beings, not stones.

### **7.3 Territorial Thinking and Otherness: Stereotyped, Gendered and Racialised Lebanese Beaches**

Judging the other is what many human beings excel at doing. Since time immemorial, people have been raising eyebrows at practices they find ‘weird’, ‘uncommon’, ‘different’. We are good at raising plenty of questions about how ‘others’ look, eat, pray, think, behave, interact....in short, live. The practices on the beach are no exception to the rule; they are also under scrutiny. Montaigne once said that “one calls barbarism whatever he is not accustomed to”. Replacing the term ‘barbarism’ with ‘unmodern’, the same idea can be applied to what is happening on Lebanese beaches where alternative swimsuits such as ‘burkinis’ - which defy standard western beach practices - are frowned upon and regarded as unmodern, as foreign to the Lebanese culture. The jargon used by participants to describe those wearing burkinis or those going to ladies-only resorts is quite similar to the one used by some French thinkers describing the ‘savage’ or British writers describing the Arab whose books are filled with criticism against practices which are viewed as ‘uncivilised’. Hundreds of years have passed since the literary works about the Arabs or the Savage Tribes, but criticism of the ‘Other’ lifestyle is still very much present. My findings have revealed the extent to which stereotyped images of the ‘Other’ – built on ideas of ‘wrong’ and ‘right’, ‘normal’ and ‘strange’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ – are controlling many minds in Lebanon therefore contributing to the processes of spatial control and territorialisation of beach leisure. Indeed, the beach in Lebanon now looks like a ‘leopard’s skin’ with a number of women-only territories, ‘dry’ territories, ‘no burkini’

territories, adult-only territories, and 'white bodies' territories that have mushroomed along the Lebanese coast, making the beach more synonymous with exclusion than inclusion. To put it differently, the Lebanese coast has become an eclectic mix of beaches where different sorts of segregation can be found: women are separated from men, adults from children, white bodies from black bodies, locals from refugees, bikinis from burqinis, alcohol drinkers from non-alcohol drinkers, etc.

Once again, the 'egalitarian image' of beaches is confronted by findings which echo, at least to some extent, similar sexualised, gendered, classed and racialised stories that took place on other beaches (Burdsey, 2016; Henshall Momsen, 2005). Yet, although various forms of discrimination - gendered, racial, etc. - have been a common practice on beaches around the world, I have not yet come across studies that pointed out all these more or less veiled discriminatory practices happening at once along the shores of one country. Lebanon may be the only example to date of such a thing which can be explained by its own characteristics and specificities not found anywhere else. Interestingly, the intricacies of Lebanese politics and common discrimination issues are being (re)produced on these coastal territories. However, while some beaches are explicitly segregated in terms of gender and age (women-only resorts/adults-only resorts), other beaches have been relying on more or less subtle regulations and unspoken rules to select their customers according to their skin colour, class, and appearance and drinking preferences, i.e. whether they want to drink alcoholic beverages or not, which is used as a way to mask their racist abuse and bypass critics over discrimination and segregation. These under-the-table shenanigans have made beaches a fertile ground for intolerance and exclusion, whether *de jure* or *de facto* and made navigating the maze of discrimination on beaches quite tricky and challenging.

On a different note, communitarianism and pluralistic beach leisure lifestyles have shaken the very concept of territory. For example, the southern region, which is known for being more conservative than other regions, is made up of discontinuous territories with beaches having a quite liberal atmosphere. Also, on the very same beach one can find two very different beach environments, western-liberal and Islamic-conservative, juxtaposing each other. In short, the territoriality of beach leisure in Lebanon illustrates quite well the ‘territorial thinking’ of the Lebanese communities and their deep-rooted divisions, which go back at least to the civil war. In fact, these discriminatory beach practices are part of a ‘cold war’ happening between Lebanese communities as well as between Lebanese and some foreigners; a sort of fight that seems to be taking place on our beaches, fuelled by some socially-constructed meanings that are deeply-rooted in minds. Complex and nuanced interactions of power are enacted to control seaside spaces which have been turned into ‘exclusionary zones’ in which particular lifestyles and values are being performed and expressed through differentiated practices. Along with being used as ‘stages’ for performing certain forms of identity and ideology, Lebanese beaches are also ‘platforms’ used for contesting and expressing fear, resentment and not-so-politically-correct beliefs towards any ‘Other’ who bothers the self. However, on a more positive note, some beaches are, on the contrary, fighting this spatialisation of stereotyped images by staying away from all kinds of discrimination that insult human dignity.

### 7.3.1 Welcomed/Unwelcomed Bodies: The Question of Whiteness and Blackness on the Beach

Knowingly or unknowingly, some beach goers are embodying Othering discourses while dealing with more or less veiled segregation on some Lebanese beaches and navigating the intricacies of beach leisure on Lebanese shores. While South African and American beaches were openly racist during the racial segregation years (Burdsey, 2016), the Lebanese ones are witnesses of covert racism, one that is disguised, subtle and maybe less offensive to the ones

who are subject to it. Indeed, unlike other countries where racial intolerance was clearly stated in black and white on beach signposts, the one experienced in Lebanon by some refugees and housemaids is not clearly visible to the naked eye at first glance. Although racism on beaches has already been tackled by a number of scholars, what is quite interesting in this study is how black bodies are given different meanings, depending on whether they are found in the sea or in a pool. Indeed, while housemaids are allowed to enjoy the pleasures of the sea, some resorts are still restricting their access to their pools for no logical reason other than the colour of their skin. Unlike the sea which is spacious and always 'in movement', pools are closed spaces, making some beach goers uncomfortable with the idea of sharing this space with housemaids. Having much space and seeing water moving around, like in the sea, seems to offer a sort of comfort and peace of mind to those who seem to be associating 'water movement' with purification of the space, making racist minds less wary of these unwelcomed bodies. Criticism of the 'Other' has moved away from a simplistic East-vs-West kind of clash. This study has shown that the clash has become more of a local one, within Arab societies, and in this case the Lebanese one, where some people are adopting a sort of 'orientalist' lens towards others belonging to the same nation and looking down at their practices.

### 7.3.2 Ladies-Only Resorts, Burkinis and the ‘Fifty Shades’ of Modernity and Feminism

Cultures are not frozen in time; they are ‘on the move’ in a world where the mobility of ideas, lifestyles and practices is commonplace. For example, the burkini, which was created in Australia, has reached Lebanese shores and has become an integral part of our beach leisure landscape thanks to these kind of mobilities between countries. Yet, ‘foreign’ things, whether ideas or practices, are not always understood, accepted, and welcomed with open arms by everyone. In fact, this fieldwork made me interact with some self-pronounced guardians of the ‘Lebanese culture’ temple who are inhabited by very specific ideas of what is wrong and right, what belongs and does not belong to Lebanon. Their very narrow view of what constitutes ‘Lebaneseness’ makes them quite sceptical of these ‘alternative’ beach practices at best, judgmental at worst. This situation echoes the controversies in France around some so-called Islamic beach practices which have reignited debates around ‘Frenchness’ (Sommier, 2019). To make matters even more complex, feminism has been thrown into the debate, with questions relating to the female body and women’s rights. The interviews in this study have put into the spotlight the lack of agreements over what gender equality means and how women should enjoy beach leisure; this time from the perspective of Lebanese people. The variety of opinions found in this study about burkinis and ladies-only resorts have restated the subjectivity of women’s rights as a concept, reminding us of the ‘fifty shades’ of feminism which is far from offering us a clear-cut view of what is best for women. In fact, the burkini seems to be challenging the hegemonic western discourse of human rights. In the tradition of some practices - genital mutilation, the atrophied feet of Chinese women over the centuries (that is no longer practised) or of the neck or the lips of certain African women – that are looked down upon, burkini wearing seems to be another practice which make some people shudder and raise their eyebrows, to use the terms of Soler (2014).

In terms of beach practices, there are no black-and-white-kind-of answers, but rather a perspective, a way of thinking, which may earn the support of some defenders of women rights while arousing consternation among other defenders of the same cause. When looking at old and contemporary feminist works, one cannot but notice the lack of consensus and the paradoxical views over how the female body is experienced as well as the practices of women in society. Interestingly, this lack of agreement is also found on Lebanese beaches, with burkinis and gender-segregated beaches being regarded by some as ‘regressive’ towards women while being considered as ‘emancipatory’ beach leisure practices by others. As if things were not complex enough, some people found the burkini to be a symbol of women’s emancipation while badly judging gender-segregated beaches, or vice versa. More specifically, confining female bodies to ‘women’s beaches’, away from the male gaze, is another example of a close interrelationship between gender, leisure and space which has been tackled by other scholars (Aitchison, 2003; Cresswell and Priya Uteng, 2008; Enloe, 2014). The concept of gender segregation on the beach is still far from achieving consensus as it is perceived as a symbol of patriarchy, thereby perpetrating unbalanced power relations between men and women within societies, including the leisure sphere. Women-only beaches in Lebanon, which are very limited in number comparing to mixed beaches, illustrate quite well the idea defended by some feminists of women being like their ‘passive’ eggs while men are like their ‘active’ sperm which freely move around (Plante, 2015).

Yet, some women, unlike others, seem to be enjoying this ‘confinement’, rather than seeing it as degrading and as an insult to their human dignity, which challenges the belief that there is ‘one’ way of defending women’s rights. There are many ways of doing so, and this study has revealed how women’s preferences, in this case female beach goers, can be met in various ways – some of which can be as perplexing as gender segregation. Women are different, so are their needs and preferences, and sometimes, enjoying the beach away from the male gaze is a need

and a preference which echoes some other gendered leisure concepts such as the ladies-only island in Finland (Gold, 2018). The democratisation of leisure and women empowerment within the leisure sphere can take different forms and gender segregation, quite surprisingly, seems to be contributing towards this goal. Women-only beaches in Lebanon concurs with other research on ‘spatialised feminism’ (Aitchison, 2003) which reminds us how gendered leisure practices can be simultaneously, and paradoxically, liberatory and coercive (Cresswell and Priya Uteng, 2008). On a different note, far from its original purpose which is to suit the needs of conservative women seeking privacy, ladies-only resorts are also being experienced nowadays as ‘cultural’ factories where ‘natural’ bodies are transformed into civilised, socialised, modern bodies (Soler, 2014; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995) - tanned, shaved and toned - that make them fit with the stereotyped idea of modernity and how a beach body should look in mixed beaches, perpetuating the disciplinary forces that act on ‘docile bodies’, as Foucault calls them, which are texts on which dominant beach leisure norms are inscribed. Indeed, keeping these norms in their minds, some women go to these women-only beaches with the idea of ‘normalising’ their bodies, i.e. making them tanned, before going to mixed beaches that are filled with inspecting gazes. In fact, these practices illustrate quite well this individual self-surveillance, this self-correction to norms which Foucault has stressed in his various works on the forces that dominate the body.

With the invention of this so-called ‘modest’ swimsuit by an Australian woman, concealing bodies on the beach, which used to be a common practice in Australia with its old bathing ordinances (Metusela and Waitt, 2012) and which people considered as being of ‘another age’, seems to be making a strong ‘come back’ that has not gone unnoticed. However, times have changed, making the old and the contemporary contexts far from being the same; while covering female bodies used to be the norm on the beach, the ‘etiquette’ to follow, uncovering the female body is nowadays being considered as the modern-day norm, which makes the

burkini an invention that goes against the modern beach etiquette, the modern beach landscape that cannot but be associated with the image of the tanned, nearly-naked female body. Here is the paradox: old rules against uncovered bodies have been replaced by some resort rules against covered bodies. This study in Lebanon has shown that these resort rules against burkinis are more or less visible, with burkini wearers experiencing some sort of veiled discrimination on some Lebanese beaches. Clearly, the female body is always facing restrictive rules of various kinds – sometimes to keep it covered, and sometimes to keep it uncovered – which was pointed out by a number of feminists, such as Josephine Butler and Simone de Beauvoir, who criticised this obsession with and ‘control’ over women’s bodies (Bordo, 2003; Sayers, 2016). On a more general note, the invention of the burkini and the development of ladies-only resorts seems to have contributed to the democratisation of beach leisure for women, and thus furthering the emancipation of women, which may seem paradoxical to the dominant belief that women can only experience freedom and emancipation by revealing their bodies and by sharing the same beach with men. In the same line of thought as Thomas Cook who realised the business potential of respectable travel for women and offered women the possibility to travel by train without being accompanied by a male (Enloe, 2014), owners of ladies-only resorts in Lebanon realised the potential of respectable beach leisure for women. Although concepts are different, the idea is the same – offering the possibility for women to enjoy leisure activities in a comfortable way.

#### **7.4 Hybridity and Fluidity of Beach Leisure in Lebanon**

Following in the footsteps of other studies, my findings have stressed the complexities found within a society that are the fruit of this liquid world which is going against rigidity and homogeneity. Interestingly, the mobility of lifestyles and practices around the world can make some nations closer to each other, while encouraging differentiation between people of the



same nation. When foreign practices make their ways into our cultural fabric, they disrupt lifestyles and behaviour patterns, or in other words, they disrupt what we have been used to see in our societies, whether in the streets or on the beach. In fact, hybridity and fluidity have been playing an important role in modernising the beach leisure scene in Lebanon. This hybrid and fluid beach culture seems to be the natural result of a multiple, complex, fast-moving, ambiguous, fuzzy, plastic, uncertain, paradoxical, even chaotic world, to repeat the words of Bauman (2012). Interestingly, this fluidity and constant change of our world have been beautifully captured by Ovid, the great Roman poet, in his *Magnum Opus* poem *Metamorphoses*, written about 2000 years ago:

*All things are fluid; every image forms,  
Wandering through change. Time is itself a river  
In constant movement, and the hours flow by  
Like water, wave on wave, pursued, pursuing,  
Forever fugitive, forever new.  
That which has been, is not; that which was not,  
Begins to be; motion and moment always  
In the process of renewal...  
Not even the so-called elements are constant...  
Nothing remains the same; the great renewer,  
Nature, makes form from form, and, oh believe me  
That nothing ever dies...*

(An extract from *Metamorphoses*)

More specifically, the fluidity of time, space and place as well as the merging of various elements from different cultural contexts and discourses renders boundaries between ‘local’ and ‘global’, ‘before’ and ‘now’, ‘this’ and ‘that’ almost transparent, resulting in plural possibilities and complex overlays which can create hybridised and fluid beach environments and beach leisure lifestyles which can hardly be categorised into clearly defined lifestyles. In other words, hybridity and fluidity have birthed a beach scene where beach environments as well as beach practices are being (re)defined and (re)negotiated, pushing people to combine eclectic elements in their own Lebanese way and (re)think meanings given to places, resulting in concepts - such as modesty, feminism, emancipation - being stretched and being embodied differently by beach goers along Lebanese shores.

#### 7.4.1 Changing Lebanese beaches and Fluid Beach Practices

Staying on the beach leisure map requires flexibility, and the ability to negotiate the fluidity of expectations, fleeting trends and the ephemeral attractiveness of a beach destination which are characteristics of the beach leisure field. Some Lebanese beach destinations have been acting like ‘chameleons’, in the same way as other beach destinations around the Mediterranean (Hazbun, 2008). While chameleons can change colour to match their environment or in response to temperature and mood, beaches can reinvent themselves in response to trends and customers’ needs. What happened to Ayia Napa – a Cypriot beach destination which lost its ‘cool’ status (Sharpley, 2004) – can be considered similar to what is happening to some sophisticated, ‘posh’ Lebanese beaches – many of which are located in the Beirut-Jounieh area - which are struggling to keep their popularity among beach goers who are increasingly seeking simplicity and wanting to stay away from ‘show off’ performances on beaches. The ‘attractive’ status is mobile; it can easily move from one beach to another without notice, challenging beach destinations to constantly find ways to remain ‘on the map’, to remain alive.

However, as we have seen in this study, not all the beaches play by the ‘remain-forever-attractive rule’; they are what I call ‘retro beaches’ which stay away from ‘changing trends’ and sophistication, mainly relying on the loyalty of their customers for their survival. These beaches defy time and trends, challenging the idea that following what is trendy is an inevitable survival strategy. Quite surprisingly, this ‘liquid modernity’ era, where things neither fix space nor bind time, seems to have benefited these retro beaches as many people are harking back to the joys of relative stability and of returning to simplicity, to origins, as a way to distract themselves from the uncertainty of the present and plasticity of our world (Bauman, 2012). Liquid times have ignited stirrings of yearning for a time where things were better or simpler or more familiar. In these uncertain times, “nostalgia for rosier days seems to be driving a consumer appetite for retro products and design” (Howard, cited in Wilson, 2005:158), making them maintain a sense of stability and foster a sense of continuity across time. However, this return to the old resorts and natural beach settings does not mean that these places are static, stuck ‘outside’ modernity. As a matter of fact, retro resorts have embraced modernity by re-inventing themselves while keeping the charm of the heyday period in Lebanon. In other words, they have embraced modernity, differently. The title of a magazine article dedicated to ‘Sporting Club’, a retro resort in Lebanon, confirms the fluidity of such places: *Sporting Club: modernisation while keeping the charm of yesteryear* (Obringer, 2019). The question is not about whether, or not, such beach destinations are hit by the forces of modernisation, but rather how these forces are being managed and incorporated within the very essence of such places. There is, it would seem therefore, a rather delicate balance to strike in being part of the modern world while attracting beach goers who want to disconnect from it, at least for a day.

#### 7.4.2 Shifting Meanings Across Diverse Temporal and Spatial Scales

In Lebanon, the coast has long fired the popular imagination and is therefore imbued with dissimilar meanings that evolve with time. Far from only being places of pleasure, the Lebanese beaches hold much symbolic, religious and political significance to the Lebanese people. These meanings are closely linked to our imagined geographies, to the ideas and images we have in our minds of places which can evoke cognitive, physiological, and/or behavioural consequences; this in turn impacts our beach mobilities and bodily practices. Yet, meanings are not static; they are also fluid, 'on the move', as they are subject to the forces of time, geopolitics, economy, demography and socio-cultural elements of an ever-changing Lebanese society. The Beirut coast, for example, used to be a very popular beach destination among Lebanese beach goers and international jet setters but it is now being associated with beach pollution, 'show off' performances, and the loss of the very essence of beach leisure, making it lose a part of its attractiveness. Indeed, with the exception of some retro resorts which somehow kept their 'simple' atmosphere, many Beirut resorts have become synonymous with fakeness and 'show off' in the minds of many, making these people look beyond the Beirut beach destinations and favour other more authentic, simpler beach settings located down south or up north. Our mental representations of beach destinations keep being re-structured, re-adjusted, resulting in differing meanings across generations, communities, stakeholders, families, and individuals and overlapping meanings, superimposed one on another - contemporary meanings coming on top of old ones.

#### 7.4.3 Overlapping Meanings of Gendered and 'Religioused' Beach Practices

Some answers given by the regular customers of ladies-only resorts I have had the pleasure to interview are similar to the thought-provoking article written by Sarah Gauch about the ladies-only resorts in Egypt. Gauch explains that these resorts are considered as places for comfort and peace of mind where women are allowed to be themselves on the beach like a 'fish in the

water' (Gauch, 2006). However, while some have expressed their concerns over possible excesses and deviations and questioned the 'islamicity' of such resorts, considering them as another form of 'decadence' (IOL, 2008) within which some sort of decadent 'spectacle' is performed by women, my findings have highlighted a different dimension that is not found in other works: the question of lesbianism. Indeed, in the minds of some participants, ladies-only resorts are more associated with 'lesbians' than with 'conservative believers', given the 'ladies-can-do-whatever-they-want' kind of atmosphere which can provide fertile ground for lesbianism and encourage a 'coming out' for lesbian women. In terms of 'halalness' of the beaches, my study pointed out the shortcomings of ladies-only resorts in providing a 100% 'halal' atmosphere. It complements the findings of other studies which have pointed out the 'un-halalness' of many other so-called halal tourism products in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries (El-Gohary, 2015) as well as the lack of agreements over what should be considered as 'halal', in other words Muslim-friendly, in the leisure and tourism sphere (Carboni and Idrissi Janati, 2016; Hashem, 2016). Chris Nader, the vice president of Muslim-friendly Shaza Hotels, once said "what is halal for one investor could be different for another" (cited in Hashem, 2016); the same line of thinking holds true for customers of ladies-only resorts who also have different views of how a Muslim-friendly beach should look, knowing that the clientele is not homogeneous but rather belongs to different religious backgrounds.

Interestingly, whereas other scholars explained why halal tourism products can be attractive to non-Muslims seeking well-being, family friendliness, cultural appreciation or a health-conscious lifestyle (El-Gohary, 2016; Stephenson, 2014; Hashem, 2016; Thomson Reuters/Dinar Standard, 2016), my study provides more reasons why some non-religious women favour ladies-only resorts such as, for example, the need to enjoy the beach during the menstrual period or perfect the body tan, away from men. As such, my doctoral research puts the well-known divide between proponents and opponents of ladies-only resorts and burkinis

into a different perspective by showing that the question goes well beyond the ‘halalisation’ of shores (Girit, 2014; Thomson Reuters/DinarStandard, 2016). For some, it is really not so much a matter of faith as of women’s desires and preferences therefore dragging the debate into women’s discourses. Indeed, by attacking the concepts of ladies-only resorts and/or burkinis, it is not only pious Muslims and their ‘alternative’ lifestyles who are attacked, but also women and their privacy needs. Arguably, the label ‘Muslim-friendly’ can be also seen as ‘women-friendly’, which reveals the hybridity and fluidity that are characteristics of beach leisure practices and the complex overlapping meanings of gendered and ‘religiused’ beach practices. On a more general note, it was found that Lebanese beaches are also ‘empowering places’ that are being used by beach goers to resist dominant, oppressive social mores and defy societal pressure, akin to other beaches in Tunisia, Algeria or even Gaza Strip (Ghanmi, 2017; Hazbun, 2010; Junki, 2006). Indeed, wearing a burkini, displaying a bikini, or simply going to the beach is a form of contestation, a form of resistance, which is similar to resisting an oppressive enemy occupying our land.

### **7.5 Understanding Lebanon’s Particularities and Complexities Through Beach Leisure**

Our hybrid beach leisure lifestyles are the mirror of our complex, hybrid Lebanese society that is swept by the winds of diverse social and cultural influences and caught between the forces of Westernisation, Islamisation, localisation and hybridisation, resulting in mashed up lifestyle practices that do not make a homogeneous culture when taken as a whole. Indeed, the differentiated beach leisure practices reflect the mosaic-like Lebanese society and illustrate the story of our cultural mixing, of our ‘mashup’, hybridised Lebanese culture that is characteristic of the fluidity of modern times. Far from being the result of a single process, this hybridisation is a complex mixture of processes which involve a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the culture of today and the culture of yesteryears and between various lifestyles that

surpass or exceed our nation state. Understanding the dynamics within our Lebanese beaches opens the door to a better understanding of Lebanon. Findings have revealed that behind the smiley faces of beach goers and that peaceful beach scenery we have in mind lie frustrations, community tensions, suspicions, questionable concerns and unsuspected intentions that are not visible to the eye. Digging deeper into the visible practices of beach goers has proven to be a key part in unveiling an important side of beach leisure and shedding light on invisible, not-so-obvious elements of the beach leisure scene, akin to revealing the dark side of a coin. Beaches are spaces of 'silent' expression; they speak silently, telling us about the intensity of the forces at play as well as what we need to know about the Lebanese society. Far from the *dolce vita* atmosphere, beaches are a sort of 'battleground' between communities, with people on each side feeling the need to mark their 'territories' on the Lebanese coast or in other words, the beaches that they consider as 'theirs', through the display of differentiated bodily practices.

Moreover, finding discrimination and racism on beaches is just another reminder that we are indeed in Lebanon. Of course, not every single Lebanese person has a natural inclination to racist practices, but this study has highlighted the extent of this serious societal problem which is not only experienced inside houses, restaurants and the like but also, unfortunately, on the shores of Lebanon. In fact, overlooking racial discrimination towards housemaids and some African/Arab foreigners has always been a Lebanese speciality. Political correctness to one side, some Lebanese beach goers consider housemaids as 'second class' residents whose bodies are to be kept away from the pools, so that bodies do not mix in the water. In the mental imagery, housemaid bodies are linked to 'diseases' and uncleanness. When it comes to intolerance towards some Arab refugees, the situation is not really any rosier; the deceitful way they are being kept away from some beaches is a simple reflection of this uneven balance of power between Lebanese residents and our complicated relation to the Other. On a different note, despite all the calls from politico-religious leaders for open mindedness and acceptance

of differences that sound like a broken record, unease towards some religious markers, such as burkinis, is still part of the mindset of those who still have not raised themselves above community tensions and who impute questionable motives to burkini wearers who are thought to be wanting to ‘visually colonize’ the beaches. Behind these uneasy feelings is the fear of being ‘dominated’ by conservative Muslims in a country where the demographic imbalance between Christians and Muslims and the growing influence of political Islam are very much a sensitive matter. Witnessing burkinis on beaches located in Christian-majority regions is perceived as a ‘cultural invasion’, as an affront to our own way of dressing, our lifestyle. Second guessing the intentions of other communities and thinking in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, is a very Lebanese thing which reinforces divisions and is a constant threat to our national cohesion. Beyond beaches, the burkini issue is just another example of the malaise affecting a number of Lebanese who look at things through the lens of communitarianism hence demystifying the ‘living together’ discourse which is rather a ‘living side by side’ kind of society. In short, what is happening on our Lebanese beaches is a bitter reminder of our everyday reality that seems to have fallen into the trap of ‘normality’.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Discussing findings feels like ‘carpet weaving’ which requires much precision, with the interlacing threads representing the correlations, the relationships between the findings. Findings are not of much value if not critically discussed, by making correlations, finding relationships, highlighting potential gaps and situating these findings within the body of literature. In this chapter, an in-depth critical discussion is offered of how my own voice, as a Lebanese beach goer, relates to the voices of other locals in Lebanon, of the complex interrelationship between constructed representations of the ‘Other’, geographic imaginaries and beach leisure dynamics as well as the ways hybridity and fluidity are being experienced on



beaches, leading the reader towards a greater understanding of how these beach leisure dynamics and lifestyles are demonstrating the complexities and particularities of the Lebanese socio-cultural fabric. More specifically, the findings have been discussed in terms of socially-constructed notions of 'Lebaneseness' and the 'Other' - a 'burkini wearer', a 'non-conservative drinker', a 'classic bathing suit wearer', a 'woman-only beach customer', a 'housemaid', a 'refugee', etc. - which are inscribed through bodies. In fact, beach dynamics are quite complex as they can seem to be strengthening some complex realities found within a Lebanese society that is infested with racism, intolerance, patriarchal beliefs, communitarianism, as well as struggling with how to define itself and how to understand 'Lebanese-ness' while paradoxically challenging, to some extent, the social order, whether religious beliefs or cultural norms, as well as destabilising some 'pillars' holding some stereotypical meanings. In short, the findings have reinforced the perception of beaches as dynamic, liminal, playful places that can have simultaneously qualities of 'anywhere-ness' and 'somewhere-ness', with Lebanese beaches being a good example of this glocalness which embraces both global and local specificities that are only found in Lebanon. The final chapter will be a sort of recapitulation of the key stepping stones on which I have built my PhD research, including literature review, research design, fieldwork findings, discussion, accompanied by my personal reflections and suggestions.

## CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSIONS

---

*--- I read what I write over and over and make corrections and improvements, until I reach the conclusion that the material deserves to stand on its own (Siegfried Lenz)*

### 8.1 Introduction

Reaching a conclusion is what is expected from a researcher. It is part of the ‘job’, an essential element of the research journey although conclusions, I believe, do not truly conclude studies which still have the potential to deliver more information and say more than what has been already said. As in movies, some endings are better left inconclusive. Of course, this conclusion chapter does by no means end all the thinking and questioning about the research topic. As I am writing this chapter I cannot but smile as I remember the very first day I started this PhD journey with a mind full of curiosity, excitement and thoughts. Time flies and here I am reaching the finish line; a moment I have been dreaming of and been waiting to reach for long years. This conclusion, although logical, should not stop readers from drawing their own conclusions as interpreting interview and autoethnographic data is, more often than not, a matter of perspective. I respect differences in outcomes for they make the research world all the more interesting and intriguing. Qualitative research is ‘liquid’. Voices of people can change, so are conclusions. What I was told today by informants may not be repeated to another researcher a few years later. To put it in more straightforward terms, findings are not static; what is true now is not necessarily true tomorrow. In one sense, research is like the beach, a shifting terrain where land (logic/data) and water (emotions/perspectives) meet, a liminal space caught in the double bind of simultaneously writing and erasing, or in other words, constantly questioning and editing what has been written by others. That is the essence of research. In this chapter, research findings have been revisited and summarised in light of my initial research aims and objectives. Then, my contribution to knowledge is specified, with a focus on some ‘zones of shade’ in the beach leisure field that have been brightened thanks to this study. What

follows is a reflection on the limitations of this research and the related avenues of work that could be developed in the future before offering my final thoughts.

## **8.2 Revisiting the Research Findings**

The following research question - *How are beach leisure dynamics on Lebanese shores reflecting the complexities, particularities and intricacies of the Lebanese socio-cultural fabric?* - is at the heart of this study, upon which the research findings were developed. In fact, this research question has been acting like the ‘North Star’, pointing me in the right direction during data collection and analysis and guiding my study towards these interesting findings that cross several disciplines and transcend conceptual dichotomies. In more concrete terms, this study has foregrounded the complex “geometries of power” on the beach, has lifted the lid on the sexual, gendered, classed, racialised and lifestyle dynamics happening in seaside environments wherein dominant meanings, discourses, are reinforced and reproduced while being challenged in counter-hegemonic struggles and resistances. I have been able to elucidate some beach leisure dynamics along Lebanese shores, with a focus on the differentiated beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities of Lebanese beach goers by exploring their various ways of thinking about religion, race, gender, identity, community, values, culture, and leisure. Far from being a homogenous coastline, the Lebanese beaches are more like ‘territories’ - fractured by different mobility factors, namely faith, comfort, racism, intolerance - that are a reflection of the complexity of the Lebanese society. The seemingly benign, open, and free leisure spaces of the beach are, in fact, contested, regulated, manipulated, racialised, politicised and even sometimes exclusionary.

### 8.2.1 Breaking Stereotypes and Debunking Falsehoods/Taken-For-Granted Beliefs

This study has contributed in part to challenge some hard-to-die stereotypes which are part of our cultural imaginary in Lebanon and even outside of it, elsewhere. As the famous saying goes, there is no smoke without fire; in this case, the stereotypes are the ‘smoke’ and they are believed by some people that they are grounded in truth. Although some stereotypes are grounded in direct lived experiences, many are distortions that arise from mass media as well as modes of thought which find their roots in childhood, social, religious and political conditioning.

- *Stereotype #1: Ladies-only resorts are only frequented by conservative Muslim women*

In-depth interviews with beach goers and various stakeholders have revealed that ladies-only resorts are far from only attracting conservative Muslim women in search of modesty. Other conservative modest Christian women have also been enjoying the privacy of these women territories on the Lebanese coast. But beyond religious modesty, these gendered places have also become spaces used for various womanly needs, including the need to hide untanned, unshaved bodies from the male gaze. Ladies-only resorts have taken a step further beyond modesty, by offering comfort to women, whether conservative or not, whether Muslim or not; a space where they can arguably be ‘themselves’, and come as ‘they are’, without worrying about the gaze of men.

- *Stereotype #2: Beaches are ‘peaceful’ spaces that are open to everyone regardless of gender, colour, race, and lifestyle*

Although looking ‘peaceful’ and full of fun on the outside, beaches are host to a more controversial reality, when experienced from the inside. While some segregatory rules in resorts are overtly an affront to standards of tolerance, another powerful form of intolerance is also experienced along the Lebanese coast, covert segregation, which is wrapped in ‘politically

correct', sometimes silly, explanations and excuses provided to beach goers who do not look or act as expected, who do not 'fit in' the beach environment they are kept away from. Covert segregation is much harder to tackle than overt segregation as people can ingeniously find ways around laws or official directives that are not compatible with their thoughts, wants or business interests. Interviews have re-confirmed that there is no limit to human's imagination when it comes to negotiating 'moral' or 'legal' matters which some informants in my study consider as 'obstacles' they should cunningly deal with the best way possible, without being convicted by their conscience. This coexistence between Lebanese communities, which Lebanon prides itself in having, seems to be a beautiful slogan behind which lies apprehension, suspicions, avoidance, and a lack of comfort between people belonging to different communities. And this study about beach leisure lifestyles has highlighted this gap between what is portrayed to the world, and the reality on the ground. We, Lebanese people, still remember the famous words of the late pope St. John Paul II about this unique coexistence in Lebanon which are still resonating in our heads: "Lebanon is more than a country. It is a message to the world". But as this study, along other studies, has revealed, this coexistence between communities is not at its best and is far from rosy. Even on the beach.

#### 8.2.2 The Impact of Memories, Emotions and Mental Imaginaries on Beach Leisure Lifestyles

The power of the past cannot be overstated, especially in a country where the past is still very much considered as part of the present. The Lebanese civil war has ended about 30 years ago. Only 30 years ago. People belonging to the generations that have witnessed it on the ground are still living with us. Civil war scenes are still fresh in the minds of those who have experienced it first-hand and their lived civil war stories are still impacting the minds of the new post-war generations which contributes to the building of their mental representations, in turn impacting their beach leisure lifestyles. Findings have stressed the key role of mental

representations of the different religious communities and the territories they belong to in the choice of the beach destination in Lebanon and the way the ‘Other’ Lebanese, who looks, acts and thinks differently, is treated. The South of Lebanon, the North of Lebanon, Mount Lebanon... All these regions are being perceived differently, depending on whether one belongs to one community or to another one. As a matter of fact, imagined geographies play a prominent role in our decision to go North or South, to choose one beach over the other. While some beach goers prefer avoiding the beach in Tyre, located in the South, as its atmosphere is perceived to be too conservative to their taste, others are flocking to the beach of this southern city in search for something different – different scenery, different atmosphere, different bodily practices on the beach, etc. - than what they are used to see in their own regions. The weight of civil war memories is being felt on the Lebanese shore. Communities are being suspicious of each other’s practices on the beach (burkinis, alcohol, bikinis, etc.) which reveals a lack of trust and comfort that is still being felt deep inside, despite years of ‘peace’ that followed the end of the bloody civil war. Suspecting bad intentions on the part of those displaying alternative beach leisure lifestyles – which are far from the classic ‘bikini’ image we have of beach leisure - hides in fact a sad reality, which is the apprehension of being ‘submerged’ demographically and culturally by those who have adopted different beach leisure practices as the spectre of civil war is still fresh in the memory of many and comes back haunting their minds whenever they sense, rightly or wrongly, that their visibility on the beach is threatened and that their lifestyles are under ‘attack’.

### 8.2.3 The Reproduction of Lebanese Societal Issues on the Beach: Communitarianism, Racism, Conservatism, Religious/Lifestyle Intolerance

It has been found that beach leisure in Lebanon reflects, and can even reinforce, some societal issues, including racism, communitarianism, lifestyle intolerance and a national cultural crisis which reflects a complex, multi-faith society that is held captive by its old demons (civil war, fear of communities of losing the battle of demography...) and that keeps vacillating between past and modernity, East and West, conservatism and liberalism, tolerance and intolerance, open-mindedness and fear of the Other, rendering it even more complex, hybrid, indecipherable and peculiar in the eyes of the outside world and even to Lebanese themselves. Paradoxically, the beach can act as a 'getting together' space between communities while fuelling communitarianism. In other words, the beach should naturally play the role of the 'wise man' who attempts to mitigate negative vibes between communities but it is being turned into a conflictual space that fuels communitarianism and where the power battle between communities is re-enacted.

In terms of intolerant religious and racist practices, the common use of some covert 'segregation tactics' to stay away from black bodies, from refugees, from burkinis, from alcohol, from bikinis, is indissociable from beach leisure in Lebanon. I have shed light on how race is spatialised and space is racialised as well as revealed an intersection between hegemonic whiteness and Lebaneseness. The presence of racialised Others at the seaside have uncovered deeply rooted racialised fears and anxieties in a country where whiteness is almost synonymous with Lebaneseness. Black bodies are perceived through a racialised lens, rendering the beach a place of racialised resistance and subversion, as well as one of subjugation and exclusion. Findings have confirmed the importance of tackling societal issues, such as racism, at source since people will always find ways to circumvent regulations. Implementing rules is far from

being enough; the mind of intolerant human beings need to be ‘rewired’, including those of many Lebanese people.

On a different note, lifestyle-shaming is still a big thing in Lebanon which pushes some beach goers to adapt their practices depending on the location of the beach environment they are in. Practices are indeed stretched like elastic by beach goers who prefer acting as open-minded in specific areas but wear the conservative mask somewhere else on the coast. While some would rather bring their cultures and beliefs to the beach, others on the contrary prefer leaving their cultural traditions behind their backs when on the beach, knowing that they revert back to their traditional cultures once outside the doors of the resort. The atmosphere differences between Christian and Muslim-majority areas in Lebanon greatly favour a sort of fluidity and elasticity of the beach leisure practices.

Finally, and on a more general note, the researcher is fully aware of the fact that the findings of this study will not be to everyone’s liking and that is absolutely normal and fine. To each his/her own impression and thoughts towards the presented findings. I know that reading this study will stir up various emotions. The socio-cultural, political and religious background and lived experiences of the reader are a major factor in whether he/she is in agreement or disagreement with what has been found on the ground, whether he/she finds him/herself feeling shocked, or cool, or annoyed, or surprised, or indifferent, or interested, or receptive, or unenthusiastic, or intrigued or appalled, or puzzled, etc. The findings may raise eyebrows, put confused smiles on faces, push you to question your mental representations, make you reconsider your bias, or in the contrary, strengthen your thoughts and confirm what you have been feeling and knowing. It all depends on your angle of view and initial thoughts and knowledge.



### **8.3 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge**

Issac Newton once said, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”. Before explaining how my study contributes to knowledge, I would like to acknowledge the work of other academics which has inspired me as well as being an important stepping stone towards the building of my own research topic and design. Academically, this one-of-a-kind study contributes towards beach leisure research; its uniqueness lies not just in the fact that no other research has been made about the beach leisure lifestyles and mobilities in Lebanon, but also the complex interplay between Lebaneseness, on the one hand, and sexual, gendered, classed and racialised beach practices and mental representations and politics of the beach, on the other. Studies about beach leisure in Lebanon lag well behind other countries; this doctoral research fills this gap. Furthermore, this research is a sort of an ‘eye opener’ to the Lebanese ministry of tourism, local officials as well as those working in the beach industry, and more generally, in the tourism sector as it provides an insight into the motives of beach goers behind their beach choices and mobilities and sheds light upon some practices that are motivated by behind-the-scenes, questionable racism, religious beliefs, lifestyle intolerance or societal pressures. A number of grassroots NGOs – which defend human rights - will find these findings particularly interesting as they unmasked the exclusionary, segregatory, discriminatory practices of some resort managers which are clearly at odds with basic ethics and human rights. More than this, by unveiling these covert practices happening on our beaches, I have revealed the important amount of work that still needs to be done by Lebanese authorities and local non-governmental organisations to eradicate both overt and covert discrimination. In other words, this study is somehow sounding the alarm of important shortcomings that need to be addressed at the state and local levels, especially in terms of tackling veiled racism and lifestyle intolerances. Indeed, this study allows officials to have a deeper understanding of the invisible power dynamics at play on the seaside and the hidden dimensions of local beach leisure,

following which commensurate responses should be decided and suitable actions are to be taken accordingly. For the homeland, the research provides people with a different, more realistic perspective on beach leisure and acts as a repository of ‘stories’ which will expand their horizons of knowledge and make them better understand themselves, i.e. their own mental representations and beach leisure lifestyles, by better understanding the myriad dynamics of power on the seaside. These voices will probably push readers to re-think their ways of perceiving and interacting with other beach goers and, why not, change their practices. On the broader front, it provides global readers, whether Lebanese or not, with a more sophisticated picture of beach leisure, beyond recreation and fun, which is shaped by invisible forces that, when explored and understood, can sharpen our knowledge on the complexities, particularities and intricacies found within the Lebanese society.

#### **8.4 Pathways for Future Research**

The world of research is an unending spider's web of research topics, a network of interlocking paths from which new topics can be developed. My own study paves the way for further research in this direction, which can possibly tackle a number of other interesting topics and questions. that can be of great interest. Of course, a follow up to my findings is chiefly required as the Lebanese seaside is developing and beach leisure dynamics are changing; it is of great interest to examine the beach leisure lifestyles of future generations and how they compare to my findings. This cross-time comparison will allow a wider understanding of beach leisure development and lifestyle choices of Lebanese people on the beach. Also, it is recommended that future research expands analysis to other faraway beach destinations in Lebanon that I could not include in my study, such as Al Bayyada, Tripoli, among others. In terms of research focus, the beach leisure lifestyles of Muslims and Druzes require further critical examination and investigation given the recent controversies surrounding their bodily beach practices and,

the questions about the ways political Islam is being performed on the beach. Furthermore, it is desired that a research project about the beach leisure lifestyles of Arabs is conducted at the regional level, beyond the Lebanese borders, rendering a comparison between the beach practices of Arabs possible. Lastly, the interplay between the beach industry and the Lebanese state (ministry of tourism, local mayors, etc.) needs to be investigated in light of the current dominant meanings and the under-the-radar, questionable exclusionary practices which may be met with greater hostility in the future.

### **8.5 Reflections and Final Thoughts**

There are academic journeys that have an impact on you and those that change you. This one has definitely been a life-changing one, to a point of me considering that there is a before and an after PhD. Embarking on a doctoral journey can be a turning point in life; it feels like going into uncharted territory which can change you in unimagined ways. Beyond academic knowledge and skills, I have come out of it stronger and wiser, with a sharper and more critical mind. This doctoral experience has been a sort of ‘self-discovery’, pushing me to reflect upon my own self, as a Franco-Lebanese woman, with thoughts and questions about my own social class, gender position, religious beliefs, identity, lifestyle, mental conditioning, sense of Lebaneseness, and more. I have become more open minded and less judgmental towards other Lebanese people, and other human beings in general, those who do not have the same beliefs, lifestyle or opinion as myself. The various reflexivities that I went through have made me realise my own stereotypes and biased mental constructions upon which my opinions and views have been built as well as see the good in the bad and the bad in the good. As a powerful therapeutic process, writing has enhanced my own self-awareness and personal growth as well as helped me find meanings in my autoethnographic fieldwork experiences. On a more personal note, writing has both been quite therapeutic in that it helped me overcome a double grief – the

loss of a family member and a dear friend - which I had to face during the thesis write up. As a researcher, I have taken up both 'insider' and 'outsider' positions which fostered elastic thinking, or in other words, cognitive flexibility. At times, research felt like being lost inside a maze but that is what makes it all the more interesting as the mind is forced to find ways or solutions to challenges, resulting in a mind that is stretched and a brain that is trained to think outside the box. Going back to the 'old dimensions' becomes undesired as I start enjoying the benefits of this reshaped mind in my everyday life. In fact, my 'soft skills' are even softer now, and this was experienced when I was a weekly TV guest in Lebanon and when I gave conference talks which did not go unnoticed as I was invited to take part in a book project (See appendix VI). As I am writing these final lines, I cannot but recall the faces I have encountered, the words I have heard, the places I have visited, the conferences/workshops/seminars I have attended, the lines I have read, the emotions I have felt, the decisions I have taken, the thoughts I have had, and all the twists and turns that are part of a memorable doctoral journey, full of surprises, life lessons and unexpected changes. And needless to say that the people's voices will be resonating somewhere within me, every time I visit a beach, gently reminding me that they are notes that are part of the music of life.

*The river's voice...all the waves and water hastened, suffering, towards goals, many goals, to the waterfall, to the sea, to the current, to the ocean and all goals were reached and each one was succeeded by another. The water changed to vapour and rose, became rain and came down again, became spring, brook and river, changed anew, flowed anew. But the yearning voice had altered. It still echoed sorrowfully, searchingly but other voices accompanied it, voices of pleasure and sorrow, good and evil voices, laughing and lamenting voices, hundreds of voices.*

*They were all interwoven and interlocked, entwined in a thousand ways. And all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. All of them together was the stream of events, the music of life.*

*(Herman Hesse, Siddhartha)*

## REFERENCES

---

- Ahmed, S. (1997). It's a sun-tan, isn't it?: Autobiography as an identification practice. In H.S. Mirza (Ed.), *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (pp. 153–67). Routledge: London.
- Ahmed, S. (1998). Animated borders: skin, colour and tanning. In M. Shildrick and J. Price (Eds.), *Vital Signs: Feminist Reconfigurations of the Bio/Logical Body* (pp. 45–65). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Aitchison, C., Macleod, N.E. and Shaw, S.J. (2000). *Leisure and Tourism Landscapes: Social and Cultural Geographies*. London: Routledge.
- Aitchison, C.C. (2003). *Gender and Leisure: Social and Cultural Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Al Mahadin, S. and Burns, P. (2007). Visitors, Visions and Veils: The portrayal of the Arab world in tourism advertising. In R.F. Daher (Ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (pp. 137-160). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Alcoff, L.M. (2006). *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Al-Hamarneh, A. (n.d.). "Islamic Tourism" - A Long Term Strategy of Tourist Industries in the Arab World After 9/11? Retrieved from: <http://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/alhamarn/Islamic%20Tourism%20-%20paper%20for%20BRISMES%202004.htm>
- Arab Youth Survey. (2008). *The Arab Millennials: Understanding the aspirations and attitudes of Middle East Youth*. Retrieved from: <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2008-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>

- Arab Youth Survey. (2016). *Inside the hearts and minds of Arab youth*. Retrieved from: <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2016-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>
- Armbrust, W. (2003). Bourgeois Leisure and Egyptian Media Fantasies. In D. Eickelman and J. Anderson (Eds.), *New Media in the Muslim World* (pp. 106-132). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Aziz, S.F. (2016). *Burkini Backlash: The Latest Transnational Gender Debate*. Retrieved from: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/8/31/burkini-backlash-the-latest-transnational-gender-debate>
- Babbie, E.R. (2011). *The Basics of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Battersby, C. (1998). *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Battour, M. and Ismail, M.N. (2016). Halal Tourism: Concepts, Practises, Challenges and Future. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, pp. 150-154.
- Battour, M., Ismail, M.N., and Battor, M. (2011). The impact of destination attributes on Muslim tourist's choice. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(6), pp. 527–540.
- Bauman, Z. (2012). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beeton, S. (2016). The Self as Data: Autoethnographic Approaches. Travel and Tourism Research Association International Conference: Advancing Tourism Research Globally (pp. 1-2). Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Beeton, S. (2016, June). The Self as Data: Autoethnographic Approaches. Paper presented at the Travel and Tourism Research Association International Conference: Advancing Tourism Research Globally, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Retrieved from: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1279&context=ttra>

- Bergaoui, M. (1996). *Tourisme et voyages en Tunisie: Les Années Régence*. Tunis: Simpect.
- Berriane, M. (1993). Le tourisme des nationaux au Maroc (une nouvelle approche du tourisme dans les pays en développement). *Annales de Géographie*, 102(570), pp. 131-161.
- Blei, D. (2016). *Inventing the Beach: The Unnatural History of a Natural Place*. Retrieved from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/inventing-beach-unnatural-history-natural-place-180959538/>
- Booth, D. (2001). *Australian Beach Cultures: The history of sun, sand and surf*. London: Frank Cass.
- Bordo, S. (1999). Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body. In J. Price and M. Shildrick (Eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A reader* (pp. 246-258). New York: Routledge.
- Bordo, S. (2003). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2011). *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp. 77–101.
- Braun, V., Tricklebank, G. and Clarke, V. (2013). It shouldn't stick out from your bikini at the beach: Meaning, gender, and the hairy/hairless body. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37(4), pp. 478-493.
- Brotherton, B. (2015). *Researching Hospitality and Tourism*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bruce, S. (1996). *Religion in the Modern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burdsey, D. (2016). *Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Burr, V. (1998). Realism, Relativism, Social Constructionism and Discourse. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, Discourse and Realism* (pp. 13–26). London: Sage Publications.
- Burton, R.F. (2012). *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Carboni, M. and Janati, M.I. (2016). Halal Tourism de facto: A case from Fez. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, pp. 155–159.
- Carboni, M., Perelli, C. and Sistu, G. (2014). Is Islamic tourism a viable option for Tunisian tourism? Insights from Djerba. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 11, pp. 1-9.
- Cave, T. (2007). *How to Read Montaigne*. London: Granta Books.
- Chambers, I. (2008). *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chaney, D. (1996). *Lifestyles*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, J. (2016). *Selves, Bodies and the Grammar of Social Worlds: Reimagining Social Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coleman, S. and Crang, M. (2002). Grounded Tourists, Travelling Theory. In S. Coleman and M. Crang (Eds.), *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (pp. 1-20). New York: Berghahn Books.
- Coole, D. (2013). The Body and Politics. In G. Waylen, K. Celis, J. Kantola and S.L. Weldon (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics* (pp. 165-188). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Corbin, A. (1994). *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in Western World, 1750-1840*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crang, M. and Cook, I. (2007). *Doing Ethnographies*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cregan, K. (2006). *The Sociology of the Body: Mapping the Abstraction of Embodiment*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cresswell, J.W. and Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Method Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cresswell, T. and Priya Uteng, T. (2008). *Gendered Mobilities*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Crouch, D. (2009). The Diverse Dynamics of Cultural Studies and Tourism. In T. Jamal and M. Robinson (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies* (pp. 82-97). London: Sage Publications.
- Daher, R.F. (2007). *Tourism in the Middle East*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Davidson, C. (2009). Transcription: Imperatives for Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(2), pp. 36-52.
- Day, R.A. and Gastel, B. (2006). *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Beauvoir, S. (2010). *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Books.
- Decrop, A. (2004). Trustworthiness in Qualitative Tourism Research. In J. Phillmore and L. Goodson (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies* (pp. 156-169). London: Routledge.
- DeMello, M. (2014). *Body Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

- Denning, G. (2004). *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across Times, Cultures and Self*. Melbourne: Miegunyah Press/Melbourne University Publishing.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, and Y. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Duffy, R. (2004). Ecotourists on the Beach. In M. Sheller and J. Urry (Eds.), *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play* (pp. 32-43). London: Routledge.
- Duman, T. (2011, July). Value of Islamic Tourism Offering: Perspectives from the Turkish Experience. Paper presented at the World Islamic Tourism Forum (WITF), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Retrieved from: [https://www.academia.edu/25215894/Value\\_of\\_Islamic\\_Tourism\\_Offering\\_Perspectives\\_from\\_the\\_Turkish\\_Experience](https://www.academia.edu/25215894/Value_of_Islamic_Tourism_Offering_Perspectives_from_the_Turkish_Experience)
- Durrheim, K. and Dixon, J. (2001). The Role of Place and Metaphor in Racial Exclusion: South Africa's beaches as sites of shifting racialization. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24(3), pp. 433–450.
- Edensor, T. (2001). Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 1(1), pp. 59-81.
- Eisner, E. (1998). *The kind of schools we need*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- El-Gohary, H. (2016). Halal tourism, is it really Halal? *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19(B), pp. 124-130.
- Ellingson, L. (2009). *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Ellis, C. (2004). *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(1), pp. 3-29.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A.P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Research as subject. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. (2010). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10, Retrieved from: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>.  
[<http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-12.1.1589>]
- Enloe, C. (2002). On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism. In K. Plummer (Ed.), *Sexualities: Sexualities and their Futures* (pp. 251-275). London: Routledge.
- Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Evers, C. (2009). The Point: Surfing, Geography and a Sensual Life of Men and Masculinity on the Gold Coast, Australia. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10(8), pp. 893-908.
- Fayed, S. (2012). *Don't Destroy Beach Tourism, Egypt's New Leader Told*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/egypt-tourism/feature-dont-destroy-beach-tourism-egypts-new-leader-told-idUSL6E8IB4RN20120718>
- Feeney, A. and Heit, E. (2007). *Inductive Reasoning: Experimental, Developmental and Computational Approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fisk, R. (2016, October 20). Lebanon is a sectarian nation, yet it has avoided civil war while the Middle East burns – here's why. *The Independent*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/lebanon-civil-war-avoided-peaceful-nation-middle-east-syria-turkey-israel-conflict-robert-fisk-a7371326.html>

- Fontana, A. (2003). Postmodern Trends in Interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Postmodern Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Franklin, B. (2003). Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America [1784]. In K. Reilly, S. Kaufman and A. Bodino (Eds.), *Racism: A Global Reader* (pp. 104-109). London: M.E. Sharpe.
- Fusch, P.I., Fusch, G.E. and Ness, L.R. (2017). How to Conduct a Mini-Ethnographic Case Study: A Guide for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(3), pp. 923-941.
- Gatens, M. (1996). *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. London: Routledge.
- Gauch, S. (2006). *At new resorts, Egyptian women find a place in the sun*. Retrieved from: <https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0830/p04s01-wome.html>
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *An Invitation to Social Construction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Germanà, M. (2011). From Hijab to Sweatshops: Segregated Bodies and Contested Space in Monica Ali's Brick Lane. In A. Teverson and S. Upstone (Eds.), *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture* (pp. 67-82). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ghanmi, L. (2017). *Algerian 'bikini rebellion' may be hype but harassment isn't*. Retrieved from: <https://thearabweekly.com/algerian-bikini-rebellion-may-be-hype-harassment-isnt>
- Gibson, W. and Brown, A. (2009). *Working with Qualitative data*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

- Gillis, J. R. (2012). *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Girit, S. (2014). Turkey sees rise in halal tourism. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-28898190>
- Gold, T. (2018, September 14). Things you only know after spending 36 hours at an 'elitist' ladies-only island. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/things-know-spending-36-hours-elitist-ladies-only-island/>
- Gray, D.E. (2004). *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage publications.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Grosz, E. (1995). *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. London: Routledge.
- Hage, G. (2011). Multiculturalism and the Ungovernable Muslim. In R. Gaita (Ed.), *Essays on Muslims and Multiculturalism* (pp. 165-186). Melbourne: Text Publishing.
- Hanafi, H. (2000). The Middle East: In whose world? In B.O. Utvik and K.S. Vikor (Eds.), *The Middle East in a Globalized World* (pp. 1-9). Bergen, NO: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies.
- Hannam, K. (2009). The End of Tourism ? Nomadology and the Mobilities Paradigm. In J. Tribe (Ed.), *Philosophical Issues in Tourism* (pp. 101-113). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Harris, R. and Johnston, R. (2020). *Ethnic Segregation Between Schools: Is It Increasing Or Decreasing in England?*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Hashem, H. (2016). *Middle East countries scramble to provide halal beach holidays as race to attract Muslim travelers intensifies*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.salaamgateway.com/story/middle-east-countries-scramble-to-provide-halal-beach-holidays-as-race-to-attract-muslim-travelers-i>

- Hattery, A.J. and Smith, E. (2018). *Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives Are Surveilled and How to Work for Change*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hayes, C. and Fulton, J.A. (2015). Autoethnography as a method of facilitating critical reflexivity for professional doctorate students. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 8, pp. 1-15.
- Hazard, P. (2013). *The Crisis of The European Mind (1680-1715)*. New York: New York Review Book.
- Hazbun, W. (2008). *Beaches, Ruins, Resorts: The politics of tourism in the Arab world*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hazbun, W. (2010). Modernity on the Beach: A postcolonial reading from southern shores. *Tourist Studies*, 9(3), pp.203-222.
- Henderson, I. (2012, January 8). Beirut: the city that rose again. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/middle-east/lebanon/articles/Beirut-the-city-that-rose-again/>
- Henshall Momsen, J. (2005). Uncertain Images: Tourism Development and Seascapes of the Caribbean. In C. Cartier and A.A. Lew (Eds.), *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalization and Touristed Landscapes* (pp. 191-202). London: Routledge.
- Holowchak, M.A. (2007). *Critical Reasoning and Science: Looking at science with an investigative eye*. Maryland: University Press of America.
- Homa, D. (2007). Touristic Development in Sinai, Egypt: Bedouin, Visitors, and Government Interaction. In R.F. Daher (Ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East* (pp. 237-262). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

- Hunter, R. (2003). The Thomas Cook archive for the study of tourism in North Africa and the Middle East. *Middle East Studies Association*, 36(2), pp. 157-63.
- Huntington, S. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- IOL. (2008). *Egypt's women-only beaches*. Retrieved from: <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/africa/egypts-women-only-beaches-887158>
- Irigaray, L. (1997). This sex which is not one. In K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (Eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (pp. 248-256). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jackson, E. (2011). Gender and Space in Postcolonial Fiction: South Asian Novelists Re-imagining Women's Spatial Boundaries. In A. Teverson and S. Upstone (Eds.), *Postcolonial spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture* (pp. 57-66). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jacobs, J. (2010). *Sex, Tourism and the Postcolonial Encounter: Landscapes of Longing in Egypt*. Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Jaworski, A. and Pritchard, A. (2005). *Discourse, Communication and Tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Jensen, J. (2011). *Will Egypt's Islamists ban alcohol?* Retrieved from: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2011-12-12/will-egypts-islamists-ban-alcohol>
- Junka, L. (2006). The Politics of Gaza Beach. At the Edge of the Two Intifadas. *Third Text*, 20(3-4), pp. 417-428.
- Kahrl, A. (2008). "The slightest semblance of unruliness": Steamboat excursions, pleasure resorts, and the emergence of segregation culture on the Potomac River. *Journal of American History*, 94(4), pp. 1108–1136.



- Kohler Riessman, C. (2006). Narrative Interviewing. In V. Jupp (Ed.) *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (pp. 187-190). London: Sage.
- Kraidy, M.M. (2005). *Hybridity, Or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Larsen, J. (2005). Performativity of Tourist Photography. *Space and Culture*, 8(4), pp. 416-434.
- Larsen, J. and Urry, J. (2011). Gazing and Performing. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, pp. 1110-1125.
- Lencek, L. and Bosker, G. (1998). *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth*. New York: Viking.
- Lennon, K. (2015). *Imagination and the Imaginary*. London: Routledge.
- Löfgren, O. (1999). *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Löfgren, O. (2008). The Secret Lives of Tourists: Delays, Disappointments and Daydreams. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8, pp. 85-110.
- Lofland, J., and Lofland, L. (1995). *Analyzing Social Settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.
- Loseke, D.R. (1999). *Thinking about social problems: An introduction to constructionist perspectives*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Lupton, D. (1996). *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: Sage Publications.
- Malak, A. (2000). Arab-Muslim Feminism and the Narrative of Hybridity: The Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif. *Alif. Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 20, pp. 140-183.
- Maoz, D. (2006). The Mutual Gaze. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33, pp. 221-239.
- Marczyk, G., David, D. and David, F. (2005). *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (2011). *Designing Qualitative Research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Martin, M.C., Gentry, J.W. and Hill, R.P. (1999). The beauty myth and the persuasiveness of advertising: A look at adolescent girls and boys. In M.C. Macklin and L. Carlson (Eds.), *Advertising to Children: Concepts and Controversies* (pp. 165-187). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Massad, J.A. (2007). *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- McGuire, M.B. (1990). Religion and the Body: Rematerializing the human body in the social sciences of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 29(3), pp. 283-296.
- McLaren, M.A. (2002). *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Metusela, C. and Waitt, G. (2012). *Tourism and Australian Beach Cultures: Revealing Bodies*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Michael, M. (2011, December 13). Egypt Islamists offer vision for sin-free tourism – no booze or bikinis. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2011/Dec-13/156691-egypt-islamists-offer-vision-for-sin-free-tourism-no-booze-or-bikinis.ashx>
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Mills, A.J., Durepos, G. and Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (Vol. 1). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moi, T. (1999). *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Muhanna, E. (2010, March 4). The End of Political Confessionalism in Lebanon?. *The National*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/the-end-of-political-confessionalism-in-lebanon-1.534397>
- Munar, A. and Jamal, T. (2016). What are paradigms for ? In A.M. Munar and T. Jamal (Ed.), *Tourism research paradigms: Critical and emergent knowledges* (pp. 1-16). Bingley: Emerald.
- Nayel, A.A. (2017). *Alternative Performativity of Muslimness: The Intersection of Race, Gender, Religion and Migration*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Brien, J. (2011). *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Obrador Pons, P. (2003). Being-on-holiday: Tourist dwelling, bodies and place. *Tourist Studies*, 3(1), pp. 47-66.
- Obrador Pons, P. (2016). Touching the Beach. In M. Paterson and M. Dodge (Eds.), *Touching Space, Placing Touch* (pp. 47-70). London: Routledge.
- Obrador Pons, P., Crang, M. and Travlou, P. (2009b). Corrupted Seas: The Mediterranean in the age of mass mobility. In P. Obrador Pons, M. Crang and P. Travlou (Eds.), *Cultures of Mass Tourism: Doing the Mediterranean in the Age of Banal mobilities* (pp. 157-174). Adershot: Ashgate.
- Obringer, M. (2019). *Sporting Club: se moderniser en conservant le charme d'antan*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lecommercedulevant.com/article/29112-sporting-club-se-moderniser-en-conservant-le-charme-dantan>

- Ochs, E. (1979). Transcription as theory. In E. Ochs and B.B. Schiefflin (Eds.), *Developmental pragmatics* (pp. 43–72). New York: Academic.
- Pape, C. (2016). “Race”, “Sex” and “Gender”: Intersections, naturalistic fallacies, and the age of reason. In M.L. Davies (Ed.), *Thinking about the Enlightenment: Modernity and its Ramifications* (pp. 153-170). London: Routledge.
- Parker-Jenkins, M. (2018). Problematizing ethnography and case study: reflections on using ethnographic techniques and researcher positioning. *Ethnography and Education*, 13(1), pp. 18-33.
- Patomaki, H. and Wright, C. (2000). After postpositivism? The promises of critical realism. *International Studies Quarterly*, 44(2), pp. 213–237.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pearce, D.G. (2012). *Frameworks for Tourism Research*. Wallingford, UK: CABI.
- Pernecky, T. (2012). Constructionism: Critical Pointers for Tourism Studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), pp. 1116–1137.
- Pfaffenbach, C. (2001). ‘Le Tunisien est un bon client qui revient et qui consomme...’: On new trends in Tunisian domestic tourism. *The Arab World Geographer*, 4(2), pp. 117–132.
- Plante, R. F. (2015). *Sexualities in Context: A Social Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Price, P. (2013). Race and ethnicity II: Skin and other intimacies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(4), pp. 578–586.
- Pritchard, A. and Morgan, N.J. (2000). Privileging The Male Gaze: Gendered Tourism Landscapes. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4), pp. 884-905.

- Raber, K. (2004). Michel Foucault and the Specter of War. In P.C. Herman (Ed.), *Historicizing Theory* (pp. 49-68). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed, pp. 923-948.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, N. (2016). *Transgressive Bodies: Representations in Film and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Rickly, J., Hannam, K. and Mostafanezhad, M. (2017). *Tourism and Leisure Mobilities: Politics, Work, and Play*. London: Routledge.
- Riessman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Riley, R.W. and Love, L.L. (2000). The State of Qualitative Tourism Research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27, pp. 164-187.
- Salameh, F. (2010). *Language, Memory, and Identity in the Middle East: The case for Lebanon*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington books.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Salehudin, I. (2010). Halal Literacy: A Concept Exploration and Measurement Validation. *Asean Marketing Journal*, 2(1), pp. 1-12.
- Salibi, K. (1988). *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sartre, J-P. (2004). *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. London: Routledge.

- Sayers, J. (2016). Feminism, Gender and Psychoanalysis. In A. Elliott and J. Prager (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalysis in the Social Sciences and Humanities* (pp. 380-396). London: Routledge.
- Scott, A. and Sahoo, S. (2015). *UAE missing out on rewards from halal tourism*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-and-tourism/uae-missing-out-on-rewards-from-halal-tourism-1.88071>
- Sharpley, R. (2004). Islands in the Sun: Cyprus. In M. Sheller and J. Urry (Eds.), *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play* (pp. 22-31). London: Routledge.
- Sheller, M. (2008). Gendered Mobilities: Epilogue. In T. Priya Uteng and T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered mobilities* (pp. 257-265). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Sherlock, S. (2014). *The Performativity of Value: On the Citability of Cultural Commodities*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Sherwood, H. (2016, September 3). Meet Generation M: the young, affluent Muslims changing the world. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/03/meet-generation-m-the-young-affluent-muslims-changing-the-world>
- Simons, S. (2009). *Case Study Research in Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sipe, L.R. and Ghiso, M.P. (2004). Developing Conceptual Categories in Classroom Descriptive Research: Some Problems and Possibilities. *Anthropological and Educational Quarterly*, 35, pp. 471-485.
- Smith, M. (2009). *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Soler, C. (2014). *Lacan: The Unconscious Reinvented*. London: Karnac Books.
- Sommier, M. (2019). Insights into the Construction of Cultural Realities: Foreign Newspaper Discourses about the Burkini Ban in France. *Ethnicities*, Vol. 19(2), pp. 251–270.

- Spivak, G.C. (1988). *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Spry, T. (2001). Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), pp. 706-732.
- Stebbins, R.A. (2013). *Work and Leisure in the Middle East: The Common Ground of Two Separate Worlds*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Stephenson, M.L. (2014). Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality': Developments, Challenges and Opportunities. *Tourism Management*, 40, pp. 155-164.
- Suleaman, N. (2010, August 28). The Birth of Halal Holidays. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2010/aug/28/halal-holidays-turkey-muslim-women>
- Thatcher, A. (2016). *Redeeming Gender*. Oxford University Press.
- The National. (2016). The Burkini in North Africa: 'Most people don't care'. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-burkini-in-north-africa-most-people-don-t-care-1.140319>
- The Sidney Morning Herald. (2008, August 20). Burqa to bikini at Egypt's women-only beach. *The Sidney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/news/from-burqa-to-bikini/2008/08/20/1218911776292.html>
- Thompson, C. and Hirschman, E. (1995). Understanding the Socialized Body: A Poststructuralist Analysis of Consumers' Self-Conceptions, Body Images, and Self-Care Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(2), pp. 139-153.
- Thomson Reuters/DinarStandard. (2016). Muslim-friendly beach resorts: Opportunities and trends. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.salaamgateway.com/reports/pdf/201602021104352997.pdf>

- Thorne, S. (2000). Data Analysis in Qualitative Research. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 3, pp. 68-70.
- Tracy, S. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), pp. 837 –851.
- Turkmen-Dervisoglu, G. (2012). Lebanon: Parody of a Nation? A Closer Look At Lebanese Confessionalism. *The Yale Review of International Studies*, 2(1), pp. 61-72.
- Turner, B.S. (1997). The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and its Perspectives. In S. Coakley (Ed.), *Religion and the Body* (pp. 15-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, L. and Ash, J. (1975). *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery*. London: Constable.
- Urbain, J.D. (2003). *At the Beach*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Veal, A.J. (2006). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Harlow, England: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Veijola, S., and Jokinen, E. (1994). The Body in Tourism. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 11(3), pp. 125-151.
- Vigo, J. (2010). *Performative Bodies, Hybrid Tongues: Race, Gender, Sex and Modernity in Latin America and the Maghreb*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Walliman, N. (2011). *Research Methods: The Basics*. London: Routledge.
- Walton, J.K. (2000). *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Waltz, SE. (1986). Islamist appeal in Tunisia. *Middle East Journal*, 40(4), pp. 651-670.
- Waters, M. (1995). *Globalization (Key ideas)*. London: Routledge.
- Wearing, S., Stevenson, D. and Young, T. (2010). *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveller*. London: Sage Publications.



- Wheatley, E.E. (2005). Risk, Reflexivity and an Elusory Body. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(1), pp. 68-100.
- White, J., Drew, S. and Hay, T. (2009). Ethnography Versus Case Study. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(1), pp. 18-27.
- Whitford, M. (1991). *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. London: Routledge.
- Wilson, E. and Hollinshead, K. (2015). Qualitative Tourism Research: Opportunities in the Emergent Soft Sciences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 54, pp. 30-47.
- Wilson, J.L. (2005). *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Winkler, L. (2015). *Stories of the Southern Sea*. Victoria, BC: First Choice Books.
- Young, I. M. (2005). *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.

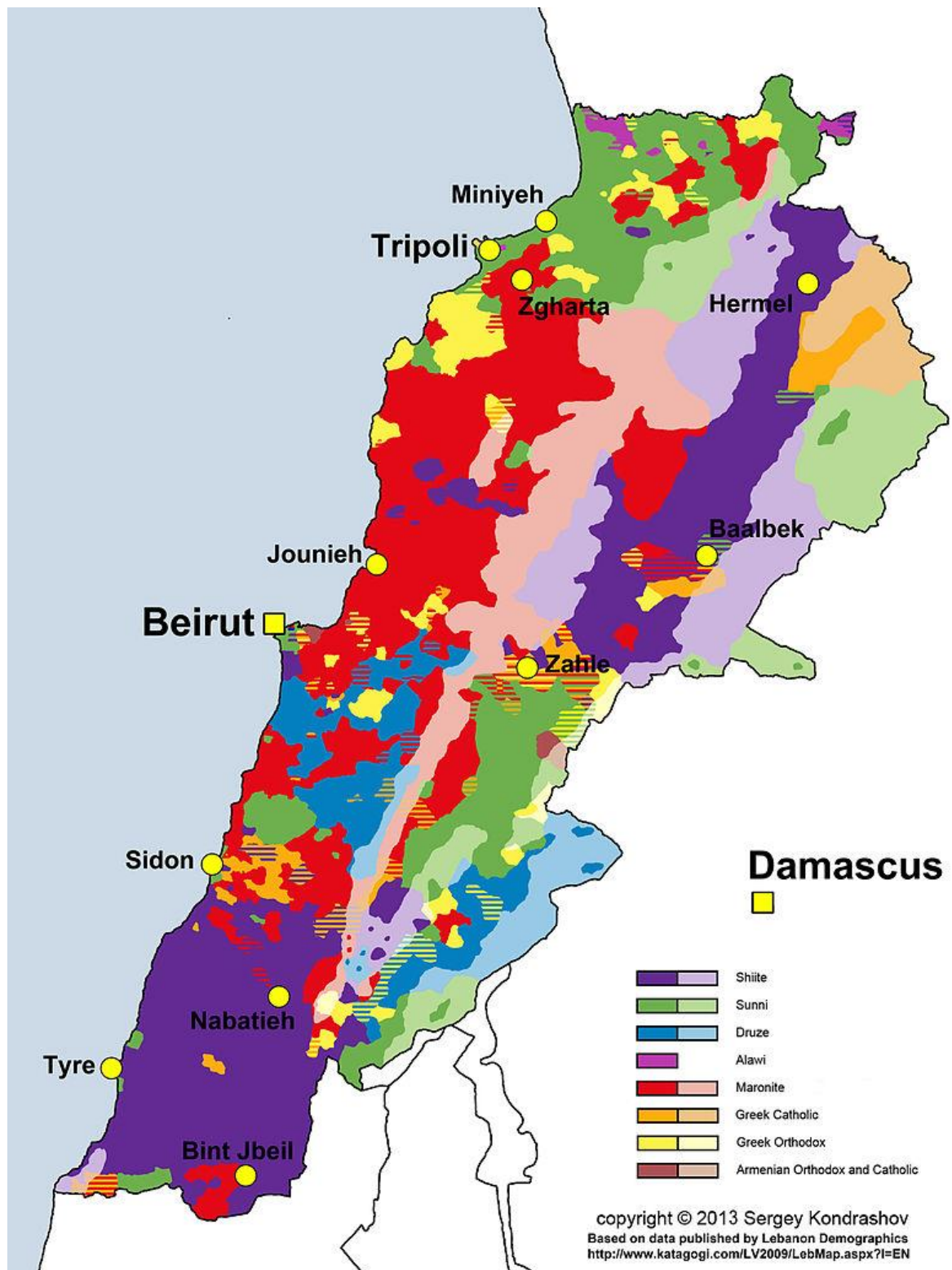
## APPENDIX I – MAP OF LEBANON



N.B: Lebanon does not recognise the state of Israel

Courtesy: Wikipedia [<https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Lebanon>]

APPENDIX II – LEBANON: A MELTING POT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES



Courtesy: Wikipedia  
 [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maronites#/media/File:Lebanon\_religious\_groups\_distribution.jpg]

## APPENDIX III – LEBANON’S BEACHES BY THE NUMBERS

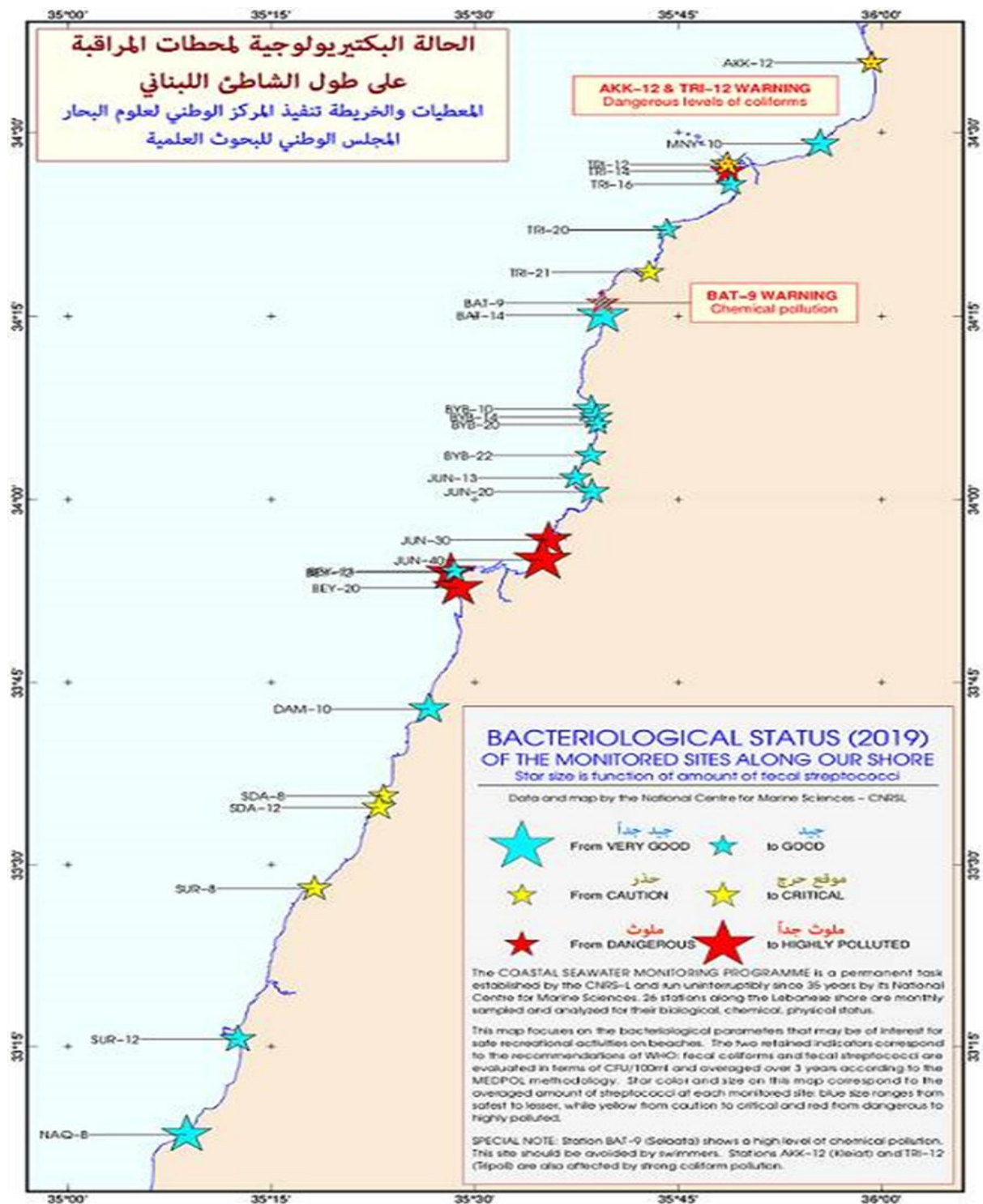


Courtesy: [mylebanonmyhome.com](http://mylebanonmyhome.com)

[<https://mylebanonmyhome.com/lebanons-beaches-by-the-numbers/>]



## APPENDIX IV – STATE OF LEBANESE BEACHES



Courtesy: Beirut-today.com [<http://beirut-today.com/2019/06/26/swim-lebanon-pollution/>]

## APPENDIX V – PHD ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

---

Application reference: ENBS-2017-18-059

Response dated: 28 June 2018

Title of proposed research: Beach Leisure Lifestyles in Lebanon: *Embodiment, Mobilities and Practices*

Dear Jihane,

The revised application you submitted to the Research Integrity Committee has now been approved.

Please use the above application reference if you need to demonstrate that your pilot study has been approved by the Committee.

Regards

Matthew Dutton  
Convener, Research Integrity Committee



**APPENDIX VI – TV APPEARANCES AND BOOK CHAPTER INVITATION  
DURING MY DOCTORAL JOURNEY**

---



On OTV (Lebanese TV station)



On MARIAM TV (Lebanese TV station)

**ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF TOURISM IN AFRICA**  
**Invitation Letter**

Dear Jihane,

We trust that you are doing well.

We have recently signed a contract to edit a Routledge Handbook of Tourism in Africa and have the joy of inviting you to contribute a book chapter.

This Handbook of Tourism in Africa seeks to provide readers from within and outside the region with a readable and accessible volume that can be used either as a set reading in its own right or as a supplementary reading or ready reference. We seek to showcase the many facets of tourism development across the African continent both in terms of success stories and the challenges faced by the tourism sector.

We believe your research will make a good contribution to this exciting project and would therefore like to commission you for a chapter on 'Halal tourism' in Egypt after the Arab Spring. Your contribution will be up to 6000 words (including references) and will generally include headings on: development of tourism (to provide historical and other context), tourism trends (i.e. international tourism, domestic tourism, outbound travel), critical issues discussion and conclusions. The section on critical issues will then focus on the key characteristics of halal tourism and some of the challenges involved in developing this form of tourism in Egypt.

We really hope you are able and willing to join us on this exciting journey. Attached is the contributor contract that you will need to sign should you decide to join this project. The expected date for the submission of your chapter contribution is no later than August, 2018.

Do let us know if you have any questions or queries.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,  
Marina, Emmanuel and Manuel