

**SCAR TISSUE: STITCHING THE DIVIDE  
REINTEGRATING BEIRUT'S CENTRAL DISTRICT INTO PUBLIC  
LIFE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the role of ruins and memory in triggering public ownership, and using them as a setting for programs that encourage inclusion, reconciliation, and interaction between different sectarian and social groups - specifically, the marketplace. Contemporary rebuilding and redevelopment aims to restore buildings to their pre-war state, erasing all evidence of violence; this is to project an image of modern stability and to attract wealthy foreign investment. The infrastructure associated with this redevelopment favours a vehicle-dominated city, with pockets of pedestrian-friendly spaces. Furthermore, redevelopment focussing on the historical downtown Central District physically and visually alienated the rest of the city, and highlights social and sectarian divisions that resulted in civil war.

Thus this thesis seeks to investigate how the reconciliation between the old and new could be translated into spaces that encourage social integration, reinforced by the preservation of ruins, and thus the collective memory of the populace.

### List of Abbreviations

BCD Beirut Central District

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my family, Samir, Lina, and Tamer. You will never understand how much the merest touch from you, the softest whisper (even though all of you are loud as hell) would send tremours of emotion and love coursing through me. I love you so much.

To Sarah, Catherine, and Niall. You pushed me to limits I did not think I would reach, and believed in me, even when my own feet refused to move.

To my dear, dear friends and cousins - you saw me at my absolute worst, and yet you help me get to my very best. Thank you, truly, for brushing away my insecurities, and making me believe that there's a spark buried in there, somewhere.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Joseph cranked his gun. With a smirk on his face he pointed the rifle in Hassan's direction and shot a few rounds. The whole area went aflame. Bullets flew left and right, back and forth. I dug behind the sandbags; empty warm bullets flew from Joseph's machine and landed at my feet. When everyone stopped shooting we heard Hassan's voice from the other side. He shouted something about a prostitute, about Christian mothers. Everyone laughed.

...

"You did not kill him?"

"No. No. We promised each other that when this war ends we will have a drink."  
(Hage 2008, 54)



(Top to bottom) The St Georges Hotel, 1957, and street market scene, 1960s; photographs by Gord Jenkins. View of Beirut in the 1970s, her port, and the snow-capped Mount Sannine in the distance.

Beirut, built upon a mercantile past, experienced a period of prosperity as a Mediterranean port city linking the West to the Arab near east. However, this prosperity thinly veiled sectarian tensions that were further exacerbated by internal and external political influences, and resulted in a civil war. The city was divided along a line of demarcation, the Green Line, that separated it into Muslim West Beirut and Christian East Beirut.

In Hage's novel, Bassam grows to adulthood in the Christian side of war-torn Beirut. The above excerpt describes his first experience on the Green Line, where Christian and Muslim militiamen trade volleys of fire. However, in stark contrast to the severity of war, and the divisive nature of fighting

for different factions, these men laugh with the carelessness and bravado of youth, and the fervour of adopted dogma. Pre-war relationships, however, run deep, and the almost-indifference of the Lebanese people as a whole towards war is highlighted by the expectation of easily-attained normalcy after war. It seems to justify the intimacy of civil war, where "individuals inflict trauma on practical neighbours" (Leclair-Paquet, Boano & Wade 2010, 80).



Martyr's Square, in Beirut's historic Central District, the top image taken in the 1960s, the bottom during the civil war in 1978 (Habeb.com 2003-2006)

Following the civil war, Beirut was left with a trail of devastation, concentrated along the Green Line, that separated the warring factions. The city's once-thriving Beirut Central District (BCD) was laid to ruin; ruptured sewer lines replaced the cooling fountains of yore, whilst structures that once housed offices of government and bustling souqs were now choked with foliage, inhabited by ghosts and memories of a silenced past. Today, the road has been turned into a highway, with no traces of the war except the scattered concrete remains of abandoned buildings, bullet-ridden buildings patched with cinder block, and mostly-homogeneous religious neighbourhoods.

The Green Line bisected the city from the Port and Central District, which were historically the city's place of origin, and extended along the Damascus Road that



Images of war, destruction, and the vegetation overtaking roads where no humans dare pass. All buildings, even churches, serve as shelter and temporary barracks. (Françoise de Mulder 1976, Roger Moukarzel 1963)

connected Beirut to Damascus in Syria, and further to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. Post-war reconstruction focused on the Central District, following a profit-led urban development strategy, whilst the rest of



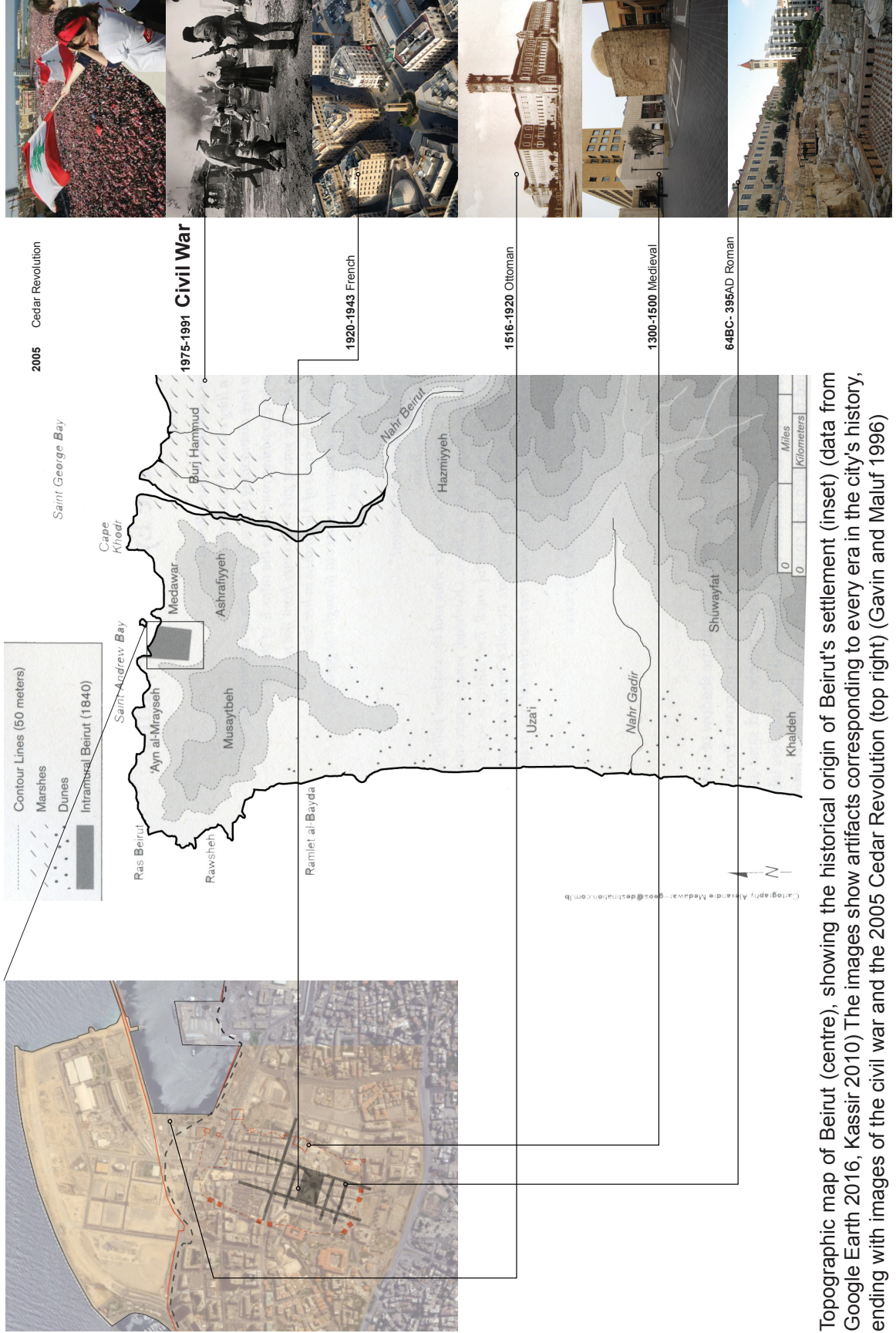
the city remained neglected and repaired haphazardly. This effectively alienated it from the rest of the city physically, through a raised highway, and socially, through developments catering to wealthy international businesses and investors.

The social repercussions of effectively neglecting the reconstruction of the rest of the city, whilst focussing on an area that does not have the interest of the common populace in mind, have been quite severe. According to Höckel, these actions led to a "loss of government legitimacy and credibility among its citizens" and "weakened state control in the marginalised regions" (2007, 1). Furthermore, "para-state actors" such as Hezbollah would challenge state authority by redeveloping poorer areas and gaining territorial domination through the support of the afflicted citizens (Höckel 2007, 1).

## **1.1 The Civil War**

The country has long had a rich but turbulent history due to its religious pluralism. The state officially recognises eighteen confessions, the main groups being Maronite, Orthodox Christian, Druze, Shiite, and Sunni Muslims (Höckel 2007, 2). Originally subservient to the Muslims under Ottoman rule, the Maronites, long supported by the French as a main Christian presence and ally in the Middle East, eventually came to power both





Topographic map of Beirut (centre), showing the historical origin of Beirut's settlement (inset) (data from Google Earth 2016, Kassar 2010). The images show artifacts corresponding to every era in the city's history, ending with images of the civil war and the 2005 Cedar Revolution (top right) (Gavin and Maluf 1996)





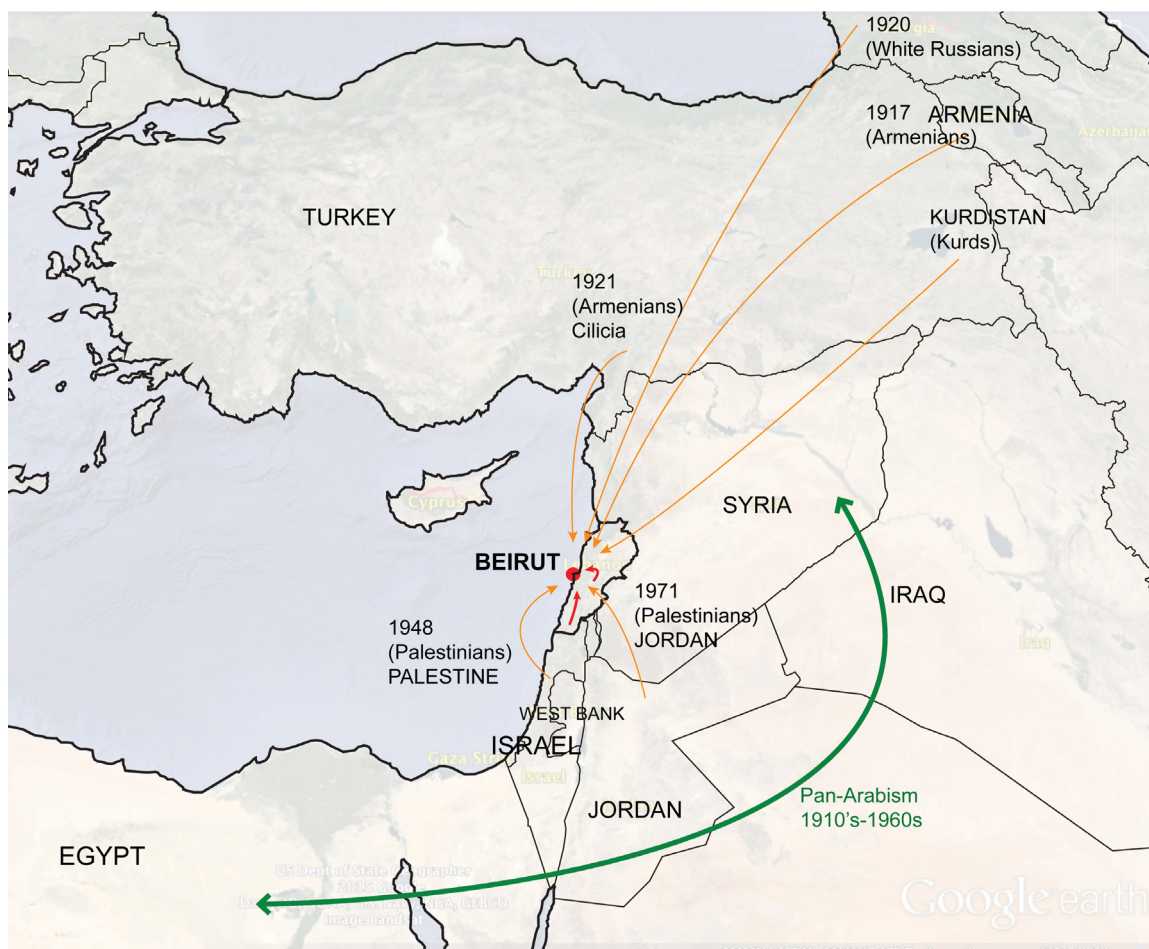
Concept of Beirut, highlighting its idyllic settings and ideal location, regionally and locally, for multicultural exposure, commercial exchange, and peaceful coexistence. To the French writer and photographer Maxime du Camp, coming from Alexandria in 1850,

Beirut is incomparable; not the city itself, which is pitiful and lacking in grandeur, but the country that surrounds it, the forest of parasol pines,...the view of the Mediterranean and the aspect of the wooded summits of the Lebanon that draw the purity of their lines on the sky. It is a retreat made for the contemplative, for the disillusioned, for those who have been wounded by existence; it seems to me that one can live happily there doing nothing but looking at the mountains and the sea. (Quoted in Debbas 2001, 27)



politically and socially. The country's founding document established a rigid consociational political system that assigns different positions and shares of parliamentary seats to each religious group. Thus, confessional affiliations for political participation is given primacy over national political agendas (Höckel 2007, 2).

Social and political fragmentation, inevitable in such an environment, with a rise in Pan-Arabism ideology, and an influx of Palestinian refugees after the creation of the state of Israel, all led to a rise in tensions in the

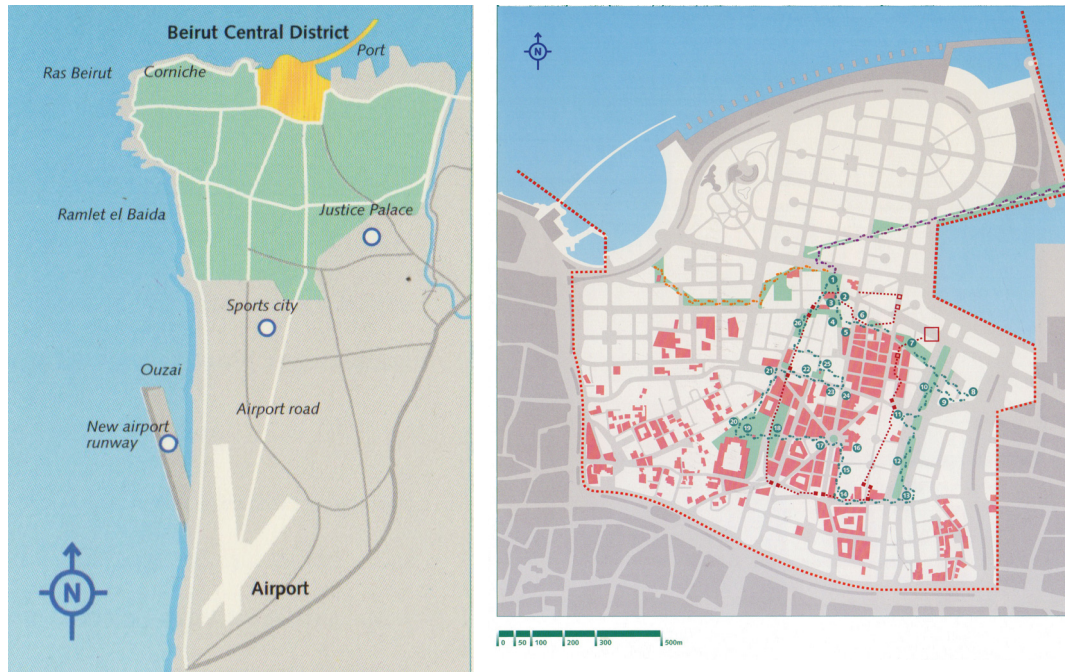


Map of the Middle East, with arrows showing the migration patterns of refugees to Lebanon over time (data from Google Earth 2015)



country. Furthermore, Höckel outlines that the fixed, rigid confessional system, which failed to "adapt to major demographic changes that had occurred since independence, produced a feeling of inadequate representation among certain groups of society. Straining an already-fragile social structure, with Muslims calling for more representation, power, and an acknowledgment of Lebanon's role in helping the Palestinian cause, and the French-backed Christian elite resisting it for the sake of an independent Lebanese identity, war broke out. Dividing the city in two, it further segregated a once heterogeneous society into religious homogeneous territories, and exacerbated social and religious disintegration that plagued Lebanese society and weakened the national entity (Höckel 2007, 3).





The area of post-war redevelopment by Solidere, in yellow, relative to Beirut (left); the extent Beirut Central District bounded by the highways (Gavin and Maluf 1996)

## 1.2 Post-War Reconstruction

### 1.2.1 Solidere - Profit-Oriented Public Design

Reconstruction, defined in a holistic sense, refers not only to the physical reconstruction of destroyed houses and infrastructure. It also addresses the rehabilitation of the economy, repair of the social fabric, and re-establishment of state functions, taking into consideration the political institutions and relationships necessary for this to occur. (Höckler 2007, 4)

In 1994, Solidere (Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre Ville de Beyrouth) was incorporated as a Lebanese joint-stock company, founded by businessman Rafic Hariri (Solidere 2002). Following the conclusion of the civil war in 1990, the city was in desperate need of

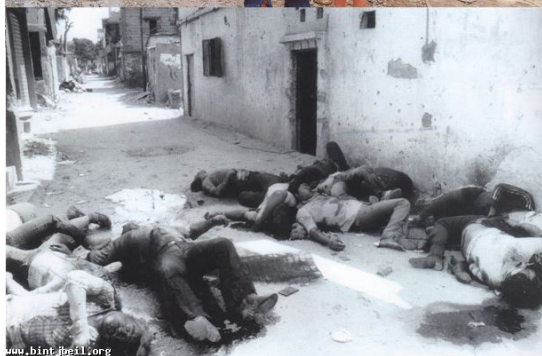
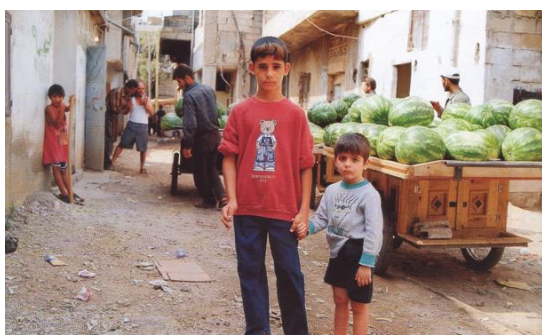
reconstruction. However, as far back as the 1940 and 1950s, the laissez-faire attitude of the mercantile sector resisted attempts at urban restrictions that would diminish profitability (Kassir 2010, 412). Nevertheless, an ordinance calling for a distinct company to manage and execute a master plan drawn up in 1992, leading to the creation of Solidere. The controversial Law 117, passed in 1991, allowed a private company to expropriate land and property of existing owners; in return, they were given shares in Solidere's stocks - albeit much at much less than their actual value (Leclair-Paquet, Boano, & Wade 2010, 85).

Thus, Solidere was driven by profit, and was accountable to its shareholders; as a company in charge of executing the urban development plan of public spaces, it represented a conflict of interest - "organisations whose work have direct effects on the public realm – thus on civic societies – ought to be administered in line with ideals clearly overpassing the fringes of profitability or economical rhetoric" (Leclair-Pacquet 2013, 19). The company further acquired land undemocratically, and destroying buildings that could otherwise have been developed. Opponents criticised the lack of democratic decision-making, especially in the public and civic arenas (Höckel 2007, 5). Furthermore, the vacant luxury apartments and offices



Place de L'Etoile, 2011, photograph by Ahmed Hashim; image of the Beirut Municipal Building after the war, 1991, photograph by Gabriele Basilico; another image of the BCD before and after reconstruction (souar.com)





The St Georges Hotel, caught in a property battle with Solidere over land rights, 2011 (top), photograph by Joseph Eid; Families squatting in and repairing ruins along the former Green Line, 1996, photograph by Ed Kashi; Sabra and Chatila camp occupied by Palestinian refugees in 2002 (top) and following the 1982 massacre (bottom two), Ibrahim El Tawil.

in the city centre, paralleled by a shortage of affordable housing in the rest of the city, highlighted the strategies of reconstruction and development that favoured the interests of an exclusive minority (Höckel 2007, 7).

Whilst the BCD reverberated with the sounds of construction, the rest of the city, especially in the poorest neighbourhoods consisting of war-displaced citizens and refugees, rang with ignored calls for help from the state (Höckel 2007, 6). Whilst the focused development in the BCD alienated ordinary citizens and led to withdrawal of their support, total neglect of the peripheral Beiruti neighbourhoods led to their full support of para-state organisations, such as Hezbollah (Höckel 2007, 6). These groups took advantage of the government's absence, establishing "an efficient and professional comprehensive social system for its Shiite constituency" (Höckel 2007, 6).

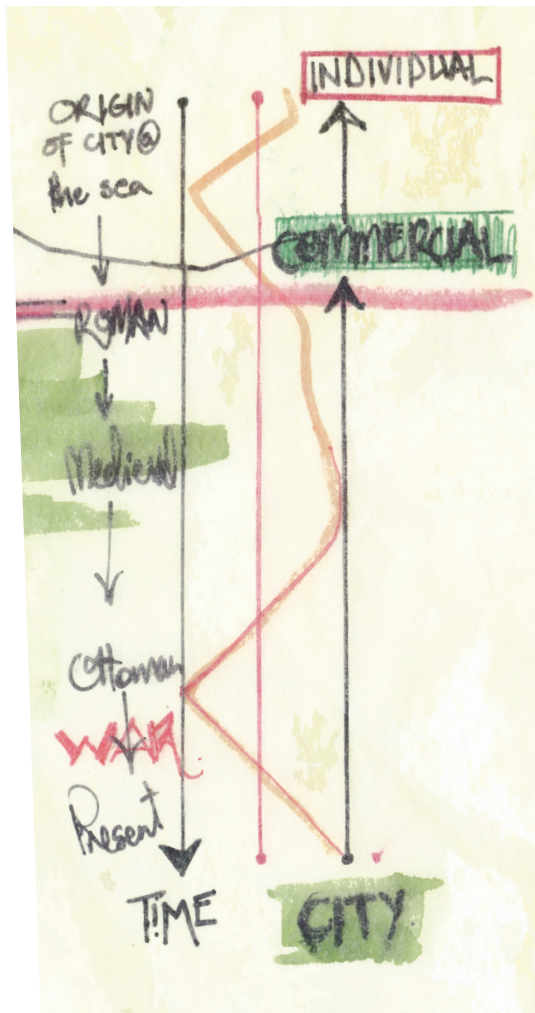
Although initiated with the intent of benefitting the rest of the city through a trickle-down approach, nevertheless promoted a "particularistic and elitist approach" that generated economic activities benefitting and elitist and foreign demographic (Leclair-Paquet 2013, 21). Instead of an inclusive, redistributive national development strategy, the reconstruction process led to a widened gap between rich and poor, manifest in the spatial quality between the BCD and the rest

of the city. Leclair-Paquet et al. argue that the "new [BCD] is detached from the Lebanese context...[and] illustrative of a process of privatisation of the urban realm and the dominance of global economic trends over local social needs" (2010, 86). The exclusion of the public in the development of civic space, and a neglect of the basic needs of the poorer neighbourhoods, all led to the disintegration of social adhesion and national unity (Höckel 2007, 8).

### 1.3 Connective Threads

By studying the elements of Beirut's makeup that encouraged social and religious cohabitation, and using ruins along the Line, I hope to explore a means of using architecture to cultivate social inclusion, reparation, and public ownership. Programmatically, the souq stands out as the scene of 'pure' social interaction, where positive communication takes precedence over social class and religious or sectarian affiliations.

Set in shelled remains from the war, it would ideally trigger the collective memory of the city's inhabitants, in a manner that promotes reconciliation. Furthermore, as a 'knot' of memory along the road that was once the Green Line, which bisects both the BCD and the rest of the city, increasing the porosity of the physical and implied barriers, and by



Conceptualising procession through the urban reality and condition paralleled with time

extension, between different socio-politico-religious affiliations.

Thus, the first thread is the Damascus Road (that was once the Green Line), going through the city, the BCD, and the Port, to the Mediterranean - the historic life-giver of trade. A physical connector, it also connects ruins, which form the second thread, memory. The third connecting thread is program, specifically the marketplace, historically significant as the stage for the city's commercial prosperity, and socially, where the unimportance of religious and social affiliation contributed to that prosperity.

Furthermore, the thread of dialogue, or ideological commerce, both external, at the larger community scale, and internal, at a solitary, reflective scale, would be spatially manifest at the Martyr's Square site, where hundreds of years of protests and rallies took place. Finally, the thread of history, which, using the Green Line, extends from the Port into the city, and beyond. Forming a procession, by walking along the line northwards up towards the sea, one is walking backwards through time, from the site of the city's expansion (the thick urban fabric), down through the BCD, the commercial heart of the capital, containing the aforementioned market spaces, into the Martyr's Square, in the zone of reflection and political and



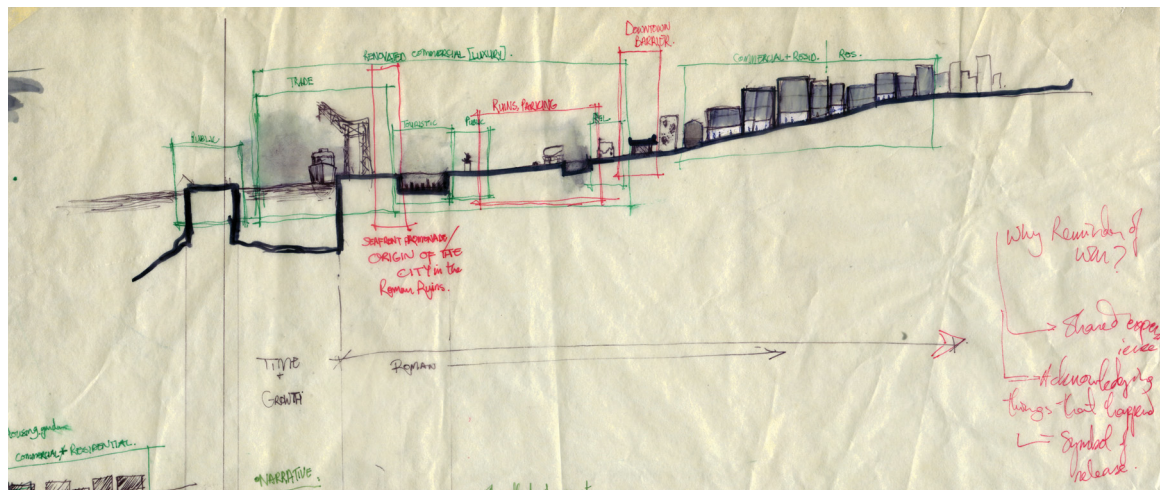
ideological exchange/commerce, and finally, into the sea, which provided for the city.

### Thesis Question

Drawing on principles of site-sensitive, inclusive traditions, can utilising the collective memory of a city in the form of ruins result in an architecture that connects a fragmented city, promotes remediation, and cultivate public stewardship?

The thesis seeks to explore the role of architecture in promoting reconciliation and public ownership - the latter reinforcing the former by putting the collective interest of the city, and its ability to cater to the needs of all of its citizens, ahead of those of immediate family, religion, or neighbourhood. The design proposal utilises the concept of procession, to stitch together layers of memory, social interaction, and program, providing a tangible and cognitive connection between the city,

Conceptual section studying urban and individual, and the collective populace. chronological connections



## CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC-ORIENTED POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

The current urban reconstruction in Beirut is suffering on three fronts: a) an urban fragmentation exacerbated by passive governments, and several developers operating independently at a large urban scale; b) a systematic erasure of the memory of the civil war, destroying any remnants of war-torn ruins and either reconstructing them in the same design, or redesigned and built; c) finally, these new episodes of reconstruction seem to bypass the public opinion, enforcing an impartiality to the public opinion, and in turn, weakening the public's faith in the local and national governments.

### 2.1 Urban Planning and Community Dialogue

Solidere's reconstruction project's slogan, *Beirut: An Ancient City for the Future*, could be more aptly called *Beirut Central District: An Ancient City District For the Future Foreign Investors*. This is a reflection of the current post-war reconstruction process occurring in Beirut: Solidere has effectively limited itself to the city's historic core, reinventing it as a separate enclave separated from the rest of the city by visual and physical barriers - the latter in the form of highways (Ghandour and Fawaz 2010). In the rest of the city, real estate foundations, created or affiliated with

different militant groups and political parties, take over the local governments' role in urban planning (Ghandour and Fawaz 2010). Thus, the city suffers a double blow of not only a reinforced disconnection and fragmentation in the form of physical barriers, but also a lack of a unifying cohesive architectural element that connects its inhabitants - exacerbated by passive public authorities.

Leclair-Pacquet argues, in his paper (2013), for the merits of the public's role in a democratic reconstruction process; one that would surely unify the inhabitants should public spaces cater to the collective similarity between different groups.

Urban policy can ameliorate nationalistic tensions in two respects – (1) it allows for opportunities for consensus building and partnering; and (2) it can increase the public's allegiance and trust in local government and thus public buy-in to political, rather than violent, means towards resolving conflict. (Bollens 2006,107-8)

Although referring to major reconstruction projects “guided by modernist ethos” where “planning is essentially a rational, objective, procedure, [and where it is believed that] a ‘correct’ solution can be derived by a hard-headed look at the facts” (Sorkin 2003, 59), Michael Sorkin's outlining of common flaws in major reconstruction projects, could be used in the context of Beirut (Leclair-Pacquet 2013, 14). “He unwraps the meaning of

'democracy' in relation to urban planning and challenges a common adaptation of the word against its inceptive meaning. Understanding that "American democracy is not direct but representative" (2003, 124), Sorkin underlines how systems designed to 'hear' people (versus systems designed to allow people to make decisions) commonly claim to be 'democratic' and have oftentimes become accepted in democratic societies. This is notably true in regional, urban and site planning processes. Admittedly, the only power left in the hands of the public for planning New York, Toronto, Los Angeles and myriad other cities founded on the ethos of democracy and just public representation, is the power to say 'no'. This is contradictory to the promise of cities as "privileged places for democratic innovation" (Borja & Castells 1997, 246).

In *Writings on Cities* (1996), Henri Lefebvre outlines the critical need for architects and planners to shift away from this traditionalist approach where decisions on city forms are taken by white collar city workers, and to actively engage in inclusionary planning through a new paradigm which defends stakeholders' right to the city – even when this stakeholder is in minority. Sandercock's *Towards Cosmopolis* (1998) lends support to this metamorphic role for planning:

Today, planning is no longer seen as being exclusively concerned with integrative, comprehensive, and coordination action is increasingly identified with negotiated, political, and focused planning (Christensen 1993), a planning less oriented to the production of documents and more interactive, centred on people. (Sandercock 1998, 205)

In this “thriving, community-based planning practice in which planners link their skills to the campaigns of mobilised communities, working as enablers and facilitators” (ibid), the objectives established for urban (re) development projects are defined by the people – the primary stakeholders – instead of by city planners, too often representative of an elitist minority instead of the comprehensive civil society affected by the project. This typology of planning repositions negotiation processes from a ministerial and professional arena to a level closer to the grassroots. Inevitably, it brings people in opposition to a table and entails dialogues amongst antagonists. Relegating the power to choose urban forms back to the people is especially important in cities recovering from civil-strives, natural catastrophes or international attacks. Societies victim of such events are more likely to be vulnerable, where the need to develop a strong solidarity and enable each other to move forward is amplified (Leclair-Pacquet 2013, 15). This especially rings true in Beirut, divided as it is at the sectarian, neighbourhood, and

government levels.

## **2.2 Resident Participation in Urban Renewal**

### **2.2.1 The Team Ten Approach**

As to people who are interested in Team 10, Team 10 might ask a few serious questions: 'Why do you wish to know?' 'What will you do with your knowledge?' 'Will it help you regenerate the language of Modern Architecture so that it would again be worth inheriting?' (Smithson 1991, 15)

I see Team 10's *modus operandi* as firstly, an understanding of the makeup of the existing urban fabric, and secondly, a reconciliation between new beginnings, and learnt socio-architectural lessons from a society's past - a method highly applicable to the current post-war redevelopment condition in Beirut.

I see a strong parallel to current events with the Team Ten's approach to modernity, the ongoing process of modernization, and the architectural and urbanist response to these (van der Heuvel and Risselada). Their critique of the extensive fragmentation of collective public and public space, and the continual restructuring and renewal of the cities in response to new economic developments, also applies to Beirut today. More importantly, their seeking within and parallel to these processes of modernization, "concepts and strategies which would make room for individual and collective identities,

which would make places capable of being appropriated by residents and users. This standpoint went hand-in-hand with an alertness to the specific context of a design task. How to define local and regional qualities, and the potential integration of these qualities into the design, occupied an important place in their discussions” (van der Heuvel and Risselada). Furthermore, they attempted to redefine modern architecture, taking in a “different view of the relationship between the individual and the larger whole...a shift from universal solutions to specific solutions for local situations, and a shift from an outlook on urban planning driven by technological rationalism to one inspired by society and culture; and, finally, it meant advocating of an inclusive and positive European perspective” (van der Heuvel and Risselada). Precedents from Team 10 architects working in Arab countries would reflect these ideals in Beirut.

### **2.2.2 Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe**

#### ***Paris et l'agglomération parisienne, 1952***

In this publication, Chombart de Lauwe was extremely critical of the dwelling conditions in the new post-war urban developments, especially their failure to underscore public life (Avermaete 2003, 239). This emerged from investigations of the characteristics of the historical city of Paris, focusing on

the combination of physical entities and practiced entities, using notions such as the neighbourhood, the urban block, the building, and the street. He compares everyday urban landscapes in different neighbourhoods, in order to trace the recurrent and thus structural elements. Mirroring this, a study in Beirut would facilitate understanding “the densely woven social and spatial structure of services” of well-functioning neighbourhoods, and ultimately a useful study of characteristics and principles that could guide architectural and urban design in the future (Avermaete 2003, 240).

### **2.3 Ruins and Memory - *Les Liban***

Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events. (Nora 1989, 22)

I would agree with Rothberg that, the ruins along the Green Line, and in other areas of fighting, are important as a reminder to the inhabitants of the city of the horrors of war, but also as a deterrent against repeating the mistakes of the past. In Rothberg’s own words (2010, 3), the past “finds articulation in a wide array [of] sites [considered] broadly to include not only monuments and museums, but also novels, cities, personages, symbols, and more.” Similarly, Pierre Nora’s “project has inspired reflection and scholarship on national memory in Germany, Italy, etc. Although emerging from a commitment to



the exceptionality of France's relation to its national past, the approach pioneered...has proven highly exportable as a model for the consideration of diverse memory cultures" (2013, 3).

I found Nora's "emphasis on the local and the heterogeneous - on what volume three of *Les Lieux* calls 'Les France'" (Rothberg 2010, 5), creates a strong image of a duality between a nation and its heterogeneous cultures - a reality all too familiar in Beirut, and Lebanon. However, Rothberg (2010, 7) notes that Nora's model may be limited, where 'sites' of memory, although representative of a heterogeneous collection, nevertheless could imply isolation (from each other). In contrast, Rothberg then proposes a revised model, of *noeuds de mémoire*, or 'knots', which suggests that "'knotted' in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at creating territories (whether at the local or national level) and reduction of multiple identities to one. Performances of memory may well have territorializing or identity-forming effects, but those effects will always be contingent and open to resignification" (Rothberg 2010, 7). He continues, saying that "even as critics have begun to explore the 'knotted intersections' of history and memory that cut across categories of national and ethnic identity,

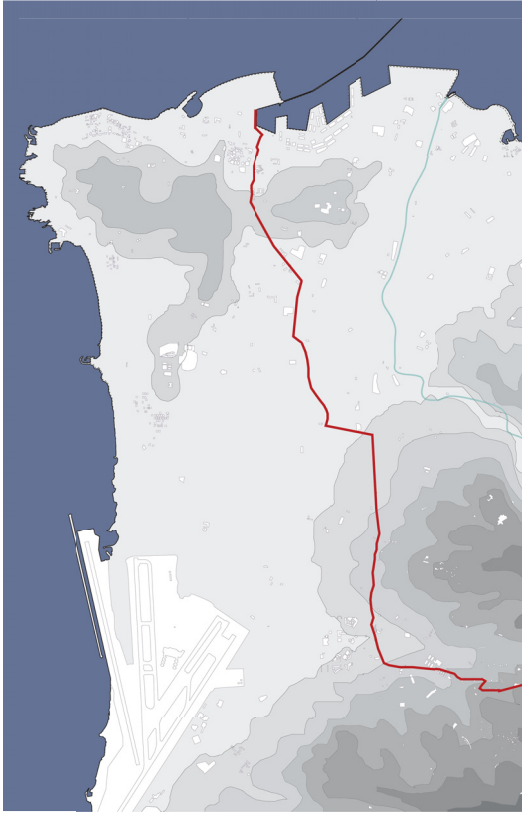


In stark contrast to Solidere's erasure of traces of war, the tenacity of the rest of the city in surviving through all harsh conditions, and reusing found materials, is evident in these rebuilt forms, 2015 (top left, 1990, AP; top centre, 2012, photograph by W. Marling)

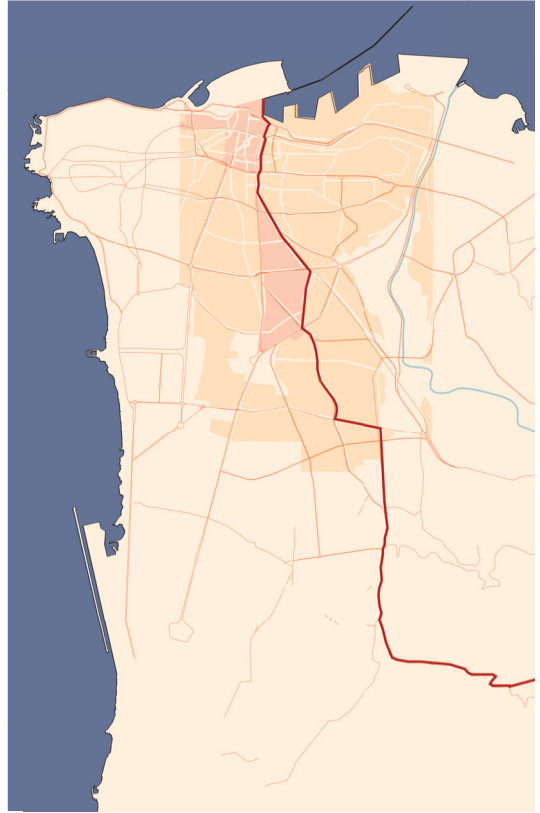


institutions of knowledge-production, nation-states, and many embattled communities continue to disavow the evidence of cosmopolitan impurity” (2010, 8). “*Noeuds de mémoire* as we conceive them here are not static conglomerations of heterogeneous elements. Sites of memory do not remember by themselves - they require the active agency of individuals and publics. Such agency entails recognising and revealing the production of memory as an ongoing process involving inscription and reinscription, coding and recoding” (Rothberg 2010, 8). This is reminiscent of the idea of ‘open and flexible city’ with a new culture illustrative of a mix of cultures (Leclair-Pacquet 2013, 13).

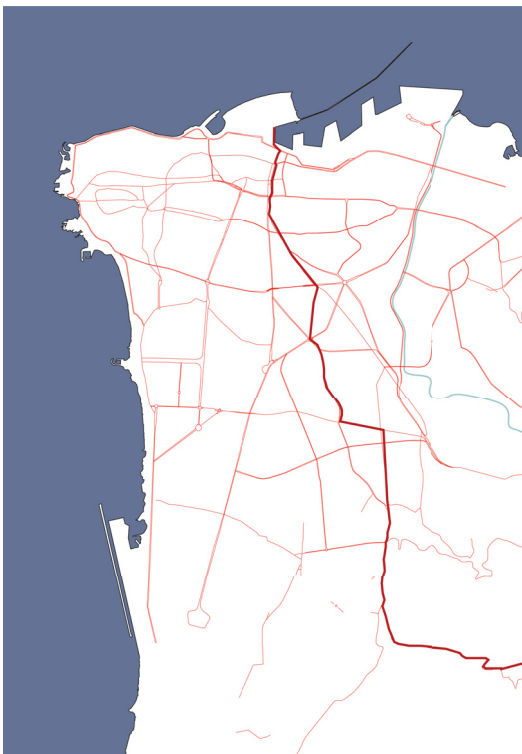
This led me to the ruins - the war-torn remnants of buildings found along the former Green Line, as well as further into the city fabric. These remnants, memories of a dark, divisive time, are nevertheless part of the collective memory. They could be designed into powerful public spaces that would unite people in the face of social fragmentation. My design intention is to link these nodes of public spaces, drawing from the ruins into a spine that would connect the currently fragmented part of the inner city. could form an architectural spine connecting various parts of the city, with programs that, historically, propelled the city into a prosperous period, whilst simultaneously catalyzing social



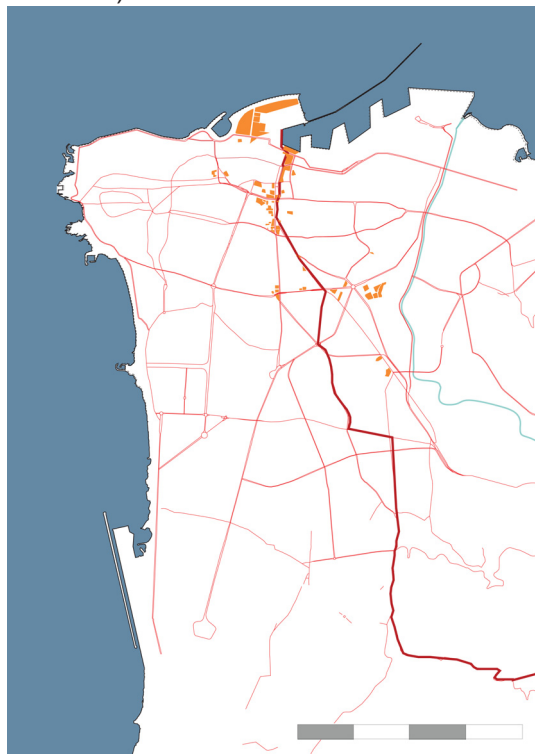
Topographical map of Beirut, with the Green Line



Beirut, with the intensity of fighting, most evident along the Green Line (data from Fisk1990)

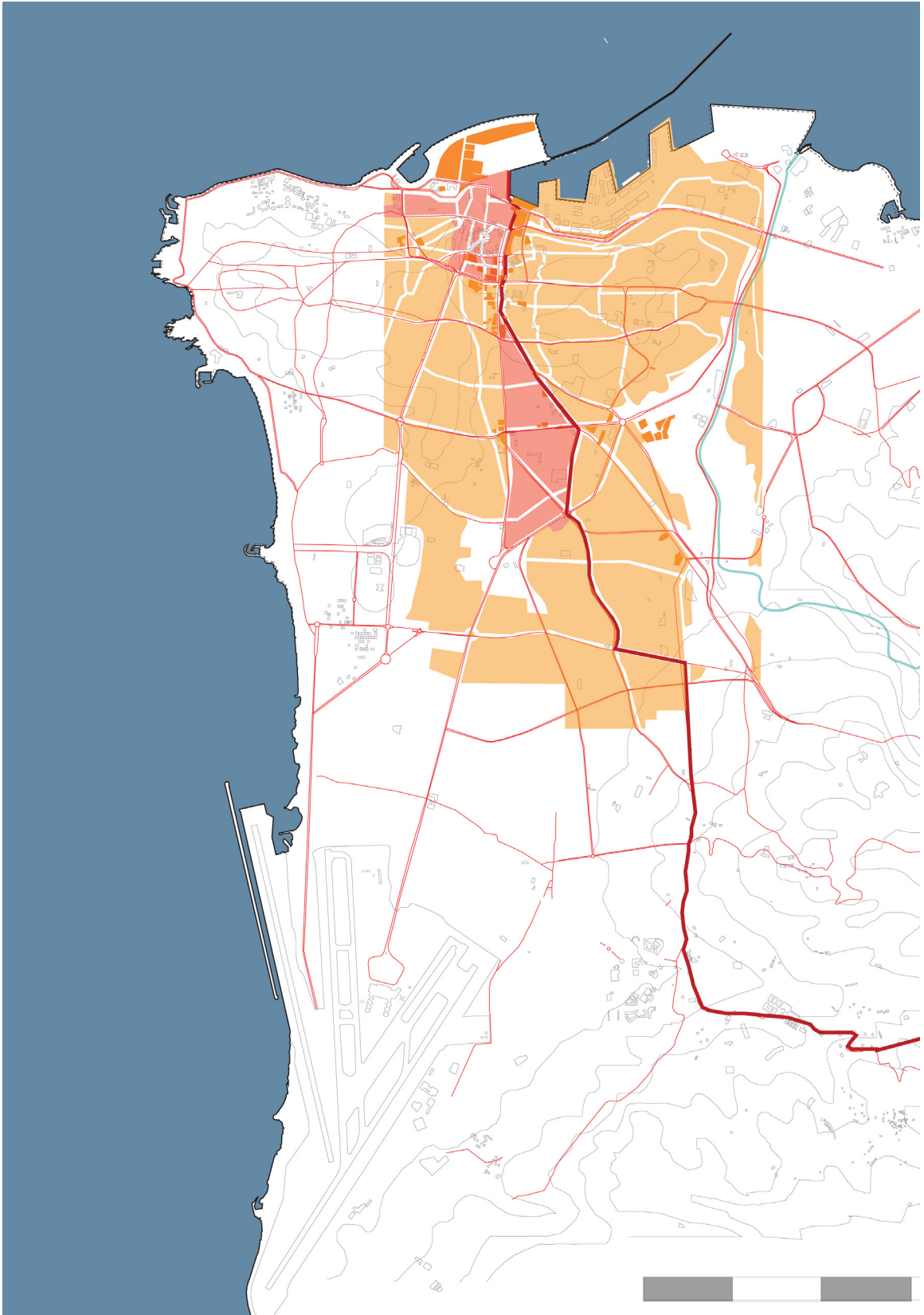


Major roadways of Beirut, and the possibility of implementing a tram network.

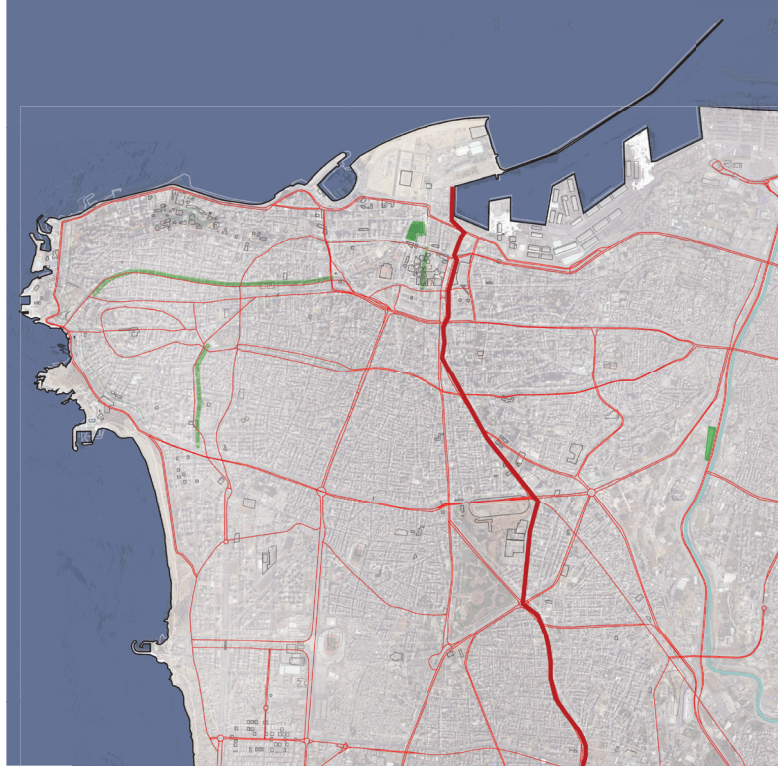


Possible sites, consisting of ruined buildings, vacant and parking lots



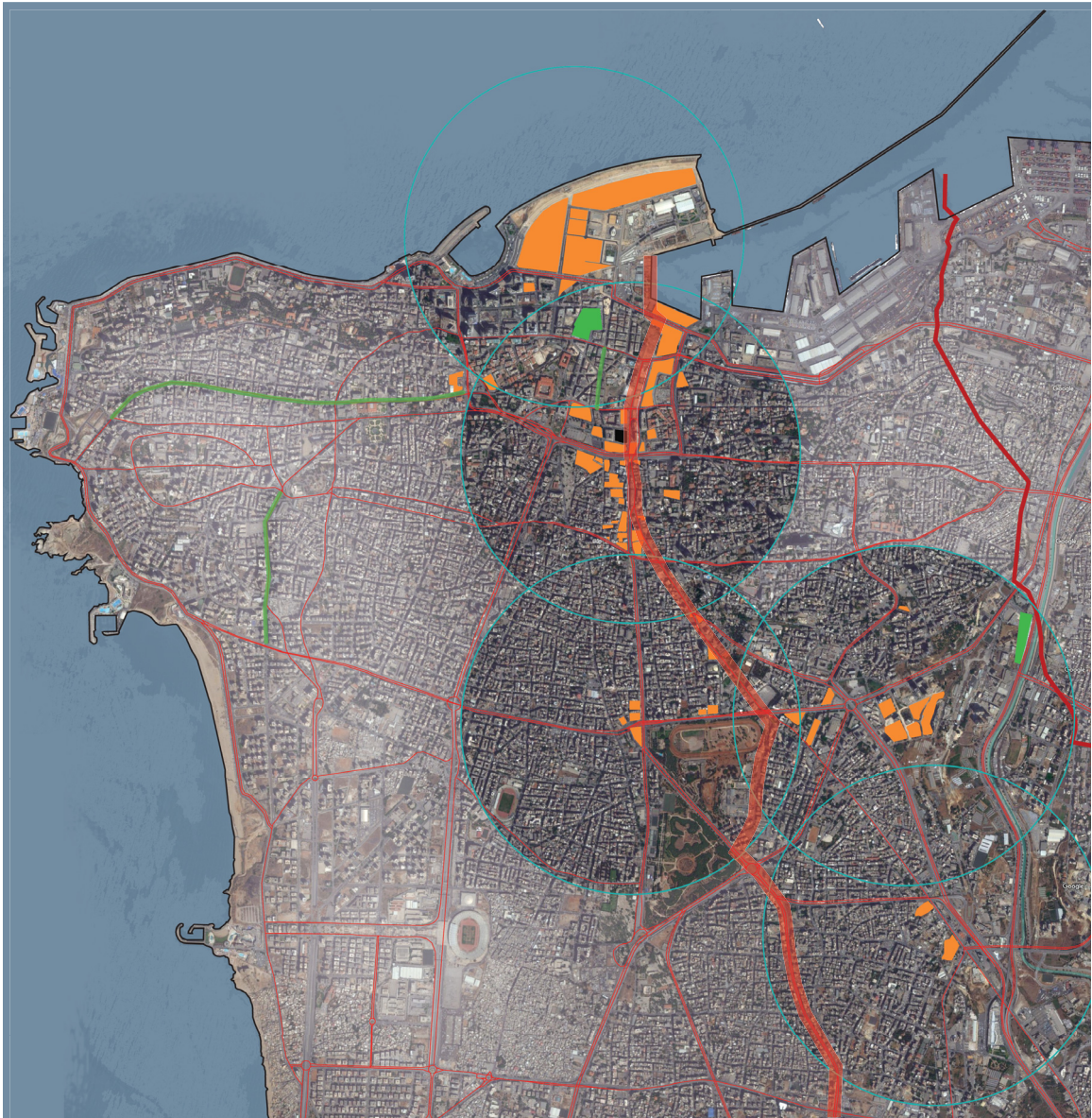


Map with all data, showing the correlation between possible sites, the former Green Line, and fighting intensity



(Top) A study of markets (solid green blocks) and market streets (green lines), results of commercial activity drifting away from the Central District because of the war. (Above) Fifteen-minute one-kilometre walking radii around the existing markets and market streets.





Compilation of the data, emphasising the correlation between the former Green Line, the dispersed markets and market streets, and the potential sites. The walking circles help to study the feasibility of having full-pedestrian streets, although they would be joined by tram lines.





The proposal sites would be at ruins, shelled buildings, and vacant and parking lots along the former Green Line. They would extend from the topmost Port area down into the heart of the city, incorporating as well historically significant areas (Data from GoogleEarth 2015)



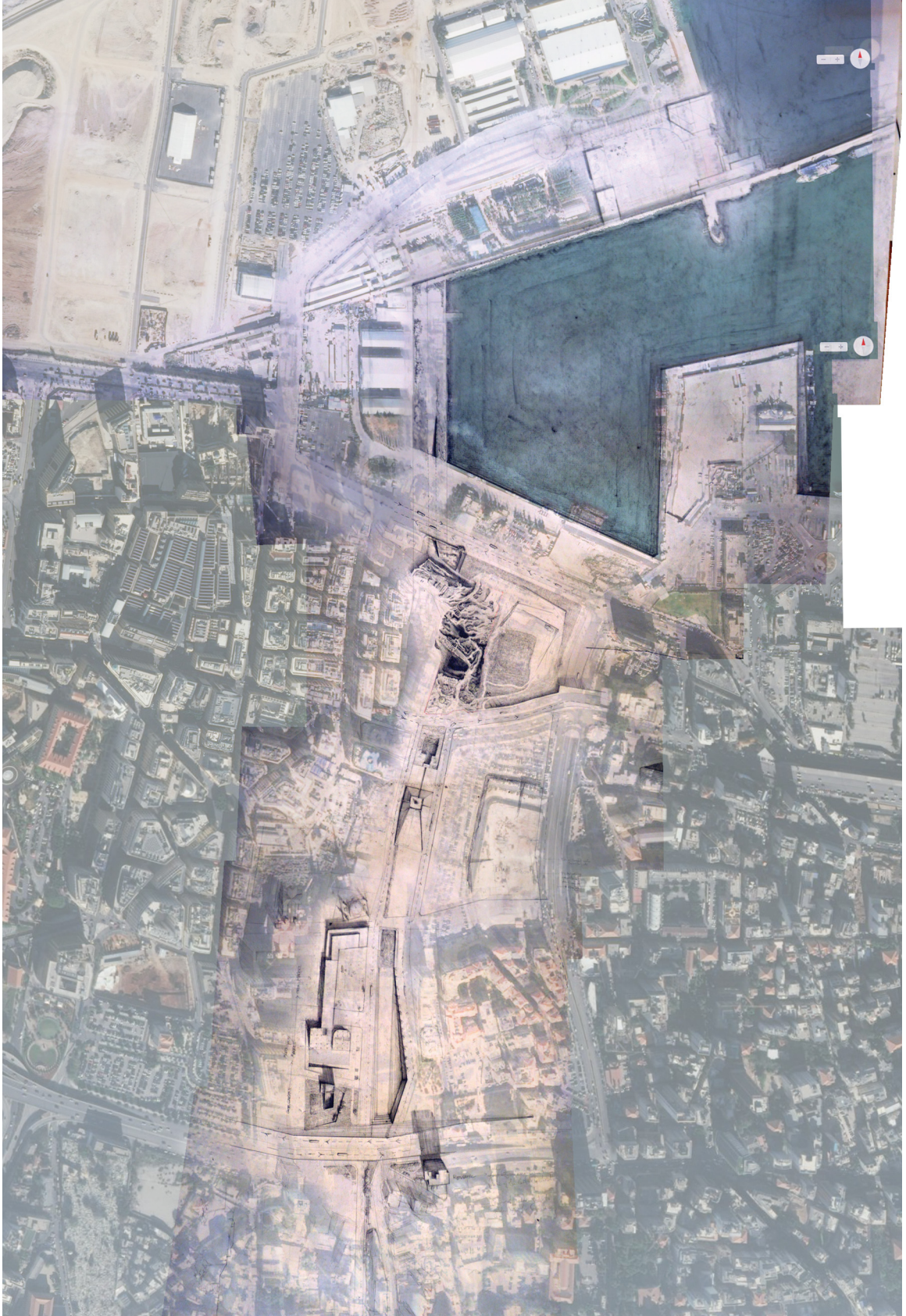
interaction: markets, cafes, restaurants, fishing piers, and festival grounds.

## **CHAPTER 3: DESIGN PROPOSAL**

### **3.1 Proposal**

The current redevelopment strategy undergone in post-war Beirut has focused, so far, on the Beirut Central District (BCD), the historic commercial, business, and banking centre of Beirut. Undergone primarily by Solidere, gutted bullet-ridden buildings were restored to their exact pre-war condition, albeit catering to a modern, capital-driven industry that has resulted in a gentrified and isolated Central District. Formerly an important transit hub connecting the various neighbourhoods and districts of the city, the private, government-subsidized Solidere, responsible for this recall to Orientalism, has not only isolated the district physically, but also sent a message of favouritism of certain areas to be redeveloped over others. This has undermined local governments that, in turn, fail to adequately develop their respective jurisdictions.

Façades in the BCD were repaired or replaced in a manner that completely erased evidence of the war and its effect on what was once the hub of the city. The buildings, in their pristine condition, stand in stark contrast with the rest of the city, which continued to



Site plan with proposed site interventions

grow in an environment rife with corruption and bribery, with the government turning a blind eye to it all.

In an effort to unify the socio-politico-religious levels of Beiruti society, I propose to activate the collective memory of the inhabitants, at several levels, with a mixed-use program. As the site for my proposal, I would look to occupy vacant plots and war-torn buildings along the former Green Line and in areas of intense fighting, as *noeuds de mémoire* that trigger the inhabitants' memory of the Civil War. However, these sites would be developed with a drawing from the Team 10 approach. Contrary to the *modus operandi* of current developers in Beirut, these sites would be designed with the individual in mind, creating intercultural spaces with implicit ideas of reparation, in a marketplace setting which, historically, was the space where religious, class, and political differences were dissolved.

Furthermore, forming the 'lifeblood' connection between the city, the BCD, and the sea, would be a tram network that attempts to reduce vehicular traffic in the city, and allow for more pedestrian-friendly spaces.

### **3.2 Site**

The site, as mentioned before, would





Ruins of a residential building right outside the perimeter of the BCD, 2010, photograph by leoolo; a triangular patch provides the perfect opportunity for a community garden for residents, as well as directing views and pedestrian traffic towards the BCD.

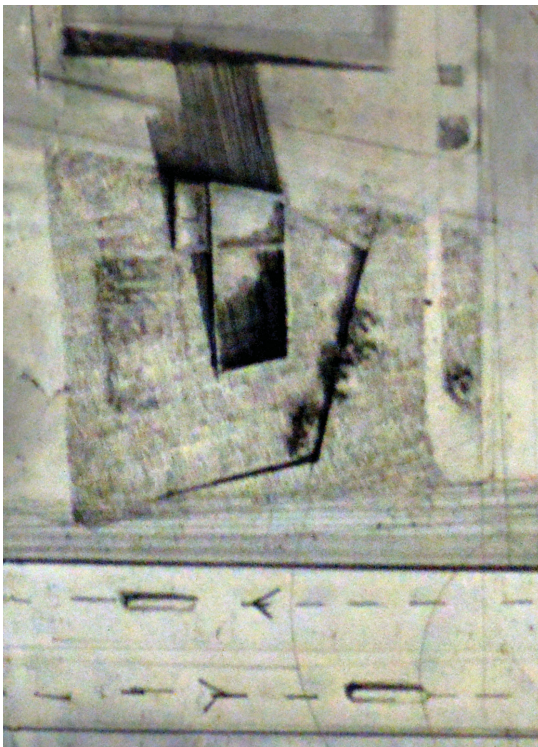
encompass vacant lots and abandoned buildings along the north-south Green Line, while the rest of the sites will serve to ‘knit’ the green line back into the city, extending horizontally, and looking at spaces of engagement that highlight common human traits: children’s laughter, food production, preparation, and distribution, music, etc. The test site will be at the corner and edge of the Central District, which I believe is a crucial hinge-point between the District and the rest of the city. As it is on the Green Line, its proximity to the gentrified neighbourhood, and the rest of the proposed connections along the Green Line, it would be at an ideal position to test out a mixed-use program that perforates the drawn boundaries of the BCD, and invite the inhabitants of Beirut back to their historical centre.

### 3.3 Program

#### 3.3.1 Private

##### *Housing*

The disparity between the upscale, redeveloped Central District and the rest of the city is distinct. Especially considering the test site, placed at the hinge-point between the gentrified Central District and the rest of the city, more affordable housing might increase the porosity of the Central District, especially with a public element underneath.



(top) Ruins of the church just north of the perimeter highway, east view, 2011, photograph by [stephenpoon@lebanon](mailto:stephenpoon@lebanon). (above) Top view of the church as a glasshouse and communal garden; depression in ground separates the gardens from the pedestrian path.

The empty, shelled building, right outside the BCD perimeter, acts as a transitional tool between the abrupt thickness of Beirut's urban residential+commercial fabric, into the commercial+civic+residential BCD. It brings the public within visual distance of the Central District, looking over the highway to the sites, all the way to the sea. A triangular plot at the base of the building provides an opportunity for a community garden, that forms a link to a peace garden attached to the ruins of the church right past the highway, within the BCD.

### **3.3.2 Public**

#### ***Church***

The ruins of a church, within the BCD perimeter, form a gateway counterpoint to the residential building on the other side of the highway. I propose the church to be converted into a greenhouse, with an additional outdoor communal garden - through depressions in the landscape, the flow of pedestrian traffic would remain uninterrupted and separate from the garden activities, without the use of fences. Ideally, the gardens would be used by tenants of the marketplace northwards across the street.

#### ***Marketplace***

The marketplace has been a central element in Beirut's history as the source



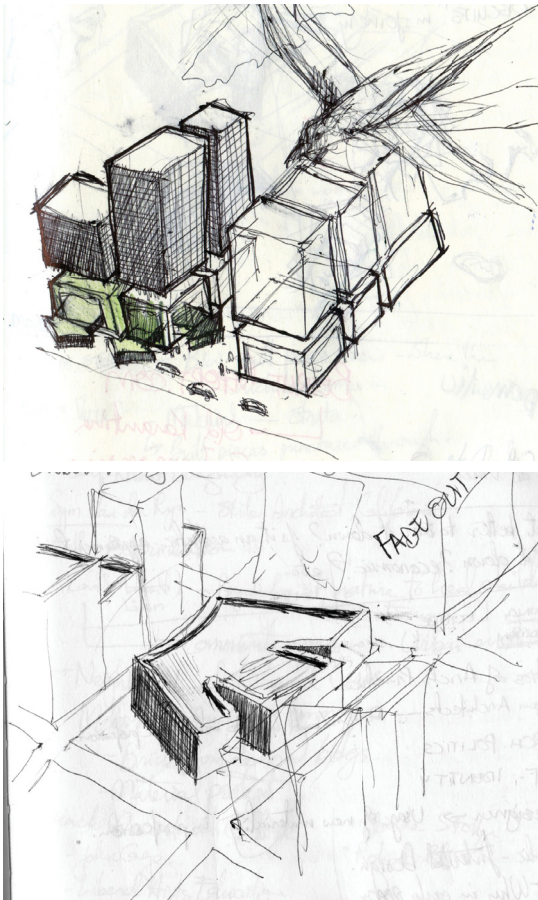


(Top) Close-up of the housing proposal, its position outside the BCD perimeter, its counterpart, the church ruins, and the marketplace site just across the church to the north. The gardens form a diagonal connection, with the intent of pulling the population into the Central District, with the central depressed plaza continuing the visual northwards to Martyrs' Square, and the sea. (Above left) The highway, seen driving from the south and into the BCD; the residential building is to the right, photograph by Ali Shaib. (Above right) The ruined building is in the centre of the photograph; the highway in this case was the site of major protests, which extended northwards up to Martyrs' Square, 2007, photograph by soly.

of its development and growth. The city's importance as a port city has been documented, and, considering its position as an economic and cultural centre, as well as the country's capital, the reality of everyday life as a multidenominational city required the faiths' cooperation (Kassir 2010, 336). The market, therefore, has been the public space where these differences meant little in the face of economics and trade. Furthermore, the pedestrian element of this program would be crucial to the aspect of connectivity between the different site nodes, as the pedestrian relationship with marketplaces could be expanded to reach into the rest of the city street markets, through the Green Line and tramway connections.

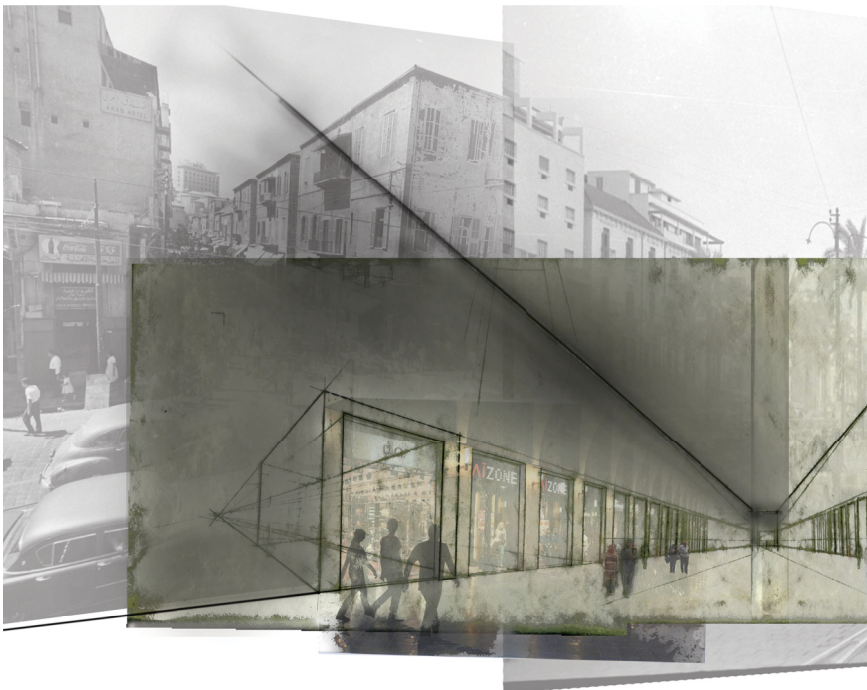
The current trend of concentrating the shopping experience within a mall runs counter to the traditional mode of commerce in Beirut. Stores were either centred at the pedestrian souqs, in the downtown district, which was the principal site of economic life, or in the thick of the urban fabric, which consisted of three- to four-storey residential buildings with a commercial ground level open to the streets (Kassir 2010, 426).

Thus, the site, occupying the old cinema building and the parking lot adjacent to it, would be designed into an indoor/outdoor marketplace, with the upper levels dedicated



Diagrams representing Beirut's urban fabric, with a private residential component over a commercial ground floor (top), and the mall trend, boxing people away in an enclosed space separate from city life (bottom).





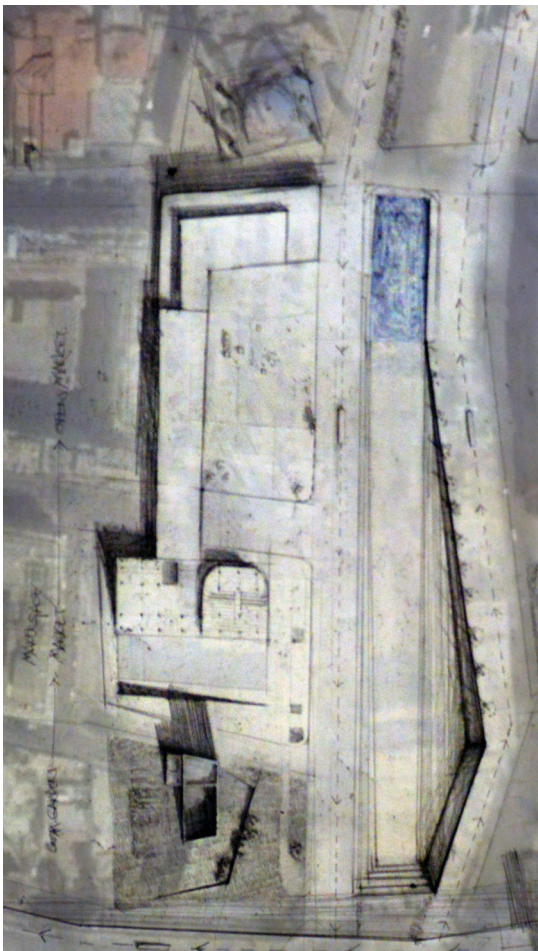
Conceptual images showing the openness of the traditional commercial experience in Beirut, that currently makes up the urban fabric of the city - even though one enters a store, the sights, sounds, and smells of the city still permeate and engulf them (above). This contrasts with the modern trend of malls, where one enters a collection of contained boxes that form a total separation from the urban fabric (left)





Sectional collage through the cinema building, proposed as a multi-level marketplace with an open courtyard, overlooked by workshops that occupy the upper existing levels of the building. The cinema theatre retains its function, forming a connection with the public.





(Top) Proposed site of the marketplace, 2015, occupying the ruins of a mall+cinema complex from the 1960s. (Above) It would connect to a proposed structure on the parking lot north of it to create an indoor/outdoor market, with a courtyard condition that looks eastwards toward the main plaza. The depressed plaza terminates at a wading pool, reflecting the sea seen in the distance.

to craftsmen's workshops. Furthermore, a maker-space facility would allow for the multitudes of children living in poverty to have the opportunity of apprenticeship, as well as provide some tradesmen with facilities to create and sell their wares.

The building is proposed to have an additional structure that extends northwards to the parking lot, with setbacks that follow the grade as it slopes down to the sea. These setbacks form terraces that overlook the vista, as well as the courtyard, and the plaza where people congregate and exchange ideas. The interior courtyard open to the plaza provides outdoor space for markets and events, whilst the interior could be dedicated to permanent structures for communal events.

### ***Civic Space***

The plaza running from the raised highway depresses into the ground, following the elevation; its lateral steps on the west side, and sloping grass on the east side, form a visual arrow pointing to Martyrs' Square, the ruins beyond, the Port, the site of the fish market and festival grounds, and finally, the sea. Ever since the Ottoman period, Place des Martyrs has been the citizens' stage for protest (Kassir 2010, 286). It would remain so in this proposal; however, the plazas leading to the Martyrs' statue are redesigned with white stone, with seating arrangements to allow



for an quasi-amphitheatre. Approaching the statue itself is through funnel-like plaza, with the walls (following the existing structure) sloping upwards, enclosing the statue, and providing seating carved into the walls. This creates an elegant transition along the overall procession, moving from a smaller communal scale to the narrower enclave of the statue; enclosed by the walls, with the sounds of the city subdued by vegetation and stone, one has only the statue to gaze

(Left) The entrance to the Place des Martyrs is extended into a funnel shape, with the path narrowing to a solitary journey. (Below) Protests have long been one of the main events at the square, 2007, photograph by Soly. (Bottom) Aerial view extending to the proposed fish market (Solidere)







(Top) Section through the Martyrs' Square and Roman ruins, indicating the ramp descending 'through time' through one of the arches. (Above) The left meandering park with archaeological ruins, the park on the right is terraced greenspace.

upon, and reflect on each bullet scar tearing through the bronze flesh.

Coming around the statue, to the north, a narrow ramp slopes down to the subterranean level of the Roman ruins, through one of the arches. Thus, as one follows the slope down to the sea, they walk along a more solitary path, deeper into the archaeological strata of the city. This sunken square would be an intimate gathering space, or a quiet relaxation space. Stairs, and a grassy knoll, take the traveller back up to grade. Conversely, should one be travelling back, they would rise through time, and be welcomed by the war-ravaged statue, commemorating Beirut's turbulent yet persevering path towards modernity.

Across the road lies a proposed archaeological park, currently barren and closed off to pedestrians on one side, and a parking lot on the other. The park would have meandering paths strewn with historical ruins, whilst the parking lot would be converted into





The sunken ruins are currently, and understandably, closed off to the public. However, this proposal opens it up as a space for intimate gatherings and for contemplation; a descent down into the city's history. Seating would be created from repurposed surfaces and materials, and would age with the city - creating a connection with the inhabitants, as they find a favourite seat, a favourite stone that they visit every day. Instead of a museum-like setting, the tangible interaction creates a feeling of possession and attachment (background photo from Solidere).





Close-up of seating within the enclosure, and circulation through the arches. Stairs, and a sloped knoll, provide access back to grade.





The Roman ruins park (bottom left) and the parks with archaeological ruins (above left) and the terraced park (above left).



a terraced green space that steps down to the lower grade.

A tunnel, burrowing under the road north of the park, leads the traveller to a park overlooking the Port; a reminder of the economic lifeblood of the city. The park has a seaside promenade, which narrows down to a corniche, with a rocky edge to the water. The rocks soften an abrupt wall into the water; the terrain becomes more natural and rough as one approaches the sea.

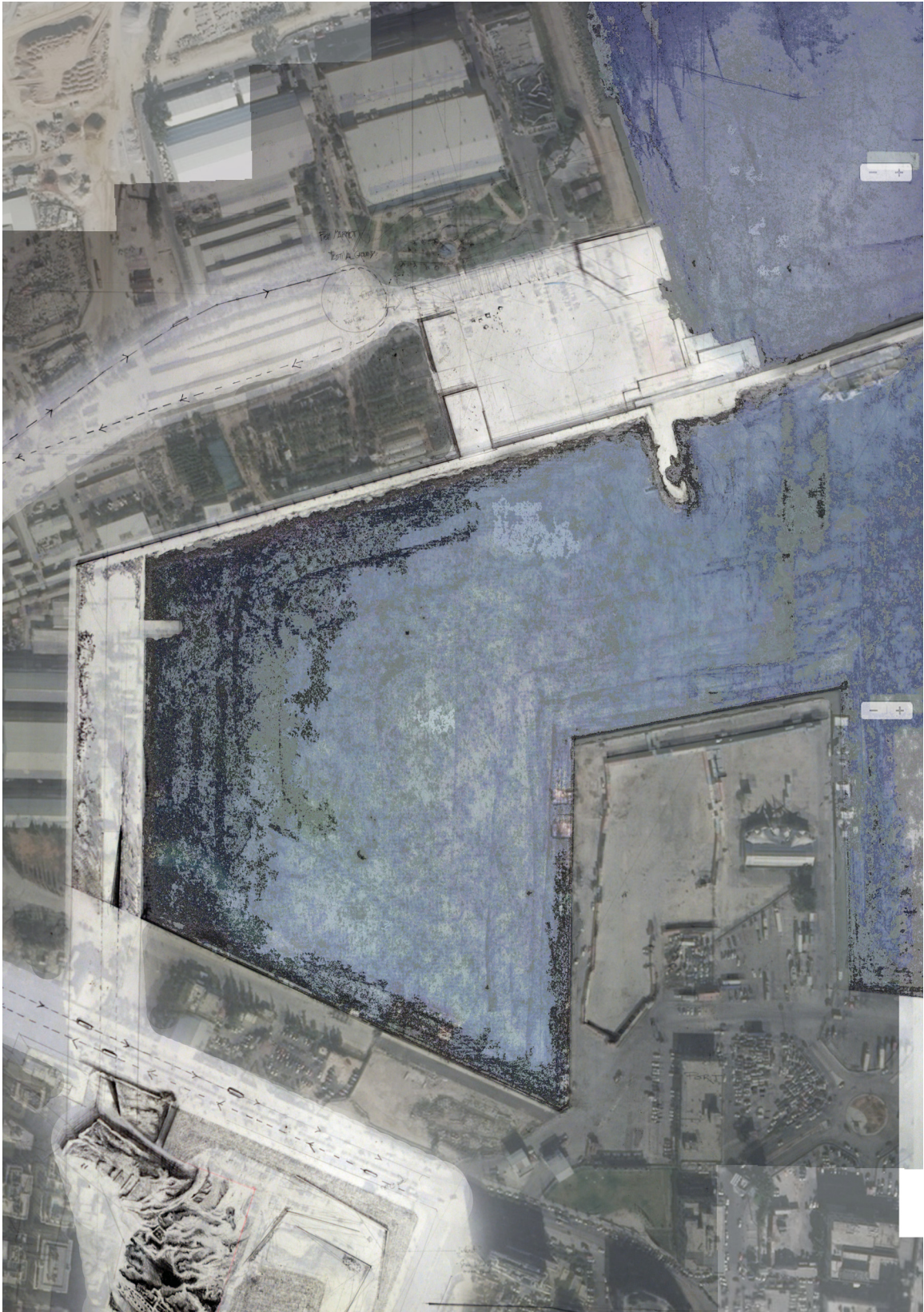
Further along, the traveller approaches a lookout that gazes southwards toward the city. A series of ramps and terraces then lead down into the market, which also doubles as a festival venue, and anchors the market at the beginning of the procession. The sights and smells of the fish market, the crash of the waves, the groans of the cargo ships -



(Left) Tunnel going from the archaeological park to the seafront park, then further along to the corniche. The fish market caters to the culture of fishermen, whilst also provides festival grounds (below).







Upper section of the procession, from the archeological park, through a tunnel, to the seaside park, and ending with a fishing market at the end of the path (Data from GoogleEarth 2016)





Map of Beirut showing potential tram lines (red) connecting the potential sites (orange), and the major points: port, airport, roadways(orange), BCD (blue), hotel district (pink), and city proper (green) (data from GoogleEarth 2016).

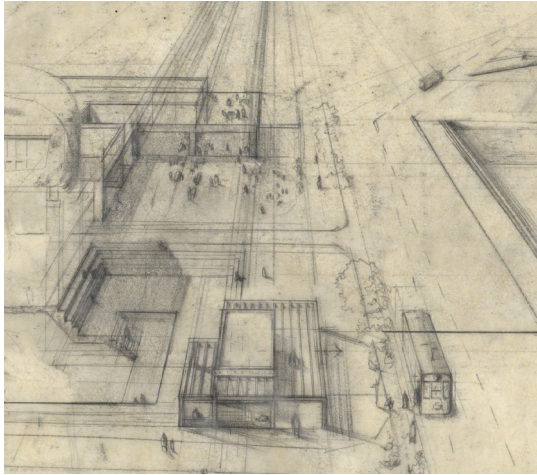


all add to the atmosphere of any celebration held there, also witnessed from the mainland.

### 3.3.3 Infrastructure

#### *The Tramline*

The downtown commercial district - the site of the old intramural town - remained, until the war, the centre of service and commercial sector activities (Kassir 2010, 430). Place des Martyrs became the busiest bus station, as it was the terminus of the city's main roads and highways; it connected passengers to neighbourhoods, other regions of the country,



(Above)The marketplace site has a tram station, with a concrete core for an enclosed waiting shelter, as well as public toilets. The outdoor waiting area is covered by a wooden structure that would ideally be covered in time with vines, such as grape plants, which are ubiquitous in the Lebanese landscape. (Below) Close up of the tram station in context.





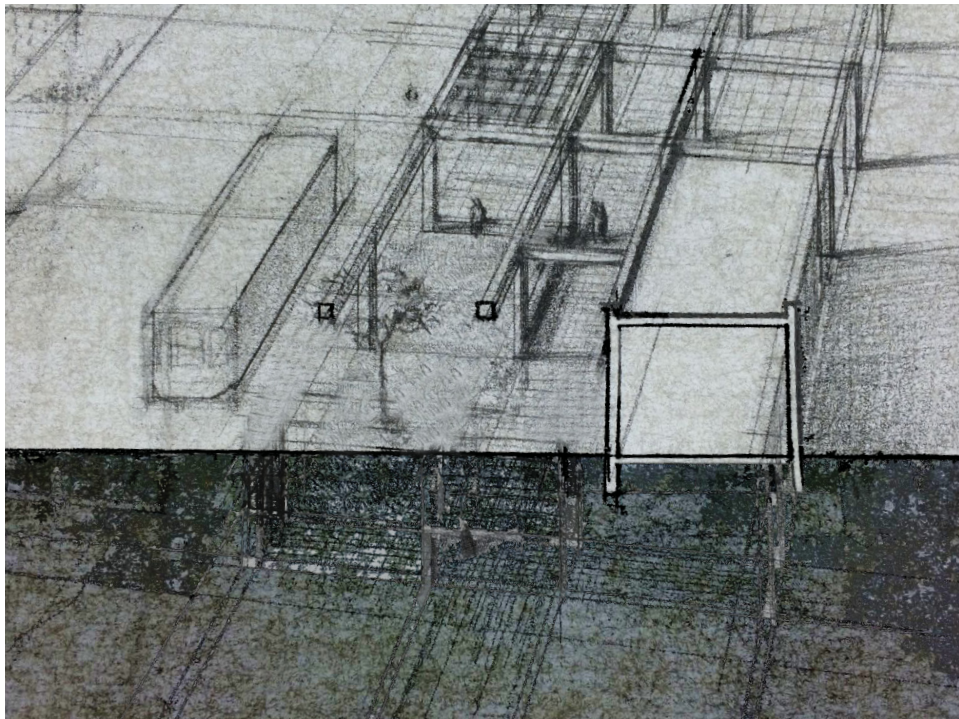
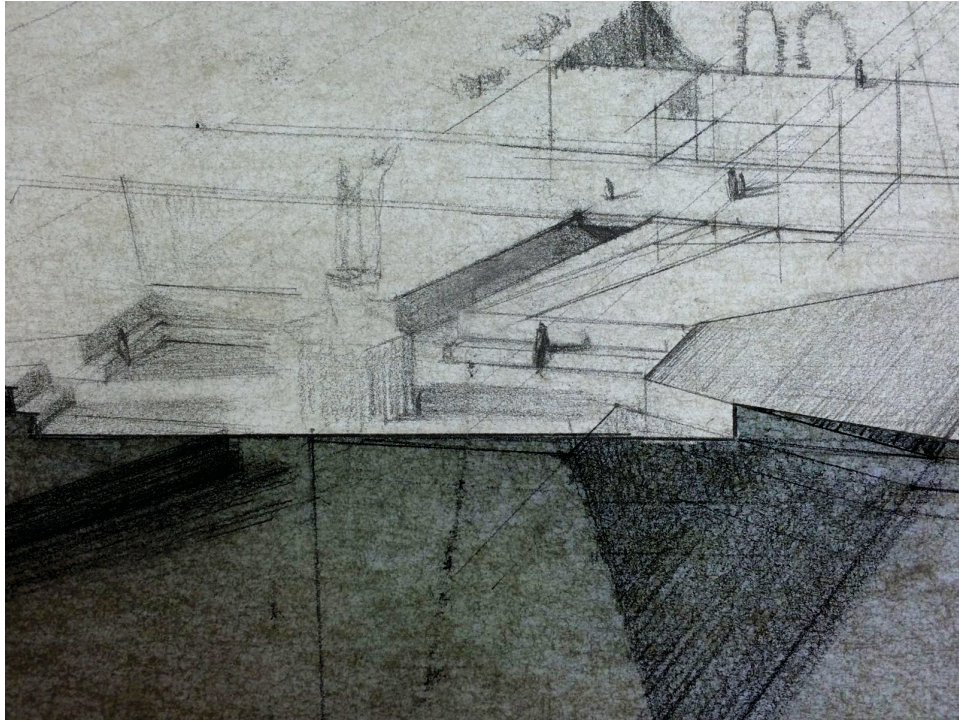


The tram station in the context of the Central District (background photograph from Solidere)



The station here, similar to that of the marketplace, has a concrete core and wooden trellis. They form a 'wall' to enclose the strip of the Place des Martyrs, and direct the views down to the water. Furthermore, the grid allows for the creation of gardens and possible market-stall spaces (background photograph from Solidere)





Close-ups of the sections through the Martyrs' Square enclosure (top) and the tram station (above)



or further abroad (Kassir 2010, 431). Thus it seems natural to revisit that idea: instead of having several parking lots in one of the most significant parts of the city, a central tram station could be built. The trams would allow for more pedestrian-friendly streets and encourage people to interact with the city at a more personal level.

Tram stops and stations would be placed at strategic locations, with some containing public toilets - an amenity the city's public desperately needs. Wooden trellises, with grapevines and other familiar vegetation would provide shade - and, perhaps, a snack.

### **3.4 Methodology**

#### **3.4.1 Precedents**

Lina Bo-Bardi (*Layering*), Lebbeus Woods (*Juxtaposition*), Gordon Matta-Clarke (*Cutting/framing*), Torre de David (*Informal Inhabitation*), Berlin Wall (*Memory/Engagement*), Kintsugi - Japanese porcelain-repair, based on the philosophy of *wabi-sabi*: the idea that breaking and cracks are remnants of character-building and life-enriching experiences.

In order to choose the material(s) suitable for each phase of the project, some abstraction was needed. Considering that it focuses on post-conflict reconstruction, *memory*

and *ruins* were considered the 'materials.' Furthermore, their framing of the city, and use within the urban context was used with the intent of re-framing the inhabitants' reading of the city. In opposition to the current status quo, where post-war abandoned buildings are destroyed and replaced with new construction, these proposals use rubble and building ruins to highlight the conflict, in the hope to prevent its reoccurrence.



Window hole in Lina Bo Bardi's 1986 project, the SESC Pompéia in São Paulo, Brazil, photograph by Nelson Kon. It was a factory that was adapted into a cultural and social centre. Her layering of materials, and embellishing and celebrating the old form, served as an inspiration for the first iteration. The reality of Beirut, much like the reality of the old factory, is seen through a different lens - one that celebrates the broken reality, and utilizes new materials to enhance this perception, through an awareness of its history.





Concept view of room with *layering* method

### ***Adaptive-Reuse/Layering***

The ruins, the major architectural backdrop to this proposal, are adaptively-reused in a manner that highlights the reason for their condition, but more importantly highlights the interactive programming of each space, while acknowledging the events that led to its destruction. As the space was repaired and restored, so too can relationships between different communities be repaired.



The idea of repair led to the study of *kintsugi* (golden joinery), the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history and character of the object, something to embrace rather than disguise. In this case, rubble fragments are joined by a 'modern' or 'restorative' element.







Concept view of the *kintsugi* method (background photograph by Angus McIntyre)

The work of Lina Bo Bardi, especially on the SESC Pompéia community centre, has been inspirational. The work manifests the idea of layering, most obviously in the use of new material versus existing/old material, but also in using the views to the city itself as a layer.



Continuing with the concept of *kintsugi*, the method of stapling is used, where fragments of rubble are joined together by 'staples.' These allowed the 'wall' to be manipulated and reveal light through its cracks. This is useful when one considers different aspects of privacy. More importantly, however, it attempts to manifest memory in architectural form. (Photograph of Nanking reticulated basket, c.1750 mended with metal staples, from Wikipedia)







Concept view of the *kintsugi* method

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION



Damaged and graffitied wall, Beirut, 2015

The people of Beirut have lost their faith in their weakened state; fighting internal corruption, nepotism, and an inability to face ever-growing para-state militias, the government has been gradually losing its status as the protector and provider of its people. Her denizens are not free of blame, however; nostalgia for the days of the "Paris of the Middle-East" has become forever a cornerstone of Lebanese identity - and yet to change the current conditions to achieve that prosperity requires action from the people themselves, as well. The public sphere cannot continue to be seen as property of the government, and thus it is not the responsibility of the layman to take care of it; they must all take possession of Beirut, so to speak, and nurture her back to life.

This thesis proposes a plan to cultivate a sense of attachment, of ownership, by a public that feels cheated and neglected. Thus, I turn to elements that are much older than the seemingly ageless, never-retiring generation of war-profiteering politicians - the fabric of the city herself. Regardless of whether her structures grew unregulated and without any formal plan - they grew, and were repaired by their owners, government or not. Broken and scarred buildings, with cinder-blocks covering their wounds, may



not be the most attractive or representative of a modern, prosperous economy - but they represent a tenacity to live (albeit with an inconsideration to regulations).

I feel that utilizing this evidence of survival would encourage an appreciation of the city's struggle, and something that should not be erased or hidden. With all honesty, I chose the Beirut Central District as the test site, and more specifically the sites of the marketplace and church by the highway, because of an intense feeling of potential I felt walking there; I feel I did not reveal enough of that with this work. More time would have taken me further into the heart of the city, and truly trying to increase the porosity and direct connection between the city proper and the immensely significant BCD. The rest of the vacant lots and building shells along the former Green Line would help thread the two together, through program and ownership ("I want to go to my spot by the almond tree, next to the bridge.")



Impact of a bullet hole in a ceiling, Beirut, 2015

Looking at a bullet hole in a wall, and imagining oneself to be in the line of fire at that time - the idea that intimate peoples could rise against one another, down to one person attempting to shoot the other, is a moving thing. But imagining an everyday setting, such as a souq or bus shelter, set within such an intensely charged backdrop, would

create a positive tension. This is mirrored in experiencing archaeological remains; which is why I attempted to take away the idea of walking through a museum, not being able to touch the scars of warfare, or those left by time; instead, one would pass one's hand over rebar exposed by shelling that destroyed a once-prosperous neighbourhood, as they would touch and sit upon a fallen Roman column. Furthermore, with a history of farming and fishing, providing opportunities for those, especially in unexpected areas throughout the proposed sites, would create a firmer, deeper connection.

The tramline would provide access to these experiences for people all over the city, and would form a physical connection between the proposed sites. Allowing the city to relieve its traffic congestion, it also allows for the inhabitants and visitors to get out, walk Beirut's streets, feel her pulse firsthand. I base this, admittedly, on my own experience: growing up, I absolutely detested trips to the city, which were characterised by motion sickness, trapped in traffic jams, cooked by heat and seasoned with smog and dust. Until, however, I stayed there for a few days, and threaded through her streets and alleys. Familiar landmarks, and an increased understanding of the city, developed a bond with that dishevelled, abused, and proud queen.





Rise...Rise...Rise

Rise from under the rubble

Like an almond's rose in spring

Rise from your sorrows....Rise

Revolution is born from sorrows womb

(Qabbani 1978)

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