

Chapter 2

Negotiating Engagement: the Empirical Part of the Study

Resilient Bodies, Residual Effects emerges from my experience as a curator and researcher in the Lebanese and Palestinian art scenes, with Beirut and Ramallah being their center. Informed by a mixed-media corpus of empirical materials, the present volume consists of qualitative and comparative analyses of three artistic case studies that elucidate the contexts and environments of those art scenes: *Contingency* (2010) by Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Free Advice* (2015) by Farah Saleh, and *Nothing to Declare* (2013) by Dictaphone Group (Tania El Khoury, Abir Saksouk, and Petra Serhal). Taking on the notion that artistic practice can contribute to theorizing the experience of the border and of collectivity, I discuss in this chapter the epistemic and methodological frameworks and tools that I rely on to formulate research hypotheses and discover structural patterns within these complex art works.

The first section of this chapter will introduce and situate the research process by outlining the ethical and epistemic implications of my access and subsequent movement in the field, exploring questions of sensitivity to power, conflicting or inconsistent epistemologies, and the specific status of theory in the empirical material. Furthermore, I will examine the twin notions of care and conflict as distinct frameworks that have conditioned the collection and evaluation of the data, as well as the status of the sensorial and the corporeal in my fieldwork. The second section reflects on the intersection of aesthetic representation and experience, addressing both the potential and the peril of working with aesthetic evidence and artistic case studies. The third section details the sample of empirical materials and the methodological tools applied to their collection and evaluation. Noting the environments and conditions in which the artworks are produced and distributed, I discuss the preconditions and the process of