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TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

'First they unpack their suitcase and then they unpack their hearts, and within their hearts they find their homeland that does not look anything like an imposed top-down and officially documented unity of the government and the people from which they fled.' [1]

(1)   Oxana Timofeeva, "How to be from here," in How to Love a Homeland (Kayfa ta, 2020), 62.

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ABSTRACT

الخلاصة

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TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

Currently, Lebanon finds itself entangled in a war with Israel. Severe and heavy bombardments continue to change not only the urban landscape of the area but also the demographic one, as waves of people are displaced and forced to leave their homes behind in search of safe refuge. This cycle of displacement is a recurring theme in Lebanon's history, shaping its identity, social fabric, urban development, and the narratives of those who inhabit its neighborhoods.

How can we understand urban neighborhoods undergoing constant change under such harsh and dynamic conditions? How can we preserve their memory and archive local knowledge and stories at a moment when their existence is threatened? How can we decolonize knowledge production and develop bottom-up archiving strategies?

This thesis aims to investigate the ongoing impact of displacement on Haret Hreik and Beirut at large through a methodological approach that combines anthropological and technological tools. Data was collected on-site during a three-month research trip, focusing on archiving spoken knowledge through oral histories and narratives that provide intimate insights into the social and cultural fabric of these communities. The process also involves the digitalization of artifacts to preserve material culture and enhance accessibility through modern technological platforms.

Traditional archiving methods, while valuable, often fail to capture the dynamic, lived realities of communities undergoing constant change. By using 3D scanning technologies and gaming softwares this research creates immersive and interactive archives. These tools enable dynamic engagement with both tangible and intangible heritage, offering a comprehensive representation of Haret Hreik's lived realities while respecting personal memories and relationships.

The integration of virtual reality (VR) as a medium expands the possibilities of archiving by creating immersive and interactive experiences. VR not only preserves material and intangible heritage but also allows users to engage with it in new ways, fostering deeper connections and understanding. By simulating the sensory and spatial qualities of urban neighborhoods, VR bridges the gap between past and present, providing a tool for empathy, education, and heritage preservation.

Derzeit befindet sich der Libanon in einem Krieg mit Israel. Schwere und heftige Bombardierungen verändern nicht nur das Stadtbild, sondern auch die Bevölkerungsstruktur, da Wellen von Menschen vertrieben und gezwungen werden, ihre Häuser auf der Suche nach einer sicheren Zuflucht zu verlassen. Dieser Zyklus der Vertreibung ist ein wiederkehrendes Thema in der Geschichte des Libanon und prägt seine Identität, sein soziales Gefüge, die Stadtentwicklung und die Erzählungen der Bewohner seiner Viertel.

Wie können wir städtische Viertel verstehen, die sich unter solch harten und dynamischen Bedingungen ständig verändern? Wie können wir ihr Gedächtnis bewahren und lokales Wissen und Geschichten in einer Zeit archivieren, in der ihre Existenz bedroht ist? Wie können wir die Wissensproduktion dekolonisieren und Archivierungsstrategien von unten nach oben entwickeln?

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, die anhaltenden Auswirkungen der Vertreibung auf Haret Hreik und Beirut als Ganzes durch einen methodischen Ansatz zu untersuchen, der anthropologische und technologische Werkzeuge kombiniert. Die Daten wurden während einer dreimonatigen Forschungsreise vor Ort gesammelt, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der Archivierung von mündlich überliefertem Wissen und Erzählungen lag, die intime Einblicke in das soziale und kulturelle Gefüge dieser Gemeinschaften bieten. Der Prozess umfasst auch die Digitalisierung von Artefakten, um die materielle Kultur zu bewahren und die Zugänglichkeit durch moderne technologische Plattformen zu verbessern.

Herkömmliche Archivierungsmethoden sind zwar wertvoll, erfassen aber oft nicht die dynamische, gelebte Realität von Gemeinschaften, die einem ständigen Wandel unterliegen. Durch den Einsatz von 3D-Scantechnologien und Gaming-software werden im Rahmen dieser Forschung immersive und interaktive Archive geschaffen. Diese Werkzeuge ermöglichen eine dynamische Auseinandersetzung mit dem materiellen und immateriellen Erbe und bieten eine umfassende Darstellung der Lebenswirklichkeit von Haret Hreik unter Berücksichtigung persönlicher Erinnerungen und Beziehungen.

Die Integration von Virtual Reality (VR) als Medium erweitert die Möglichkeiten der Archivierung durch die Schaffung immersiver und interaktiver Erfahrungen. VR bewahrt nicht nur das materielle und immaterielle Erbe, sondern ermöglicht es den Nutzern auch, sich auf neue Weise damit auseinanderzusetzen und tiefere Verbindungen und ein besseres Verständnis zu schaffen. Durch die Simulation der sensorischen und räumlichen Qualitäten von Stadtvierteln überbrückt VR die Spalte zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart und bietet ein Instrument für Empathie, Bildung und Wertschätzung dea Kulturerbes.

حالياً، يجد لبنان نفسه منخرطاً في حرب مع إسرائيل. القصف العنيف والشديد مستمر في تغيير ليس فقط الخريطة العمرانية في المنطقة بل أيضاً الخريطة الديموغرافية، حيث تنزح موجات من الناس وتضطر إلى ترك منازلها بحثاً عن ملجأ آمن. إن دورة النزوح هذه هي موضوع متكرر في تاريخ لبنان، حيث تشكل جزءًا من هويته ونسيجه الاجتماعي وتطوره الحضري وسرديات أولئك الذين يسكنون أحياءه.

كيف يمكننا استيعاب الأحياء الحضرية التي تشهد تغيراً مستمراً في ظل هذه الظروف القاسية والديناميكية؟ كيف يمكننا الحفاظ على ذاكرتها وأرشفة المعارف والقصص المحلية في لحظة يتعرض فيها وجودها للتهديد؟ كيف يمكننا إنهاء استعمار إنتاج المعرفة وتطوير استراتيجيات الأرشفة من الأسفل إلى الأعلى؟

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى التحقيق في الأثر المستمر للتهجير على حارة حريك وبيروت بشكل عام من خلال مقاربة منهجية تجمع بين الأدوات الأنثروبولوجية والتكنولوجية. جُمعت البيانات في الموقع خلال رحلة بحثية استغرقت ثلاثة أشهر، مع التركيز على أرشفة المعرفة المنطوقة من خلال التاريخ الشفوي والروايات التي توفر رؤى عميقة في النسيج الاجتماعي والثقافي لهذه المجتمعات. تتضمن العملية أيضًا رقمنة القطع الأثرية للحفاظ على الثقافة المادية وتعزيز إمكانية الوصول إليها من خلال المنصات التكنولوجية الحديثة.

على الرغم من قيمة أساليب الأرشفة التقليدية، إلا أنها غالبًا ما تفشل في التقاط الواقع الديناميكي الحي للمجتمعات التي تشهد تغيرًا مستمرًا. باستخدام تقنيات المسح الضوئي ثلاثي الأبعاد وبرامج الألعاب، ينشئ هذا البحث أرشيفات غامرة وتفاعلية. تتيح هذه الأدوات التفاعل الديناميكي مع التراث الملموس وغير الملموس على حد سواء، مما يوفر تمثيلاً شاملاً للواقع المعاش في حارة حريك مع احترام الذكريات والعلاقات الشخصية.

يوسع دمج الواقع الافتراضي (VR) كوسيط من إمكانيات الأرشفة من خلال خلق تجارب غامرة وتفاعلية. لا يحافظ الواقع الافتراضي على التراث المادي وغير المادي فحسب، بل يسمح للمستخدمين بالتفاعل معه بطرق جديدة، مما يعزز الروابط والفهم الأعمق. من خلال محاكاة الخصائص الحسية والمكانية للأحياء الحضرية، يعمل الواقع الافتراضي على سد الفجوة بين الماضي والحاضر، مما يوفر أداة للتعاطف والتعليم والحفاظ على التراث.

INTRODUCTION

(1)

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

Motivation

The motivation behind this work is rooted in an effort to understand the urban space of Beirut through the lens of visual culture and architecture, with particular emphasis on the social, political, and spatial elements that shape its identity. The complexities of urban life, especially in a city like Beirut, offer valuable insights into how architecture interacts with the lived experiences of its inhabitants. This approach seeks to investigate how urban environments are formed by historical and contemporary forces, and how these layers are reflected in the physical space of the city.

A critical aspect of this research is the decolonization of knowledge production. The dominant discourse surrounding Beirut and Lebanon is often viewed through the Western lens, particularly through the Francophone perspective. By amplifying local perspectives, this work aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the region, one that is grounded in tacit knowledge rather than shaped solely by external interpretation.

Additionally, the urgency of archiving the cultural and architectural heritage of these districts becomes increasingly important, especially in light of ongoing conflicts and destruction. The neighborhoods of Beirut, particularly those that have been heavily impacted by war and bombardment, are undergoing rapid transformation. As physical spaces are irreversibly altered, the need to document and preserve their heritage becomes critical. This archive, in its digital form, serves as a means to preserve the complexity of the area, often oversimplified or misrepresented in the media, while ensuring that the stories of its residents endure, even in the face of physical destruction. The preservation of these narratives is essential not only to understanding the past but also to safeguarding the future memory of these communities, which may otherwise be lost to the forces of conflict and erasure.

Through this archival effort, the aim is not only to document the landscapes of Beirut's neighborhoods but also to ensure that the stories of those who inhabit them remain accessible and resilient, particularly in an era where physical spaces can be obliterated, but digital archives may offer a means of continuity or persistence.

Terminology

Given that the digital medium is in constant development, some of its terminology is borrowed from other fields like geography, sociology, and psychology. Many of these terms are central to the thesis, and appear either directly in the text or as part of the methodology. Introducing them at the beginning provides readers with a foundation for understanding the topics and themes discussed. This early clarification not only helps readers immerse themselves in the subject matter but also explains how these terms are adapted to the context of displacement and the digital medium.

Code-switching was first introduced by sociolinguist Einar Haugen in 1954 to describe the practice of alternating between languages within a conversation.[2] This linguistic practice is prevalent in Lebanon where Arabic, French, and English mix fluidly within conversations and is a reflection of the cultural hybridity and situational adaptability. Similarly, this work incorporates various "languages": personal narratives, descriptive texts, and recollections. These voices intertwine within the thesis, forming a narrative that mirrors the logic of code-switching.

Displacement and architecture are atypically connected. While architecture can root people into their communities, it is always built upon foundations of displacement. The displacement of soil and entire earthly microcosms is often the first step in construction, a quiet but significant disruption of the natural order. Underneath the concrete, stone and tiled floors lies a scarred landscape, a reminder of what was removed to make room for human presence.

As Douglas Robinson discusses, displacement is a concept emerging from postcolonial studies, initially associated with the forced removal of individuals from their homes, categorizing them as refugees, displaced persons, or forced migrants. Robinson explains that this notion later expanded to encompass cultural displacement, which can occur without physical relocation. When a colonizing power exerts control over a nation, it frequently imposes new cultural norms and structures, supplanting the original cultural framework. This cultural displacement is often facilitated through measures like educational reforms and institutional dominance, leading to the erosion of indigenous cultural identities and practices.[3]

Three important terms introduced by Robinson are particularly relevant to the focus of this study:

Ideosomatic dysregulation refers to how forced displacement disrupts bodily and ideological integration, impacting migrants' ability to adapt to new sociocultural environments. This lens highlights the trauma experienced by displaced populations and the struggle to rebuild identity in foreign or transitional spaces.[4]

Ideosomatic counterregulation focuses on postcolonial struggles of cultural identity and expression where marginalized cultures resist assimilation by reasserting

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(2)   "The Burden of Code-switching | U-M Detroit," n.d., https://detroit.umich.edu/news-stories/the-burden-of-code-switching/.
(3)   Douglas Robinson, "First Essay," in *Displacement and the Somatics of Postcolonial Culture*, 2013, https://kb.osu.edu/bitstream/1811/56904/1/Ronbinson_Book4CD.pdf.
(4)   Robinson, "First Essay."

traditional practices and reclaiming agency through cultural production. Robinson critiques how dominant narratives erase or overwrite subaltern voices, advocating for more equitable frameworks in cultural representation.[5]

Paleosomatic regulation explores how the effects of historical trauma, like colonization or genocide, manifest across generations. Robinson analyzes how historical wounds are preserved in collective memory and the body and how communities can confront and heal from inherited traumas.[6]

Sigmund Freud's theories on **Trauma** revolved around the psychological damage caused by overwhelming experiences. In his 1920 Essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud introduced the idea of the "compulsion to repeat," describing how individuals who have undergone trauma are driven to re-enact the event rather than process it as a memory. For Freud, trauma is not an event, but rather an experience that disrupts the psyche. This can result in the persistent re-experiencing of the trauma, which Freud referred to as the repetition compulsion.[7] This is particularly of interest in the context of urban environments where displacement and trauma are frequent parts of daily life.

Cathy Caruth, a theorist in Trauma Studies, builds up on Freud's ideas by focusing on the role of narrative and memory in the trauma experience. In her work Trauma: Explorations in memory, Caruth argues that trauma is fundamentally linked to an inability to fully experience or process the event at the moment it occurs. She suggests that trauma represents an "absence" or "gap" in experience, something that is not fully understood or internalized by the individual at the time. For Caruth, the re-experiencing of trauma occurs because the event has not been integrated into the conscious memory system and instead "returns" in the form of intrusive memories or flashbacks.[8] Cities often act as sites where collective memories of displacement and violence are suppressed, only to reappear in the form of social and intergenerational trauma.

Through the work of Freud and Caruth trauma is understood not just as a psychological event but as a sociocultural divide that continues to shape both individuals and communities in profound ways. In the context of urbanism, this understanding of trauma underscores the need to address both the psychological and social dimensions of displacement and the importance of preserving cultural memory and creating spaces where communities can heal.

Adrian Lahoud, an educator, curator, architect, and writer, describes the term **'post-traumatic'** as referring to "the evidence of the aftermath—the remains of an event that are missing. The spaces around this blind spot record the impression of the event like a scar" [9]. In the context of urbanism, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reflects the enduring psychological and spatial impacts of trauma on both individuals and communities in cities shaped by war, displacement, or socio-political disruptions. For

(5)   Robinson, "Second Essay."
(6)   Robinson, "Third Essay."
(7)   Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Psychoanalysis and History 17, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 151–204, https://doi.org/10.3366/pah.2015.0169.
(8)   Cathy Caruth, "Trauma: Explorations in Memory," Choice Reviews Online 33, no. 05 (January 1, 1996): 33–3030, https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.33-3030.
(9)   Adrian Lahoud, Charles Rice, and Anthony Burke, Post-Traumatic Urbanism (Academy Press, 2010),18.
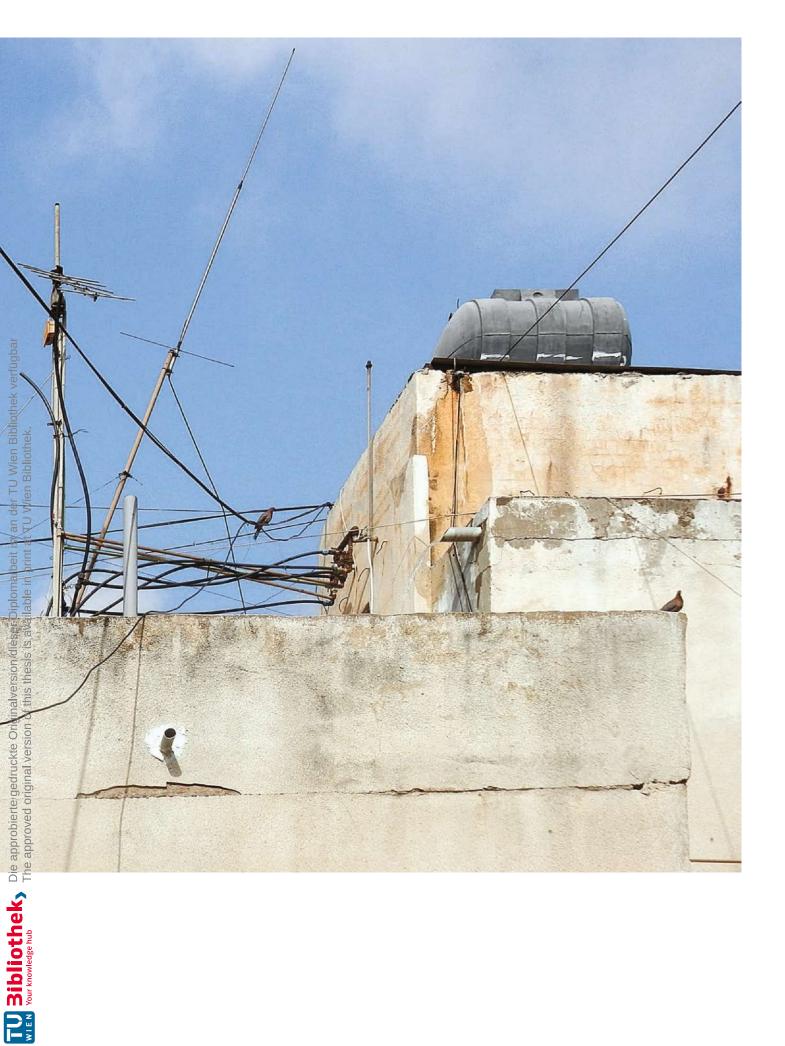
example, in Beirut and its suburbs, bullet-ridden facades, abandoned buildings, and ruins contribute to a cityscape marked by trauma.

In A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the concepts of **territorialization, deterritorialization,** and **reterritorialization** to describe the processes by which spaces are created, dismantled, and redefined.[10] Territorialization refers to the process of establishing boundaries, both physical and symbolic, to define a space or domain. This process encompasses not only the physical demarcation of territory but also the creation of social, cultural, and psychological frameworks that give the space meaning. Deterritorialization involves the dissolution or loss of these boundaries and structures, signifying a movement away from fixed, stable systems toward transformation or chaos. In contrast, reterritorialization is the act of reclaiming or restructuring a territory, either by re-establishing its old boundaries or redefining it in a new context.

Memory Trophies refer in this particular work to digital artifacts that signify personal or collective memory, acting as a tangible link to a past events, place, or experience.

(10)   Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (U of Minnesota Press, 1987).

CHAPTER 1

Key aims and research questions

This research examines displacement as a significant factor shaping the development of urban neighborhoods in Beirut, with a particular focus on Haret Hreik. Displacement has been a recurring force throughout Lebanon's history, driven by the rise and fall of powers and regimes, and it has deeply influenced the social, cultural, and spatial dynamics of the city. This study seeks to address key questions: How can the heritage of urban neighborhoods be preserved amidst the ever-changing social fabric, the displacement of inhabitants, and the influx of newcomers caused by ongoing wars and conflicts? Furthermore, it explores how lived experiences can be documented and archived from a bottom-up perspective, utilizing new technologies to create accessible and inclusive repositories of memory and knowledge. A critical aspect of this inquiry is ensuring that such archives transcend geographical boundaries, offering a platform to preserve and share the intricate narratives of these neighborhoods on a global scale.

Postwar reconstruction schemes often prioritize rapid rebuilding, but does this approach adequately address the trauma induced by war, or does it hinder meaningful recovery architecture? As discussed later in this thesis, a comparison between the Solidere reconstruction efforts and the *'Waad'* initiative highlights differing approaches to rebuilding and their implications for community resilience and healing. How much do the architectural styles emerging in war-torn regions reflect the resilience and experiences of displaced and traumatized communities? Can a digital archive or medium provide psychological or therapeutic benefits in addition to preserving cultural heritage?

In essence, this thesis represents a first attempt at reconciliation and understanding of the Haret Hreik neighborhood. It seeks to unpack the paradigms and parameters that have shaped and continue to shape this area. It places Haret Hreik on a psychiatrist's couch, with the aim to understand its trauma before proposing a solution.
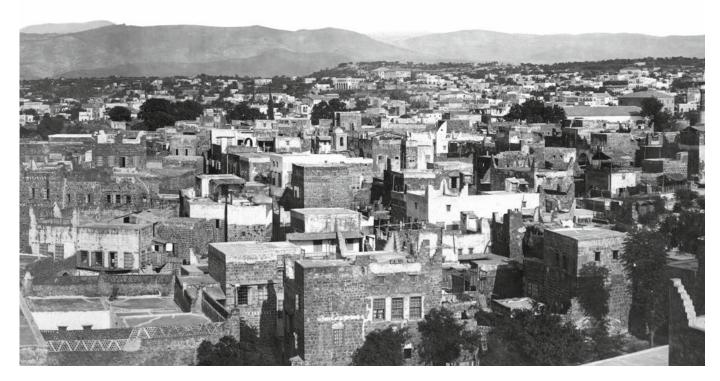
Fig.1

Fig.2

Fig. 1   Beirut, Lebanon in the 19th-century. Photograph by Maison Bonfils.
Fig. 2   Aerial view of West Beirut, 1983.

CHAPTER 1

Methodology

"BUT HISTORY IS A PROCESS OF FORGETTING AS MUCH AS IT IS A PROCESS OF LEARNING, AND MEMORY IS FAMOUS FOR ITS SELECTIVITY."[11]

The methodology for this research integrates anthropological approaches (everyday observations, fieldwork, and recordings inspired by Alltagsgeschichten)[12], action research, and artistic research to comprehensively document and analyze the lived experiences of urban neighborhoods in Beirut. Important to this methodology is the archiving of spoken knowledge, capturing oral histories and narratives that provide intimate insights into the social and cultural fabric of communities. The process involves the digitalization of artifacts, ensuring the preservation of material culture and enabling broader access through modern technological platforms.

A key component of this methodology is the utilization of 3D scanning technologies, including both cellphone-based applications and 3D scanners, alongside gaming softwares. These tools are used to create immersive and interactive digital archives, enabling the construction of virtual environments that allow users to engage with the heritage of these neighborhoods in dynamic and experiential ways. Additionally, the concept of a digital twin is considered, offering a comprehensive virtual representation of the neighborhoods. This approach not only preserves the physical and intangible heritage but also facilitates broader accessibility and interactive engagement, ensuring the archives remain present in the media. History as recounted from a micro scale, a microhistory. From the stories and experiences of ordinary people. Small stories can tell great things.

(11)   Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).
(12)   The television documentary series produced by Austrian journalist Elizabeth T. Spira for ORF between 1985 and 2006. Spira's work focused on documenting everyday lives, offering a nuanced and a human perspective on societal changes,an approach that informs this project's emphasis on the voices and experiences of marginalized groups.

Fig.3   3D scan of a Jasmine plant, Haret Hreik.

Fig.4   Abandoned villa in Monot, Beirut.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF BEIRUT AND LEBANON, DISPLACEMENT

(2)

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

It's Like Being in Beirut

Briefly after the end of the civil war in Lebanon in 1990, the term 'it's like being in Beirut' gained popularity as a common expression to describe chaos and urban decay. The image that was perpetuated of the city is one filled with juxtapositions. Beirut, once labeled the 'Paris of the middle east',[13] has since become synonymous with disaster cities, political turmoil, and unrest. Jad Aoun, a marketing and communications specialist, set out to map all iterations of the phrase around the world, from comparisons made by political leaders to Online bloggers complaining of the development of their neighborhoods. The reachability of the phrase is clear proof of the impact the civil war has had, not only on the lives and urban developments of the city but also on the transgression of the image of the city worldwide.

Haret Hreik is one of the many neighborhoods that make up the southern suburbs of Beirut. Pre civil war, the area was a well-known agricultural village. It had a very strong rural identity, where its inhabitants often praised its fields of citrus trees and pine forests. The views towards the sea on the one hand and the forest mountains on the other, were unhindered. Since those times, there were key events that led to the development of the colloquially known Hara, meaning neighborhood in arabic, or Dahieh, meaning suburb. The gradual changes in the social fabrics of the area due to the influx of internally displaced refugees have been very visible throughout the years. A series of shifts in demographic, that will be discussed in detail further on, are crucial to the understanding of the makeup of the neighborhood.

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(13)   A term used to describe various cities worldwide, symbolizing grandeur, beauty, or cultural significance by comparing them to Paris.

Fig.5   Jad Aoun, Looks Like Beirut - Mapped Across the World by Jad Aoun, "Google," April 1, 2016, accessed 2024, https://www.google.com/maps/d/embed?mid=12SiWppX1uUxTe08vzcZOW5gWIu0&ehbc=2E312F

"Now it's like Beirut"

by Lebanon News Under Rug Swept | Mar 9, 2010 | Looks Like Beirut | 8 comments

A 31-year resident of the Australian town of Altona Meadows has had enough:

> Altona Meadows is being ruined by selfish residents with no respect for their neighbours, says Trevor, an emergency services worker who has lived in Shirley St for 31 years.
> "Ten years ago this was the most beautiful street in Altona Meadows," he says.
> "Now it's like Beirut."

This is what his street currently looks like:

Let me tell you something Trevor, Beirut doesn't have space for green. Let me rephrase that in a better way, we have no green. So your little insignificant street can never look like Beirut. As for the comment itself, its quite immature, stupid and pathetic like your complaint.

8 Comments

1.

fadi on March 10, 2010 at 12:56 pm

so there's a wave of rebranding our beautiful party city.. into smthg ugly..? definitely

- Jad Aoun on March 10, 2010 at 2:21 pm

    I love Beirut but honestly, no matter how many vodka red bulls you chug down, you cannot escape the fact that it's nothing but concrete and asphalt. There are no green spaces and no one seems to care about it.

    Basically, I used the post to hit two birds with one stone: 1. the cliche "looks like Beirut" and 2. brown Beirut.

    - nicolien on March 17, 2010 at 9:25 pm

        The question is: did you send this whino a certificate? 🙂

        - Jad Aoun on March 18, 2010 at 8:28 am

            Unfortunately, no. Didn't have much to go with except for his first name. A shame though.

            - LebExile on March 22, 2010 at 6:56 pm

                more likely a racist, who doesn't like the fact he has a neighbour who is lebanese!!

            - Jad Aoun on March 23, 2010 at 8:55 am

                Possibly, though I doubt he would be able to locate Beirut on a map.

Fig.6   "Looks Like Beirut - Mapped Across the World by Jad Aoun - Google My Maps."

CHAPTER 2

Historical Timeline

Beirut is considered to be one of the oldest cities on the eastern coast of the mediterranean sea and of the ancient world. Its strategic geographical location made it of particular interest and victim to many conquests over the centuries and a battleground for many conflicts and wars. From Canaanite and Phoenician to Hellenistic and Roman rule, and Islamic rule during the medieval time to the Ottoman and French rule during the colonial eras. Displacement has been a recurring and defining feature in the history of the region, consistently shaped by waves of occupation and war. To fully comprehend the social fabric and urban dynamics of Lebanon, it is essential to revisit its historical trajectory. The cumulative events of the past, layered like a palimpsest, serve as the foundation upon which Lebanon's contemporary reality is inscribed. This historical context not only reveals the patterns of disruption and reconstruction but also provides a lens through which to examine how these events continue to shape the nation's identity, governance, and spatial organization. By tracing these layers, we can better understand the enduring legacies of conflict and their influence on the present, setting the stage for the discussions that follow.

Lebanon has a population estimate (2022) of 5,296,814[14] and an area of 10,452 km² making it the 161st smallest country in the world. [15] At the crossroads of three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe, Lebanon's geographic location facilitated trade and cultural exchange, making it a vital link in ancient maritime routes. Moreover, Lebanon's proximity to major trade arteries, such as the Silk Road, further enhanced its significance as a hub of commerce and connectivity between East and West. This strategic location exposed it to the influence of diverse civilizations.

Fig.7

(14) "The World Factbook 2021," Central Intelligence Agency, 2021, accessed September 12, 2023, https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook about/archives/2022/.

(15) As'ad AbuKhalil, "Geography," in Lebanon, a Country Study, ed. Thomas Collelo, 1989, 42–48, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA8083830X.

Fig. 7 The Commercial Network of the Phoenicians, n.d., Kommos Conservancy, n.d., https://www.kommosconservancy.org/handoutmapweb/.

Fig.8   Satellite image of Beirut and its southern suburbs (marked in red)
        "Beirut in Big," n.d., https://www.esa.int/ESA_Multimedia/Images/2021/08/Beirut_in_big.

Phoenician civilization

Among the most influential civilizations to leave its mark in the history of Lebanon is the Phoenician civilization, which flourished from around 2500 BCE to 333 BCE and was a maritime powerhouse that left a legacy on the ancient world. The Phoenicians established a network of cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Berytos (Beirut) which served as hubs of trade and culture. They dominated Mediterranean trade routes and facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and technologies across the ancient world. They are credited with inventing the first known alphabet and were also known for their production of the Tyrian purple, a vibrant dye extracted from the shells of sea snails found along the coast. This dye, coveted for its rich hue and resistance to fading, became highly sought after throughout the ancient world, adorning the garments of royalty and elites. Its significance extended beyond mere ornamentation, as it symbolized wealth, status, and prestige. The trade in Tyrian purple played a pivotal role in the economic prosperity of Phoenician city-states, further solidifying their reputation as pioneers of commerce and industry in the ancient Mediterranean.

Despite the passage of millennia, the legacy of the Phoenicians remains deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of the Lebanese people, shaping their sense of identity and belonging. This connection is evident as it continues to resonate in various aspects of Lebanese culture, from language and cuisine to art and architecture.

Fig.9   Logo, n.d., Lebanese American University, n.d., https://www.lau.edu.lb/.

Fig.10   National Costume designed for Miss Lebanon, Nada Koussa. Source: Joe Challita's collection, in tyrian purple

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The origin of the People that inhabited Beirut

The migration of the semitic people from the Arabian peninsula towards the north began in the first half of the third century B.C. The Canaanites branched and inhabited the eastern coast of the mediterranean sea. From the Egyptians to the Persians, many have sought after the valuable cedar trees which were prized for their durability and resistance to decay and made into a valuable resource for maritime powers. They are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Fig.11

The Greek and Roman

The Greek and Roman rule had a strong influence on the architecture and culture of the region. One notable legacy is the establishment of the law school of Berytus, the world's first institution dedicated to the study of Roman law, which contributed to Beirut's reputation as a center of legal scholarship in the ancient world. Baalbek, situated in the eastern region of Lebanon became known as a center of worship and cultural exchange. Under Greek rule the city was renamed as Heliopolis and Phoenicians started to incorporate greek influences into their architecture.

Fig.11   Cedars of God Reserve in Bcharri, North Lebanon. 2016. Bcharri. https://website.bcharri.net/places/lebanon/north-lebanon/bcharri/attractions/cedars-of-god/?lang=en/.

When the Romans arrived Baalbek flourished as a center for worship with the construction of the Roman Jupiter Temple which is believed to be built on top of the foundations of Phoenician sanctuaries.

During the medieval time Lebanon was under the rule of a series of alternating islamic dynasties. In addition to the islamic dynasties it also oversaw the founding of the county of tripoli, a crusader state, which controlled the northern part of what is now known as Lebanon, up until the mamluk sultanate. In 1308, the Mamluks regained control of the region, **forcibly displacing the Shiite population** from Keserwan and relocating them to southern Lebanon. [16]

The Ottoman Empire

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy definition of colonialism the term depicts the practice of settling, forcibly displacing, and exerting political control over other regions across the globe.[17] The Ottoman empire which ruled for four centuries arguably marked the beginning of the colonial era. While the term "colonial power" is often associated with European empires, the Ottoman Empire also engaged in colonial practices during its existence. The empire expanded its territories through conquest and established control over various regions extending from parts of Southeast Europe to South West Asia and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire implemented policies of assimilation, taxation, and governance in these territories, similar to other colonial powers of the time. Additionally, the empire extracted resources and exerted political control over the colonized regions.

The breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the forceful establishment of nationalist Turkey led to the creation of the region's modern states, including Lebanon. This also triggered the **displacement of large numbers of people**, such as Armenians from Cilicia (100,000)[18], Syriacs (30,000)[19], and Kurds from the Jazira region, who migrated and eventually settled in what would later become Lebanon.[20]

(16)   Ja'far Al-Muhajir, *The Foundation for the History of the Shiites in Lebanon and Syria: The First Scientific Study on the History of the Shiites in the Region* (Dar Al Malak, 1992).

(17)   "Colonialism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Spring 2023 Edition)," January 17, 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/colonialism/.

(18)   Nichanian, Mikaël. Détruire Les Arméniens: Histoire d'un génocide, 2015.

(19)   Carl Skutsch, Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities (Routledge, 2013).

(20)   "Lebanon: Migrations and Crises (in Arabic)," Al Sifr, March 5, 2024, accessed September 5, 2024, https://alsifr.org/lebanon-crises-migrations.

"Alleys, streets, and squares, which were named after the Beirut families that lived in those shops and streets. The buildings, which were no more than two or three stories at most, were called "hara". In this instance, "hara" refers to a neighborhood among the neighborhoods that existed in Beirut, such as the Barbar and the Khoury Alley.

As for the neighborhoods that existed in the heart of Beirut and beyond, there were neighborhoods like Ras Beirut, the Ramel (Sanayeh) neighborhood, later the Sanayeh neighborhood, and the Arab neighborhood.

Ottoman Beirut was also characterized by the presence of districts, each with its own sheikh known as the district sheikh responsible for its affairs.

It was also renowned for the abundance of its alleys and the narrowness of these alleys. Some features of Ottoman Beirut hold historical significance. The Ramel neighborhood, which is now known as the Sanayeh area and its neighboring neighborhoods to the south, which were all sandy neighborhoods.

From here came the naming of two areas: Ramel Al-Zarif, where the Zarif family lived, and Ramel Al-Zaydanah, where the Zaydan family lived. Sandstone extracted from these areas was used in the construction of the traditional Lebanese house.

The Ramel area did not further develop until the beginning of the twentieth century when Muslims began to build houses in these areas.

The Hamra area is located outside the old city of Beirut and later became one of the most important areas and streets of Beirut. It was first inhabited by the Hamra family of the Bekaa princes since 1145. This area was characterized by its abundance of crops and orchards, including mulberries, fruits, vegetables, and pasture. Among the early residents, apart from the princes, were Itani, Thabit, and Shihab. Among the landmarks of the Hamra were the Mosque and the famous tower known as the Hamra Tower. Later, the area became a center for official institutions, foreign embassies, schools, and foreign institutes." [21]

(21)   (My Translation) Hassan Hallak, Beirut During the Ottoman Era, 1987.

Independent Lebanon, Fakhr EdDine Reign

The first signs of Lebanese efforts to gain independence under Ottoman rule can be traced to Prince Fakhr EdDine II, a prominent Druze leader. He played a crucial role in shaping the foundations of a modern Lebanese state through his political and military strategies, which aimed to gain autonomy from the Ottoman Empire while fostering alliances with European powers. He collaborated with Ferdinand I, the Duke of Tuscany, against Ottoman rule.[22] Consequently, the Ottomans exiled him to Tuscany in 1613. Upon his return to Lebanon in 1618, Fakhr EdDine instigated a series of reforms aimed at modernizing Lebanon, fostering strong relations with the dukes of Tuscany and Florence. He facilitated the importation of Italian architects, irrigation engineers, and agricultural experts to enhance Lebanon's infrastructure and agricultural practices.[23]

This is relevant because many locals attribute Tuscan influences in Lebanese architecture to Fakhr EdDine II. Interestingly, displacement, while deeply challenging, can sometimes foster unexpected outcomes such as creating opportunities for new connections and cultural synthesis.

Beirut extends beyond its gates to include the 'new neighborhoods'

The arrival of the British in 1840, subsequently the French in 1860 and the declaration of Beirut as a vilayet in the year 1888 marked the beginning of the modern city of Beirut. The division of Lebanon into two religious communities caused dissatisfaction among the Druze minority. They felt marginalized politically and economically. Around 11,000 Maronites were massacred, and roughly 100,000 people, including **Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics, were displaced** during the violent conflicts in Lebanon in 1860. [24] As a result, many **Maronites were displaced** to the city of Beirut during the sectarian strife. [25]

During the same time the city began to grow in all different aspects from Architectural, Cultural to economical. During this time, it began to expand outside of its city fortifications and began to incorporate its suburbs into its city borders.

New roads and housing residences flooded the areas that have become to be known as Ashrafieh, Zoqaq el Blat, Mar Metr and Msaitbeh, as for the neighborhoods that

(22)   Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, Provincial Leaderships in Syria, 1575-1650, 1985.

(23)   Alessandro Olsaretti, "Political Dynamics in the Rise of Fakhr al-Din, 1590–1633: Crusade, Trade, and State Formation Along the Levantine Coast," The International History Review 30, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 709–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2008.10416646.

(24)   Homam Altabaa and Adham Hamawiya, "Émigré Creativity in a Historical Context," Society 7, no. 2 (December 3, 2019): 59–70, https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v7i2.85.

(25)   "The Civil War in Syria," The New York Times, July 21, 1860, https://www.nytimes.com/1860/07/21/archives/the-civil-war-in-syria.html.

were built beyond, those are the neighborhoods that became the new suburbs - known as Sahel el Metn or Dahieh. The newly repaired streets extended into the previous suburbs, where new dwellings began to appear amidst the groves.

"The suburbs of Beirut did not go beyond the pine forests south or the Beirut River in the north. This distance is crossable in less than 30 mins on foot. The roads of Beirut used to branch out from its gates in different narrow sandy pathways, which were lined with prickly pears. The mulberry orchards used to surround the city, and amongst them there were vineyards of figs and olives.

The house fronts in Beirut were predominantly built on uncarved stone and the windows were no more than one meter in height and three quarters of a meter in width. The Cafes of Beirut were plentiful and would sit directly by the street side. The residents of the suburbs used to be known as 'children of the wilderness' and if they would visit Beirut they would always say ' we were in the city' or 'We would like to go down to the city', indicating the journey the nature of the relationship between the inside and outside of the city walls." [26]

[26]   (My Translation) Issam Chebaro, History of Beirut From the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century (دار مصباح الفكر, 1987), 146-165.

Greater Lebanon under the French mandate.

After the collapse of the Ottoman empire in 1918, part of its territories was split between the allies. In the agreement Lebanon would be governed by Lebanese officials under French protection. However, the reality differed significantly, with what was described as a 'regime of direct rule' imposed by France. By 1923, the mandate was formally granted by the League of Nations, marking the beginning of the French Mandate period.

The Syrian revolt of 1925–27 and pressure from the League of Nations Mandate Commission led to the granting of a constitution to Lebanon and Syria.[27] The constitution, adopted in 1926, renamed Greater Lebanon as the 'Lebanese Republic', introduced the tricolour French flag with a cedar emblem, and designated French as an official language alongside Arabic. The constitution allowed for French control over Lebanon's foreign and military affairs, as well as public security.

"Significantly, it did not define Lebanon's borders, as if to emphasise that they were open to modification." [28]

Meantime, the Armenian community in Lebanon grew significantly during this period due to waves of **refugees** fleeing persecution in Turkey.

Anjar - a case study of ideosomatic dysregulation?

Anjar was established as a permanent settlement by the French Mandate authorities for Armenian refugees and survivors of the Armenian Genocide.[29] They had initially sought refuge in Syria before being resettled in the Bekaa Valley before they were resettled in Anjar in 1939.

The town's layout today is structured into six neighborhoods, each named after their villages from the Mousa Dagh region, preserving the memory of their origins. The six quarters are Kabusia, Vakif, Haji Hababli, Khdr Bek, Bitias and Yoghun Oluk.

Anjar is a great example of how collective identity and history can be preserved through spatial organization. As Pierre Nora describes, a lieux de mémoire (site of memory) is "any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial...which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage." [30] By naming its neighborhoods after the lost villages of Mousa Dagh,

(27)   Fawwaz Traboulsi, "From Mandate to Independence (1920–1943)," in A History of Modern Lebanon (Pluto Press, 2015), 88–109, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p4f5.
(28)   Traboulsi, "From Mandate to Independence (1920–1943)," 90.
(29)   Vahram Shemmassian, "The Settlement of Musa Dagh Armenians in Anjar, Lebanon, 1939-1941," Asbarez, January 2, 2015, https://asbarez.com/the-settlement-of-musa-dagh-armenians-in-anjar-lebanon-1939-1941/.
(30)   Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," Representations 26 (January 1, 1989): 7–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520.
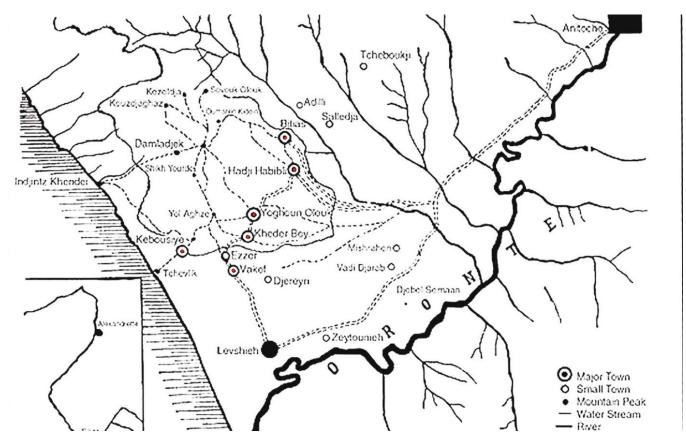
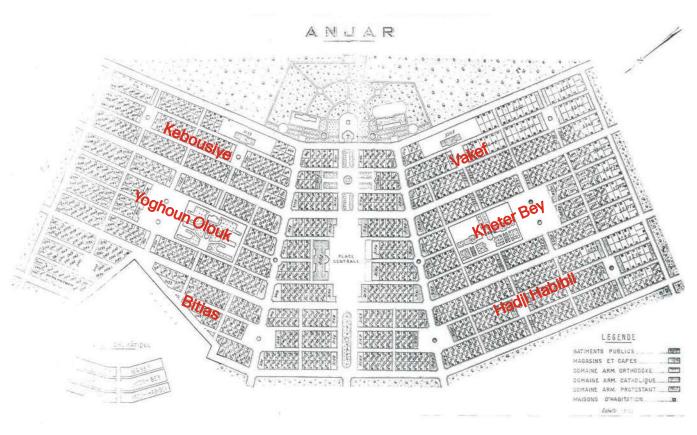Fig.12   Map showing the location of the six villages of Musa Dagh in Türkiye.

Fig.13   Hagop Keshishian, city plan of Anjar, 1939, courtesy of Anjar Municipality. © Vartivar Jaklian, Hossep Baboyan.

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Anjar becomes such a site, "material, symbolic, and functional"[31], preserving and transmitting the identity of its displaced community through its very structure.

Independence

The French mandate officially ended on November 22nd, 1943. This marked the culmination of Lebanon's struggle for independence from French colonial rule.
As with all colonial and occupying forces, the French left their mark on Lebanon. The French mandate introduced an administrative structure modeled after their colonial system. This included the establishment of government institutions, legal frameworks, and bureaucratic practices that still shape Lebanon's governance today.

Apart from the legal system and economic policies, France introduced the French language as official language and introduced the French educational curricula. Even though it is no longer an official language, it is still widely spoken and contributed greatly to the bilingualism of the country today. The common greeting of Hi, Kifak ca va? is an example of code switching in everyday life.
Extreme economic hardships and political unrest resulted in some Lebanese individuals and families emigrating from Lebanon to other countries in search of better opportunities or to escape persecution. While specific records of displacement from Lebanon under French rule vary in availability and detail some figures document the following:

Migration of Lebanese
Percentage of forcibly displaced vs voluntary migration unclear

DISPLACEMENT FIGURES: [32]
1930: 56,389 , ++138,682
1920: 54,121 , ++102,581
1910: 34,156 , ++48,849
1900: 11,385 , ++13,757

According to the Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, the majority of Lebanese immigrants arrived in the United States between 1890 and 1920, with a temporary decline during World War I due to a sea blockade imposed by the French and British. A brief resurgence in immigration occurred between 1920 and 1923, but this wave significantly slowed after the introduction of restrictive U.S. immigration laws in 1924.[33]

(31)   Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire."
(32)   Akram Khater, "The Early Lebanese in America: A Demographic Portrait, 1880-1930," Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, November 8, 2018, accessed April 10, 2024, https://lebanesestudies.ncsu.edu/news/2018/11/08/the-early-lebanese-in-america-a-demographic-portrait-1880-1930/.
(33)   Khater, "The Early Lebanese in America: A Demographic Portrait, 1880-1930."

Displacement and Life in Lebanon's Refugee Camps

While the 1948 influx of Palestinian refugees marked the first major wave of displacement in Lebanon, the challenges faced by displaced communities continued afterwards. The next section focuses on one Palestinian refugee camp, offering a closer look at the lives of those displaced during the 1948 Nakba especially in light of the more recent waves of refugees, such as those displaced by the Israeli occupation in the 1980s and the Syrian Civil War.

There are in total twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon:
Beddawi Camp, Burj Barajneh Camp, Burj Shemali Camp, Dbayeh Camp, Ein El Hilweh Camp, El Buss Camp, Mar Elias Camp, Mieh Mieh Camp, Nahr el-Bared Camp, Rashidieh Camp, Shatila Camp, Wavel Camp.[34]

The Rashidiyya Refugee Camp
Example of ideosomatic counterregulation?

Located near Tyre in South Lebanon, the Rashidiyya Refugee Camp is the closest Palestinian camp to the border of historic Palestine. Established in 1949, it initially served as a refuge for Palestinians displaced from northern regions, particularly Safad and its surrounding areas. The camp's evolution has been immensely influenced by Lebanon's turbulent history, particularly from events such as the Lebanese Civil War and Israeli military actions.[35]

The camp is divided into two sections: Old Rashidiyya, established by the French for Armenian refugees and later used for Palestinian refugees after the 1948 Nakba, and New Rashidiyya, built by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) in 1963 to accommodate the growing population. Over the years, the camp has become densely populated, with residents facing significant challenges related to overcrowding, limited infrastructure, and inadequate access to essential services such as water, electricity, and healthcare. The camp's layout consists of narrow streets and closely packed buildings, but the residents face severe restrictions on building materials. The Lebanese government imposes strict controls on materials like cement, which are needed for construction and repair. This restriction significantly prevents the residents of the camps to maintain and improve their homes, leading to deteriorating living conditions over time. Additionally, these restrictions reflect broader Lebanese policies that limit the rights of Palestinian refugees, including prohibitions on property ownership and work in certain professions.[36]

(34)   "Refugee Camps in Lebanon," UNRWA, n.d., https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon/beddawi-camp.
(35)   "Rashidiyya Refugee Camp Lebanon," The Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, n.d., https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/30630/rashidiyya-refugee-camp.
(36)   "Lebanon - Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children" (Amnesty Interntional, June 6, 2006), accessed October 12, 2024, https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/amnesty/2006/en/38282.

Traditionally, women in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have not pursued employment beyond their immediate environments. Inaash an organization created by Huguette Bechara El Khoury, created job opportunities and generates income for refugee women living in these camps. A key skill the women brought with them was traditional embroidery, which became the foundation of Inaash's initiatives. Over the past five decades, Inaash has played a dual role in preserving this cultural heritage and utilizing it as a source of livelihood. Operating across five camps in Lebanon, the organization has benefited over 8,000 women by providing financial support and stability. [37]

The skill of embroidery, passed down from mother to daughter despite the odds of displacement and oppression, serves as a marker of resilience. Practicing this traditional craft becomes a form of cultural expression, countering assimilation pressures they face. Through the economic agency enabled for refugee women, a community of continuation is formed. This supports the argument for ideosomatic counterregulation, as it embodies the active reclaiming of cultural identity and agency in the face of systemic erasure.

Civil war

The Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, was a conflict that deeply scarred Lebanon and reshaped its political landscape. This war involved numerous domestic and international actors, resulting in extensive human, economic, and social costs. The political system established in 1943 divided power among the major religious groups, but demographic changes and regional influences gradually undermined this balance and ultimately led to the war.

Yahya classifies displacement in Lebanon as taking two forms: temporary and permanent. Temporary displacement happens during periods of conflict when people flee their immediate areas due to attacks, which leads to large-scale movement within the city or between urban and rural areas. This type of displacement is usually reversible, as those affected tend to return home once the violence subsides. In contrast, permanent displacement is more severe, as it not only forces individuals to leave due to life-threatening conditions but also prevents them from returning. This results in the rise of informal settlements and unauthorized housing developments.[38]

(37)   "About Us," Inaash, accessed November 9, 2024, https://www.inaash.org/pages/about-us.
(38)   Maha Yahya, "Reconstituting Space," in Recovering Beirut : Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction, ed. Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury, 1993, 164, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA21379050.

Selected Key Events

1975: Outbreak of War
> Although numerous events led up to the civil war, the Ain el-Remmaneh bus attack is marked as the incident that officially marked the beginning of the conflict. On April 13, 1975, Phalangist also known as Kataeb Party (Lebanese Social Democratic Party) gunmen attacked a bus carrying Palestinian civilians, killing 27 people. This attack sparked widespread violence between Christian militias and Palestinian factions.

1976: Syrian Intervention (589,680 displaced from 189 Christian and Mulsim villages)[39]

June 1976: Syrian intervention under the guise of restoring peace and order adds another layer of complexity to the war after initially siding with Christian militias against the Palestinian factions.

1978: Israeli Invasion (100,000 to 250,000 internally displaced)[40]

In March 1978, Israel launched an incursion into southern Lebanon, known as Operation Litani, targeting the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This operation resulted in the establishment of a buffer zone controlled by Israeli forces and their Lebanese ally, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which displaced 120,000 residents from the affected areas. [41]

1982: Israeli Invasion and Beirut Siege
> Israel invaded Lebanon again with the aim of expelling the PLO. They besieged and encircled the city of Beirut and caused widespread destruction and a temporary wave of displacement. On September 28 1982, Operation Peace for Galilee ended and the Israeli army began its withdrawal towards the south. In February 1985, Israel began withdrawing from Sidon, by 24 April they withdrew from the Bekaa Valley and 29 April, from Tyre. The final troop withdrawal to the previously occupied zone in southern Lebanon was completed on 5 June 1985.
> The invasion led to widespread displacement, particularly from the capital. Although the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Beirut allowed many to return, their departure from Mount Lebanon triggered intense internal conflicts and additional displacement.[42]

1983: War of the Suburbs
> It led to the displacement of approximately 400,00 individuals from the southern suburbs and Ras al-Nabaa areas as well as 150,000 person from the south of Leb-

(39)   Yahya, "Reconstituting Space," 157.
(40)   Spencer C. Tucker, ed. (2010). The Encyclopedia of Middle East Wars. Bloomsbury Academic. p. 728. ISBN 978-1-85109-947-4.
(41)   Georges Assaf, "Resolving the Issue of War Displacement in Lebanon," Forced Migration Review, accessed November 7, 2024, https://www.fmreview.org/assaf-elfil/#notes.
(42)   Assaf, "Resolving the Issue of War Displacement in Lebanon."

anon, 150,000 to the Bekaa valley and west Beirut. [43] **Total displaced 464,314 1983-1984**[44] By the mid-1980s, Shia militias like Hezbollah and Amal gained prominence, supported by Iran and Syria and played a critical role in the resistance against Israeli occupation in the south.[45]

1989: Taif Agreement

The Taif Agreement, signed in 1989, aimed to end the Lebanese Civil War by redistributing political power among Lebanon's religious communities and strengthening the central government. It led to the disarmament of militias (except Hezbollah), the withdrawal of Syrian forces, and efforts to rebuild state institutions. While it brought relative stability, the agreement entrenched sectarian divisions in politics, affecting daily life by maintaining a power-sharing system based on religious affiliation. The implications on displacement were significant, as the agreement facilitated the return of many displaced individuals, although some sectarian tensions and regional disparities remained.[46]

1990: End of the Civil War

The end of occupation of southern Lebanon came on May 24th 2000, following 18 years of occupation. The Israeli forces withdrew unilaterally under mounting pressure from Hezbollah's guerrilla warfare and growing domestic dissent within Israel. The withdrawal was completed in compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 (adopted on 19 March 1978), which called for Israel's immediate pullout and the restoration of peace and security along the Lebanese-Israeli border. The withdrawal allowed thousands of displaced Lebanese to return to their homes, although the area remained volatile with ongoing tensions and sporadic conflicts.

All the while, solidere, the real estate company owned by businessman Rafik Hariri who became prime minister in 1992 emerged as the leading developer company of the reconstruction efforts of Downtown beirut.

2005: Prime minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut on the 14th of February sparking calls for the withdrawal of syrian army forces.

This marked the beginning of a period of time of increased bombings and assassination attacks, bringing the total to 30 between 2005 and 2012 [47] and 42 between 2013 and 2024.[48]

(43)   Yahya, "Reconstituting Space," 161.
(44)   Yahya, "Reconstituting Space," 159.
(45)   Massaab Al-Aloosy, The Changing Ideology of Hezbollah, Springer eBooks, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34847-2.
(46)   Hassan Krayem, Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Selected Essays, ed. Paul Salem (Syracuse University Press, 1997), https://www.civil-center.org/files/taif/The-Lebanese-Civil-War-and-the-Taif-Agreement---Hassan-Krayem.pdf.
(47)   "Timeline of Explosions and Targeted Assassinations From 2004 to 2012," The Daily Star Newspaper - Lebanon, n.d., https://web.archive.org/web/20180922135810/http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-20/192095-timeline-of-explosions-and-targeted-assassinations-from-2004-to-2012.ashx.
السيارات المفخخة في لبنان : 1975-2013," Monthly Magazine, accessed January 13, 2025, https://monthlymagazine.com/article/3073/السيارات-المفخخة-في-لبنان-1975-2013--
(48)   Wikipedia contributors, "List of Attacks in Lebanon," Wikipedia, December 23, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_attacks_in_Lebanon.

2006: An attack on July 12 by Hezbollah on the border with Israel led to a 34 day war between Israel and Lebanon.[49] This resulted in the death of 1,200 Lebanese and a vast destruction of Lebanese infrastructure and the displacement of approximately one million people.[50]

2020: Tonnes of Ammonium nitrate, that were being stored at the Beirut port, detonated following a fire on August 4th, destroying the port completely and causing extensive damage to the architecture and infrastructure of Beirut[51]. The explosion, considered to be thelargest non nuclear explosion, resulted in the **displacement of approximately 300,000 person.**[52]

(49)   "The 2006 Lebanon War: Hezbollah's Expensive 'Victory' Ten Years On," Alarabiya, 2016, accessed February 11, 2025, https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2016/07/15/The-2006-Lebanon-War-Hezbollah-s-expensive-victory-ten-years-on.
(50)   UNHCR, "The Lebanon Situation," 2006, https://www.unhcr.org/asia/sites/asia/files/legacy-pdf/4666d244e.pdf.
(51)   "Beirut Recovery Map - Rice University," Beirut Recovery Map - Rice University, n.d., https://www.beirutrecovery.org/.
(52)   Aya Majzoub, "'They Killed Us From the Inside,'" Human Rights Watch, March 28, 2023, https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast.
        "The Beirut Blast and What It Says About How Displacement Is Monitored," IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, n.d., https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-analysis/the-beirut-blast-and-what-it-says-about-how-displacement-is-monitored/.

Current situation

The occupation of the south of Lebanon by Israel and its supported South Lebanon Army created a rift and division in Lebanon that is still visible today. Lebanon finds itself amidst a renewed war with Israel along its southern borders. On October 8th Militant group Hezbollah fired guided rockets and artillery shells at Israeli positions in the disputed Shebaa Farms. The war has since continued and Israel and Lebanon have been engaging in a war that has since spread and reached the Bekaa valley further north of the country. Media coverage frequently emphasizes southern Lebanon, with headlines and social media posts focusing on the area as though it were an isolated entity.

This division is evident in how the conflict is framed. Phrases like "all eyes on south Lebanon" suggest the region is somehow apart from the rest of the nation. While it's important to pinpoint conflict locations geographically, this focus also highlights and perpetuates underlying social and cultural divisions. The portrayal of southern Lebanon as predominantly Muslim can reinforce stereotypes, overshadowing the region's diverse demographic fabric, which includes a significant Christian community.

Official sources in southern Lebanon report that "more than 4,000 attacks have hit 23 towns directly along the border with Israel since Oct. 8.[53]

A the UN Development Program report in Lebanon revealed that more than 90 villages were affected, with an estimated 1,200 homes completely destroyed and around 5,000 others sustaining partial damage.[54]

The estimated **number of displaced people** in the ongoing attack is estimated to be around 82,000 people thus far. The report explained that the majority of the displaced, 93%, come from three border districts: 48% from Bint Jbeil, 33% from Marjayoun, and 12% from Tyre. The displaced are distributed across 5 regions, with 31% seeking refuge in the Tyre district, 17% in the Nabatieh district, 15% in Sidon, 9% in Baabda, 7% in Beirut, and the rest dispersed in other areas.[55]

(53)   "Israeli Attacks on Lebanon," Public Works Studio, February 24, 2025, accessed February 26, 2025, https://publicworks studio.com/en/observatory/israeli-strikes-map/.
(54)   Rida Nazeer, "Empty Villages in Southern Lebanon and Israeli Destruction Along Border," Asharq Al-Awsat, April 8, 2024, https://english.aawsat.com/features/4954846-empty-villages-southern-lebanon-and-israeli-destruction-along-border.
(55)   Jana Al Dhaibe, "Empty Villages," Al Jazeera, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2024/1/12/ قرى-خالية-تفاصيل-النزوح-والأضرار-بفعل

Conclusion

The historical timeline of Beirut shows that the rise and fall of regimes, often accompanied by displacement, has been the driving force in the city's growth and the transformation of its urban neighborhoods. Incoming populations have brought with them diverse cultural knowledge, architectural practices, and consistently built upon the foundation of previous existing ones.

Beirut in particular is a dynamic collage of architectural styles that reflect its complex history. Every construction site digs a new layer of a remnant past. Its current urban fabric consists of a mixture of influences from various eras, from Ottoman style structures like the Grand Serail, Neo-Ottoman and Arabesque-Ottoman styles, French colonial architecture, and more recently the mixed use modern high-rises and towers similar to the VR tower that will be introduced in Chapter 7.

The fragmentation of Beirut's urban landscape is further shaped by the multitude of displaced communities, each arranging their own microcosms within the city. The Armenian neighborhoods and Palestinian camps illustrate how distinct communities have adapted to their circumstances.

This historical overview serves as the ground for understanding the chapters that follow, which examine current elements of control, such as checkpoints and borderlines, as well as later efforts at recovery and renovation. These developments contextualize Beirut's responses to its history of displacement and its ongoing process of urban development.

July 2006. Destruction after Israeli airstrikes on southern Beirut

August 4, 2020. Smoke rises following Beirut Port Explosion.

November 2024. Smoke rises following an attack on southern Beirut.
© AFP, Patrick Baz

November 2024. A residential building hit by an Israeli airstrike in southern suburb of Beirut.
© (AP)

BORDERS, DEMARCATION ZONES, CHECKPOINTS, SURVEILLANCE

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TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

"Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership—claims to 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs'—are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over."[56]

An (UN) Natural Barrier

The Wallace Line is an invisible barrier or rather a biogeographical barrier that was keeping two areas apart. It was mapped out in 1863 by explorer, geographer and anthropologist Alfred Russel wallace.[57] This line demarcates two distinct ecozones: the Asian realm to the west and the Australasian realm to the east. The two ecozones show a significant difference in species distribution on either side of the line, highlighting its role as a natural barrier.
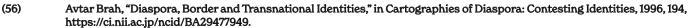
The flora and fauna on the western side remained predominantly Asian while the eastern side the species are characteristically Australasian. While the distance is not the only reason that prevented species from intermixing, it is estimated that its the deep water channel that lies between the islands the true cause of this divide. This long-term divide in evolutionary isolation meant that those species were not only physically distinct but also behaviorally adapted to their respective environments.

Drawing on the Wallace Line, we see parallels in the boundaries within urban landscapes. Urban checkpoints, delineate spaces of belonging versus exclusion. In this sense, biogeographical boundaries become sociopolitical ones, defining who has access to certain areas and who does not. Such checkpoints lead to different conditions for individuals based on identity markers like race, class, and citizenship.

The Line is an imaginary boundary. Boundaries are areas of transition, contact or separation between two or more spatially heterogeneous areas. When we speak of boundaries in an ecological or geographical sense we look for physical marks and differences that highlight areas of transition.

So how do we identify the changes in the landscape of socio-political boundary areas? The practice of bordering has always existed to reduce ambiguity on ownership and highlight territorial areas of influence. While we still maintain borders on a wider national level, boundaries and border areas can exist within the framework of a nation.

During the civil war the demarcation line or the green line emerged as a new border landscape within the city of beirut dividing the capital in two. It was named the green line because of the rich fauna that emerged and flourished with the absence of human presence.

(56)   Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities," in Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities, 1996, 194, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA29477949.
(57)   "The Alfred Russel Wallace Page," Choice Reviews Online 40, no. 06 (February 1, 2003): 40–3384, https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-3384.

Blight as a Sociopolitical and Biogeographical Construct

The etymology of the term 'blight' which is originally used to describe plant diseases provides a strong metaphor for urban decay and socio-spatial exclusion. In its (re) placement from botany to architecture and urban planning, blight signifies areas deemed as degenerated. Area zones subject to exclusion policies by the state and which are often inhabited by marginalized communities are often labeled in dehumanizing rhetoric which invokes further social distancing and justifies neglect or erasure. A tactic not only used by external forces, such as the case of Israel's labeling of every target as a militia target, this is continually used by government fractions to further create a rift within the already fragile Lebanese social infrastructure.

The 'disease solicits cures' phenomenon drives a paradox where the so-called cure for these exclusion zones often entails the displacement of its original inhabitants whom society at large distances through processes of rationalization. This conceptual distancing works as a psychological coping mechanism to deny poverty and racial problems, thus reinforcing blight as a manufactured sociopolitical construct.

Checkpoint Crossings are the wallace Line

Achille Mbembe suggests, borders have evolved beyond their traditional role as mere demarcation lines between sovereign states. Instead, they now operate as independent structures with their own logic, functioning almost autonomously and impersonally. No longer solely controlled by national authorities, these borders impose their own regulations and mechanisms of control, shaping movement and access in ways that transcend direct human oversight. [58]

While there is no physical barrier or divide when entering the southern suburbs of Beirut, there are many indicators or markers making it clear we are leaving one territory and entering another, crossing the socio-political line.

Checkpoints surrounding the southern suburbs of Lebanon have been a familiar sight since 2012. Introduced by Hezbollah to maintain peace in the neighborhood and monitor suspicious activity, these checkpoints were established in response to growing security threats. A series of explosions that followed soon after, underscored the need of these measures to the inhabitants of the area. While the imminent threats 'subsided' the checkpoints soon became a permanent fixture in the urban landscape.

The roads leading into the southern suburbs are lined with political paraphernalia. Party-affiliated posters, flags and posters of martyrs drape nearly every streetlight post, creating a vivid display of territoriality. At the entrance to each street, military checkpoints stand as reminders of the area's controlled access. CCTV lines up the entrance to smaller and narrower alleyways, and cafes serve as local neighborhood watches. Bored soldiers, standing guard with little enthusiasm, wave vehicles through as they approach. As you drive closer, you instinctively lower

(58)   Achille Mbembe, Brutalism (Theory in Forms, 2024).61.

the music and roll down the windows. With a polite nod and a "Good day Watan," [59] you acknowledge the soldiers, who respond with a perfunctory wave, signaling you to proceed

The traffic congestion at these checkpoints is notorious, making any journey into the suburbs a frustrating one. The gridlock is so severe that many taxi drivers refuse to take passengers beyond the checkpoints. Those who do agree often do so reluctantly, either dropping you off just before the checkpoint or charging double, sometimes even triple, the usual fare. In stark contrast, a trip from the suburbs to the city costs the standard fare, highlighting the disparity and inconvenience faced by those entering or rather returning into the area.

While this socio-political line isn't a physical barrier, and pedestrians are technically free to move in and out as they please, crossing it makes one acutely aware of the act. This is similar to the experience of crossing borders within the European Union. Though the borders are open, border personnel and the architecture of border control facilities serve as constant reminders that you are moving from one jurisdiction to another. These elements make the act of crossing significant, emphasizing the transition between distinct spaces, despite the lack of formal restrictions.

The restrictions and checkpoints eventually led to the creation of a state within a state, and the area has soon become known as a Hezbollah stronghold. In the book 'The Shock Doctrine' by Naomi Klein, the author describes the aftermath of the 2006 July war on Lebanon and the vast destruction of Haret Hreik.[60] The Lebanese government, completely neglectful of the marginalized suburbs, showed no initiative to support those whose homes had been damaged during the one month war. The country suffered massive destruction and an urgent need for reconstruction, with damages estimated at $9 billion. International donors, convening in Paris in 2007, pledged $7.6 billion in aid, but with strict conditions attached, including privatization of public services and tax increase. Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, backed by Western allies, accepted these terms, which Author Naomi Klein argues is typical of disaster capitalism, which according to the author refers to a strategy where governments and corporations exploit crises, such as natural disasters, wars, and economic collapses, to push through controversial free-market policies that benefit the wealthy and powerful. However, this approach faced significant backlash from the Lebanese public, who were worried of the economic burden these reforms would place on them.

Despite the extensive damage to the infrastructure and damage to residential blocks, particularly in areas like Haret Hreik in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Lebanese protested the conditions tied to the aid. Hezbollah quickly mobilized a parallel reconstruction effort. Within days of the ceasefire, Hezbollah's local committees began the assessment of the damage, distributing $12,000 in cash to displaced families to cover their year's rent and furnishings. This initiative, which involved local contractors and volunteers, allowed reconstruction in Haret Hreik to begin almost immediately, contrasting sharply with the slower, more

(59)   Watan is the arabic word meaning homeland, but colloquially refers to Army soldiers.
(60)   Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (Penguin UK, 2014), 459.

bureaucratic processes associated with international aid. [61]

While Western media often dismissed Hezbollah's efforts as bribery, for the many Lebanese it was the effective response to the community's needs. Hezbollah's rapid and localized approach to rebuilding Haret Hreik highlighted the inefficiencies and inequities of the international aid model, which many feared would replicate the mistakes of Lebanon's previous post-war reconstruction, benefiting elites while neglecting the broader population.[62]

On October 7th 2023 the most recent war between Israel and Gaza unfolded and has had impacts extending beyond its immediate borders and contributing to escalating tensions in the surrounding region. This spillover effect influenced Lebanon, leading to responses from Hezbollah. As of September 27 2024, Lebanon faces renewed and intensified bombardment by Israel, with damage, destruction, and displacement surpassing even those of 2006 in their extremity. Israel has intensified its assault on Lebanon, extending the violence not only to Beirut but also to Baalbek, Tripoli and other regions. In South of Beirut, at least 325 buildings have been demolished, with the destruction covering an area of 11.87 square kilometers.[63] Beirut Urban Lab, a collaborative and interdisciplinary research space based in Lebanon, has mapped the evacuation orders and announced strikes on south Beirut and the 37 villages along the border that have been completely destroyed, leaving approximately 1.2 million people displaced. [64]

As this war unfolds, the fate and future of the area remain uncertain. For the Lebanese, each bombing systematically alters the landscape, erasing familiar landmarks and reshaping spaces into reminders of ongoing conflict.

Checkpoint performativity

Borders are not just fixed geographical lines; they are continuously performed through rituals, gestures, and interactions—passport checks, questioning, body language, and the ways in which individuals must present themselves as "legitimate" travelers. Boundaries are enacted and reinforced through these performances, shaping not only the movement of people but also the perception of belonging and exclusion.

As Peggy Phelan argues in Unmarked: The Politics of Performance, performance exists only in its live enactment, it is ephemeral, unfolding in the present moment and resisting full documentation.[65] Similarly, the authority of a border is not static but is reaffirmed through the performative acts of both border agents and travelers. Inspections, interrogations, and the presentation of identification are all acts that continuously produce and reinforce the border's existence. While borders depend on documentation and surveillance, their enforcement remains performative, fluid and contingent on who is

(61)   Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, 462.
(62)   Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, 462.
(63)   "Mapping One Month of Announced Strikes in South Beirut," Beirut Urban Lab, accessed October 16, 2024, https://beiruturbanlab.com/en/Details/2009/mapping-one-month-of-strikes-in-south-beirut-(27-september-24-october-2024).
(64)   "UNHCR: Lebanon Crisis Deepens as Israeli Airstrikes Intensify," UNHCR, October 15, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-lebanon-crisis-deepens-israeli-airstrikes-intensify#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20Lebanon%20estimates,continues%20to%20spill%20into%20Syria.
(65)   Peggy Phelan, Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (Routledge, 2003), 146.

present and how they behave. Some travelers may pass through seamlessly, while others face heightened scrutiny based on race, appearance, or nationality.

Judith Butler expands on this idea by emphasizing that performativity does not create something from nothing but rather functions through repetition and rearticulation within an existing cultural or institutional framework. As she explains, "Generally speaking, a performative functions to produce that which it declares." [66] In the context of border enforcement, this means that the act of inspection itself helps construct the reality of who is deemed a legitimate traveler and who is subject to suspicion. The checkpoint is not merely a neutral space of verification; it is an active site where identities and legal statuses are continuously produced and reinforced. These performative actions do not simply describe reality—they create it, shaping the border as a site of power, control, and exclusion.

Both natural and artificial borders create divisions, influence movement, and shape distinct identities within regions. In the same way the bio geographical line not only maintains but also reinforces the bio heterogeneity on either side of the borderline, a socio-political line operates in the same methods. The checkpoints , through reinforcing stereotypes and conditions on the residents within the borders, further pushed people to move out of the neighborhood as they felt they couldnt reside there any longer.

M.F. has lived in the Dahieh area since birth and has always felt deeply rooted in the neighborhood. However, in recent years, the increasing traffic congestion, cou-

pled with widespread disorganization and the deteriorating infrastructure, has made life increasingly challenging. M.F.'s workplace is located in the heart of Beirut, and the commute has become hard, taking up significant time each day. Furthermore, maintaining a social life has proven difficult, as many colleagues are hesitant to visit the neighborhood due to pervasive stereotypes and concerns about safety. These growing issues prompted the family to move to the nearby Badaro neighborhood, just five minutes away from their original home.

Similarly, R.A. decided to relocate their family, despite one partner having a stable and well-paying job in Dahieh. The worsening living conditions, including the air pollution caused by diesel generators and persistent power cuts, were compelling reasons to move to Baabda.

This pattern of internal migration has become increasingly prevalent over the past few years, reflecting a broader struggle among Lebanese citizens to navigate and adapt to deteriorating living standards. The convergence of economic instability, environmental degradation, and inadequate public services underscores the profound impact of systemic governmental negligence and corruption. These challenges have disproportionately affected marginalized communities, exacerbating social inequalities and prompting widespread displacement as individuals and families seek more sustainable and livable environments within the country.

The paradox of borders - (B)ordering rejects as well as erects othering. This paradoxical character of bordering processes whereby borders are erected to erase terri-

(66) Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex"* (Psychology Press, 1993), 107.

torial ambiguity and ambivalent identities in order to shape a unique and cohesive order, but thereby create new or reproduce latently existing differences in space and identity - is of much importance in understanding our daily contemporary practices.[67]

Once a boundary is established, whether visible or not, it becomes easier for governments or communities to enforce a sense of "otherness" upon marginalized groups. Once the conditions for exclusion are set and the language of dehumanization takes root, imposing living conditions that reflect this marginalization becomes a normalized practice.

Throughout Lebanon's history, this dynamic is evident in how communities outside Beirut's city walls were described and treated. The rhetoric used for the suburbs of Beirut in the 19th century mirrors that used today for areas like Dahieh. "It was believed to be very dangerous to live beyond the Beirut wall that served as a protection layer. The first houses that were built "outside the wall" around 1810 consisted of small tiny huts used to house silkworms. It is said that the Basoul Family is one of the earliest families to have settled beyond the city walls, which earned it its name meaning 'the brave'. "[68]

Today, the fear of areas like Dahieh is reflected in everyday interactions. Throughout my stay there, taxi drivers often refused to travel to Dahieh citing security concerns. Some UBER drivers even reacted angrily when the destination Dahieh was disclosed, describing the area as dangerous and recounting personal stories of robberies or other incidents.

Lebanon's electricity sector with Electricité du Liban (EDL), the state-owned utility company, has never really recovered from the damaging impact that civil war and Israeli attacks had on its infrastructure. In addition, the power plants are old, inefficient and lack diversified energy mix, which leads to frequent breakdowns and inadequate power generation. The heavy reliance on expensive and imported fuel adds to the already troubled sector. Post-war reconstruction efforts were held back by mismanagement, political interference, and the lack of long-term planning.

While all the country experiences daily power rationing, the distribution of power resources has not been equal, with some areas experiencing up to 22 hours of power cuts per day. In particular the worst affected areas are the suburbs of beirut. This has led to the emergence of a parallel industry of private diesel generators as a more reliable source.

These tend to operate on a subscription-based model, where residents or businesses pay a monthly fee based on the amount of electricity (measured in amperes) they consume. More recently, there is a noticeable independent switch to solar power panels.The rooftop landscape of the neighborhood is one that is dominated by the sight of solar panels and water tanks in what has come to resemble a metaphorical oudet el mouneh, or the pantry room. Mouneh is the traditional way of saving food and sustenance in bulk during the seasons in order to be consumed at a later stage. A practice that is still heavily practiced in Dahye where the majority of its citizens have been displaced

(67)   Henk Van Houtum and Ton Van Naerssen, "Bordering, Ordering and Othering," Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie 93, no. 2 (May 1, 2002): 125–36, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00189.
(68)   Issam Chebaro, History of Beirut From the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century (1987 دار مصباح الفكر), 146.

from the countryside and still maintain some connection to the land. Onions, olives and olive oil as well as dried foods and vegetables and spices such as Zaatar are still purchased in bulk to last the year.

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

Fig.14 Satellite image (2024) highlighting the number of installed solar panels in a section of the southern suburbs of Beirut, in response to surging power cuts.

CHAPTER 3

July 2022. The Light sign above Électricité du Liban, where half the letters remain unlit, an ironic reflection of Lebanon's ongoing electricity crisis.

RECOVER, RENOVATE, REBUILD

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TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

I recalled an interesting conversation I had as a child with my uncle, a seasoned farmer who tended his land for over 40 years. One afternoon, while working on one plot of land I questioned him about why we had been leaving certain plots of land uncropped during specific seasons, only to alternate cultivation in between. In response, he explained how allowing the earth time to recover and regenerate between harvests was essential for maintaining soil health and productivity. Through diligent tilling, the addition of fertilizers, and periods of fallow, he ensured that the land could replenish itself, compensating for the exhaustive demands of each previous crop cycle. This concept of regeneration and recovery time resonated deeply within me, sparking a curiosity that extended far beyond the boundaries of the farm. I couldn't help but wonder whether this principle could be applied to the rehabilitation of urban landscapes ravaged by the trauma of war. Just as my uncle nurtured the land back to vitality, could we not similarly cultivate strategies that allow cities to heal and flourish anew, providing the necessary time and resources for communities to rebuild, recover, and ultimately thrive once more? In the wake of destruction, perhaps there lies an opportunity for renewal, a chance to sow the seeds of resilience and regeneration, and fostering hope amidst the rubble.

To enter Beirut you had to enter through one of the seven iron reinforced gates. Beirut was famous for its city walls which date back to the Canaanite age and consisted of large stones that surrounded historic Beirut (current Downtown area) and offered protection from its enemies. The fortification wall was destroyed multiple of times and was partially reconstructed and reinforced in 1791 by reusing the masonry stones of Shihabis buildings[69] and churches that he had demolished during his occupation.

Ironically, the presence of these "fortifications" can still be felt, as army checkpoints and barbed wire fences now stand in their place, restricting access to the area. After the 15 years civil war ended (1990), the country faced significant devastation and lacked resources for the reconstruction. Rafiq Hariri, businessman and future prime minister, overtook the reconstruction through his personal real estate company, Solidere. The majority of historical Beirut including its ancient souks were demolished to make way for marinas, shopping malls and apartments reducing accessibility for the general population. Many Lebanese viewed this as disconnected
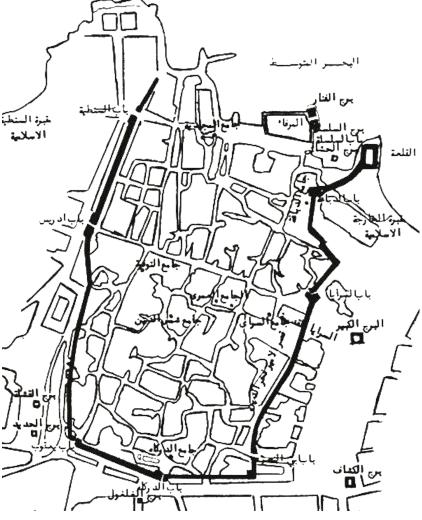

Fig.15

(69)   The Shihabis were a dynasty that ruled Mount Lebanon during the Ottoman era. They assumed power from their predecessors in 1697 AD. Their rule came to an end in 1861 with the establishment of the Mutasarrifiyya (autonomous administrative region). Prince Bashir II Shihabi was one of the prominent statesmen in the Ottoman Empire.

Fig.15   Map of Beirut and its Gates highlighting the city fortifications.

from reality. The reconstruction, which prioritized commercial interests, came at the expense of the displacement of the original residents, leading to the erasure of the traditional urban fabric. The redevelopment created a luxury-focused downtown that alienated many Lebanese citizens, as it catered primarily to affluent investors and tourists, disconnecting the area from the broader socio-economic reality of the country. [70]

"The first waves of displacement (1996-2008) in these affected neighborhoods fall neatly under gentrification trends, which are processes of urban transformation through the influx of more affluent residents and businesses."[71]
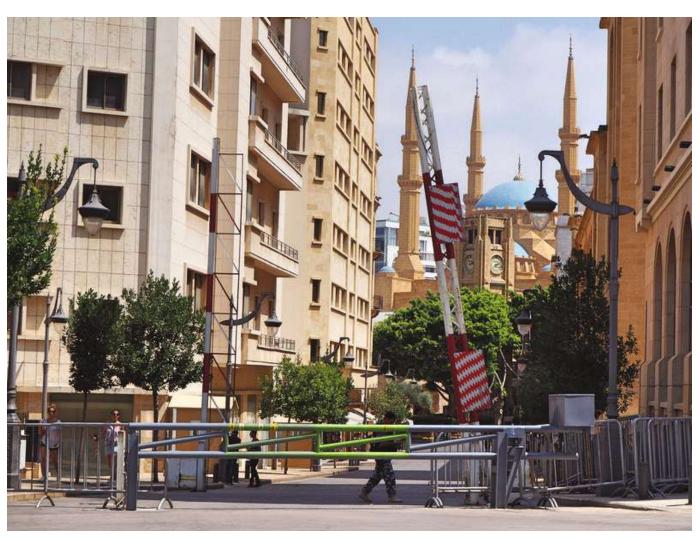

Fig.16

(70)   Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (Penguin UK, 2014).
(71)   "Beirut's Blasted Neighborhoods: Between Recovery Efforts and Real Estate Interests," The Public Source, n.d., https://thepublicsource.org/beiruts-blasted-neighborhoods-between-recovery-efforts-and-real-estate-interests.
Fig.16   Army checkpoints positioned around the old city center, restricts access to visitors.
         "Rebuilding the New Beirut," Nomadic Notes, October 1, 2024, https://www.nomadicnotes.com/rebuilding-the-new-beirut/.

Synthesized Heritage

The reproduction of spaces and architecture that are deemed to be of historical and cultural significance has been regulated by many international guidelines. The International charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites is one of most influential documents in heritage conservation. The restoration processes are governed by a combination of traditional techniques and modern strategies under the principles of authenticity, sustainability, and inclusivity. UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) provide comprehensive guidelines and resources to ensure that restoration efforts honor cultural heritage.

According to the Venice Charter of 1964 which was adopted by ICOMOS in 1965, the restoration of monuments must respect original materials and avoid speculative interpretation. [72] Additions must be clearly distinct from the original design, bearing a contemporary character, and the process must be informed by thorough archaeological and historical studies both before and after the intervention (Article 9). When possible traditional techniques should be utilized (Article 10). Restoration should respect the contributions of all historical periods, avoiding the removal of later additions unless these are of little significance and the underlying material holds substantial historical, archaeological, or aesthetic value, with the decision guided by collective expertise rather than individual judgment (Article 11). Missing elements should be harmoniously integrated but distinguishable from the original to prevent falsifying the monument's historical or artistic integrity (Article 12). Furthermore, any new additions must not compromise the building's significant features, traditional setting, compositional balance, or its relationship with the surrounding environment (Article 13).

In many war or disaster stricken areas, reconstruction follows these guidelines. Poland is a great example of such reconstruction efforts. Gdańsk and Warsaw's Old Town, which is on UNESCOs world heritage site list, were almost entirely destroyed during WWII. Both cities were rebuilt after the war, guided by historical paintings, photographs, and documents. Reconstruction focused on restoring Gdańsk's Hanseatic architectural style, preserving its identity as a key Baltic trade city.

Another great example is the Stari Most, a 16th-century Ottoman bridge in Mostar, which was destroyed during the Bosnian War in 1993. Rebuilt in 2004 using original techniques and materials wherever possible, the new bridge is a faithful reproduction of the original.

(72)   International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964), accessed 14.10.2024, https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/venice_e.pdf

The two case studies I wish to discuss fall under a unique category of architecture that bridges reconstruction and vernacular revival. These are not reconstructions in the traditional sense, as they do not involve rebuilding structures that were destroyed or replicating specific historical buildings. Instead, they represent an effort to use authentic heritage material, salvaged or repurposed, to create entirely new structures that embody vernacular architectural principles in new locations.

CHAPTER 4

"*The village invades the city for the first time*"

«الفرية تغزو المدينة لأول مرة»

Noha Hneife, "صاحب «نظرية العمارة التدويرية» جمال مكي»," Annahar, 2012, accessed July 27, 2023, https://www.annaharkw.com/annahar/Article.aspx?id=322790&date=02042012.

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

Al-Saha Village

"We, who saw the light in the Lebanese village, yearn for our childhoods. For in the depths of our souls, it holds sweet memories: the spring and the path of the spring, the vineyards and the path of the vineyards, the return and the fields of return, the fortress and the groves of fig and olive trees, the upper and lower terraces enclosed with ancient rusty barrels scented with thyme, cloves, and jasmine, and an apple tree with clusters of apples, and innocent gatherings under the arbor.

And though we've gone, and when we descend, the images of the village remain etched in the back of the mind. There is nothing more delightful to us than to return to the village, to enter the dark, smoky upper floor where we were born, to walk in the square where we played, and to pass through the alleys and passages where we hid.

But the civilization of the Lebanese village, the village of our childhood, is on the verge of disappearance. Western civilization has invaded most Lebanese villages, even the most remote among them." [73]

This text by Anis Freiha was the inspiration behind the Al-Saha village project. Al-Saha International Group, known for establishing Al-Saha - Lebanon Heritage Village in 2002 along the former route to Rafic Hariri International Airport, claims to embody the essence of a traditional Lebanese village with a blend of ancient architectural styles and elements.

The premises encompass:

A 5-star boutique hotel featuring 50 rooms designed in a fusion of Arab and international architectural aesthetics, alongside 26 Lebanese-designed "Standard" rooms.
Dining establishments specializing in Lebanese cuisine.
Versatile event halls equipped with cutting-edge technology.
An old souq (marketplace).
A Heritage Museum.

Al Saha has expanded its presence beyond Lebanon to include Qatar, Sudan, London, and Kuwait, with plans for expansion into Iraq, all operating under the global franchise system.

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(73)   Anis Freiha, حضارة في طريق الزوال [A civilization on the brink of extinction] (Al Kareem, 1957),1.

Architect Jamal Makki recounts the creation of "Al-Saha- Lebanon's Heritage Village." This project found its inspiration in the heart of the Lebanese village, particularly in its central square, where people gathered to share their joys, sorrows, and daily activities. These squares were characterized by closely-built houses, shops, and charming archways, as depicted by the late Lebanese writer Anis Freiha in his work "The Lebanese Village, a Civilization on the Way to Disappearing." In contrast, the urban landscape is marked by towering buildings that replace green areas, and markets with an entirely different environment.

Makki wanted to provide those who yearned for the village's aesthetics with a complete experience and aimed to immerse them in the village's distinctive climate, scents, food and architecture. The objective was to transport them back to their roots.

According to the Al-Saha International group the project follows the storyline of a character called Abu Ahmed, a farmer from the village, who 'decided' to embark on a journey to the city, carrying his heritage with him, symbolizing a new concept: "For the first time, the village invades the city." In this context, one can say the term "invades" was used almost positively.

As a result of Abu Ahmed's determination, the village came to life within the cityscape. It transformed into a living museum, preserving the traditional environment, complete with its architectural nuances, way of life, and the ancient tools employed in everyday activities. The hotel project offers visitors a journey through time and memory.

Collecting its artifacts, elements, and even the stones from its ruined houses, he packed these precious remnants with his belongings and brought them to the city. With this act, he aimed to revive the essence of his village's cultural legacy.

Every architectural detail, from arches to inns, rooftops to shops, attics to arzals (Syriac terms that mean a dwelling or shelter situated at an elevated location), found a place in his vision. This village emerged as a living museum, preserving the traditional environment, architecture, lifestyles, and the age-old tools employed in daily activities.[74]

(74)   "About us," Assaha Village, accessed August 24, 2023, http://www.assahavillage.com/.
Jocelyne Elia, "مطعم الساحة.. قرية لبنانية في قلب لندن," Khiyam, 2099, accessed August 28, 2023, https://khiyam.com/news/article.php?articleID=8010.
Hneife, "جمال مكي «صاحب نظرية العمارة التدويرية».
"أسطورة "الساحة," Laha Magazine, 2010, accessed August 28, 2023, https://www.lahamag.com/article/11954-27%الساحة_27%أسطورة
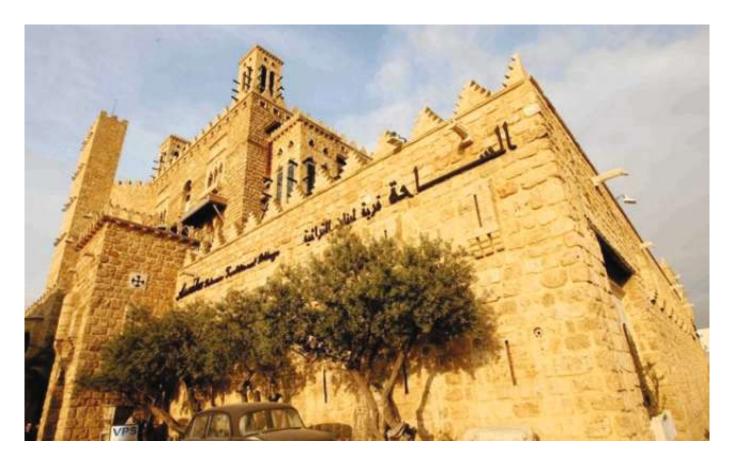
Fig.17   Al Saha Restaurant, a view of the vernacular architecture.

Fig.18   A view of the traditional courtyard and the outside dining area in Al Saha Restaurant.

CHAPTER 4

"I wanted to have it so badly. So every-day I continued to search for these houses, and enter the ones that were ready to be demo-lished. I bought the accessories from them."

((كنت أرغب بشدة في الحصول عليها، لذلك كنت أواصل البحث عن هذه المنازل، وأدخل المنازل التي كانت جاهزة للهدم، أشتريت منها الإكسسوارات))

"Henry Loussian an artist's revival of old Beirut," The Verbose, accessed August 8, 2023, https://www.theverbose.com/Henry+Loussian.

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

HENRY BB

Henry Loussian is a Lebanese artisanal Jewelry artist with Armenian roots, and the founder of the Henry BB Museum. The two Bs in the name refer to the names of two coastal Lebanese cities. Batroun, the city where the museum is located and Beirut, the city that has surrendered fragments of its memories that are now 'immortalized' in the architecture of the Museum. Henry tells the story of how it was approximately ten years ago when he had begun falling in love with old Beirut houses.

The rising cost of real estate in very dense Beirut makes it impossible to purchase one of these properties or any property for that matter. He began to collect elements from these old architectures that were being demolished. Henry would roam the streets of Beirut and when he would come across a demolition site, would try to salvage any remnants of the Buildings. From the typical triple archway, marble columns, stained glass windows to the marble floors and red brick roof.

This three-story residence/ Museum is a synthesis of Beirut's historic architecture. While the primary structural framework is composed of concrete rather than traditional sandstone, every single detail, accessory, and component of the house has been meticulously sourced from old Beirut homes. This means that everything you see in this house has a rich history and origin in these timeless structures.

"We had influence from Tuscany. The inspiration for Lebanese architecture comes from Italy. We had an old leader who lived in Tuscany and he decided to build old Beirut like Tuscany. The same exact, with the specialty of the tree arches and the house which I showed in the picture. If you go to Tuscany you will see the same house but without the arches. Because there, it can get very cold and not in Beirut. So these arches are very open only in hot places like the Mediterranean and here in the Middle East. It's Lebanese." [75]

The floorplan of the house is based on the dimensions of the elements that were collected. The arches and marble columns, the balcony balustrades and windows, all determined the dimensions. The murals which were hand painted by Loussian himself were based on the original murals that he had photographed before demolition. The museum was filled with memory trophies, and felt as though it was inhabited, which was partly true.

(75)   "Henry Loussian an Artist's Revival of Old Beirut."

The Central Hall House

This unique architectural style is characterized by several distinctive features: a cubic shape, a red-tile roof made from imported Marseille tiles, and a central facade adorned with triple-arch openings. It's important to note that these houses were primarily constructed using stone, either sandstone with stucco in coastal cities or limestone in the mountainous regions.

There are no conclusive theories around the origins of the Central Hall House typology. As cited by Robert Saliba in his Essay, *Genesis of Modern Architecture in Beirut,* Davie and Nordiguian argue that the central hall as an organizational spatial and planning device has no conclusive origin, though they suggest the triple arch to be a Venetian import[76] . This could potentially link back to theories of Fakhr edDines time spent in Italy. The house is a mix of local and imported materials. While its bearing walls were typically made of local sandstone, much of its construction relied on materials introduced through colonial trade in the late 19th century, including iron beams and roof tiles from France, sawn timber from Romania, cast iron hardware from England, and marble tiles from Italy. [77]

"There is no new taste in this house," Loussian explains. "There is only reviving and imitation. I'm giving these old things a new place because nobody cares about them now."[78]

The day of my visit to the Museum, Rita gave us a tour of the house. The museum was situated in a remote part of the village outside of Batroun. Initially, our journey was marred by misguidance from our navigation system, making the museum quite challenging to locate. Finally, after inquiring with perplexed local visitors, who were unaware of the museum's existence, the last person cleaning their carpet on the balcony was able to help. This individual pointed us in the right direction, exclaiming, "Look, look at that beautiful building over there! Do you see it? That's the museum you're seeking." We proceeded to drive up and, upon arrival, we knocked on the door.

Rita promptly emerged, enthusiastically welcoming us. She guided us through the museum, whilst providing comprehensive explanations. It felt akin to entering a private residence. Rita then proceeded to showcase the artifacts that were collected by Henry over the years from various demolished houses. She directed our attention to the Carrara tiles which bore imprints inscribed with the word "a Beyrouth," on their reverse side, designating the destinations to which these Carrara marbles were destined, all the way from Italy.

She allowed us then to roam freely within the space, evoking memories of strolling through the streets of Beirut and intervened only to answer our questions or when she noticed our excitement over particular objects.

(76)   Robert Saliba and Oxford Brookes University, "1840-1940: Genesis of Modern Architecture in Beirut," n.d., https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/media.archnet.org/system/publications/contents/4766/original/DPC1478.pdf?1384786657.
(77)   Saliba and Oxford Brookes University, "1840-1940: Genesis of Modern Architecture in Beirut."
(78)   Robert McKelvey, "Lebanese Artisan Revives Heritage Homes With Open Residence," The New Arab, n.d., https://www.newarab.com/features/lebanese-artisan-revives-heritage-homes-open-residence.

This house is not a house. It is a multitude of houses. These artifacts did not originate from the same home, or location; rather, they hailed from houses of perhaps different classes and diverse historical backgrounds. Remarkably, they harmoniously converged within the museum, weaving together a narrative tapestry of a Beirut home. Rita later mentioned that she herself resides on the lower floor and maintains an Atelier there. When she noticed our excitement, she kindly offered to show us around. As other guests arrived during this time, she extended her hospitality to them as well. We were granted the privilege to explore her home freely, and interestingly enough noticed no distinction between her residence and the museum above; none reminded of a museum.

It is important to note that Loussian, the person behind this unconventional architectural project, does not bear the title of an architect or a painter; rather, he is a jewelry maker. His motivation lies in his passion for Beirut's heritage and its cherished homes. His dream materialized in the form of this house, whose dimensions were determined by the elements he had procured. The three arches, for instance, dictated the house's width, while the columns and windows established its height. Additionally, the balconies were shaped by the size of the balustrades he had collected. This concept presents a compelling departure from conventional architectural paradigms, a home designed not by architects or residents, but rather by the elements and remnants of a previous homes and heritage.

In this context, de-territorializing is exemplified by instances such as the demolition of houses by construction companies. The disassembly of windows, arched beams, columns, and tiles signifies the removal of their territorial context. On the other hand, what these artists have essentially undertaken is a process of re-territorializing. By extracting the concept of home, including memories, mementos, and objects , they liberate it entirely from its association with a specific territory or land.

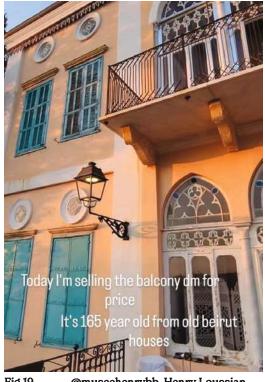As of 2025 the house and museum by Henry is up for sale for 1,2 million USD.

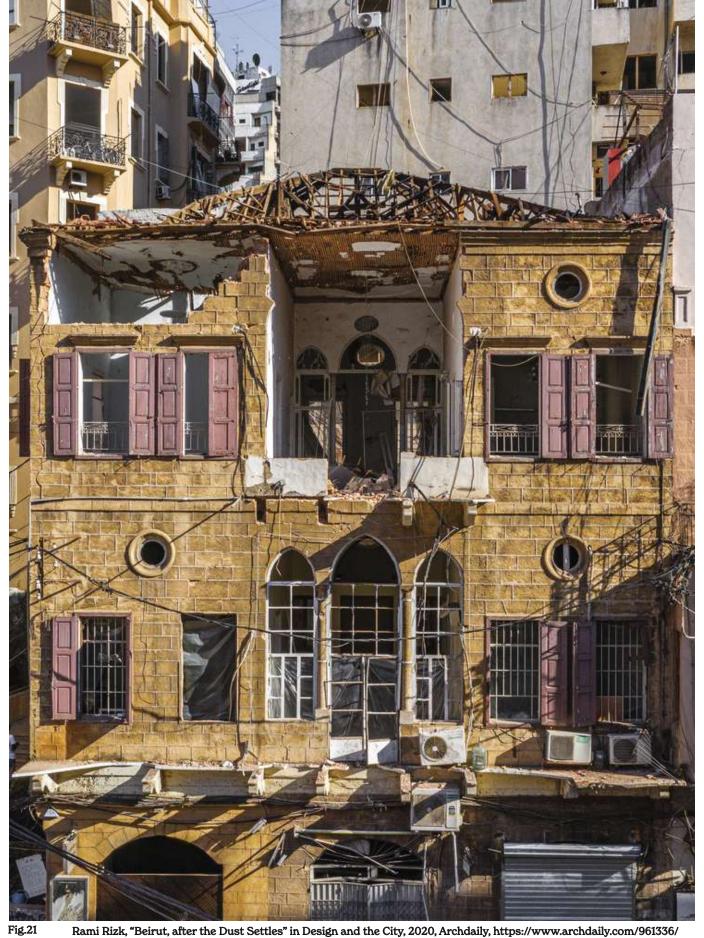Fig.19   @museehenrybb, Henry Loussian

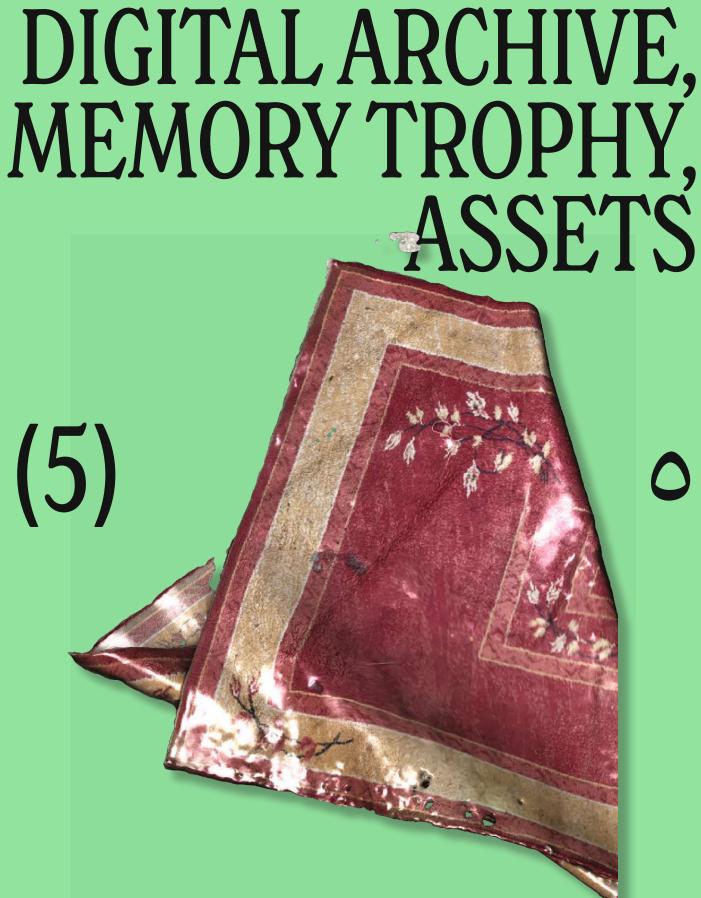Fig.20   @jskre, JSK Real Estate Lebanon

Fig.21   Rami Rizk, "Beirut, after the Dust Settles" in Design and the City, 2020, Archdaily, https://www.archdaily.com/961336/
christele-harrouk-and-salim-rouhana-on-rebuilding-beirut-in-design-and-the-city-podcast

Fig.22   Aerial photo of Henry BB Museum, Facebook, April 2 2022, https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=5187153351307388&set=a.137491836273590.

DIGITAL ARCHIVE, MEMORY TROPHY, ASSETS

(5)

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

Recollection: How to Study the Past

Recollection extends beyond the mere retrieval of past events; it is an active process of reinterpretation, shaped by selection and context. Before we can understand recollection, we must first consider collection itself, an act of assembling material or digital artifacts that hold memory significance. Re-collection, then, becomes the foundation of digital storytelling, where fragments from different timelines are gathered and repositioned to create new, subjective experiences of time. Much like how tools extend our perception beyond ourselves, this act of repositioning meaning shifts personal memory into a broader interpretive framework.

This process echoes what experimental psychologist Endel Tulving describes as mental time travel[79], the ability to reconstruct personal narratives by navigating memories in non-linear ways . Isolated moments, otherwise fragmented, gain coherence when placed within a reconstructed historical timeline. Memory is not a passive recording but an evolving structure shaped by what is retained, what is forgotten, and what could have been.[80]

Yet memory is never neutral. As Bernard Stiegler argues, it is always a product of both retention and omission [81]. What is remembered is defined equally by what is excluded as by what is preserved, shaping not only personal identities but also collective understandings of the past. This tension between remembering and forgetting extends beyond individual recollection into the realm of power and historical narratives.

Jacques Derrida highlights this in his discussion of archives, arguing that control over memory is a political act :

"There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation."[82]

This issue became particularly evident to me during a field trip to Beirut in the summer of 2022, when I visited the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) in search of historical maps documenting the city's urban development before the 1900s. Expecting open access, I instead encountered restrictions that underscored the gatekeeping of historical knowledge. Who determines what is worthy of preservation? Who controls access to archives? And to what extent does restricted access shape collective memory?

Ultimately, recollection is always an act of (re)construction, selection, and (re)interpretation. Whether in personal storytelling or institutional archiving, memory remains a contested space, shaped by the structures that dictate how the past is assembled and understood.

(79)   Endel Tulving, "Chronesthesia: Conscious Awareness of Subjective Time," in Oxford University Press eBooks, 2002, 311–25, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195134971.003.0020.
(80)   Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, 1966, 12-13.
(81)   Bernard Stiegler, "Memory," in Critical Terms for Media Studies, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen, 2010, 80, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226532660.001.0001.
(82)   Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression (University of Chicago Press, 1998),4.

Timeline of Archiving

Archiving has been an essential tool/ feature of human societies in preserving their culture and experiences. Adrian Cunningham argues in his chapter Archival Institutions, that while culture can be considered contestable, one thing that remains consistent across all civilizations is the need to preserve culture through various means, such as through spoken and written narratives, as well as the arts.[83]

The history of archiving can be traced back to ancient civilizations. The Ancient Egyptians (2500–1000 BCE), the Persepolis Fortification tablets from the Persian Empire (6th century BCE), the Ebla Tablets (ca. 2500–2250 BCE), and the archives of Mari (19th century BCE)[84] in modern-day Syria are amongst some of the most notable. The Ebla records for example include the earliest mentions of the "Canaanites," "Ugarit," and "Lebanon," providing a detailed account of Ebla as a major trade hub with documentation of commercial activities, beer production, an organized trade network with neighboring cities, as well as preserving king lists, royal decrees, treaties, and a collection of literary works that reflect the administrative and cultural practices of the time.

These archives provide insights into the lives of people across different eras but beyond their textual content, these archaeological artifacts serve as memory trophies, capable of transporting into the periods they represent. As such, the archives themselves become objects of archiving, or let's call them "meta-archives", and this dual function transforms them into artifacts of archival practice itself, reflecting the technological, cultural, and administrative advancements of the civilizations that produced them.

By studying these ancient collections, we gain not only a window into the lives of past people but also an understanding of how these societies viewed and practiced the act of archiving itself, thus contributing to the meta-narrative[85] of how human memory and history have been curated across time.

"I think "archive" is a big word that you can put so many things underneath. (...)Also my sister who is ten years younger than I am, her generation have no memory of it. So it's weird. Our parents are struggling to survive daily, so they're not going to talk about the war. To talk about the war is really absurd because you have a daily fucking war to go through-in a sense. And while there are many books on the topic, you have to look for them —and it's not taught in school, so in schools we do not teach our children about what happened in our war. It stops around independence. Yeah we got independent, OK hello, and then?" [86]

(83)   Adrian Cunningham, "Archival Institutions," in Elsevier eBooks, 2005, 21–50, https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-1-876938-84-0.50002-0.
(84)   "Archives Texts | Mari," accessed October 19, 2024, https://archeologie.culture.gouv.fr/mari/en/archives-texts.
(85)   Term introduced by Jean-François Lyotard."The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" (1979).
(86)   Mai Abu ElDahab, Marnie Slater, and November Paynter, These Are the Tools of the Present (Sternberg Press, 2017),17.

The quote highlights the complexity of trauma and the necessity of archiving experiences of war for future generations. Trauma is not interchangeable; while different people may experience war, their memories, emotions, and ways of processing it are deeply personal and shaped by their specific circumstances. The absence of structured archival practices, particularly in Lebanon, exacerbates this issue, when historical records are erased or neglected, entire collective memory risk being lost. This loss is further compounded by generational gaps, where younger individuals, like the speaker's sister, grow up without direct knowledge of the past. Without formal education or widespread public discourse on Lebanon's war, the burden of memory falls on personal recollections, which are often silenced by the immediate struggles of daily life.

Digitalization of Archive

As Stiegler highlights the dual nature of technical memory: while artificial memory aids can expand our capacity to create meaning and build open, future-oriented communities, their control by industries driven by profit risks turning memory into a tool for manipulation. The delegation of memory to external technologies—what he, following Derrida, calls "grammatization"—has historically shaped distinct epochs, from early writing systems to digital recording and the internet. However, in the current digital era, memory is increasingly shaped by industrial selection in real time, bypassing the slower, reflective processes of historical meaning-making. This underscores the urgency of developing independent infrastructures for self-archiving, free from platform-driven logic, to reclaim agency over how memory is preserved and interpreted.

"Everything hinges on how the political struggles that must and can only be waged through the technologies that at once empower us and threaten our individual and collective agency." [87]

With analog and digital technologies, the processes of encoding and decoding memory are increasingly delegated to machines, fundamentally altering how memory is produced and received. This shift disrupts the traditional sender-receiver dynamic, transforming memory into both a commodity and a form of industrial production. However, the rise of participatory digital environments, particularly with the internet, challenges this producer-consumer divide, enabling new forms of collective memory-making and social engagement.

[87]   Bernard Stiegler, "Memory," in Critical Terms for Media Studies, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen, 2010, 66.

Memory Trophy

The Civil War severely damaged the cultural sector, interrupting artisinal activities such as silk production. The migration and displacement of many Lebanese people during the war led to the dissipation of this knowledge. As a result, the artisanal heritage that once thrived in Lebanon faced a significant decline, and much of the cultural expertise was lost.

Memory trophies serve as portals into past worlds, or rather, they establish connections to specific moments in history. They facilitate access to tacit knowledge through interaction, allowing users to be transported to different times and bringing past knowledge into the present.

In this research project, memory trophies are treated as objects that establish connections to historical, cultural, and social moments of significance. These trophies are essential in differentiating or adding value to archival elements or objects of knowledge.

Key questions arise: What do these objects offer to someone unfamiliar with their history? What does the interaction bring to someone who has not previously experienced or interacted with these objects? Does the interaction recreate similar experiences or emotions, or does it generate different ones?

Methods:

The archiving process unfolded intuitively, without any preconceived narrative. Objects that sparked a sense of mental time travel when I encountered them were digitalized through 3d scanning methods. Looking back at the archive, a collection of memory trophies, there isn't a single unifying thread. Instead, it forms a network of intersecting storylines, memories, and experiences, weaving together the story of one person's life in Haret Hreik.

The archive is accessible and navigable, through a systematic method for classifying and naming the objects. Each object is categorized with key information, including:

- Time and date of the scan
- Location
- The app used for capturing the scan
- Classification: Personal memory, collective memory, cultural heritage, experience

File Naming methods:

Date:

- Format: YYYY-MM-DD (e.g., 2024-01-01)
- chronological sorting.

Location:

- Use a shorthand or code for the area (e.g., HH for Haret Hreik).

App Name:

- e.g., Scaniverse, Pointcloud.

Asset Type:

A consistent prefix or code to indicate the classification:
- PM for Personal Memory
- CM for Collective Memory
- CH for Cultural Heritage
- EXP for Experience

Optional Description:

> A short, descriptive tag for quick identification (e.g., Water_Tank).
> Example:
> 2024-01-01_HH_Scaniverse_PM_Water_Tank.obj
>
> When needed contextual differentiators or numeberings are added to differentiate similar scans.
>
> **For example scan perspective: (Front_View, Top_View, Side_View)**

3d scanning

3-Dimensional scanning technology, created in the 1960s, and introduced to the engineering field by Cyra technologies in the 1990s, has seen great developments in recent years paralleling the evolution of virtual reality (VR). Cyra Technologies was acquired by Leica Geosystems in 2001, marking a key milestone in the accessibility of 3D scanning. Until recently, the data generated by these technologies was too large to be easily stored by the average user. However, the development of data storage/ transfer technologies and the integration of LiDar capabilities (Light Detection and Ranging) by Apple into its iPad Pro in 2020 and subsequent pro models specially developed for augmented reality (AR) experiences, made 3D scanning more accessible.[88] Phone applications such as Scaniverse and Sitescape, used in this research project, allow users to generate 3D data and save them in various formats for further use.

Relocation by digitalization

The connection between roots and soil is mutually dependent. Soil conditions shape the development of root systems, while roots, in turn, alter the characteristics of the soil. The relationship between the root and the soil is one of reciprocal causality.[89] Human roots are not biological but rather intricate psycho-sociological processes, deeply intertwined with the fabric of urban development.

If we take into consideration the political environment, the social roles and the traditional family structures, human roots as psycho-sociological processes are deeply embedded in hierarchical human social structures. In particular, when we discuss archiving cultural heritage, it is predominantly managed and controlled by either private entities (Museum, cultural centers) or governmental organizations (ministries of culture and education) operating in a top-down manner.

(88)   "History of Laser Scanning | SurvTech Solutions," SurvTech Solutions, accessed December 20, 2024, https://www.survtechsolutions.com/history-of-laser-scanning.
(89)   Peter J. Gregory, Plant Roots: Growth, Activity and Interactions With the Soil (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006),10.

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and…and…and…" This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. [90]

Whilst we speak of roots in the physical world, we must address those relations differently in their digital counterpart. When we capture a 3d Asset/Memory trophy and transplace it in the digital architecture, the asset undergoes a process of displacement of some sort. While the object may remain intact in the physical world, its existence is limited by various external factors that jeopardize it, such as war, censorship, natural wear and tear, and environmental degradation. As it gets displaced, it undergoes the process of uprooting and deterritorialization as it reterritorializes in the digital architecture where it becomes a part of different system.

(90)   Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, The Journal of Interdisciplinary History (University of Minnesota Press, 1987),46.
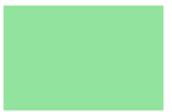
Selected Asset Description

Tree covered in barbed wire a reference to the conflict between nature and confinement, this tree embodies the tension between organic growth and imposed boundaries. The barbed wire, meant to restrict and protect, mirrors the borders and separations that shape the city's landscape.

Abandoned house Haret Hreik the house tells the story of migration, war, and forgotten spaces. The absence of inhabitants amplifies the presence of those who once lived there revealing the long-term consequences of conflict and gentrification.

Concrete block obstacles and hardship are constant aspects or present aspects in the daily lives of Lebanese people, particularly the ones living in marginalized neighborhoods and communities, such as Hart Hreik. They are simply of the difficulties that are faced in daily life from a symbolic act of walking along the street and running into a security zone security area that is demarcated and marked by these concrete blocks to chains that are fending off a privatized parking spot to the prevention of access to public property, such as beachfront and access to the sea by privatizing. (insert photo of a gate to the sea or the wall barricading the city center.) These are symbols for the formal and informal interventions that are implicated and inserted in order to control and privatize and segregate Beirut into separated zones that mimic the post Civil War effects of demarcation on the city of Beirut and the whole country of Lebanon.

Old house Sandstone façade the textures of the sandstone referenceo Beirut's architectural heritage. Sandstone, sourced from the land itself, carries a sense of place, rooting the structure within its historical and cultural context. In a city where rapid urbanization erases the past, these facades stand as links to collective identity.

Abandoned Villa Door both an entry and an exit point. This particular villa door signals a threshold that no longer leads to a home, but rather to an absence.

Stone road block Beirut a political artifact, marking spaces of restriction, control, and urban militarization. These blocks dictate who can pass and who must turn back, reinforcing the uneven distribution of access and security in urban space.

Metal Door Sursock the metal door of the Sursock Museum was forcibly blasted open by the shockwave of the August 4, 2020, Beirut port explosion. Dislodged from its hinges, it remained suspended in an unnatural position, symbolizing the force of destruction and the abrupt rupture of daily life. The door, now stuck mid-air, acts as an unintended monument to the impact of the blast and the fragility of our built environment.

Rental Regulation Law book represents an instrument of power. The intersection of law, displacement, and urban stability. Housing regulations dictate who can remain and who must leave, shaping the social fabric of neighborhoods.

Traditional Jebena (traditional coffee pot) carries with it cultural continuity. In the face of displacement and migration, it remains a familiar presence, binding people to their origins through the ritual of coffee-making.

Beirut Haret Hreik old house This structure reflects the layered histories of Beirut's urban fabric, where old homes are either abandoned, destroyed, or repurposed. Through its walls and windows, one can trace the stories of those who built, inhabited, and were later forced to leave.

Gardenia flower the gardenia carries meanings of memory and longing to place as it is often associated with home garden. Its scent lingers in personal histories and literature evoking a connection to past landscapes, family homes, and moments of nostalgia.
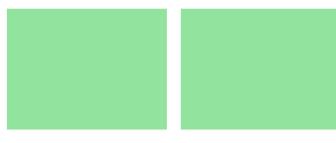
Keys are symbols of ownership and domesticity, however in the context of displacement, they take on a different meaning: they are remnants of denied access and of homes left behind. A promise of return.

Photo of Grandfather a family photograph is a link to personal timeline carrying memories of people and places that may no longer be accessible. In contexts of displacement, such images become especially significant, offering a sense of continuity despite physical separation.

Beirut Ashrafieh, abandoned house An abandoned house in Ashrafieh is one of many structures left vacant due to war, migration, or urban redevelopment. Its empty spaces and deteriorating walls reflect a broader pattern of displacement, where homes are left in political and social limbo. These buildings stand as reminders of the shifting social and economic landscape of the city.

Water tank a material signpost of resilience and adaptation to dire situations or conditions that were harsh and put on people. either natural in this scenario or human conditions the water rationing system is, of course, geographical by location. Some areas are more prone to have Wells, underground Wells, and underground, water, sources, and that way of making them more suitable for habitation, and others do not make them hard conditions to live in this segregation should theory be Russian by the state, but as we see, it is a mechanism also to ensure that there's no equal distribution of resources and these water tanks on top on the rooftops of buildings which create a landscape resource of resilience and storage can be connected to the idea and thought of moune, which is the Arabic word or Lebanese word for food that is saved or ration for later times so you would buy in the winter amount of food that would help you get through times of hardship and struggle.

Texture wall bullet holes scars are also a fixed feature of interactions of Lebanese daily life from this scarred wall facade with bullets. Wall facades of buildings that have not been yet restored after the Civil War. These are constant reminders of how Beirut has yet to deal with the trauma that has lingered from the Civil War and the open wounds that have yet to be healed on its people, and its urban and architectural landscape.

Weights symbol for the informal economy and trade in business that was happening or was dominant in the neighborhood.

Apple tree, Jasmine flower, and Fitne reflect the region's changing natural landscape, transformed by the influx of new communities. Once characterized by mulberry trees, prickly pears, and citrus groves, the fauna has been gradually altered.

The Archive of Memory Trophies

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

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CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

CHAPTER 5

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

(The Archive was organized chronologically)

Where are the people?
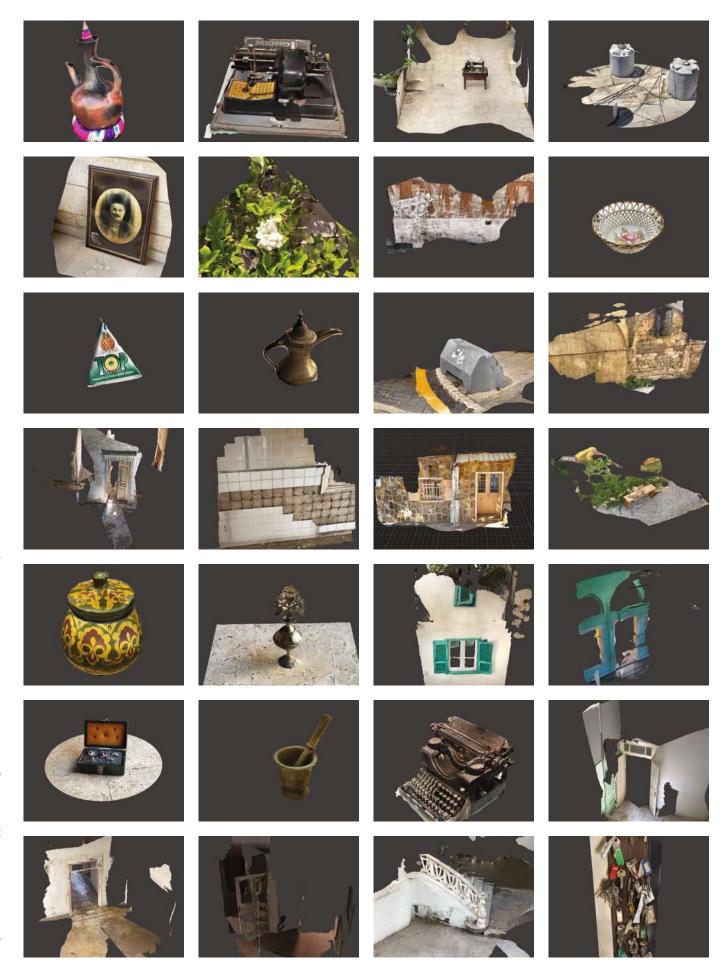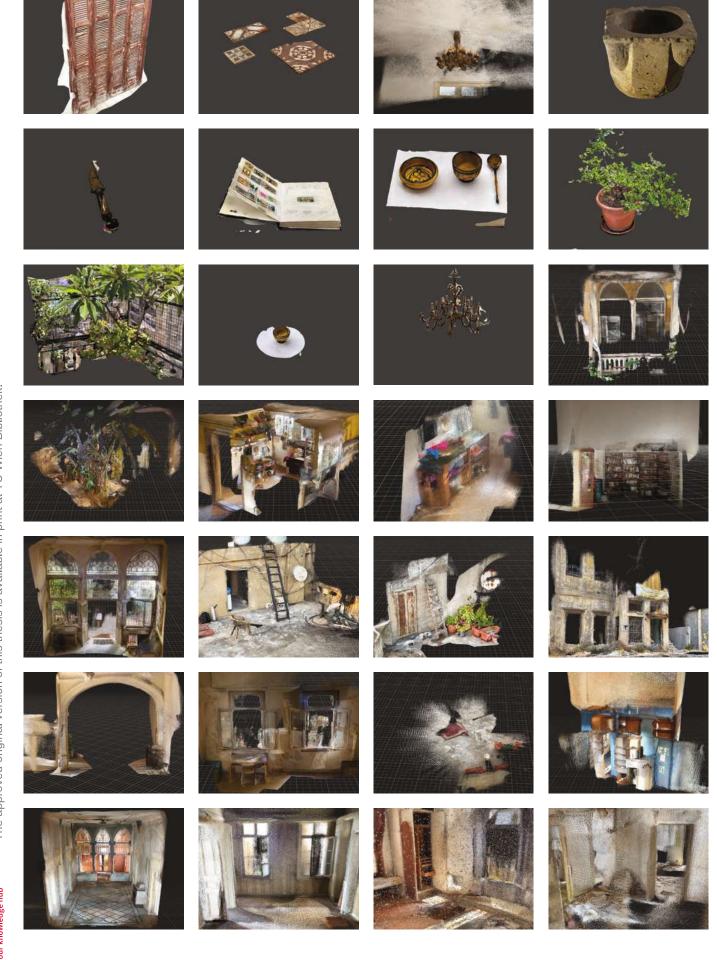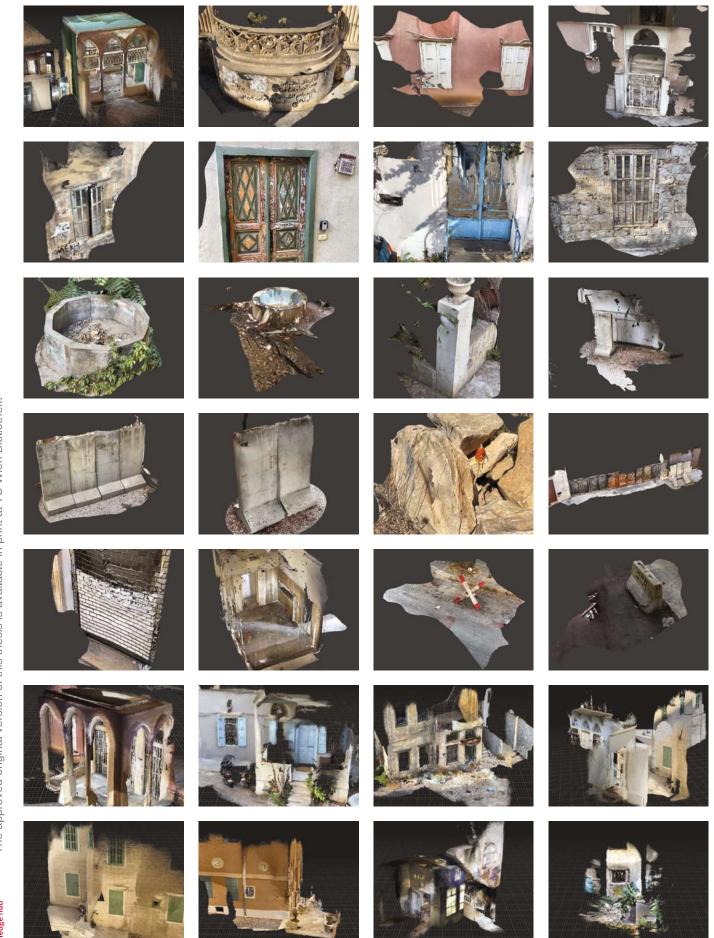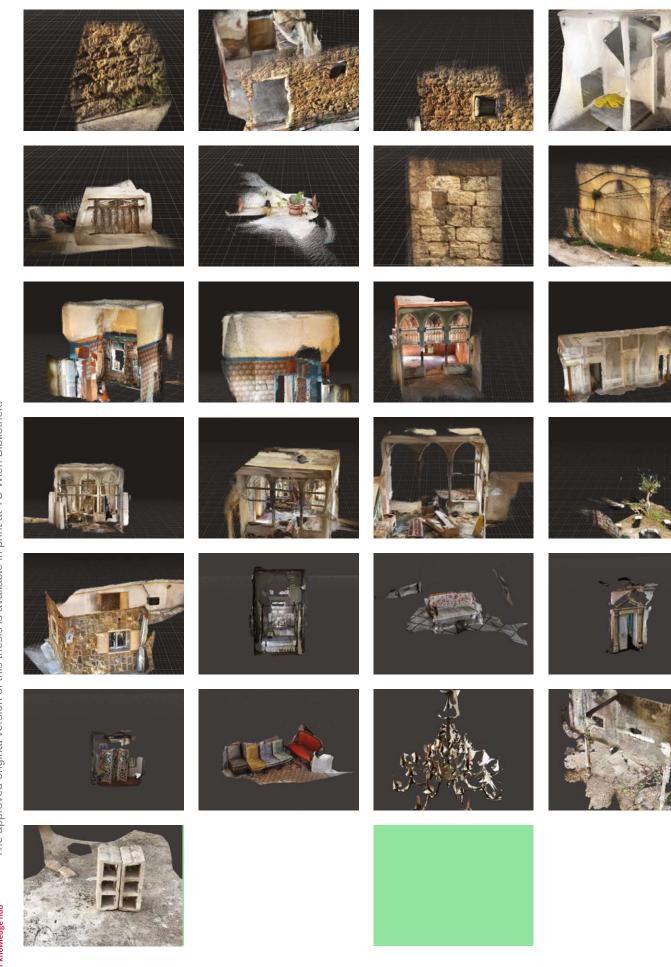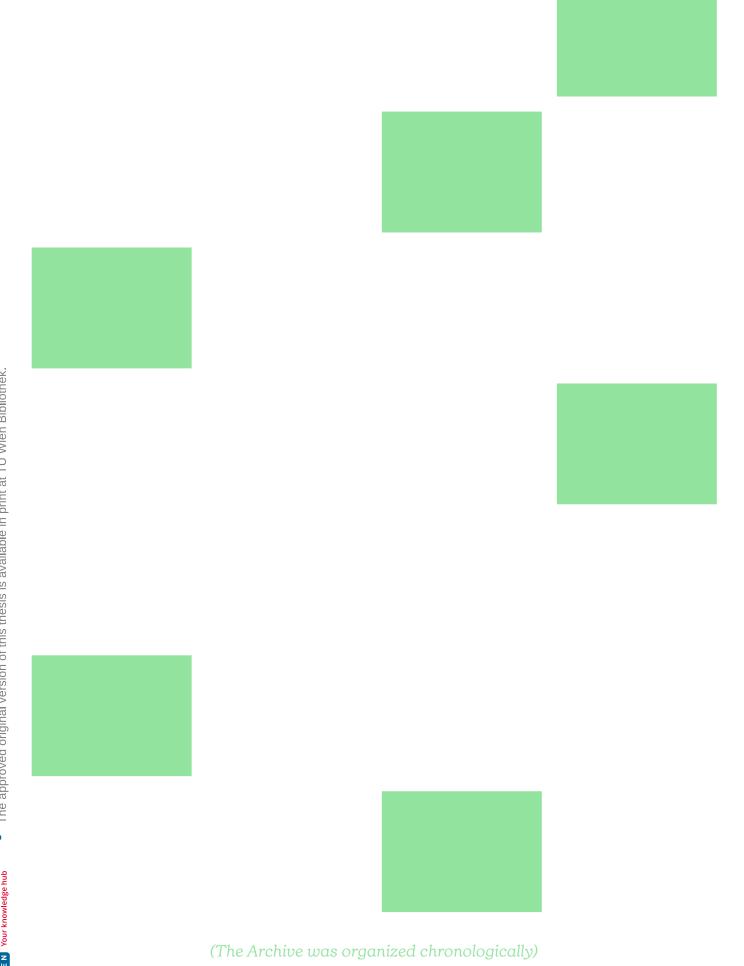
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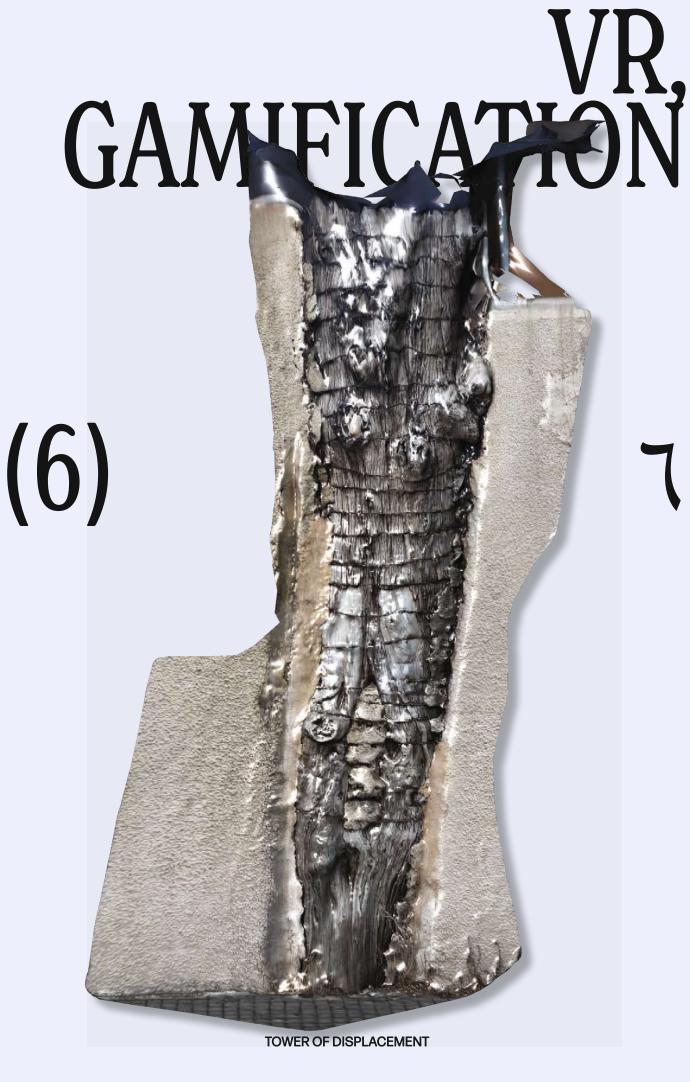
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f al-Burj square

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VR, GAMIFICATION

(6)

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TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

In 1984, Jaron Lanier first used the term "virtual reality" and founded VPL Research, one of the first companies to develop VR technology and further input devices such as the Data Glove and the EyePhone HMD.[91] The term "metaverse" was first introduced by the speculative fiction writer Neal Stephenson in his 1992 science fiction novel Snow Crash.[92] He depicted the metaverse as a virtual reality space where avatars would interact with each other in a digital environment. These foundational developments laid the groundwork for VR's transition from concept to experimental reality.

Although the 1990s saw further popularization of VR, with Nintendo releasing the Virtual Boy and early attempts at VR gaming, it wasn't until the 2000s that we saw the release of commercial VR and virtual worlds such as Second Life by Linden Lab in 2003, which enabled users to create content and interact with one another. This period marked a shift toward user-generated content and participatory digital experiences, bridging the gap between early experimental VR and the broader accessibility of the 2010s.[93]

By 2010, the first prototype of the Oculus Rift was developed by Palmer Luckey and was released through a Kickstarter campaign. Facebook's acquisition of Oculus VR marked a big shift in metaverse developments, as the market saw the release of multiple VR headsets such as the HTC Vive by HTC and the PlayStation VR by Sony. The price of VR headsets has dropped significantly in recent years, and computers capable of supporting these devices are now widely available, making this technology increasingly accessible to a broader audience and opening doors to applications beyond gaming.[94]

To enter a VR world, one must cross the invisible line, an intangible border set up by the programmer of this digital realm. This boundary serves a dual purpose: it protects the user from physical collisions with their environment and delineates the transition between two distinct zones of experience, the tangible reality and the immersive virtual domain. As VR has become more immersive and integrated into daily life, this boundary is not just a technical necessity but also a metaphor for crossing into a space where perception and identity are transformed.

Much like the checkpoints or border zones in Beirut, this line establishes a sense of security and order, creating a controlled space where the virtual world can be sustained. The act of setting up this boundary during the initialization of the VR space is itself a performative bordering action. It mirrors the practices in the physical world, which, much like the creation of socio-geographical boundaries or buffer zones, is ingrained with intent and power. It not only defines where the virtual world begins but also shapes the user's interaction with the space, prescribing movement and behavior within its confines.

(91)   Vradmin, "VPL Research Jaron Lanier - Virtual Reality Society," Virtual Reality Society, July 13, 2017, https://www.vrs.org.uk/virtual-reality-profiles/vpl-research.html.
(92)   Mark Grimshaw, The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality (Oxford University Press, 2014), 702.
(93)   "History of Virtual Reality - Virtual Reality Society," Virtual Reality Society, January 2, 2020, https://www.vrs.org.uk/virtual-reality/history.html.
(94)   "History of Virtual Reality - Virtual Reality Society."

This highlights the role of the programmer as both a creator and a regulator, actively shaping the user's environment and experience. Furthermore, it reflects the ways VR spaces are designed to influence perception and behavior, creating interactions that often mimic or challenge real-world social structures.

The immersive nature of VR blurs the lines between reality and the virtual space in which it invites interaction. Research has shown that disembodiment in VR can alter attitudes and perceptions, heightening certain aspects of empathy that transcend conventional forms of storytelling. For instance, Mel Slater et al. (2010) demonstrated how embodying virtual avatars could reduce biases and enhance empathy, reinforcing VR's potential as a tool for fostering human connection.[95]

The uses of this medium move beyond typical commercial applications into socially and politically engaged art. *On the Way to Colonus* is an immersive VR experience in a 360° environment that premiered at the 2022 Biennale of Art in Venice. It offers full immersion and disembodiment, where the viewer steps into the 3D world and becomes not a mere passive observer but an active participant in the environment firsthand.

Fig.23   A still from Alvanou's work. "A 'Docufictional' VR Film: Loukia Alavanou on Representing Greece at the 59th Venice Biennale. ArtReview, n.d., https://artreview.com/a-docufictional-vr-film-loukia-alavanou-on-representing-greece-at-the-59th-venice-biennale/.

(95)   Mel Slater et al., "First Person Experience of Body Transfer in Virtual Reality," PLoS ONE 5, no. 5 (May 12, 2010): e10564, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0010564.

Alavanou's work uses virtual reality to address social and political issues, particularly around migration and displacement. In Oedipus in Search of Colonus, she uses VR to create spaces that reflect real-world struggles, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and inviting viewers to confront these issues in a new way.

The technological framework behind VR experiences relies on game engines like Unity or Unreal Engine, which enable the creation of interactive environments that respond to user input. These engines provide the necessary tools for building complex, immersive worlds that react in real-time to user actions, allowing for a gamified storytelling experience. For example, in the VR Tower created for this thesis, sounds and videos are activated and triggered by the proximity of the visitor, enhancing the sense of interaction.

VR breaks the linear storytelling conventions by offering nonlinear narratives that evolve uniquely each time the program runs, unfolding its current state according to its own past, a state that wouldn't exist otherwise, as Petra Gemeinboeck notes. [96]
Viewer's choices and interactions can influence the flow of the story. This dynamic approach to storytelling enhances the sense of agency and immersion, making the experience feel more participatory.

Animating everyday interactions within the virtual space encourages users to actively participate in the world, whether by interacting with objects or simply moving through spaces. These interactions are designed to preserve the memory of real-world environments and ensure that the virtual world feels both familiar and alive. By incorporating local textures, objects, and cultural elements, the VR world maintains its connection to the real world while allowing the viewer to experience it from a new, immersive perspective. This approach not only enhances the user experience but also strengthens the narrative, ensuring that the political and social themes explored in the project are deeply rooted in reality.

I attempted to recreate the same methodologies that were used in the two case studies mentioned earlier. The first is the Al-Saha restaurant, where the architect used/recycled sandstone blocks and other architectural elements from abandoned and demolished houses, and the second is the Henry Beirut/Batroun residence, where the artist rescued architectural elements from houses right before demolition. In this particular instance, the process took a similar path and the digital artifacts and memory trophies that were collected locally are placed in a common virtual space where they collectively become a part of a new digital architecture. Each of those singular fragments makes up the 'building block' of the virtual memory tower.

These assets can be classified as belonging to either episodic or semantic memory. According to Endel Tulving recollection is a fundamental component of episodic memory.

(96)   Petra Gemeinböck, "Negotiating the Virtual: Inhabiting Architectures of Emergence and Remoteness" (PhD Dissertation, TU Wien, 2004),107.

Other key features include chronesthesia, the ability to mentally travel through time, which provides a sense of self-awareness during this mental process. [97] While objects cannot physically transport us to another moment in time, they may serve as powerful cues that trigger the mind to engage in mental time travel, allowing us to relive past experiences or imagine future scenarios.

How does one convey or pass along the tacit knowledge accumulated through years of living in a particular place and experiencing its people? What becomes of these observations that culminate in collective wisdom? How do residents interact with their cities, navigate their infrastructure, and understand their urban environments? In Dahieh, where dense informal urbanization occurred during the Civil War, most streets lack official names. Buildings remain unnumbered, and formal addresses are yet to be established. Navigating this area requires a deep reliance on local knowledge.

On Google Maps, nearly every street is labeled Haret Hreik or left unnamed. Yet, colloquially, these streets have identities, often named after the families who have lived there the longest or those who have established trades or shops. For instance, some streets such as Abu Ali Rahal Street, are named after a local grocery and supply store owner who had run the family shop for years. His son has now taken over the business following his father's passing. The shop, according to local stories, was originally located in the middle of the road until the municipality, during road paving efforts, moved it a few meters back from the road line. Residents navigate not by official street names, but by landmarks, trees, and houses. Buildings often carry the names of their owners or the prominent families residing in them. Despite the sprawling nature of Beirut's metropolitan expanse, the city maintains an enduring sense of familiarity through these informal networks of knowledge. In a place where informality prevails, preserving this tacit knowledge through informal means is not just important, it is essential.

(97)   Tulving, "Chronesthesia: Conscious Awareness of Subjective Time."

The physical tower

Based on the family building located in Beirut, Lebanon, this mixed-use tower (construction started in 1996) mirrors the architectural and cultural trends of a city undergoing recovery and transformation. This building is a typical archetype found in Beirut and its suburbs during the post-civil war reconstruction era, where towers often serve mixed-use purposes.

Additionally, the tower functions similarly to a Baugruppe, a housing cooperative, but in this case, it is entirely occupied by members of a single family. The ground floor houses commercial shops, while the three floors above are dedicated to office units. Above these, residential spaces provide homes for family members, remaining flats are unfinished and uninhabited. This configuration not only creates a multi-functional urban space but also serves as an act of resilience and forward-thinking. Instead of selling the land and dividing the proceeds, the family chose to build homes and generate income, ensuring long-term stability and rooting.

This approach mirrors a common sentiment among Beirut families, who often prioritize remaining in their districts of origin despite the displacement faced. It reflects a deep-seated connection to place, heritage, and community, emphasizing the significance of maintaining familial and cultural ties even amidst the challenges of postwar reconstruction.

The virtual tower

The tower, in this context, becomes the first architectural artifact to occupy the virtual land. The virtual twin of the family tower is constructed upon the same floor plan as its physical counterpart. It can be described as a replica, as it mirrors the physical form though not an identical one. It is situated in an exaggerated, barren virtual landscape. This landscape, consisting of sand dunes, references the neighborhood's original historical and geographical state. In this sense, the virtual land functions as a twin of the physical realm, almost creating a "new" timeline for the territory.

This speculative timeline reimagines the historical context of the tower and its artifacts while exploring their potential futures. The artifacts are not confined to a single tower; instead, they can appear across multiple towers, creating intersections among the archives and fostering a network of shared histories.

In future editions of the VR experience, the artifact could evolve into a portal, transporting visitors between various towers and further emphasizing the fluidity and interconnectedness of memoryscapes.

The Towers architecture has been stripped of its plastering, ornamental details, and any indicators of human habitation. It lacks windows and doors, leaving it unlockable or mediating the exterior environment. Locking is one of the first indications of possession and roots. Palestinians displaced in 1948 still carry the keys that unlock the homes they once inhabited. A practice in collective imagination. [98]This absence of barriers symbolizes a commitment to openness and dialogue, removing the physical and symbolic constraints that typically define human habitation and ownership. What remains is a shell of its physical counterpart, a structure that houses numerous artifacts but remains permeable and open.

In the future, this virtual landscape may contain numerous towers. Some might be exact replicas of their physical counterparts, while others may take alternative forms, freed from the constraints of material reality. Once fully constructed, the virtual space will transform into a landscape of memory, an archival terrain composed of "archive/ memory towers," each containing artifacts and narratives. These towers will function as portals to different universes, preserving stories of heritage, displacement, and collective experiences within the city. They will house not human inhabitants but the memories, knowledge, and histories of those who once lived in the physical spaces.

Some of the artifacts within the Element Tower would not, in reality, have ever been positioned in close proximity to one another, whether physically, culturally, or socially. These artifacts are rooted in distinct areas of Beirut and Lebanon, tied to specific locations and contexts. However, through the use of 3D scanning technology, these artifacts are rendered translocal in the virtual space, enabling them to engage in dialogues that were previously impossible. This virtual realm, therefore, facilitates new conversations, creating intersections between artifacts and histories that were once disconnected.
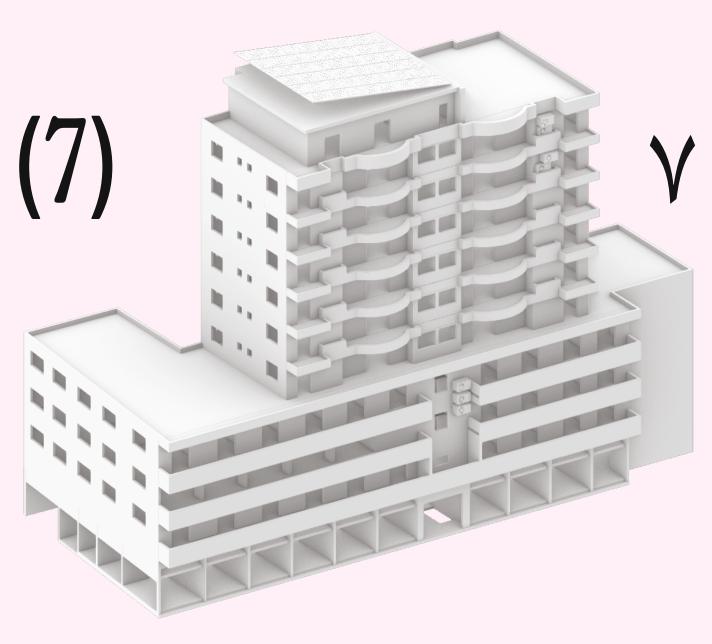
The virtual space has the capacity to address themes of loss, trauma, and destruction on a different level. In a city grappling with significant loss and trauma, the physical realm often lacks the capacity to preserve or engage with the multiplicity of its narratives. The virtual space offers a new platform for these stories to coexist, fostering dialogue and connection in ways the material world may not be able or willing to accommodate. This realm becomes a critical tool for archiving and reflecting on heritage in a fragmented urban landscape.

(98)   Yoram Meital and Paula M. Rayman, Recognition as Key for Reconciliation: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond (BRILL, 2017).

CHAPTER 6

TOWER OF DISPLACEMENT

(7)

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Displacement is not solely a human experience; it extends to the material world as well. The loss of physical objects, homes, personal belongings, photographs, and landmarks, represents an often-overlooked dimension of displacement. When war or trauma reshapes a city, those who return find a transformed landscape, one where familiar spaces have either vanished or been altered beyond recognition. Rebuilding occurs, but the past is never fully restored.
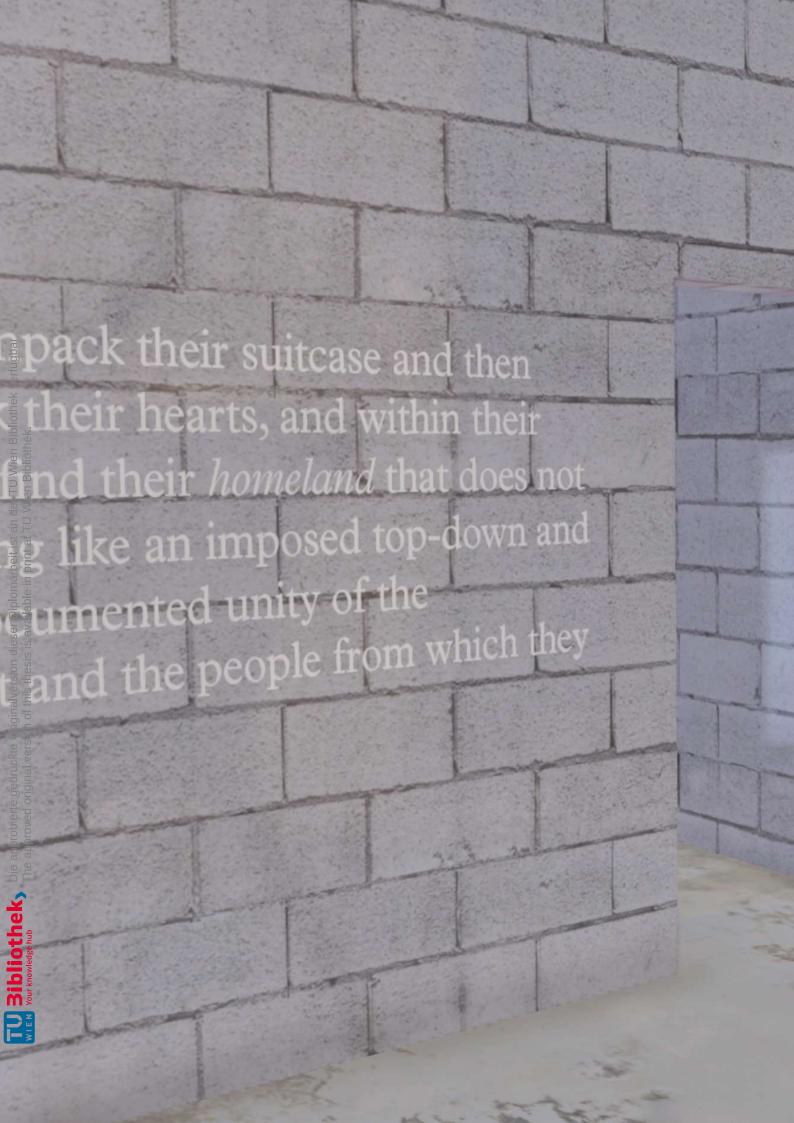
The tower, as conceived in this project, embodies the fluid and fragmented nature of displacement. Each scanned object within it represents a fragment of a displaced reality, and together, these objects form a spatial archive that resists erasure. The tower itself stands as a symbol of home uprooted yet reimagined, built upon the foundations of what once was. Rather than succumbing to displacement, the act of constructing this archive becomes an assertion of presence, a refusal to be erased. It is not merely an architectural structure but a vessel, containing a single individual's lived experiences across time.

But what happens when more towers emerge? When this virtual landscape, currently occupied by a solitary tower, expands to reflect the layered histories of many? If additional towers rise, each housing not people, but memories, does the archive evolve into a virtual urban memoryscape, a digital counterpart to Beirut itself? This project raises the possibility of a city reconstructed through remembrance, where architecture is no longer just a physical entity but a living archive of displacement, resilience, and collective memory.

A panoramic view from the Tower's rooftop captures the city's layered infrastructure, water tanks, reservoirs, antennas, and cables. This point marks the beginning of the archive, a space where past and present intersect.

Tower of Displacement

pack their suitcase and then
their hearts, and within their
nd their *homeland* that does not
like an imposed top-down and
umented unity of the
and the people from which they

The entrance reveals the raw texture of unplastered stone walls and tells a story of construction, abandonment, and transformation.

A plastic chair, appearing throughout the archive, becomes a recurring symbol of surveillance and observation. In the background, a set of keys rest quietly, hinting at access, restriction, and the forces that shape these spaces.

A discarded carpet lies folded, a remnant of what was once a place of gathering and ritual. It speaks to an abandoned domesticity, a space that once held voices and memory.

A solitary jasmine plant, uprooted and repotted, struggles within a confined space. Positioned next to the remnants of stone blocks from a demolished house, it silently engages in a dialogue between displacement and resilience.

Concrete walls and obstacles obstruct the entrance to an archive room. The very space meant to preserve memory is now rendered inaccessible, reflecting the tensions between documentation and erasure.

Tools of surveillance and control intrude upon daily life. A concrete block, marked with the Arabic word for "promise," serves as both an obstacle and an offering.

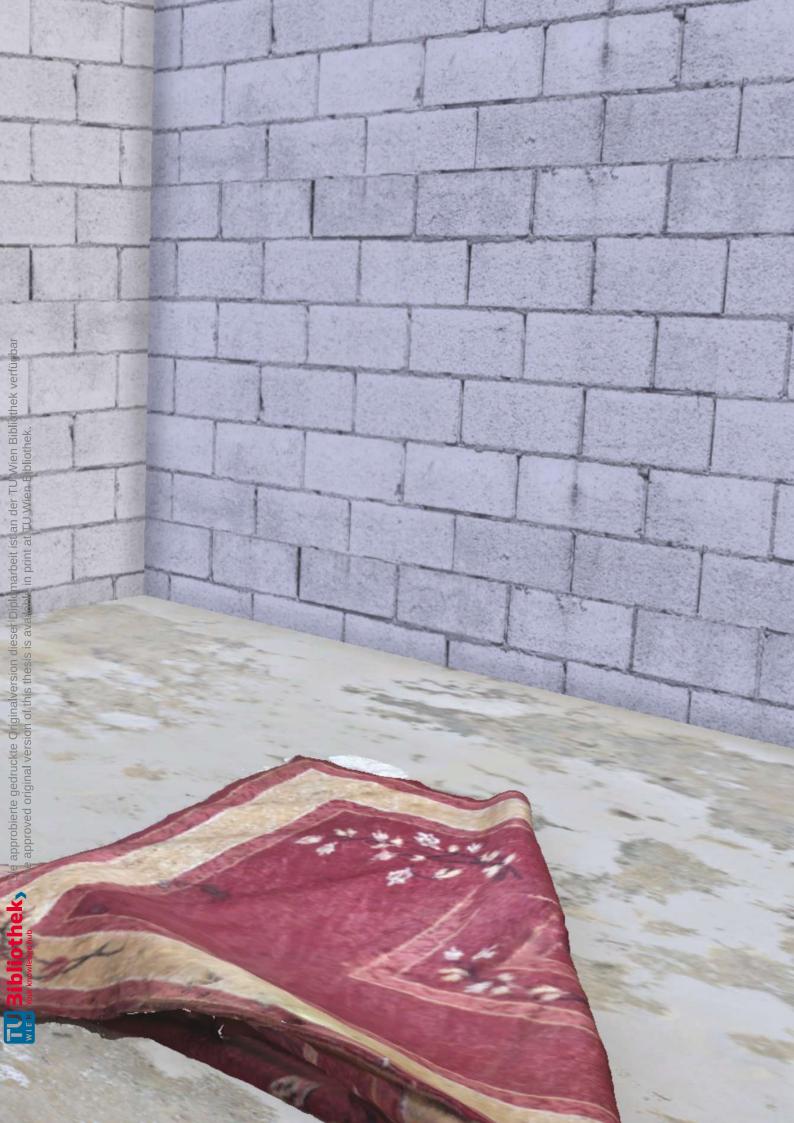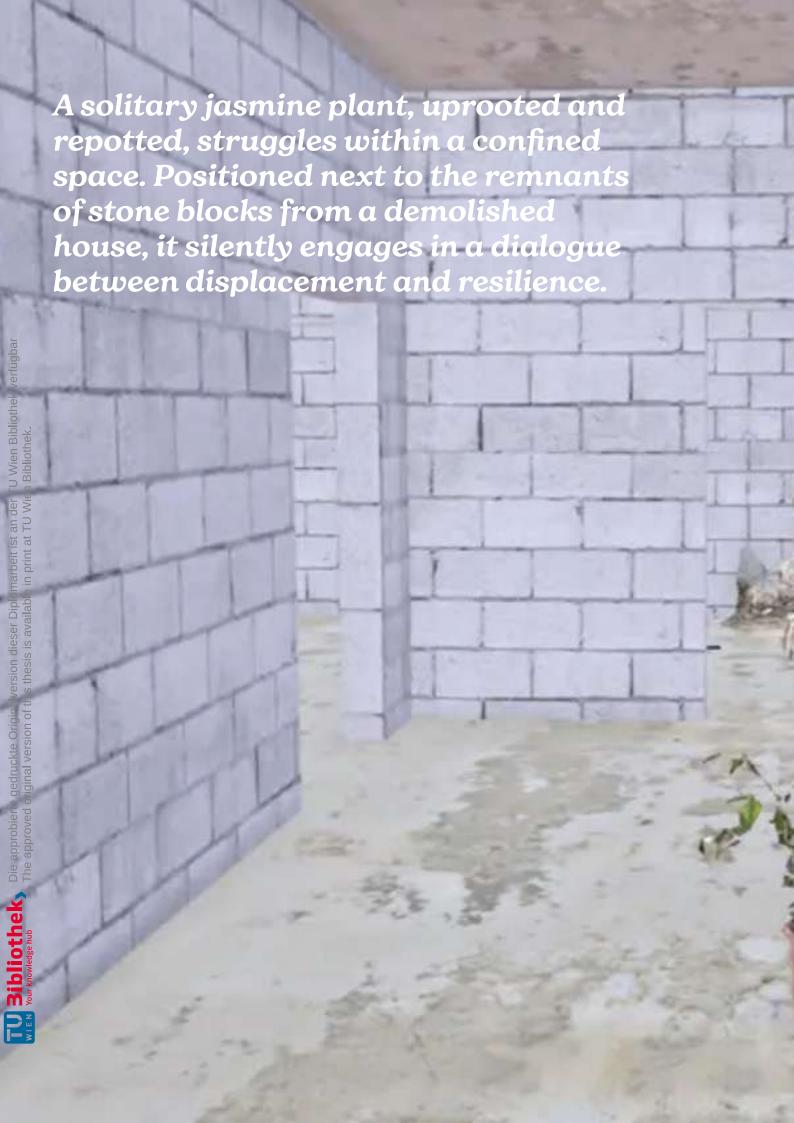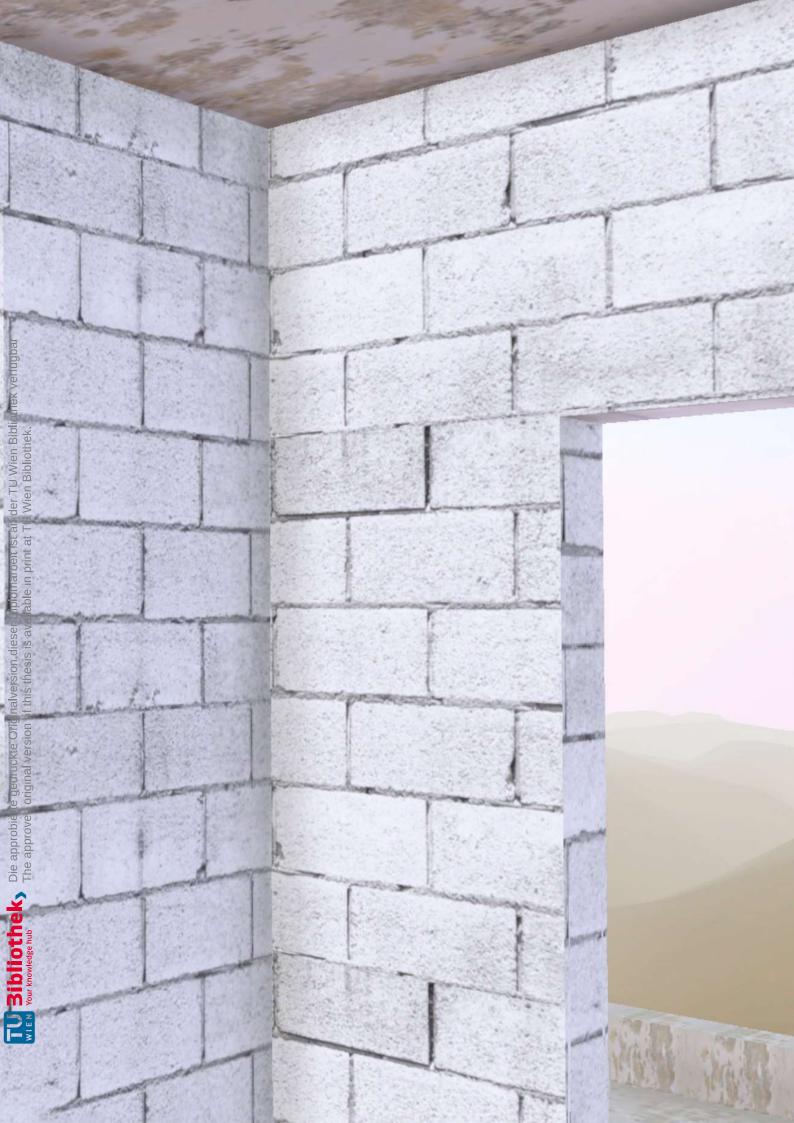*A traditional water fountain, similar to the one that once stood in the backyard of the house demolished.*

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Figures

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