

Access to Public Spaces in Contested Cities:

Case Study Beirut, Lebanon

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Access to Public Spaces in Contested Cities: Case Study Beirut, Lebanon

Diploma Thesis

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Access to Public Spaces in Contested Cities: Case Study Beirut Lebanon

Objectives of thesis

Beirut is one of the most contested cities discussed by many scholars, academics and students. It attracts many visitors due to its provoking complexity, hyper social context and (still) unresolved issues since the 1975 civil war. Disciplines from cultural studies, to sociology and anthropology, to landscape architecture and urban planning have continued to conduct research in this city in hope to make sense of it. This research intends to investigate Beirut and the Martyrs' Square in its unique situation. From this it proposes to set an example for future designers on the importance of understanding people in the city while designing for public spaces

Methodology

Literature Review

- Formulate a theoretical base for discussion on concepts of contested city, public space, sense of place and designing for people <with Gehl's Cities for People and with perspectives of a contested city>
- Explore previous research done on Beirut and Martyrs Square
- Help formulate and clarify key research questions
- Provide a structure for surveys and interviews

User Surveys of Urban Spaces in Beirut

Results of the Literature review and survey will be presented in a chapter called "Applications" rather than the traditional Methodology chapter. Proposed design solutions will be prepared for Martyrs Square as a typology for other public spaces in Beirut. It is anticipated that the final work product will be highly illustrated, using both hand drawn and visual simulation models.

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 pages

Keywords

public spaces, contested areas, Beirut, urban spaces

Recommended information sources

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Declaration

"I hereby declare that I wrote this diploma thesis independently, under the direction of doc.Peter Kumble, PhD. I have listed all literature and publications from which I have acquired information."

Diana Salahieh

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I would like to begin my acknowledgement and gratitude to my parents for their support, love and confidence in me when I first set sail to Prague. I wouldn't have made it the first year without them. A special appreciation to my younger sister and her truthful advices on writing and more. A very kind thanks to my supervisor doc. Peter Kumble for his great support and feedback. To my brother, who believes in me no matter what. To Gloriya and Elena, for their wonderful inspirations and emotional endorsment. To K, for tolerating me throughout this process and everything. And, finally, to the Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague, for giving me this unique educational opportunity.

Yours truly,

Diana

Abstract

The city is a resource for us to produce, socialize and express ourselves. Public spaces are important in contributing to that role of the city. It is in these spaces is where life takes places and where identity is shaped. The planning and design of public spaces, therefore, is a complex process. This thesis attempts to investigate that process by looking at an interesting case of a contested city, Beirut. In the heart of this vibrant urban context, lies an abandoned public square that suffers from nostalgic unrecovered potential. Analysis of public opinion was carried out through field visits and an online survey that revealed the diverse perspectives locals uphold towards the square. The research aims to reimagine a design strategy for such a complex space by approaching the space as a place for urban identity, a playground and a memorial site of engagement. Eventually, this thesis provides a possible design solution as a first step in the future development of this square.

Key words: contested, public space, reimagination, Beirut

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Introduction

Introduction

Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis provides an introduction to the research context, problem statement of this research, the objectives and research question that will be explored throughout this project.

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1.1 Introduction

Cities have become a platform for personal identification and self-expression, as a mirror of social reality. A constant struggle persists through different layers of city planning, revealing its effects in public spaces. Public spaces are a vital resource for city residents to shape and express their diverse political and social identities, and overcome cultural differences. Different social layers coexisting in close proximity to each other, in combination with competing economic interests over a densely populated urban space, make the city host to many areas of contestation. Such areas of contestation (e.g. main squares as places of historical and cultural importance) are regarded of higher value by the public.

When it comes to such public spaces, there are always controversies on how these spaces should be designed to mediate for all interests of different social groups, especially spaces of complex symbolic attachment. A public participatory process in landscape planning and design is a proven technique, applied around the world in an attempt to tackle this challenge. It is considered a democratic act, by both planners and municipalities, to take into account the locals' opinions during the development of urban projects. However, this process usually brings more challenges than opportunities, leaving public participation snubbed due to the non-linearity (or unpredictability) of public opinions. However, Fergus (2017) raised an interesting point in saying that "contestability should not be a win or lose equation; it is about growing cities that allow and encourage an equitable opportunity for as wide a range of citizens as possible". Jan Gehl (2010), writes on the importance of designing cities for people by understanding their behaviour and taking into consideration the public opinion. When it comes to contested spaces, landscape architects/planners need to understand the perception of the people and the identities and meanings they give to their public space. To do so, it requires more than just a heated debate in a public participatory action,

but a re-imagination of the role of public spaces in cities.

In *A Global Sense of Place*, Massey (1995) criticizes the narrow understanding of place and the consequences of approaching spaces as a static physical entity. She re-conceptualizes places as processes that are in a state of flux and constant reproduction, as they are continually filled with internal conflict. Approaching place as a dynamic entity without a singular identity bears a pivotal role in understanding public spaces in the planning and design process. Applying theories from urban design, cultural geography, environmental psychology, concept of play in public spaces can allow for a discovery of simple, and yet effective methods of enhancement of urban-life and stronger social integration. Public spaces can be adopted to such concepts, bringing flexibility and spontaneity in an otherwise contested context.

The intention of this thesis is to reimagine the role of public spaces in contested cities by bridging the gap between theory, research and design into a practical application. By revisiting the concept of contemporary public space in the academic literature, studying recent design practices that suggest alternative methods and gathering data on public opinion, I propose a design strategy for approaching a uniquely contested space in the hyper-diverse City of Beirut - Martyrs' Square.



Image 1.1. Martyrs Square statue (source: internet)

In the middle of 20th century, Martyrs' Square represented the image of diversity, modernity and unity of Beirut, but today it's urban context distresses the consequences of the 15-year civil war (1975-1990). This square held a strong historical and symbolic value in the past, yet now stands as an abandoned void of unrecovered potential amidst regenerated polished buildings. Although it still holds a role of an open space for national gatherings and protests, Martyrs' Square feels as a lost treasure within the heart of a vibrant city. An international competition for reconstruction of Martyrs' square was launched in 2009 by Solidere (a private-share company that took charge of the post-war reconstruction of the Beirut's central district), but up to date there has been no implementation of re-designing plans due to conflict of interests. Like many metropolitan cities, Beirut suffers issues of high traffic, water and waste crises, to challenges of social integration and a lack of sustainable public spaces. Due to the complexity of these raising issues in the city, Martyrs' Square has the potential to become a spark that will light the way to new and creative solutions to a city stuck in time.

While the square resonates in its name a space of memory and commemoration, its unique location urges for a more vibrant and a representative outlook that reflects the young and new imageries of the city.

Hence, this project aims to develop a holistic design approach that will:

- (1) uphold the Beiruties' perception and sense of public space (Martyrs Square),
- (2) investigate public space as a playground for social integration and cohesion,
- (3) rehabilitate the cultural values of the Martyrs Square as a historical and memorial site,
- (4) provide a prototype of a "green" solution for the highly-populated city.



Image 1.2. View towards Martyrs Square (source: Solidere, n.d.)

Methodology

Methodology

Methodology

The following chapter explains the research tools, how they were analyzed and how they contribute to this thesis research project.

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2.1 Overview

This thesis explores a methodology that involves investigation of academic studies, field observations, site analysis, interviews and an online survey, in order to explore landscape design conceptual solution for the case study. Each method attempts to add a rich layer of information that will provide a better understanding of how to approach Martyrs' Square as a public space. To begin, a thorough literature study is drawn to get an in-depth understanding of theories, ideas and examples to become inspirations to the study. Second, a historical review of the city and its square's past is narrated to get a better picture of how the square was transformed and developed to this point. Thirdly, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to analyze the city, its people and their opinions on public life and public spaces. To do so, I conducted field visits in three public spaces in Beirut city, in addition to the case study. Inspired by Gehl architects' analysis of cities' public life/public spaces, I interviewed people in the public spaces to get an understanding of how they use the space, what attracts them to these areas and what can be improved in order to understand the nature of public spaces in Beirut. I also conducted an interview with the head of the Planning Department in Downtown Beirut, Mr. Bachir Moujaes, in order to obtain an alternative stakeholders' perception on the approach to planning public spaces in the central district. Due to limited time and a geographic limitation (an inability to visit the city as much as I could), I conducted an online survey to acquire additional feedback on perception of the local residents of the value and expectation of the role of Martyrs' Square. All of these tools became part of a strategy that this thesis project portrays as the pertinent way to approaching contested public spaces (see figure 2.1).

2.2 Cityscape analysis (qualitative)

Inspired by Ghel's architects work (see image 2.1), I adapted my public spaces visits to *observe, assess and engage*:

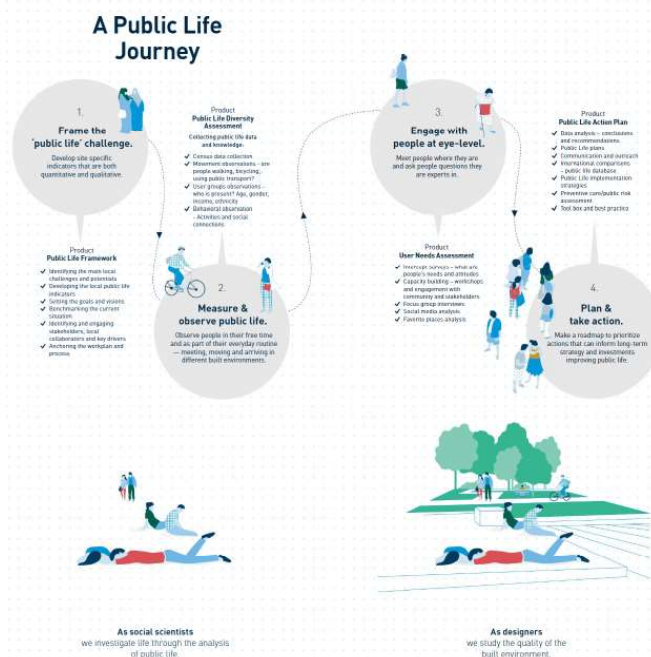


Image 2.1. Public Life 'People First' Strategy (Gehl Architects, 2018)

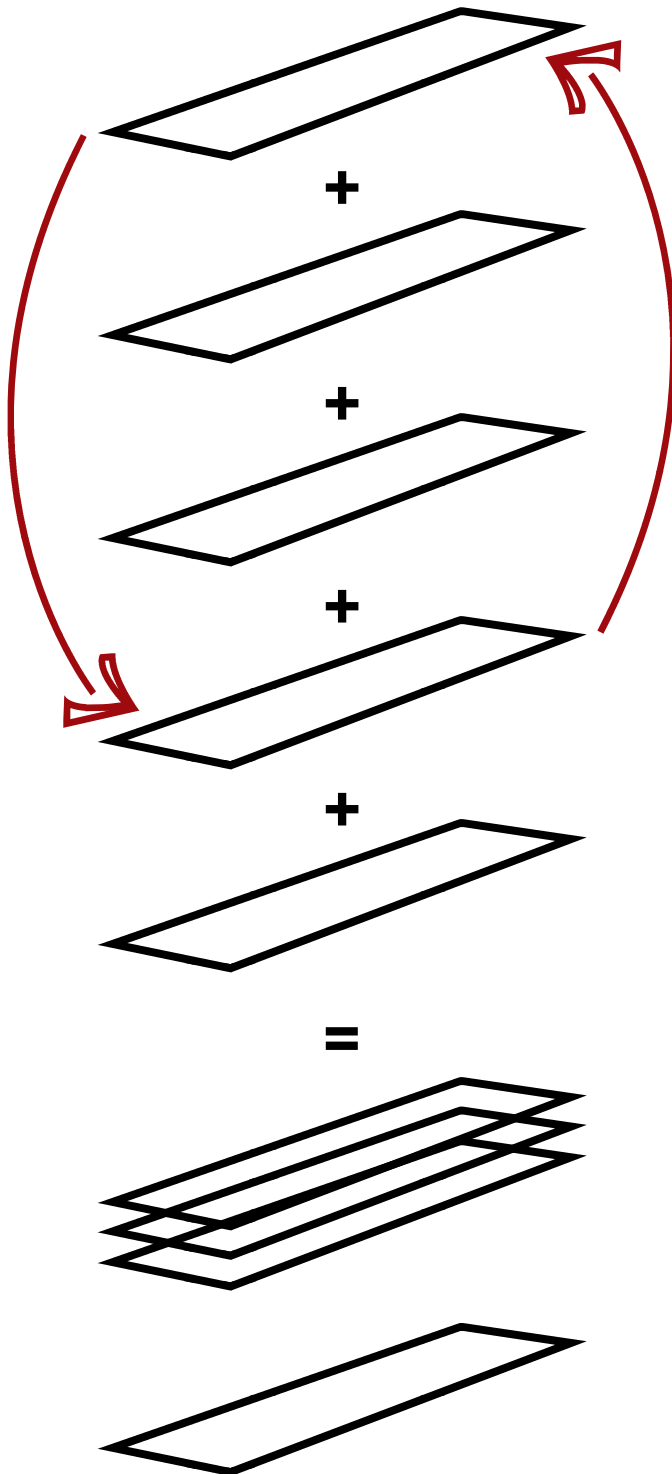
- 1- Public life diversity assessment
 - Identity user groups: Age and Gender tally
 - Observe people's behavior and activities
- 2- Assess the quality of the space in three main themes: safety, comfort, sentiment of people

*On 4 different public spaces in Beirut:

- 1- Martyrs' Square: the study area
- 2- Sanayeh garden: the busiest garden in Beirut
- 3- Beirut Souks: a very busy spot in the city
- 4- Corniche: a controversial space of different users

2.3 The online survey (quantitative & qualitative)

The online survey was a very useful tool where quantifiable but also open-end questions were asked to get an interesting display of results. I used SurveyAnyplace (surveyanyplace.com), an online surveying software that allows for creating an interactive survey, easily distributed to the locals through online social platforms. As a result, I collected 112 responses that were statistically analyzed by the same software. Open end questions were analyzed manually, categorizing the answers into general themes and mind maps.



Literature study

theory exploration and search for inspiration

What is place identity? and how is it important in placemaking strategies?
 How can play positively influence social integration in contested places?
 How can memorial design inspire engagement and appreciation?

History and Story of the Place

background information on the site

What is the history of this place? What happened here before?
 How did political events transform this place? What consequences and opportunities came with these transformations?
 What are the future plans of the site's surrounding?

Cityscape Analysis

observation of the context and the city

What are the positive and problematic accomplishments of the context?
 How do other public spaces work in the city?
 [observation and intercept interviews]

Stakeholders' perceptions and opinions

engagement with the people

- an online survey to understand how people perceive their city and their square
 - an interview with head of planning department to understand their plans and approach

Concept development

fusion of findings and ideas

Design Solution

a multi-layered design strategy and phasing solution

Reflection

discussion and evaluation

Figure 2.1. Layers to understanding Martyars Square; a strategy for contested public spaces

The Literature Study

The Literature Study

The Literature study

Beirut is an interesting case of a city that underwent urban regeneration, after a 15-year long civil war, that has substantially not just changed the urban fabric of the downtown area (where Martyrs' square lies) but also heavily influenced the Beirutis evaluation and perception of their city. The following chapter follows through the history of how this unique public space transformed and how events shaped the public life in the city.

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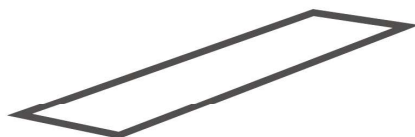
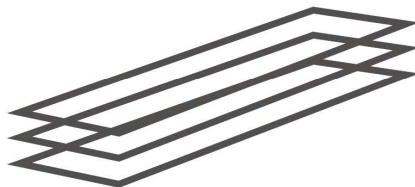
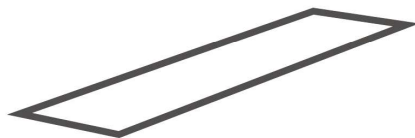
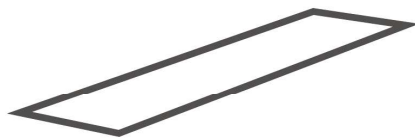
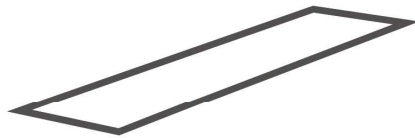
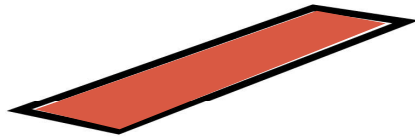
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3.1 Contested City/ Contested Space

Understanding the nature of Beirut as a contested city requires describing the term 'contested space'. "Cities are the crucibles of the new, places of mixing and the creation of new identities; they are the cradles of new ideas. On the other hand, that very process of the coming together of different peoples can create conflict, intolerance and violence" (Massey, Allen and Pile, 1999, p.1). In that sense, it seems that all cities are in some way contested. The importance lies in distinguishing the nature of contested cities, whether it's the issues of pluralism-disputes about social reproduction and class differences, ethnicity, power and status (e.g. racial segregation in Chicago), or cities contested over both pluralism and sovereignty, concerning issues of state legitimacy and rival claims of national belonging (Gaffikin, et al., 2010, p.494).

Hepburn (2009) describes a contested city as a co-inhabited location of two or more ethnically conscious groups, divided by religion, language, culture and history, where no side will acknowledge the supremacy of the other. Beirut, Jerusalem and Belfast are examples of such contested cities. Such strong competing nationalistic attitudes can create division on national identity and territory ownership that could tear a society apart (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010). Since public space is central to the overall social dynamics, planning is the main instrument for social shaping and conflict resolution (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010).

Recent literature, talks and debates are becoming more focused on exploring the role of architecture, planning and public space design as a tool "for transforming ethnic conflicts into urban controversies towards the city's commons" (Gualini, Mourato and Allegra, 2013). These social conflicts take on a spatial form in the cities and intensify with increasing mobility of resources, political migrants and as a product of war consequences (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010). The 21st century is the golden age of globalisation, bringing new challenges and ideas into city environments, where

landscape planners and architects will play a strong role in shaping both the public spaces and the nature of social interactions. 21st century is the golden age of globalisation, bringing new challenges and ideas into city environments, where landscape planners and architects will play a strong role in shaping both the public space and the nature of social interactions.

3.2 The Urban Public Space: *a new understanding*

"If there is any one lesson that I have learned in my life as a city planner, it is that public spaces have power. It's not just the number of people using them, it's the even greater number of people who feel better about their city just knowing that they are there. Public space can change how you live in a city, how you feel about a city, whether you choose one city over another, and public space is one of the most important reasons why you stay in a city." - Amanda Burden, 2014

In the following chapter, I explore the concept of public space in different thematic approaches. In each theme, I attempt to reimagine the role and potential of public space in defining our experience and quality of urban life in the city. Drawing together theories and arguments from different scientific fields (e.g. environmental psychology, urban design, landscape planning, cultural geography, art and architecture), this chapter will attempt to provide a new perspective on contested public spaces, such as Martyrs' Square. Such literature exploration is a foundation for reshaping our design strategy and thought process, before creating or rehabilitating urban spaces. The place-design philosophy must be based on more than just high aesthetic quality and ecological performance, and instead tell the story of history, culture and social diversity of the city, thus reflecting emotions, tolerance, resilience and harmony of mutually intertwined life.

In recent studies about public spaces, researchers (such as Gehl, Whyte) have investigated

the everyday behavior of people in public spaces, in order to understand which features of the environment influence people's actions the most (i.e. stop, pass by or get involved; Stevens 2014). Yet their detailed analysis of how and why public spaces work or don't work, only show a glimpse of the variety of unexpected actions people take in public spaces, since their research agenda is strongly space-centered (Stevens, 2014). Quentin Stevens, in his book *The Ludic City*, draws on an interesting perspective of urban design adopting a relatively complex concept of 'amenity'. From this concept he illustrates two issues that would help better understand urban spaces. The first point revolves around questioning what makes a good environment and how can a setting provide a desirable mix of potentials to calibrate for diverse needs of diverse users. Stevens emphasizes the importance to understand all the uses of urban space within the city to achieve publicness and openness, in order for it to gain a desired meaning by the locals. The second issue is understanding "how spatial characteristics shape people's experiences and actions" (p.2). The idea of amenity prevails over the function of a public space, in terms of serving for diverse desirable actions and experiences of its physical environment. However, Stevens recognizes that people's behavior and actions aren't predictable, nor fixed or even well-understood. Therefore, reimagining the concept of urban space beyond predetermined functions, and designating it to mediate potentials that provide for an extended variety of social experiences, carries a pivotal role in realising the full potential of an urban environment. We may relate Steven's thoughts to Massey's idea of how places are not static, but are in constant change. Public space needs to serve for fluidity of actions and interactions. This leads to a reconceptualization of public space, and as Gaffikin et al. (2010) point out from Massey's work, it is necessary to let go of the common notion of space and place that has been 'both physically grounded and socially fixed' (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010, p. 497). Massey argues against the conventional understanding of space and encourages to a new spatial imagination (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010). The authors simplify Massey's main propositions towards space, in her famous work *For Space* (2005), into:

(1) space is the outcome of interrelations; it is 'constituted through interactions';

(2) space is an arena of 'coexisting heterogeneity', reflecting and changing the multiplicities and pluralities of contemporary society;

(3) space is forever a work in progress, continuously being remade.

- *Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010, p. 497*

In the light of these propositions, space is understood not in its physical entity, but as a moment in time. In a 'dynamic urban environment', a public space "facilitates chance encounter, happenstance, the accidental and contingent, and allows for exploration and discovery" (Gaffikin, McEldowney and Sterrett, 2010, p. 498). Once it is established that space no longer needs to be perceived as a rigid setting serving a specific mono-function, it is necessary to recalibrate the design approach. A space can be a lunchtime spot at noon, a playground in the afternoon and an inspiring stage for artists in the night. There is power in adapting the meaning of public space to the preferences of its users with minor interventions (e.g. relocating a bench or a tree, drawing a new boundary etc). Designing for temporality and progression has the power to assign specific identities to spaces, adapting to this dynamic arena of constantly changing environment.

However, the concept of public space in the 21st c. is not just challenged with the trouble of defining it in the dictionary of architects, designers and planners. New challenges require shift of perspective of public spaces. Drawing on the opening of *Space, Place and the City: Emerging Research on Public Space Design and Planning*, Schmidt and Németh (2010) layout critical questions that can help redefining our understanding of public space in the contemporary contested city:

"...in this increasingly fragmented urban landscape, how do we begin to define and catalogue public space, particularly as the public is constantly contested, redefined and reformulated (Németh, 2009) ...how can we conceptualize 'publicness' itself, given that a diverse population might have different interpretations of what public space is, or should be?" (Schmidt and Németh, 2010, p. 455).

Similar to Massey's arguments towards rethinking the sense of place, perhaps we don't need to answer those questions. Sometimes, when defining a certain object, it's meaning changes retroactively from the new definition, to a confined one. Instead, it is

necessary to try and keep an outward perspective on the roles, uses and meanings a public space may bring to the city. In an interesting analytical study on the concept of Loose Space, Quentin Stevens and Karen Franck (2006) explore the creative ways city dwellers appropriate variety of activities within public spaces to meet their own needs and desires. Loose space refers to discovered gems in the city that people have appropriated for themselves; they are neither ordered, designed nor planned. These unique spaces in the city can offer an invaluable lesson to the city planners for future projects. The following sub-chapters of the literature review will display different themes a public space can be re-imagined to attain a new meaning in the contemporary contested city. While there may be more roles to public spaces, I've narrowed down to three main ones that I believe are suitable and relatable to Martyrs' Square.

3.3 The Urban Public Space:

a place for civic belonging and identity

"The ability to appropriate space, to write oneself into the urban fabric and carve out a visible presence in the city, is a key step in establishing a viable, recognized, and enduring sense of civic belonging and identity (Lefebvre 1991; Mitchell 2003). " - (Tchoukaleyska, 2013, p. 1)

Public space can help nurture a profound and inclusive sense of what it means to be a citizen (Hayden, 1995). "Identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories (where we come from and where we have dwelt) and the collective of social memories interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbors, fellow workers, and ethnic communities" (Hayden, 1995, p.9). Urban landscapes are treasuries filled with collective memories, and when these landscapes are bruised during conflicts and tragic events, urban renewals (often of savage nature) can threaten the survival of very important cultural memories (Hayden, 1995). Public spaces have the power to nurture public memory- to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory (p.9). In her famous book *The Power of Place* (1995), historian and architect Dolores Hayden draws on the importance of interpreting urban landscapes as public memories. She calls on architects, urban

planners and designers to expand their thoughts on "sense of place" beyond an aesthetic concept of "the personality of a location", but as geographer Yi-fu Tuan frames it, with understanding that an individual's sense of place is both a biological response to the surrounding physical environment and a cultural creation (p.16).

Exploring sense of place helps to understand the impact of urban places on people and their quality of life. However, it is difficult to break down what makes up a sense of place and how to measure/study it. In environmental psychology literature, sense of place is generally expressed in three place constructs: place attachment, place dependence and place identity (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). While the three concepts may overlap, each describes a different aspect of the human/place relationship, comprising cognitive, affective and conative processes (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). One concept in particular, place identity, is critical for creating and preserving the people's identities within their city (Ercan, 2017). According to Jane Handal, "Place identity is the process of building and re-building meaning, in a space-time continuum, on the basis of emotive forces -the 'heart'- formed and reformed by the flow of rational forces, the 'head'" (Handal, 2006, p.51). She explains that while the emotive forces of the heart are instigated by cultural, political, religious or collective identification of an imaginary community, accommodating meanings to era-specific realities, is the use of rational forces of the 'head' (Handal, 2006, p. 51); these two forces form the cultural landscape of a place.

Handal takes the case of Bethlehem-Palestine, a historic city with a contested context similar to Beirut, to explore the importance of these two forces being integrated in urban planning and design strategies, that will accommodate urban change, whilst sustaining place identity. A very common mistake in urban regeneration processes is a narrowed understanding of identity, determined to be either by an idealized past or by the phenomenon of globalization and urban change. This limited vision results in either mummifying identity and transforming cities into museums, or replacing the heritage with the monotony of global high capitalism; in both scenarios the sense of a sustainable and living place-identity is at stake (Handal, 2006). In the case of Bethlehem, an urban development project 'B2000' fell into that risk by prioritizing motives of economic growth and

meeting demands for touristic attraction (rational forces) in the hope of promoting an international recognition of Palestine and Palestinians as a nation. Yet the project failed to involve the local inhabitants' interpretations, present time identities and needs in the city. This scenario can be closely compared to what happened in Beirut Downtown during the reconstruction efforts after the civil war. This urban planning scenario has consequently created a competitive comparison of values:

'meaning of Bethlehem as interpreted by the decision makers of the B2000 project' **versus** 'meaning of Bethlehem as interpreted by local people';
 'past identity' **versus** 'present identity';
 'objectives of decision makers' **versus** 'needs of local people';
 'experts knowledge' **versus** 'vernacular knowledge';
 'a stage set heritage museum' **versus** 'a living historic locality';
 'the use of place' **versus** 'the interpretation of space';
 'growth' versus 'quality of life';
 'competitiveness' **versus** 'progressiveness';
 'globalisation' **versus** 'distinctiveness' - (Handal, 2006, p. 58)

While certain projects can go wrong in ignoring locals and their needs, sometimes such repeated behaviour can slowly isolate the people from their own city, deteriorating their sense of belonging in the city. In a very thought-provoking talk by a young Syrian architect, Marwa al-Sabouni suggests how lack of sense of belonging was one of the reasons that lead to the horrific events of a whole nation's destruction:

"While many reasons have led to the Syrian war, we shouldn't underestimate the way in which, by contributing to the loss of identity and self-respect, urban zoning and misguided, inhumane architecture have nurtured sectarian divisions and hatred" - (Al-Sabouni, 2016)

It may sound as an extreme perspective to view the reasons behind such a devastating war, yet the idea of how the loss of your own place in your own country provokes a sense of anger, revolt and revenge displays to governors and planners the importance of place identity in urban developments.

Urban development projects need to be sensitive to such matters. Handal urges for a balanced integration between the emotive forces and the rational forces, where the locals' views, needs, knowledge, experience "and their very spontaneous, incremental, but culturally responsive actions, [are considered] as the creative forces that sustain the



Image 3.1. Slums in Damascus city (source: internet)

town's identity throughout history" (p.58) and are involved in the rebuilding/regeneration processes. That means sustaining cultural values, social diversities, political identifications and collective associations of a community. Eventually, Handal interestingly redefines place identity for us as:

"Place identity, as understood within the emotive and rational forces, is a process that depends on continuity, a natural fluidity between the past and the future, while also possessing the faculty of adapting, evolving and innovating under the influence of rational forces so long as it remains connected to its emotive sources." (p.67)

People are constantly building and rebuilding their identities in their cities. There are constant forces and events bending the emotions and rational of people's perception, understanding and expectation of space. Perception of the city's urban built environment is an active process of constantly encoded and decoded meaning (Stevens, 2014). A person's experience of city triggers memories but also shocks expectation with daily new encounterment and possibilities. "The complexity of the city and the diversity of its users mean that there are often contradictions and tensions between meanings received and produced" (Stevens, 2014, p.18). These tensions and contradictions display a dynamic perspective of the city. Drawing on urban theories from Henri Lefebvre and Walter Benjamin, the author explores how the city and urban encounters inspire playful behaviour. People's movement and interactions within the city are usually unplanned and unpredicted therefore spontaneous and creative. Stevens revisits Benjamin's analysis of urban experience in the modern city as a site for

discovery, transformation and re-interpretation in the state of wandering, for example; a form of urban play that allows for deployment of symbolism in the city. Stevens believes a re-awakening of memories, demystification of them and a re-imagination can potentially transgress social conflicts in the public space. Further, playful acts display people's continued capacity for the invention, discovery, appropriation, contestation, re-appropriation and expansion of the meanings that urban spaces can convey (Stevens, 2014, p.18).

3.3 The Urban Public Space:

a playground;

a flexible and ambiguous space for self-expression & social tolerance

How can play promote social tolerance, enhance urban-life experience and give new meanings to public spaces? To begin with, we ought to first explore the concept of play. Generally speaking, play is associated as child's behavior. While it differs from culture to culture, it's continually redefined in every context and changing social practices. Yet defining play is not restricted to a set of activities but rather it is a characteristic of varying degrees to many kinds of human behaviour (Stevens, 2014). In other words, play is associated as a contrast to 'normal' mature acceptable behavior in the public realm. 'Normal' understood as conventional, expected, calculated, practical, constant and play as the unusual, special and different (Stevens, 2014). However it is not child's play that Stevens finds interest in:

"It is the play of adults which can lead to a reconsideration of the ways in which urban space might stimulate and facilitate unexpected and impractical behavior, and how space can be utilized for escapes from serious meanings and uses and to critique the normal social order." (Stevens, 2014, p. 27)

Stevens goes further to define play in an elaborate manner to focus on four ways on why playful behaviour is important in the urban realm and how its experience becomes an escape from the exhausting attributes of everyday life in the contemporary city:

1. play involves actions of non-instrumental;
2. there are boundary conditions and rules

which separate play from the everyday;

3. play can take on 4 types of form in which people can test and expand limits

4. play in the city very often involves encounters with strangers.

Stevens explains the above statements as follows. Play opposes instrumentality by freeing one from three everyday social burdens: purpose, functionalism and productivity. Play, in its exploratory pursuit of pleasure, becomes a relief from the opposing draining chase of social purpose, i.e. work and conforming to socially acceptable behaviour. Play, also in its very nature, contradicts the notion of an action with function. Play is neither productive nor consumptive, but instead it is a waste of energy; in other words, it is a release of energy and self-expression. The second idea is that play is usually a voluntary action (with freedom of participation), where rather than obtaining a material reward a person receives a psychological benefit as an end result. Thirdly, play takes on four different basic forms (competition, chance, simulation and vertigo), which makes it very different to the agency of everyday life. Inspired by the influential work of the French Sociologist, Roger Caillois, 'Man, Play and Games' (1961), Stevens reinterprets his typology of play in relation to designing for playful behaviour in public spaces. First, Competition is a rather instinctive behaviour in human nature. In competitive play there is an exciting sensation that allows people to 'seek ways of utilizing their knowledge and skills' (p.37) in front of an audience with fair rules. Second, Chance. In contrast to competition, chance is independent of any kinds of prepared skill or experience, but rather has a different thrill to it, in its ambiguous and captivating nature of taking risk. In the unsure state of what's coming, public spaces have the ability to create new encounters that allow for spontaneous playful activities. Third, Simulation, a game of pretend, allows for interplay of both imagined and real perceptions in an open space. Just like in a theatre structured around an audience, a public space design can become a stage for people to perform, act and play. The space's architectural quality may enhance memory and fantasy to stimulate imaginative play. Through programming of changing activities, it allows for re-interpretations of space and innovative use. Unlike the first two forms of play, simulation is not defined by rules, but instead requires constant invention of new codes

of meaning. This way of simulation allows people to reinvent and reimagine any story, memory or meaning that a public space holds. . Lastly, Vertigo, is a rather unique form of play than the previous. In a state of letting out and escaping one's own comfort zone, a person carries a new activity of thrill and fear that challenges both his/her mental and physical state i.e. tightrope walking, riding roller coasters etc. The sensation of such activity has disorientation, misleading and stimulation of confusion at its core. It is highly engaged with the built environment, just like Caillois' example of the function of a labyrinth of mirrors. Stevens finds similarities of vertigo in the harsh world of the city that evoke a sense of sublime: 'the awe-filled pleasure of submission to that which overwhelms us – a mixture of reverence, fear, and an almost phallic pleasure inspired by grandeur' [(Dovey 1999: 120) Stevens, 2017: p.44]. He compares this inapprehensible sensation to perception within the city which "is constantly destabilized by sudden shifts in scale, views of tall buildings and rapidly moving vehicles... and contrasts of light and darkness..." (p.44). On a smaller scale, the feeling of vertigo can be achieved in urban spaces when skateboarding, ice-skating or dancing. Caillois' four categories of play behavior represent "a different way in which life is lived more intensely, and each suggests forms of heightened bodily and mental engagement with the rich specificity and strangeness of urban space" (p.45). While competition and chance promote equalization with their disposition of predetermined social roles, vertigo and simulation allow for liberation from power relations in an improvised world without fixed rules. With public spaces as a stage for play, people can "transcend the roles which have been defined for them by work and domestic life" (p.46). The last point and aspect of play is its public character and engagement with strangers in close action. This is an inseparable and also an attractive side of play, where the audience not only indirectly watches over the fairness of play and offers encouragement to the players, but also enforces the meaning and essence of the public activity (Stevens, 2014). Being seen in public and encountering strangers adds a sense of wonder, mystery and fantasy to the experience of watching or participating in a playful act. Such form of interactive play can create feelings of connectedness and community within the public space (Stevens, 2014).

In a Dutch landscape architecture studio, Carve, Elger Blitz and his team work theme revolves around imagining the city as a playground. Inspired by works of the Dutch architect Aldo van Dyck, Blitz (2018) explains how their design approach of intertwining concepts of architecture and playground allows public space for playful acts, for disorder and happenstance. While he emphasizes the fact of lack of places for children in the city, he believes that playgrounds can become everyone's and anyone's square; and so by designing a city for kids, one designs a city for all.

"The spectacular scale of this site – regarding both the height of the terril as well as its industrial heritage – is unique in the relatively flat surrounding landscape of Limburgian-Flanders. The intervention is a landmark on a large scale, but through its playable character it also reflects the small scale of a child. The values of the industrial heritage have been a continuous leading theme in the design process that resulted in an unprecedented playscape. The mining 'terril' has been given a new meaning, rooted in both the past and the future." - (Carve.nl, 2016)



Image 3.2. Play landscape Be-Mine - Belgium (source: internet)

Temporary interventions as playful experimental solutions to see what works and what does not work

Playful approaches/attitudes are becoming more popular and adopted in recent design practices. Especially in public spaces, a recent approach, is temporary interventions. These temporary practices can be very experimental and rejuvenating for spaces that lost their meaning or for activating dead spaces.

72 hour Urban Action - architectural temporary installations

“It is a tool for resetting our perceptions of public space. This tool, taking the form of a design festival, has been intervening in different communities since 2010, working hands-on with local partners from the bottom up.” - (72HUA, 2019)



Image 3.3. Play landscape Be-Mine - Belgium (source: internet)



Image 3.5. 72 Hour Urban Action, Stuttgart (source: internet).

dérive LAB - El mesarrón, Querétaro, Mexico

“The intervention consists of the installation of a 21-meter -long table with which people can interact, expressing ideas, phrases and drawings. This table is placed in a public space with high pedestrian flows in a way that breaks with the dynamics of the same and invites the passers-by to participate.” - (Young, 2018)



Image 3.4. Play landscape Be-Mine - Belgium (source: internet).



Image 3.6 El mesarron- more than 300 people writing and drawing about their favorite places and topics in the city, 2018 (source: internet).

Another wonderful example is the temporary transformation of historic Gdansk public square, in Poland, into an interactive urban park. After a decision of removing parking from the city's central square, the city council saw the opportunity to initiate a competition for a temporary intervention within the square. The winning team, GDYBY group, came up with the creative idea of creating urban grass rooms with elements that would involve the locals to participate in a sort of a game, moving structures to assemble small spaces for different uses (Grupa Gdyby, 2013). Through this project, the square functioned as a lab for the city to understand and notice people's preferences in future development of public spaces (Horton, 2013). The project turned the square into the similar concept of loose space, explored earlier by Stevens and Franck (2006). The light weight wooden cubes encouraged even kids to move the boxes into various arrangements and create their sort of playground and settings (Horton, 2013). The interactive space offered new uses and opportunities to the public square with people enjoying weekend breakfast, spend time to relax or read a book or gather in the evening with friends.

3.3 The Urban Public Space:

a memorial

a place for remembrance and engagement

Martyrs' Square indicates in its very name a place of memory and commemoration. While it is necessary to explore the space as a memorial, it is important to ensure a rather interactive space for people to use and enjoy. The following chapter will briefly explore a contemporary perspective at memorials as public spaces and how their design, use and meanings have evolved in the 21st c. to become beautiful lively spaces in the hearts of cities.

From the late nineteenth century into the twenty-first, changes in the design of memorials in Europe, North America and Australia have altered the relationship between visitor and memorial from one of viewing to one of engaging —by occupying, touching and hearing, and participating in acts of commemoration (Franck and Stevens, 2006). The design features of these contemporary memorials stimulate the senses and invite exploration by drawing visitors close; they encourage visitors to take a more active role in experiencing the



Image 3.7,3.8,3.9. TARG O WĘGLOWY, 2013 (source: internet).



Image 3.10. Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain (source: internet)

memorial in a bodily manner and by leaving their own tributes (Franck and Stevens, 2006).

While traditional memorial usually involved a centered statue elevated above the ground to be admired and create a sense of awe, contemporary designs challenge themselves in reproducing this effect in another manner. Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, "featured a dramatically different relationship to the ground compared to many memorials: being neither elevated nor fully on the ground level but partially below." - (Franck and Stevens, 2006, p. 18)

It is also important to mention that, previously, completely abstract memorials lacking any traditional memorial elements, were difficult for both experts and the public at large to accept (Stevens and Franck, 2016). And yet now the meaning of a memorial can no longer be easily grasped by simply looking at it. Visitors have to make more of an effort to interpret meanings that are more indirectly or less precisely expressed. Increasingly, remembering is not achieved by simply viewing a sculpture but is instead an active, engaged process, requiring people to "look within themselves for memory" (Young, 2000, p. 119; Stevens and Franck, 2016).

Acoustic experience is another interesting design feature in contemporary memorials, whether



Image 3.11. 9/11 Memorial (photo credit: Joe Woolhead)

it is generated from interaction of water movement with different hard surfaces to the steady sound of sheets of water pouring into the two large pool in the 9/11 memorial (Stevens and Franck, 2016).

Another beautiful example is in a coastal city of vivid historic fabric, Zadar, Croatia, where heritage speaks so loudly in the city, two contemporary memorial designs feature a unique combination of visual-acoustic. Commemorating importance of the sea and the sun, "Sea Organs" and "Farewell to Sun" are now a distinctive landmark in the city developed as an area for hanging-out, touristic views, symbolic appreciation of nature and the city's unique geographic location. Both creations, by local architect Nikola Bašić, the 22m-wide circle set into the pavement, filled with 300 multi-layered glass plates that collect the sun's energy during the day, together with the the Sea Organ that resonates from wave movement and energy, produce a beautiful sound and light show from sunset to sunrise that stimulate the senses. Circular memorial also collects enough energy to power the entire harbour-front lighting system (LonelyPlanet, 2017).

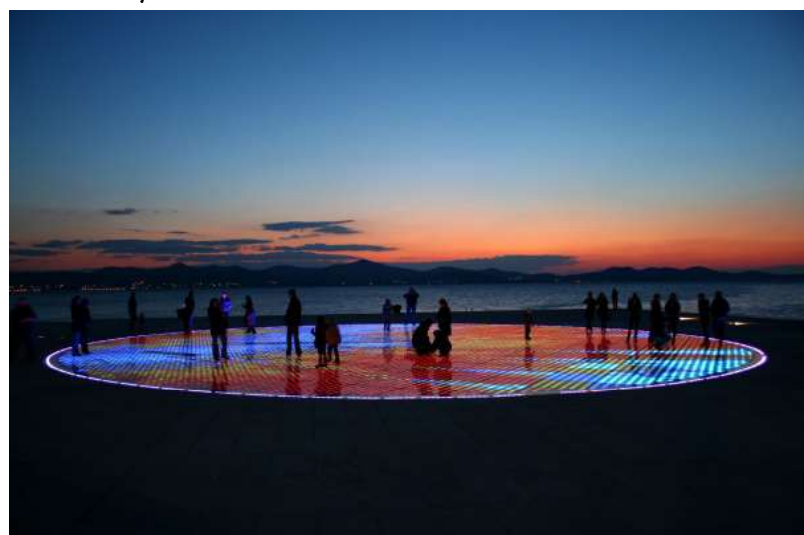


Image 3.11. Greeting to the Sun, 2008 (photo credit: Stjepan Felber)

3.3 Reflections on public space in the [contested] city

“So what’s the trick? How do you turn a park into a place that people want to be in? You don’t tap into your design expertise. You tap into your humanity. I mean, would you want to go there? Would you want to stay there? Can you see into it and out of it? Are there other people there? Does it seem green and friendly? Can you find your very own seat?” - Amanda Burden, 2014

In light of the reviews of public space made in the previous chapters, we may now have new images of what the role of public space may be, as well as new ways of perceiving the urban environment and experiencing the cities. The importance of evoking place identity and sense of belonging when creating or redeveloping urban spaces has the power of stimulating social self-identification and strengthening the sense of community. In highly diverse settings, public spaces are leading agents in establishing social integration and diluting sense of conflict in the city. Studying the community and its preferences at early stages of a project is essential to understanding the connection public spaces have to the people, and how future decision-making may impact their sense of belonging as citizens of the city. However, as designers and planners, we need to keep an outward perspective on these premises, for as we established from Massey and Handal: public space and people’s perception of space is an dynamic and ongoing process. Beneficiaries’ opinions should be included in place-making analysis (through onsite interviews, online surveys, etc.), in order to understand the behaviour of different ethnic, racial and age groups (similar to works of Jan Gehl’s observational analysis), and realise the appeal () future public spaces should provide. Furthermore, examples of temporary interventions proved to be ideal actions that might instantly offer t people’s feedback to design impacts. Examples from Mexico, where an installation of a 21 meter black painted table was placed in the middle of busy space attracted bypassers to express their feelings, needs, likes and dislikes in the city and the Netherlands, of a 72 hour Urban Action workshop involving a collaboration between locals, artists, architects and engineers to design and build several playful

architectural interventions that would help uplift abandoned or dead spaces in the city, support the applicability of these temporary interventions.

In an interesting talk given by Martin Rein-Cano (“Immigration, Urban Society and the importance of Public Space”, 2016),, director at Topotek 1 discusses the creation of Superkilen Urban Park in Copenhagen, with the concept of culturally enriching and diversifying the city by integrating the high immigration influx into a super-park, that will serve as a container and a catalyst for the development of a new multi-cultural identity of the city. Rather than succumbing to designing for a short annual profit off of tourism, Rein Cano states that ‘Parks have been used to create identities’, and proposes the concept of English landscape garden in his goal for recreating and intermixing of tradition and exotic cultures. These landscape are known as “typically English”, although the integrative elements used through the park (e.g. the Greek architecture, the allochthonous trees from America, etc.) demonstrate the fluidity and persistency of foreign cultural elements becoming a beautiful archetype of a space sensation. Another important factor in the development of the Superkilen park is that in the Danish Scandinavian culture, participation is a highly valued matter and a strategy of participation is expected in every urban development project. However, in a neighborhood of 90% immigrants, public participation is somewhat disturbed due to slow social integration of foreigners. After a failed attempt of an online query, the residents were personally asked to provide an object from their culture to be integrated into the park design. This resulted with t a model of design that was presented to people, with about a 100 objects dispersed around the park. The objects varied from advertisement icons (that create a sense of dislocation) to lamps and switch covers, slides to benches, or even more iconic elements originating from their countries of origin, like the bull from Andalusia, the fighting ring from Bangkok, the beatbox from Jamaica, the red soil from Palestine etc.

This collaborative approach can redevelop the narrative of contemporary public spaces and will ensure a more lenient integration of the immigrants into their new society, while ensuring a strong identity of the local community. In an empirical analysis of 14 public spaces in London, Matthew Carmona (2015) seeks to do so

with a new normative: a set of principles of what makes a good public space. By addressing the literature critiques towards public space in the past years, he attempts to find a hopeful balanced view of public spaces, one that recognizes “the multiple complex types, roles and audiences for public spaces in cities today”(p.1). And while his verdict is site specific to London, yet they foresee a new nature of public spaces that’s worth exploring. He states that a good public space is

- **Evolving** (sometimes neglected)
Carmona points in this principle that public spaces have a life cycle of constantly shaped and reshaped, evolving from redevelopment and renewal projects to being neglected and eroded, leading to another process of regeneration. This natural place-shaping continuum allows for innovation and a new perspective of specific places that could have contested history.
- **Balanced** (positively invaded)
Carmona focus on the balance of providing space for pedestrians and space for traffic.
- **Diverse** (not intentionally exclusionary)
It is important to acknowledge, Carmona says, that not every space should or can appeal equally to every citizen; however, spaces should offer diversity.
- **Delineated** (not segregated)
Discussing the appropriate division of public and private spaces in the cities can be a rather exhausting debate but an important one; however what is equally relevant is to understand that the provision of public spaces in the wrong places can be more problematic than the absence of any public space at all (Carmona, 2015).
- **Social** (sometimes insular)
“Public spaces are important in hosting social interactions from the large-scale and gregarious to the intimate, quiet, and even insular. Far from a withdrawal from urban life, if conducive to such uses, public spaces still represent the definitive venues for public discourse, protest, encounter, collective experience, communication, and the rich and varied social life of the city”(Carmona, 2015, p.400).

- **Free** (public or privatized).
When space is free in all senses of the word- open and unrestricted – then it should also be free to all, and for all reasonable activities, with guaranteed freedoms for users established through guaranteed rights and responsibilities for users and owners alike.
- **Engaging** (embracing consumption).
“The essence of cities is found in the opportunities they provide for exchange – exchange of goods and services, ideas and experiences, and social interactions of all types. A good part of this is wrapped up in activities of consumption, and typically these processes animate and enrich the public spaces of the city, filling them with life and value and allowing users to engage with them” (Carmona, 2015, p.400).
- **Meaningful** (often invented).
“Whether a space is created from scratch or evolves over time, and whether it is a simulacrum or uniquely authentic, matters little to most users, who are instead largely concerned with the experience it offers them – good or bad, engaging or repellent – and consequentially to the meaning that attaches to it over time. All spaces are invented to some degree. The challenge is to make them meaningful in a positive sense that encourages users to engage with them, including making the choice to return to them time and time again” (Carmona, 2015, p.400).
- **Comfortable** (confronting scary space).
Spaces will have different needs in terms of safety and security, relating to a host of local contextual factors. Spaces that are well secured are not necessarily diminished as a result.
- **Robust** (resisting homogenization).
“The character of space is shaped by many factors, not least the nine qualities articulated above. In addition, the design and redesign of spaces will almost inevitably reflect trends, styles and formats that are current at the time of their creation or recreation, most notably in the way in which spaces are programmed and in how they host uses that reflect prevailing trends (market or otherwise). The long-term success of public spaces will depend on shaping places which, through their robust design, are able to adapt and change over time in a manner that can withstand a degree of homogenization

and still feel distinct and rooted in local context” (Carmona, 2015, p.400).

In *The Experience of Place*, Tom Hiss (1990) discusses interesting points from going back to our five senses and being aware of our simultaneous perception in the urban spaces to borrowing ideas from Olmsted on the importance of spatial connection in the city. “It is a common error to regard a park as something complete in itself” (p.46) Hiss highlights Olmsted’s statement that we must keep in mind, one perfect park is not the solution to approaching a healthy city fabric. It is about creating a network of parks and green spaces, that are easy for people to reach wherever they are in the city.

The Case Study

The Case Study

The Case study

Beirut is an interesting case of a city that underwent urban regeneration from a 15-year long civil war, that also heavily influenced the Beirutis perception of their city. The following chapter follows through the history of how this unique public space transformed in history and how events shaped the public life in the city.

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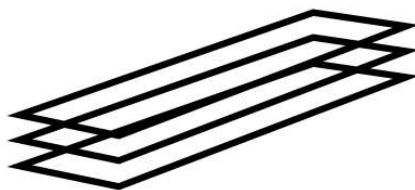
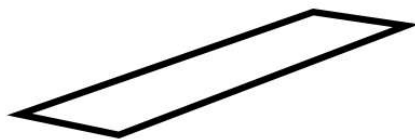
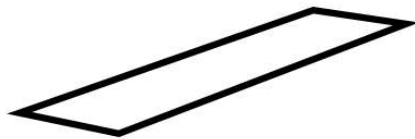
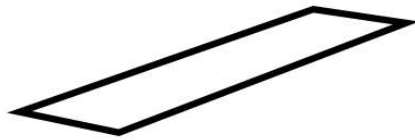
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4.1 The story of Martyrs Square

Martyrs' Square and its monumentality has intrigued many scholars who studied and wrote about the significance this space held throughout the years (Tuéni & Sassine, 2000; Khalaf, 2006; Sarkis, 2006; Dados, 2009; Gharios 2012). Its transformation and evolution mark historical narratives of Beirut city. Just like Beirut, Martyrs' Square has always been a victim of destruction and a target of revival, due to its cultural and geographic significance. For many rulers, planners and architects, the square provoked a powerful symbolic value. In the past, the square commonly celebrated economic, social and cultural welfare; however, a perception of division defined this square when it became a demarcation line during the 15 year Lebanese civil war. Since the reconstruction efforts, there has been several attempts to reclaim the square's past identity: the square as a symbol of revolution, the square as the centre of the city, the square as a cosmopolitan sphere, the square as a symbol of national unity, the square as memorial for Lebanon's martyrs (Dados, 2009). Since then, this monumental place provoked controversies that has obscured any prospect plans for the square.

As the future of the square continues to remain a mystery, it has become consequently stripped down from the powerful image it once had: as the heart of the city. However, hope of reviving this important place is not lost. To begin to understand this contested space, we ought to take a brief journey through the history of the development of Martyrs' Square. Revisiting historic events and memories is an essential part of appreciation, healing and recovery from the past mistakes and conflicts, in order to grow and move on to build a city that will celebrate its people's resilience and offer a new identity. In short, the square evolved from a marginal space, to a monumental square, to 'a physical void' (Gharios, 2012). Throughout time, this square stands as an interesting case of adopting several names adjacent with its evolving national

character of conflicting identities (Khalaf, 2006). While archeological evidence in Beirut center display the city's rich layers of civilizations dating back to 3 million years ago, the square did not attain its role as a public space until recent history (Khalaf, 2006). It was the Ottomans who developed this space as a central piece in the planning of the city; positioned as a public square in the 1880ies brought life, prosperity and cultural influence to the space (Gharios, 2012). Before that, the first spatial urban form the space of Martyrs' Square took was referred to as *al-maidan* 'a common ground for unanchored social groups' placed at the edge of the city (Khalaf, 2006). A neutral territory that was mostly used by traders and pilgrims. Yet the maiden had an interesting feature as well: "a place that offers freedom without obligation ... [with an] ability to accommodate a diverse range of social and political structures... [where lied] the spirit of commonness" (as cited in Khalaf, 2006, p.38). It was a spontaneous and negotiable piece of land.

As the city was growing in size and networks, the maiden's significant location acquired it to be transformed to attain a more landscaped urban form that would encompass more urban variety of activities. During the Ottoman empire (1889-1918), the square began to increase in popularity and its central role. The space, with its new name *Sahat al Ittihad/al Hamidiyyah*, Ottoman rule references, was developed into an attractive public



Image 4.1. An artistic sketch of *al-maidan* during the 18th c. (source: Tueini & Sassin, 2000)

Image 4.2.
The Hamadiyeh
Garden in
1890, oval
shaped
with fences,
fountains and
alleys, planted
with lush
vegetation
(source: Tueini
& Sassin,
2000)



garden, where the new governmental headquarters were placed, along with the police station, the municipality building, the Ottoman bank, tobacco, gas and railway companies, and soon after: hotels, cafés and restaurants immediately started engulfing the garden square. This leisure did not last for long. The effects of WWI created political instability in the city and with weakening of the Ottoman empire, Lebanese and Arab nationalists took the chance to claim for liberation and revolt against oppression, which led to a public hanging of the anti-Ottoman lead activists. As an expression of power and political manifestation was rooted in the public image of the square, it was used as a platform for the hanging. This act developed a strong sense of revolution and protest imagery to the square (Khalaf, 2006).

When the Ottoman empire collapsed, the French invaded, taking over authority and proclaiming a reconstruction plan that will modernize the city.

The first objective of the French was to revive and redevelop the city “through a colonial type urbanism” a neo-oriental style (Buccianti Barakat , 2004). With a grand vision of remodeling the city center and Beirut’s metropolitan area, the square was to be redeveloped as well. A new name was to be given for the new image of the square. While the French were imposing Place Pasteur, it seemed detached from the historical events that took place at the square (Gharios, 2012). Finally, between 1919 and 1931, the official name of the square became Sahat el Shouhada (the Martyrs’ Square). In 1930s, the idea of drawing a master plan for Beirut was developed. Two prestigious design bureaus were appointed to develop suitable directives and planning that would aid for an economic recovery for the city and the downtown area (Sarkis, 2006). First, it was the Brothers Danger, a French planning group, who proposed a ring road that would connect different urban centers to each other and to Martyrs’

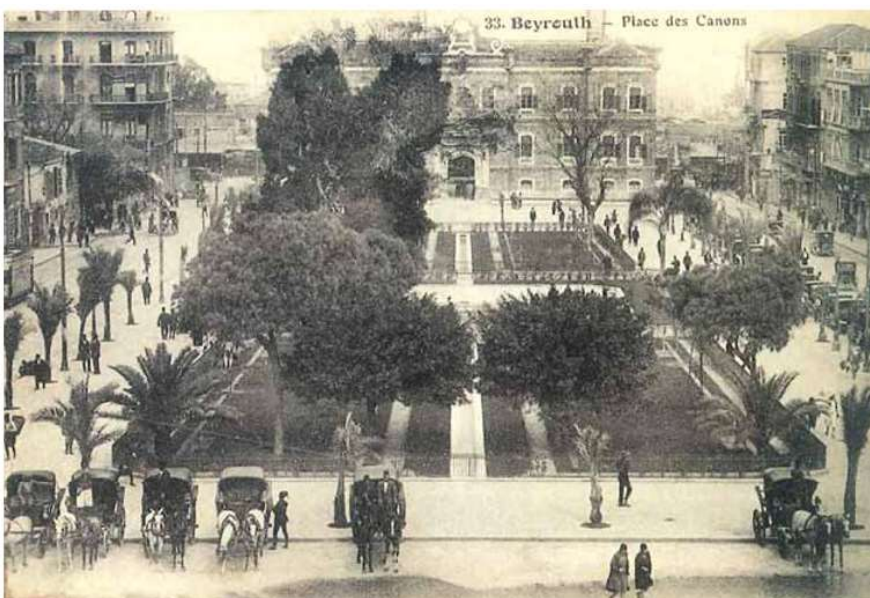


Image 4.3. The square during French Mandate time
(source: Tueini & Sassin, 2000)

Square. Architect Delahalle proposed a bold design as an extension of the master plan, that would 're-embellish' downtown and its square marked by a grand opening and a massive terraced space towards the harbour (Khalaf, 2006). It was in this project that the idea of running a major axis through Martyrs' Square to the sea, first mentioned. None of these proposals, however, were implemented. The second attempt, in 1942, was instigated by French planner, Michel Ecochard. His ideas emphasized on a circulation network including suburban sprawl, in order to enhance the fast movement in and out of the city, which included a bypass to the north of the square (Khalaf, 2006). The two projects were similar, in the fact that both transform the Martyrs' square into a major urban boulevard, thus no longer functioning as an urban public square (Gharios, 2012). However, Ecochard's ideas were passed over by the government at the time.

In 1943, independence happened. During that time, the country enjoyed a post-colonial revitalization. Beirut was for 30 years known as 'les trentes glorieuse'. The banking secrecy and the vivid city life (casino, events and leisure activities) attracted tourists from all over the world. Beirut was prospering as a 'modern' city with economic, political and cultural importance in the Middle East region. However, the planning and spatial development wasn't following up with the fast growth of this city. Divergent development plans for the city and the metropolitan area of Beirut were often based on the vision and politics of different presidents, who were continuously changing in time. Although some initiatives were developed for finding a solution for the area, it soon appeared that the problems were more complicated than expected (Tabet, 1993). While the city was failing in achieving any urban planning scheme, the center was becoming busier and livelier as the major destination for many retailers. The Martyrs' Square kept its popularity and became the location of political demonstration for students, laborers and political parties, the location of social activities and exchange. "The square was not the best designed place but it was a place that was working. It was place where you can find everything and meet" (as cited in Gharios, 2012).

1975 marked the beginning of the 15 year long civil war. As soon as violence erupted, Martyrs' Square became an open battlefield separating the city in two enclaves – the Christian on the east and the Muslim on the west. The division line

stretched approximately 9 km long and 18-19m wide. As inhabitants moved out, the square and its surroundings became a no-man zone where very few people would dare to pass by (Gharios, 2012). Yet despite this division, the square maintained in playing its symbolic role of carrying a public image of the city as a coherent entity, much like the Forbidden City in Beijing (Sarkis, 2006). However, the inaccessibility of the city center gave rise to a decentralization of the country's main activities. New neighborhoods developed as secondary commercial and cultural centers and new areas emerged and developed as self-sustaining zones (Gharios, 2012; Khalaf, 1993; Sarkis, 1993). In other words the civil war completely transformed the urban morphology of the city (Yassin, 2011).

Throughout those 15 years, reconstruction plans were already being developed every time a truce event seemed to be taking place. While none of these plans took action as more damage meant for a revised plan for the city, an initial postwar plan came to develop in the ending phase of the war (Gharios, 2012). Henri Eddé developed the first post-war plan for Dar el Handassa, an international design company based in Lebanon. His plan was based on three main visions.

First, a Haussmannian grand design on the city scale that would create three major axes, one of them passing through the Martyrs' Square

Second, an emphasis on the urban networks to facilitate the connection between the city, the airport and the nearby neighborhoods

Third, the city's architectural character was to be preserved by enhancing the 'romantic neo-regionalist image of a Mediterranean Levantine city with red tile roofing' (Saliba, 2003).

In this plan, the Martyrs' Square was extended to the sea via a long visual corridor that would enhance the connection between the center and the sea (Gharios, 2012). The concept was of course grandiose, expensive, and destructive both physically and socially. However, the war left Beirut brutally destroyed and stripped from any economic or political power to help it get back to life. A bankrupt government with many social and political issues to be dealt with, it was clear that the reconstruction of the whole city would be impossible and the project of the reconstruction was too large and costly to be dealt with. Therefore, a private joint-stock company Solidere (Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la reconstruction) was created in 1991 to deal with

the development and reconstruction of the city centre.

The company announced its 13-year plan with a budget of over 11 billion dollars that occupied an area of 191 ha (472 acres): 118 ha of original land of the traditional city center and 73 ha an extension reclaimed from the sea (Ragab, 2010; Solidere, 2017). To ensure a smooth efficient progress without complications, the company assumed ownership to all property in the area within the boundary they drew (as shown in figure 1) and compensated property owners and tenants with stock shares or immediate cash payments (Nagel, 2000). Solidere adopted Dar el Handassa' master plan ideas to put in action. Although this provoked controversy, the government accepted the plan in 1992 with only few modifications that increased the number of preserved buildings, but did not change the overall vision. With the heavily clearing and immediate restoration for buildings in the center, Martyrs square was left as a hollow space serving at the edge of downtown for secondary uses, parking and anchored social groups, returning to its previous role as a maidan (Sarkis, 2006).



Image 4.4. Maps displaying the many plans for Martyrs square through the years (source: developed by students in an urban planning studio, Sarkis, 2006)

4.2 Beirut's Reconstruction - Reformulating Identity in a City in Transition

"Seven times destroyed and seven times reconstructed, as the legend says, Beirut wakes up every morning as a newborn. Strange city which seems to have always survived by superbly ignoring its past, all the while refusing to imagine its future" - (Naeff, 2017, p. 58: quoting architect and urbanist Jad Tabet, 2001)

Choosing a rehabilitation approach for city re-building is one of the most complicated and sensitive matters, especially when there is severe contest over preserving the damaged historical landscape of the city. In a highly diverse hub of ethnic and religious communities such as Beirut city, conflicts over the reconstruction efforts displayed an extension of the attempt of achieving and reformulating a collective sense of a national Lebanese identity (Ragab, 2010). The 16-year civil war that ended in 1991, left Beirut massively destroyed and the approach to rebuild its city center was not collectively agreed on. The reconstruction of the city center has, as Judith Naeff puts it, "unleashed heated debates in which the relations between space, memory, history and identity have been negotiated and contested." (Naeff, 2017, p.5). Lebanon has some 18 different acknowledged sects of different religions, all of whom hold and have constructed various "versions of an overarching national identity" (Naeff, 2017, p.4). Consequently, many argue that the conflicts over the reconstruction efforts are not simply between the ones with capital power and the 'hapless locals', but they "are indeed deeply rooted from the civil war that continue to unmask the contest over economic and political power." (Nagel, 2000).

The case of Beirut fits squarely with a growing trend in urban development projects to create place identities and to market ethnicity and 'national character'. - Nagel, 2000, p.226

The following chapter will attempt to portray the place-making strategy of the reconstruction of historic Beirut downtown, the challenges that came

along with that strategy in relation to theories in global landscapes and place-making, and how that strategy decisions transformed the whole character and identity of the area.

As noted in the earlier section, Beirut's reconstruction efforts were adopted by Solidere, a private joint stock company. Solidere declared its project's objective to recapture the city's role as "a hub of commerce, culture, and tourism for the Middle East" (Ragab, 2010, p.110). However, with regional competition, Solidere took urge in formulating a new distinctive brand name for Beirut. Therefore, the project took the city's history as its greatest asset and worked with the language of memory and heritage as a marketing tool (Nagel, 2000; Ragab, 2010). With a focus on Phoenician history, Solidere promoted Lebanese historical pride and used the Phoenician imagery to symbolize and remind today's Beirutis of their ancient rootedness in commercial instincts and entrepreneurial spirit (Nagel, 2000). With such efforts, the master plan took initiatives to sensitively incorporate archaeological sites within the designs of parks and plaza designs, regardless whether those weren't the original intentions of the company or not (Nagel, 2000). However:

...the preservation of this heritage became useful in creating a "name brand" for Beirut—a place identity that is easily marketable to tourists and investors and that adds value to downtown real estate. - Nagel, 2000 p.224

Many Lebanese scholars criticized the ethics of Solidere's project in every single way. For example, on the east-southern part, lies now the Saifi area (image 3): a very high end commercial and residential area re-designed with a French colonial style: red tile roofs, arcaded streets and sandstone facades. However, this area was strongly affected during the civil war, being used a front line ("the green line"), and thusly, rejected to be seen

as “a saccharine image of the past” (Ragab, 2010: Solidere, 2009; Salam, 2005). With the project’s focus on physical appearance and potential economic benefits, it absurdly ignored:

...other critical dimensions such as the social consequences of reconstruction, the public’s needs, residents’ diverse historical pasts, their memories of select intimate urban spaces, and the right of Beirutis to their own city.

- Sawalha, 2014, p.106

“Invention of Traditions”

One major challenge brought by Solidere’s approach was the term used to market a new identity of Beirut ‘phoenicianism’, and it makes one question whom does it really serve to glorify. For to begin with, “Phoenicianism” or the Phoenician identity came about by Maronite Christian intellectuals under the French Mandate, who argued that Lebanese Christians were not Arabs, and eventually persisted to claim Christian difference and individuality (Nagel, 2000). However, Solidere attempted to redefine this terminology in the sense of referring to the richness of the ancient history of Lebanon; “But whether Phoenician symbolism can ever be dissociated from its original meanings and serve as a rallying point for all Lebanese is highly uncertain.” (Nagel, 2000, p. 227). This can

be related to the problem with the “invention of tradition” discussed by Doreen Massey in her paper *Places and Their Pasts*. She argues how different interpretations of the identity of a place develop due to specific readings of an area’s past, for the purpose of arguing about the future plans of that area. She continues to deduce that:

The identity of places is very much bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant.

- Massey, 1995 p.186

In the case of Beirut, the dominant history of Phoenicians was chosen by Solidere to promote their strategy, but with little attention being taken into consideration on how this choice would affect a political stance, as it excluded and included different Lebanese people. And the identity associated with the history of the Phoenicians was constructed to create that marketable place-identity. Furthermore, Massey argues in another paper, that places don’t simply have single unique “identities” that can be framed for they are full of internal conflicts. Therefore, Solidere with its approach and slogan, “The Ancient City of the Future”, assumed a holistic uninterrupted continuity of a single identity for Beirut (Nagel, 2000) and this is a problematic sense of place, as it expresses “reactionary nationalism



Image 4.5. Aerial view of Beirut Downtown, Solidere's project (source: internet)

and introverted obsession with 'heritage' "(Massey, 1994).

"Collective Amnesia"

This brings us to another problematic of this type of place-making strategy. In the preference of which memories to memorialize, Solidere's approach overpassed the fact that the country has just underwent 16 years of ethnic, cultural and identity conflicts that caused serious trauma and damage not just to the physical fabric of the country, but to the psychology of every Lebanese. As Judith Naeff phrases it in her PhD thesis, Beirut's suspended now: Imaginaries of a precarious city:

The lack of closure experienced with regard to the history of dissensus and civil conflict branches out to the judicial domain, the political domain, larger geopolitical interests, socio-economic relations and psychological recovery, all of which are interrelated.
- Naeff, 2016, p.2

This act of selective memory, as architect Jad Tabet expresses, is like "playing with fire"; in the attempt to repress such complex conflicts, one might jeopardize the return and re-appearance of unfortunate events (Naeff, 2017). However it was not just the "memory makers", Solidere and the Ministry of Tourism, who decided to simply forget the war and 'turn the page on the past', but this "collective amnesia" was adopted by many Lebanese citizens (Naeff, 2017; Sawalha, 2014). It was an agreed tactic accepted on a national level, in order to get over the war; instead, what happened in the immediate aftermath of the war, was a sort of a nostalgia to the pre-civil-war era, when Beirut was described as "Paris of the Middle East" (Sawalha, 2014). This strategy transformed into a "memory industry", a term used by the literary scholar Andreas Huyssen, where souvenirs, old postcards, touristic sites become marketed for their cultural memory value (Sawalha, 2014). However this only eclipsed public discussions on the causes and memories of the civil war and diluted the feeling of responsibility (Sawalha, 2014).

"An island for the rich"

Looking at Beirut Central District now creates a great sense of confusion. How the area is represented and built is different to how it is experienced. Who the area is built for versus who

really uses it, raises questions about how much the project was able to recapture the pre-war identity of downtown Beirut and its previous authentic sense of place. For example, Nejmeh square stands in the middle of a high-end area of expensive restaurants, cafes and bars. The particularity of offers the square and its surroundings provide, isolates the possibilities of lower-income families to benefit from the refurbished area. The reasons for that are much more complex, spanning even to the economic instability of the country as a result of unbeneficial influences from neighboring countries. In an online journalist blog, Beirut Report, Habib Battah discusses the problematic situation of the area by interviewing different users and stakeholders. A Lebanese economist, Georges Corm, expressed remorse looking at what Solidere has delivered:

"This was a place where all of the social classes would mix. It was the biggest symbol of coexistence in Lebanon. Now it's a kind of no man's land for rich people."

- Erasing Memory in Downtown Beirut, 2014

So far we have seen how the rehabilitation project of Beirut Downtown displays patterns of how a transnational capital seeks out unique geographical niches and wraps a sweet narrative in order to create economic value to an urban development (Nagel, 2000). Others would say that it was a forward example of:

...how the conglomeration of wealth and political influence can manipulate national-scale urban decisions towards the ultimate benefit of individual investors at the expense of the national social objectives. - Ragab 2010, p.113

However, this is a familiar scenario for the city of Beirut. As Caroline Nagel, in her work *Ethnic Conflict and Urban Redevelopment in Downtown Beirut*, draws on the works of scholars that discuss ethnicity and globalization in global cities, she elaborates on the idea of "symbolic economy", where an increasing importance is shed on the construction of authenticity, identity and culture in urban landscapes, such as New York city and London. Within these symbolic economies, there is the promotion of an "image of diversity" for the middle class consumption, while in reality it is highly controlled by a minor group of global elite (Nagel, 2000). In the case of Solidere's project, one specific transformation was the souq area (the

old marketplace). The renovation was one of the highlights of Solidere's works, which contributed to the promotion of the theme of Middle Eastern entrepreneurialism (Ragab, 2010). The souq became "an urban amenity that is marketed as part of the total downtown investment package." (Nagel, 2000, p. 226). However, what was once a highly diverse local market place was manicured into a high end architectural space, with more than half being brand and expensive designer shops (fig. 5, 6). In a local news website, an article under the title "Beirut Downtown: a City of Ghosts", the writer portrays the locals' reactions and struggles: e.g. a university student working as a shopkeeper, but is also a customer in the new souq area, pays in installments to afford a pair of jeans equaling to as much as her whole monthly salary, just to be catching up with the life trend of such an expensive environment. This behavior is common on a general scale, where the behavior of loans or leasing, has become a living standard, in order to afford living in such an expensive city. Taking into account country's economic instability and fluctuations of prices, to continue acquiring such an easy and affordable lifestyle, it is necessary to provide a social hub for all people, irrelevant of their social and economic situation, as it was in the past

4.3 Martyrs Square & future plans

As discussed earlier, Beirut's situation is a very complex one. Not only due to the challenges that came along with the reconstruction project, but also the ongoing fight over economic-power, originating from rivalry between various political/religious sects.

As much as Solidere can be criticized yet the burden of such scenarios doesn't fall only on their shoulders. The company has made efforts in the past to try to revive the center and its square. In June 2004, Solidere launched an international design competition on Martyrs' Square grand axis. Antonis Noukakis and Partners Architects (Greece) were the competition winners. Their scheme defined four sections, each being responsive and attuned to the characteristics of the corresponding context. It also offered a symbolic organization of the space along the axis with an intelligent and varied array of commercial, retail, residential and civic structures consolidating urban field around

the square and axis. However, the winning project wasn't carried on for many reasons and conflicts. Another project was initiated in 2012, assigned to Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW, Paris) to complete an urban design study for the square and its axis. The approach treated the space as a coherent linear public space, providing a new urban layout that form both physical and visual connections to the surrounding context. (Solidere,2019). We can notice RPBW approach to Martyrs square focus on its future connections and the creation of a new landmark, Beirut's History Museum, a transparent building structure that will connect the present with the past. Other important things to notice from Renzo Piano's plan, is the widening of the square's width, which pushes the roads on both sides closer to the buildings. The streets however are also narrowed into two lanes with a parking lane. The underground parking is taken into consideration with several elevators located along the edges of the square and with an exit and entrance for the cars is located at the north. The statue is moved to the center becoming one of the main axis in the new layout. Two lanes of tall palm trees are imagined on both sides of the square (probably inspired by the pre-war image of the square). A very interesting detail is an underground connection from the archaeological site at the square to the new museum across the street. While construction has started on the glass building of the new Beirut museum, plans for the square are left to imagine it as a large linear open space.

From a landscape architect/planner's point of view, a lot of potential can be seen in the square, as a space to challenge the current issues in the central district, as well as in the rest of the city. The Martyr's Square symbolizes a great deal for the Lebanese people as an open space for expression; however, being abandoned and left untouched can be seen as a chance for a new understanding to the square. A lot of time has passed since the war and new identities have been formulated which further extend and ramify the diversity of social groups in Beirut. Therefore, a holistic approach may be appropriated to public spaces to preserve the history, create a connection with an urban nature, while integrating different cultural activities and designs for human scale. However without repeating mistakes of the past in glorifying a unique identity and instead keeping Massey's writings in mind to approach a space as a dynamic entity.



Image 4.6. Plan developed during Renzo Piano Building Workshop for Beirut History Museum and Martyrs Square (source: internet)



Image 4.7 & 4.8. Rendered images by Renzo Piano Building Workshop for Beirut History Museum and Martyrs Square (source: internet)

Analysis

Analysis

Analysis

In continuation to what was discussed in the earlier chapter, I would like to display a general analysis of the Martyrs square surrounding: Downtown area, from a planning point of view, and take a look at the positive and problematic aspects of the area and display potentials that would provide great opportunities for improvements and ensure a well-thought strategy for the square as part of its proximate and city context. This chapter continues with a brief investigation into Beirut's public life and public spaces by understanding how other public spaces work in the city. And finally, an online survey attempts to wrap up this chapter by giving a closer look to how locals perceive their city, spaces and square.

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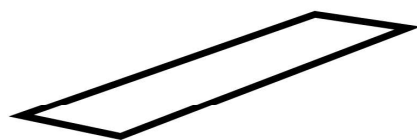
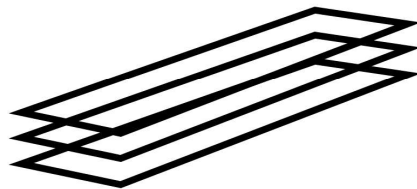
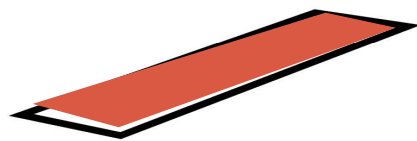
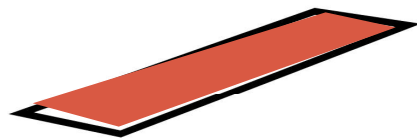
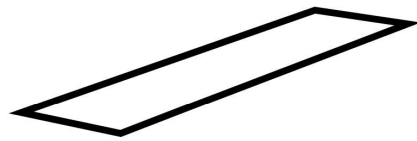
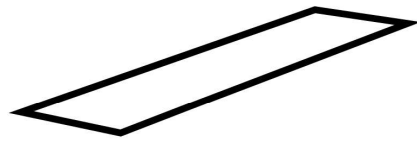
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Downtown's Achievements , Problems & Potentials

5.1 Achievements



preserving heritage

The aftermath of the civil war exposed a lot of archaeological sites in the Downtown area of Beirut i.e. in the northern part of the Martyrs square underneath the site of the petit serial. Many were preserved and opened for public as beautiful attractions.

Benefit

These sites add richness to the unique character of Beirut's urban context that encompasses history and culture. People get to visit, appreciate and feel a sense of heritage pride and identity in their city.

Challenge

These archaeological sites are always being discovered when new plans for buildings are initiated. However, not all are being preserved or taken into consideration with the new development plans. This creates tension between historians, the locals and the investors.

creating public spaces

The master plan for Downtown Beirut considers introducing new public spaces. However few have been implemented and others are on hold or don't have a design proposal yet.

Benefit

These new public spaces are very important in a congested city like Beirut. Especially during warm or hot days, these spaces can provide a cool social atmosphere that can contribute to a healthier quality of life for the Beirutis.

Challenge

Most of these public spaces project lack any people in them. The design and planning of these spaces need to consider how to activate and invite people to use them. A balance of safety, functionality and aesthetics needs to be drawn.

introducing better streetscapes

Most of Downtown area enjoys comfortable, wide sidewalks with street trees that makes an enjoyable walking experience.

Benefit

These streets contribute to the character of the area while providing solutions during hot and wet days.

Challenge

It is important to ensure circulation and network that allows these streets to reach their full potential, however in many places barriers from army checkpoints or security stands disturb the connectivity and walkability in the area.



pedestrian only zones

Nejmeh square for example has been dedicated as a pedestrian only area.

Benefit

Designating pedestrian only zones is a great way to improve connectivity in the heart of the city and inviting people to walk and use their city more often. For Beirut, a car-dominated city, this is very crucial, to prioritize people first and encourage for a healthier quality of urban life.

Challenge

So far pedestrian zones only are very limited. Expanding this strategy isn't so easy due to the high traffic and compact size of the city, this would require collaborative work with city planners and traffic expert to redirect traffic flow and begin a vision of a pedestrian dedicated Downtown areas.

neighborhoods of different characteristics

During my interview with the head of planning department at Solidere, Mr. Moujaes explained how the planning strategy of Solidere considered a delicate balance of 10 distinct neighborhood according to density of population, height of buildings and character of the place.

Benefit

This kind of approach ensures a balance that maintains a general architectural character of the city while meeting the needs of the city's growth.

Challenge

These decisions can be very sensitive if they don't consider historic events of each neighborhood when reclaiming or attaining them with new identities. Another question, is was there a balance of social class and affordability taken into consideration as well?

organizing social events & celebrations

Last New Year's celebration in Nejmeh square caught the attention of the world making Beirut one of the 'Top 10 NYE Celebrations' worldwide (National Geographic, 2018).

Benefit

These type of events endorse the social identity within the city and bring people together to celebrate despite difficult times. It also helps to activate abandoned yet valuable spaces.

Challenge

Accommodating for such big events can seem overwhelming from many aspects i.e. security, overcrowdedness. Therefore it is as important to maintain smaller events but more often ones throughout the year that constitute a progressive life in such spaces.

5.2 Problems

scattered open spaces

Public spaces are scattered seeming like they are hidden and are hard to find, and there is no connecting network that invite people to use and know about them. In addition, most public spaces in Downtown are monitored by army stands or security men. This really adds a lot of tension to spaces, discouraging people from using and appropriating themselves in the spaces.



dominant social class

The downtown area is immediately associated as an area for who can afford it. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the area sends off a message as being tailored for rich and tourists.



traffic dominated city

While this does not stand just for Downtown area, indeed the city suffers from serious traffic issues.





Problems

minimal open spaces identity

There is an unclear hierarchy to public spaces as there is no network of how they function, which ones are for gathering, for relaxing. They project a similar vibe that does not invite for a balanced public life pattern.



neglected landmarks

Time has managed to deteriorate unique landmarks in the area. However their location and meaning are too significant to be neglected for a long time. For they are part of the public memory and story that play an important role in how people perceive their city. While such spaces create controversies in how to approach or redesign them, however in that long process, activation and interventions can be encouraged to sustain the life and memories of these spaces. Doing so can help understand what new identities people can create within them.



disconnected waterfront

The water is one of the most important natural character of this city. However, people are very disassociated from the water line, how it works, when it is accessible and how to reach it. It has a great potential and big role in a network of connecting Downtown and the entire city.

5.3 Potentials



fantastic landscape setting

The waterfront and mountain back drop define the main character of this area and all of Beirut. It's proximity to the sea is very important as the shoreline connects all of Beirut. Taking advantage of these unique viewpoints in Downtown is very important in the design of spaces and creating connections to the rest of the city

strategic location

Downtown lies in the center of lively and diverse neighborhoods. It has a crucial role in connecting the city's neighborhoods, streets and public spaces.

fine base for walking & biking

The city's size is a great potential to encourage people to walk and bike as an alternative commute. People, local organization are also raising awareness on the importance to switching to much healthier commute methods. While there was one bike sharing installation implemented in Downtown, more action needs to be taken to promote this great opportunity that city enjoys.



sensory experiences

Beirut is full of architectural surprises. Its topography contributes to enjoying a diverse spatial experience while popping art from graffiti and colored stairs add uniqueness to every corner. Native flora such as jasmine indulge the senses and textures from old buildings stimulate a sensory impression.

significant history

History is reflected in every corner, building, sidewalk and site in the city. A mix of old and new architecture adds a unique feel to this city. Downtown has a potential of telling the many stories people have instead of an overarching narrative of the city's center. There is cultural heritage in people's stories and memories, for they too are part of the historic layer the center used to have.

vibrant diverse social life

There is a diverse social life scene that keeps this city alive. Public spaces need to be approached by inviting all sorts of these scenes and allow for other people to acknowledge and appreciate all sorts of art and cultural diversity.

5.4 Beirut 'a concrete jungle'

Beirut is a highly congested city, 'a concrete jungle' with few very green spaces that allow its residents to breath. Beirut has 0.8 m² of public green space per capita, when the recommended minimum standard by World Health organisation for a healthy city is 9 m² (Boulad, 2015). While Beirut truly suffers from a low number of gardens and public spaces, a common issue is the lack of awareness of some existing hidden green gems in the city. Dima Boulad, a designer, an activist and the co-founder of Beirut Green Project, discusses in an encouraging ted talk about her discovery with her team during their search for green spaces in the city that there are over 24 gardens existing in Beirut. However these gardens are not even known to the public and that fact have caused a sense of neglect and forgetfulness towards these spaces i.e. William Hawi garden. A main contributor to this issue is also the lack of connectivity and accessibility to these spaces. Some public spaces in the city are associated with a mental barrier i.e. as they are surrounded by roads and traffic like Khalil Gibran garden for example. Beirut Green guide project took many initiatives to start getting people to realize and appreciate the existing green spaces in the city. They started organizing *Green your Lunch Break* events where they advertised and encouraged

people to take their lunch breaks together in nearby gardens to re-activate and bring life back to these hidden gems. But also the intention of the event was to bring attention to the importance of these spaces and the need to rehabilitate them and create more.

The urgent need for a greener Beirut is beyond deniable however the first steps would be to understand a network and system of green and public spaces in the city. Just like Olmsted believed that creating one great park is not enough of a golden achievement in the city but imagining a body of different organs that work together to bring life to the city. Therefore, Martyrs square needs to be thought of as a major node in a network of other smaller and bigger nodes. Ease of accessibility both visually and physically into these nodes is also highly important. People need to feel invited and safe when approaching public spaces.

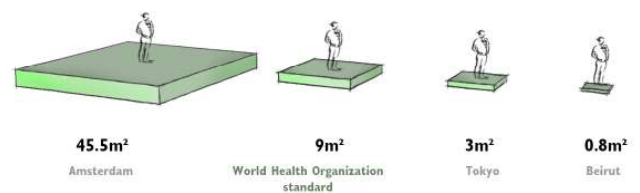


Image 5.1. William Hawi garden during Green your Lunch Break (source: internet)



Image 5.2. Khalil Gibran garden (source: internet)

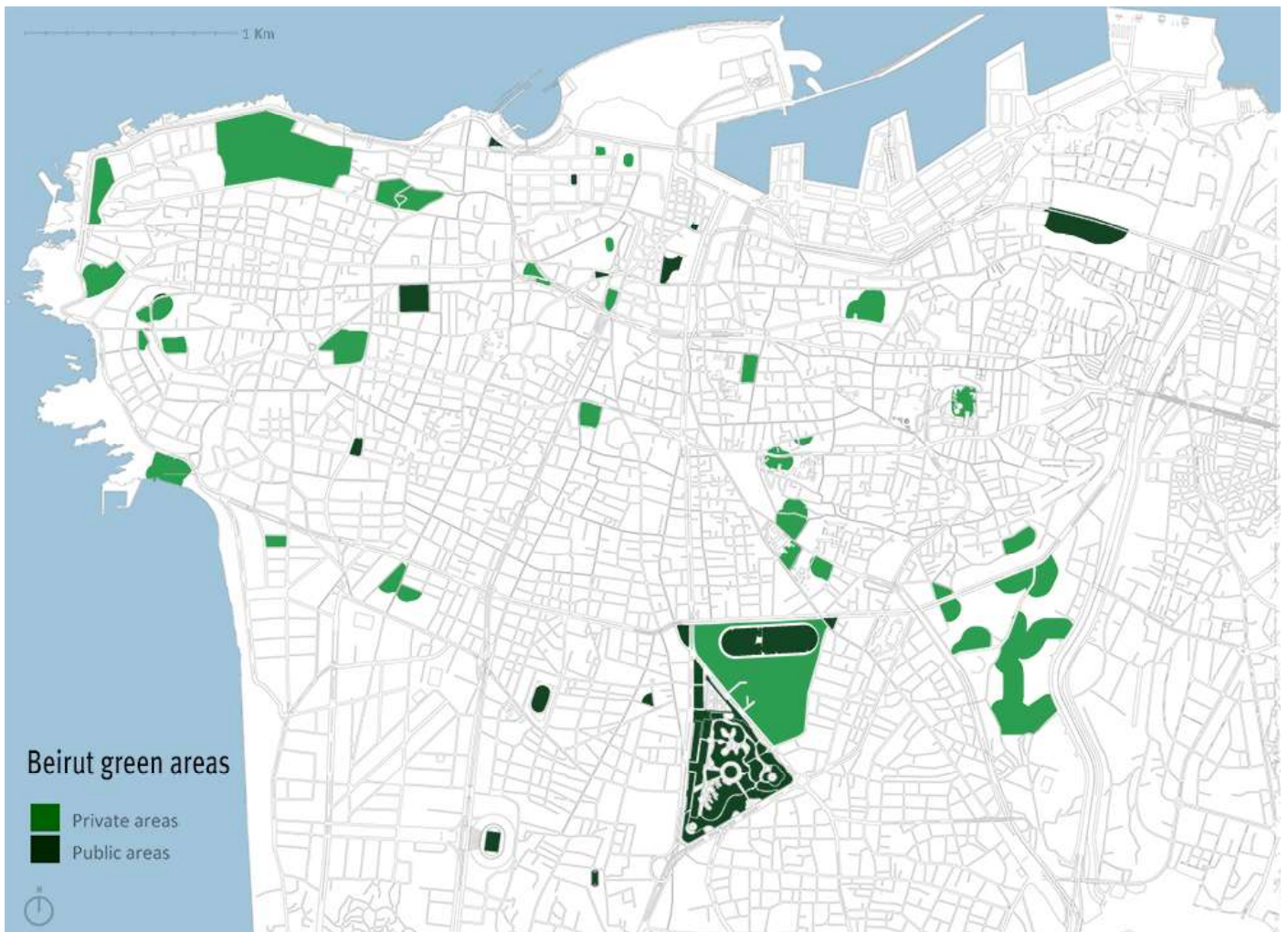


Figure 5. 1. Beirut green areas (map credit: The American University of Beirut Libraries, Neighborhood initiative, 2015)

Both rehabilitation (through maintenance) and activation (through social and cultural events) are necessary to existing spaces. There also needs to be a change of perspective of the locals, just like the city, the people are stuck in time of a long over due post-war scenario, where it seems as if one has to accept the way things are in the city.

“...together we can start improving the situation, if we don’t talk nothing will happen; together we can start looking at our city in a different way. We can start doing small things that would spark big changes. And it’s not about not having space [in this concrete city], it’s about transforming places like Sassin square from grey to green.” - Boulad, 2015



Image 5. 3. A public intervention representing a 0,8 m2 of green space per person in Beirut city by Dima Boulad and Nadine Feghaly. A project in protest to claiming the right to more green spaces in the city. (Beirut Green project, 2015)

Beirut Public Life Public Spaces

5.5 How do public spaces function in the city today?

[Observations and Intercept surveys with users of Public Spaces]

Very often designers are disconnected from the target users of the spaces they design; therefore, I decided to visit public spaces in the city to observe and interact with the users. The purpose of these visits was to see how public spaces function in the city today, get an understanding of how Beirutis use these spaces, what is it that they like about those spaces and what is it that is missing or lacking. I chose four different spaces that I knew or expected to be busy and eventful. Martyrs square was the first choice, as it happened to be independence day when I visited the city and heard of a small protest that would be taking place. The three other ones were Corniche (the popular waterfront area), Sanayeh garden (the most crowded garden in Beirut) and Beirut souks (where a farmers market takes place every Saturday). Inspired by Gehl architects' approach on studying public life in the city, I adopted a framework on how to observe the sites and what kind of questions to ask the users. The following section is a summary of key findings from my observations and short interviews with people.



Image 5. 4. Martyrs Square during site visit

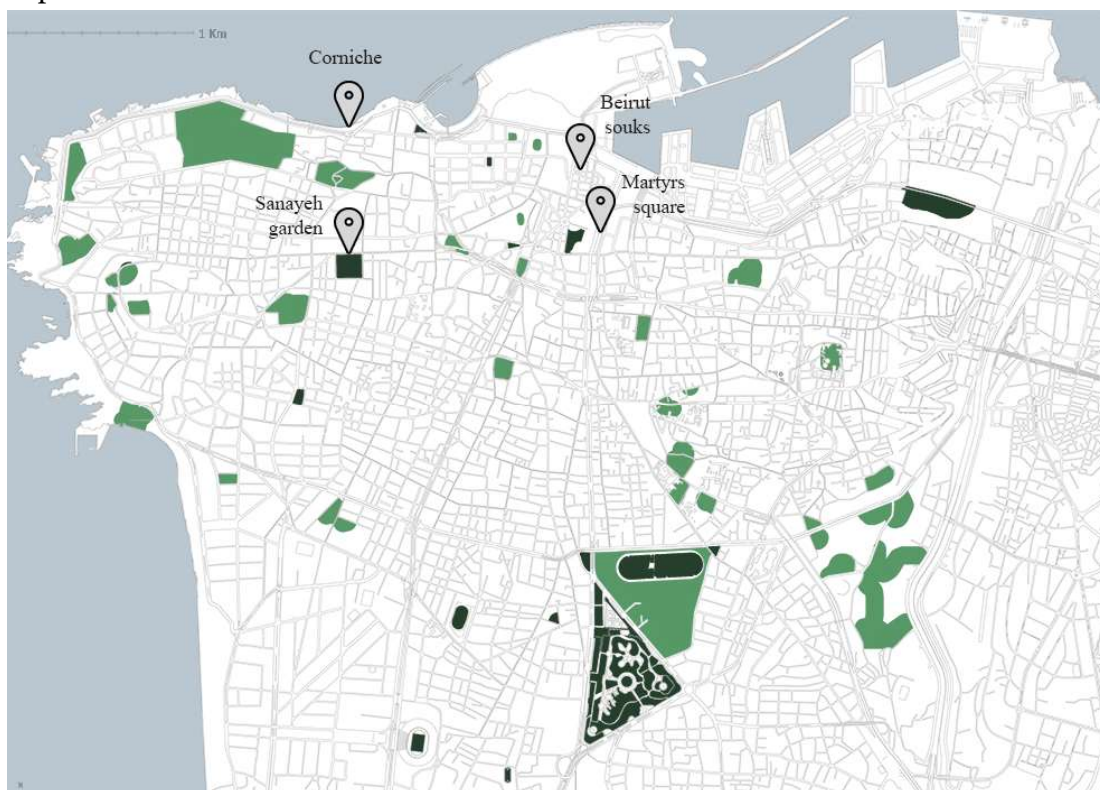
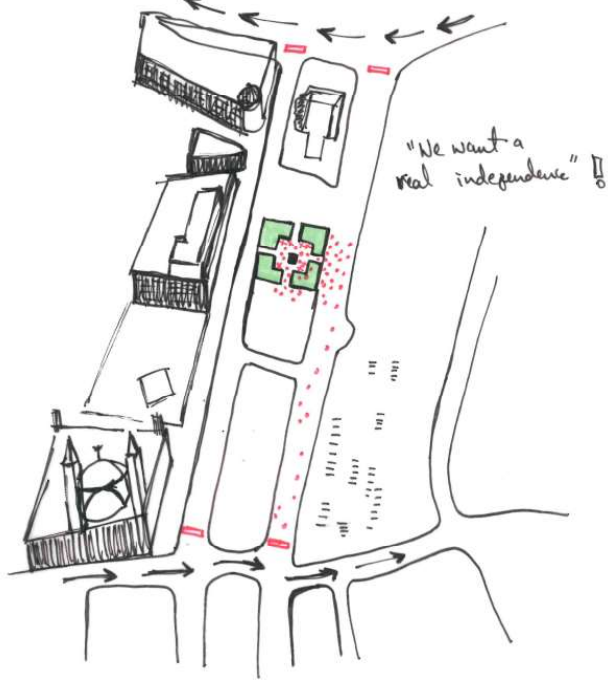


Figure 5. 2. Map indicating the locations of the public spaces I chose to visit and observe

Martyrs Square



When I first arrived to the site, the roads were blocked from car traffic from both sides of the square. People were marching towards the statue at the center of the square. There was police force with their cars blocking the roads and ensuring a peaceful protest. The protest was a small gathering of about 100 - 200 people. Within 30 minutes, the roads were opened again for cars. Soon, the people dispersed and the protest was over. Since the people were very involved and loud in their protest action I waited till it calmed down and managed to survey 12 people. One man told me the protest/march started from the National Museum and they walked thru the city til they reached Martyrs Square. According to the Age&Gender count, the square was dominated by adults (age 25-65) however with a few presence of

kids waving flags and playing alongside their parents. There was a small appearance of senior males as well. As for gender, males were more present in an approx. ratio of twice the number of women. People were loud and active, taking turns on the loud microphone. Many were standing, while some were sitting around the statue where appropriated. Others were leaning on the high rise grass beds while some sat on top of them. Few climbed and stood next to the statue.

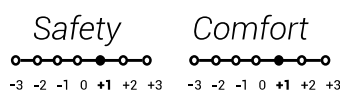


Image 5. 5. Martyrs Square during site visit

General view of the space

People generally do not spend alot of time in this space nor do they visit it very often. That comes to no surprise ofcourse since the square isnt equipped for public use. However, they seem to have a general positive view towards it. *When asked to describe the space in a three words, the reoccurring themes were:*

historical; spiritual; national memory
suggestive, interesting, contrast
 unique, symbolic
 empty
 traffic, polluted



somewhat safe

somewhat comfortable

Activities

Just pass through
 Cultural event
 Political event/
 Protest

Wishes

"I would like to be able to access the statue, like climb and sit. I would like to have the opportunity to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee."
 Play and Talk to people
 a green space

Necessary improvements

pedestrian crossing
 lights
 less traffic

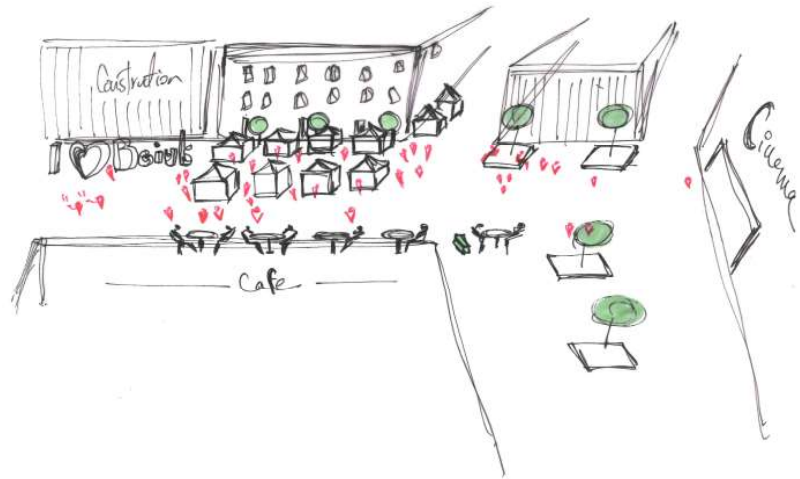
Beirut Souks



On a gloomy Saturday morning, Beirut souks were sizzling with people shopping at the farmers' market, enjoying a coffee or nargileh, or playing with their kids in the open space. Usually this specific spot of the souks is empty and considered just the end, with a construction site, yet the market brings it to life for a few hours every Saturday morning. Not exactly equipped and designed, people use every shaped corner in the space to suit their activity: grabbing a bite they just bought, smoking a cigarette, watching their kids, hiding from the drizzling rain. Mixed with different age groups, the site was also almost equal ratio of male and female. After surveying 7 people, including (by chance) the organizers of the market and a group of 4 women with their 6 kids who were quite conversing, full of opinions and suggestions, the drizzling rain become a pouring rain, dispersing the people to find shelter and flee the market. Accessibility wasn't an issue for this site since the rest of the souks is a pedestrian zone only.



Image 5.6& 5.7. Beirut souks during site visit



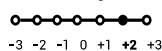
General view of the space

People generally spend an hour or more in this space as it is filled with shops, cafes, a cinema and an open space where the market usually takes place. People associate a rather strong positive feeling towards the space as well.

When asked to describe the space in a three words, the reoccurring themes were:

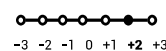
Convenient; friendly, **fun**, good place to meet people; its great for beirut
 cosy, **safe**, good access, good gathering space; **community social platform**
 original, crowded

Safety



safe

Comfort



comfortable

Activities

Shooping/
 market
 Spend time
 with family
 / friends
 Social
 events

Wishes

"It is not just the government's responsibility, private companies and individuals should contribute to activating places"

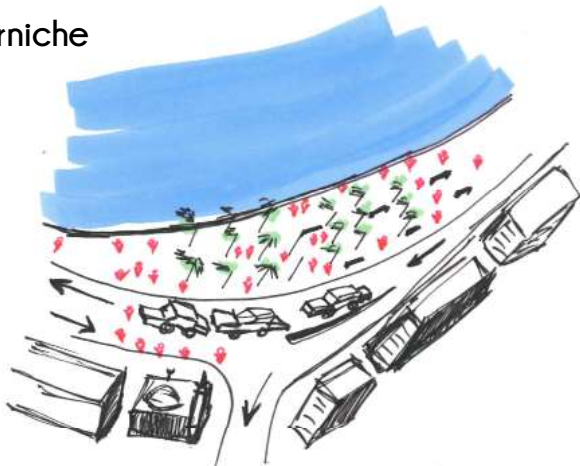
place to sit without having to pay for coffee

Necessary improvements

depending on weather, there needs to be cover from rain, warming facilities

elements for kids to play

Corniche



The site was occupied with different activity. Families with kids running and playing, adults walking, jogging; fishermen and other people standing by the railing near the sea, enjoying the weather. This place is rather linear extending along the sea coast, however I chose to observe at the beginning of it where it is more spacious. This site can be considered one of Beirut's most used public space. I managed to survey 8 people from those who were sitting or leaning against the railing. People were very enthusiastic and expressive when I approached them and they seemed interested to discuss and converse. According to the Age&Gender count, the site was definitely more male dominant in a ratio of almost triple the amount of women. Adults were most present than kids, and with no sight of seniors. One important observation is the new signs hanged around the site that mention new rules and regulations of use. The sign mentions: No use of motor bikes on the sideway, No personal

General view of the space

People generally spend a good amount of time, ranging between 1 - 4 hours, in this space either to enjoy long walks and take their mind of daily burdens or to simply spend time outdoors with their kids. People associate a positive feeling towards the space although they find it underperforming with services and strict rules.

When asked to describe the space in three words, the reoccurring themes were:

our place, peaceful, relaxing,
sea view, place to meet people, great
but neglected, beautiful, **dirty**,
beirut's essence, too crowded

chairs usage is allowed, No smoking nargileh, No food consuming (Beirut Municipality). Yet the place seemed to be under performing in its lack of seating option availability. People expressed how unhappy they were with these new rules (esp ones about chairs and food). Pollution in the sea however was the most disturbing aspect people felt. People still come here despite the new rules because for them it's the only public space in the city. Many described the Corniche as the image of the city, partly due to its specific location (by the sea).

I decided to go to Corniche again to observe and survey people on a rainy day. "There's always people on the Corniche, rainy, sunny or stormy". I managed to survey 5 people. The common reason they shared for being there while its raining is because it's less crowded. Accessibility is not safe if you are not coming here by your own car. There no pedestrian crossings. Another note about this place is the lack of proper public toilets.



Image 5.8. Corniche during site visit

Safety	Comfort	Activities	Wishes
○●●●●●●● -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	●●●●●●●○ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	Walking Meet with friends Spend time with kids Jog/Swim	"They banned the nargile and bringing your own chair policy, I dont understand why; it would be nice to have some food stand and benches" "i would like a ramp for skating and sports, we actually built our own wooden structure"
safe	somewhat uncomfortable		
Necessary improvements			
pedestrian crossing food and coffee stands more benches!!! elements for kids to play			

Sanayeh garden



Image 5. 9. Overcrowded playground at the garden during site

One of the very few gardens in Beirut city, I went to survey people on a busy Sunday. The garden is fenced all around and has one main entrance. The entrance had two security guards who can choose to search you if you're carrying a bag that may contain food. Again, this public space is also managed by new rules, one which bans bringing or consuming food. However the most surprising ban, especially for a public garden, was the sitting on the grass. People were only allowed to sit on the provided seats or on the curb sides. And there are guards in very corner of the garden that ensure everyone follows those rules. They even go up to kids to tell them where they are allowed and not allowed to play. Everything is rather controlled. I was approached twice by a guard. Once for taking pictures, telling me that I'm not allowed to take photos for the reason I would be invading people's privacy. I told him that if anyone gets bothered I will immediately delete the photo. The second time, he approached me when I started surveying people, mentioning that it is not allowed

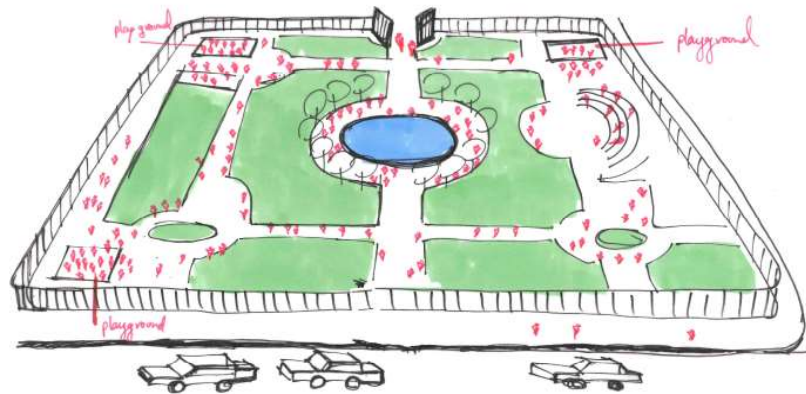
General view of the space

People generally spend from 30 min to hours in this small green oasis. They seemed very appreciative of it and very happy to have it despite the strict rules and being overcrowded. People associate a positive feeling towards the space as well.

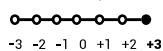
When asked to describe the space in a three words, the reoccurring themes were:

sun & green; a social place, fun place for kids; **small paradise;** beautiful nature, calm space,

since this place is under the supervision of Beirut municipality. When I explained that I'm a student doing research he sent me to the man at the main entrance for ask for permission. Eventually, we came to agreement it was okay for me to approach people. The garden was full of families, kids, working adults. Thru the surveying we knew that most users weren't Lebanese. People were first suspicious of the intent of the survey but after the second question they started responding more openly. Even though the garden has 3 playgrounds, each one was absurdly over-crowded with kids waiting in line to use the swing or go down the slide. Kids are also allowed to use their bikes in the designated bike lane, there is a bike rental at the entrance. Since this was a recently renovated garden, it could be said it is a well-designed space. There are signs everywhere, some telling the story of the garden, some mentioning the tree species and others instructions on how to use the garden. The garden has a curfew and closes its doors around 6-7pm.

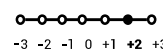


Safety



very safe

Comfort



comfortable

Activities

Spend time with family / kids

spend time alone/relax

pass by time

Wishes

"I wish we can just sit on the grass, bring our food and enjoy a nice picnic"

"well since we can't sit on the grass, we need more benches and games for the kids"

Necessary improvements

coffee/food stands

freedom of using the garden

5.6 Online survey results : Key findings

An online survey was developed as part of my research as a suitable tool to get an understanding of people's needs and preferences in relation to their city, favorite places and Martyrs square. The survey's purpose was also to help get a closer look on how Beirutis perceive their city and what Martyrs Square means to them.

The advantage of an online survey helped me collect data despite the fact I couldn't be in the country. However, a small drawback was I couldn't control my respondents demographics. Therefore due to my social circle, age distribution of the participants was mainly between 19 - 35 years old. I managed to collect a total of 112 responses. A sample of the survey with detailed responses can be found in the appendix. The following section will display key findings summarized from the survey results.

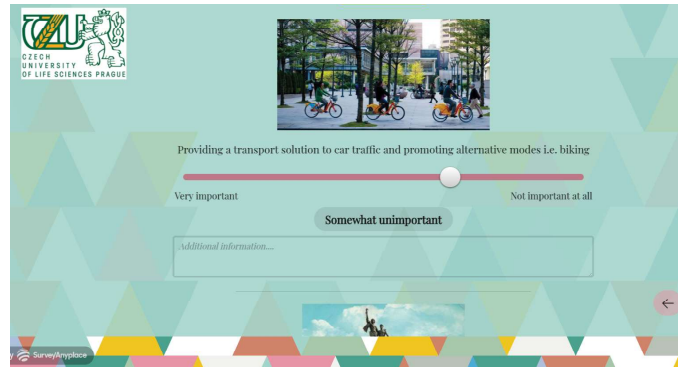
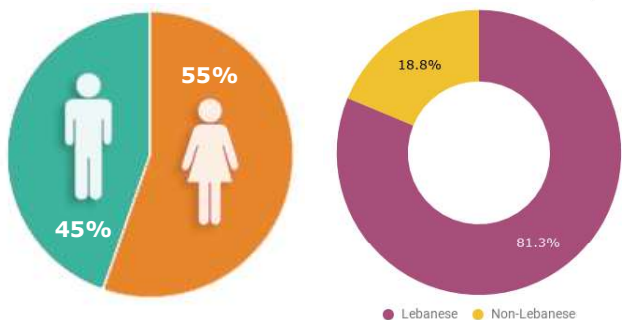
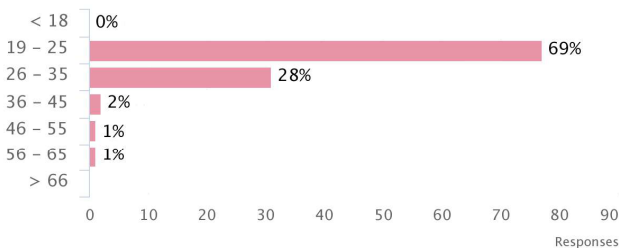


Figure 3. screenshot of the online survey

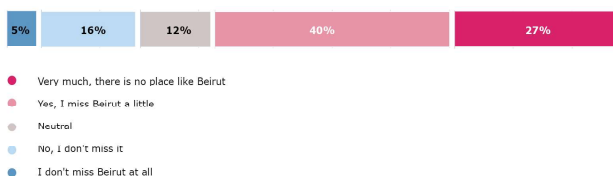
Questions on length of residence in the city, if the respondents lived elsewhere and how much they miss Beirut when they leave for long period were asked to get a sense of of their attachment to the city in relation to how they perceive it.

Demographics of the survey's repondents

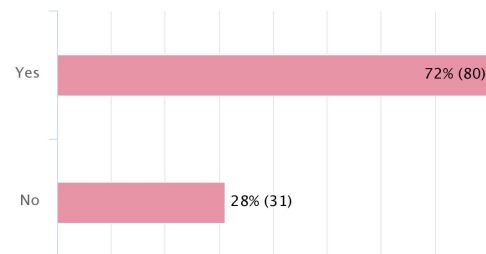
Age distribution



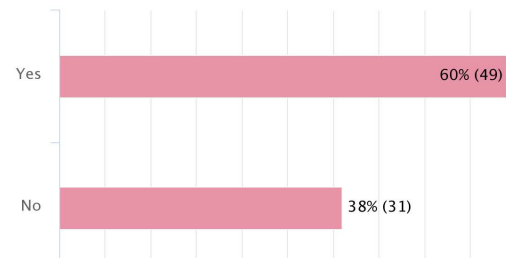
Do you feel you miss Beirut when you leave the city for an extended period of time?



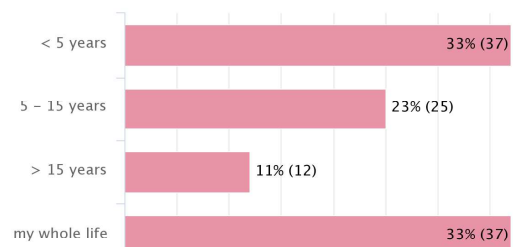
Do you currently live in Beirut city?



Have you lived outside of Beirut?



Approximately how many years have you lived in Beirut?



What is your favorite aspect about living in Beirut?

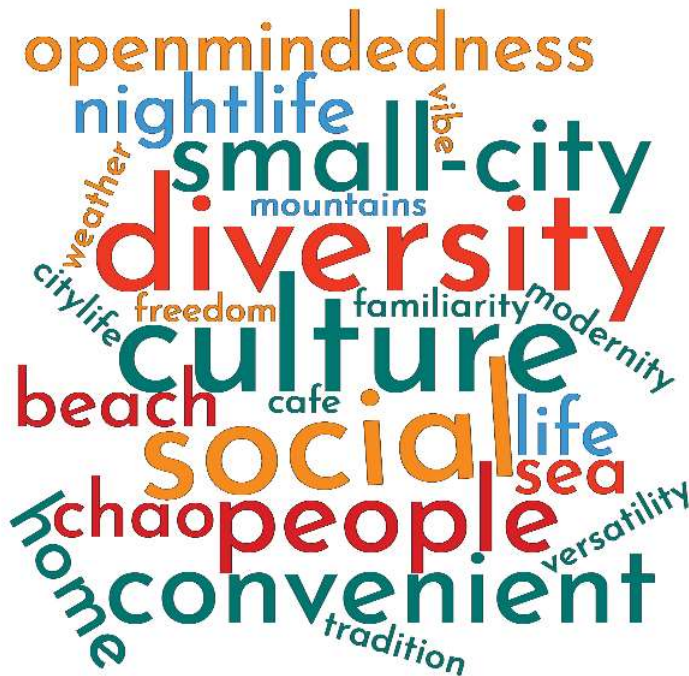


figure 5.3. word cloud of most common answers

"The dazzling diversity creating a harmonious chaos giving the life to the beautifully worn steets. The continuous stream of new places and events"

"Its vicinity to the mountains, the youth, and the maze of historical context that you can explore."

"It's central, family is there, childhood and adulthood memories"



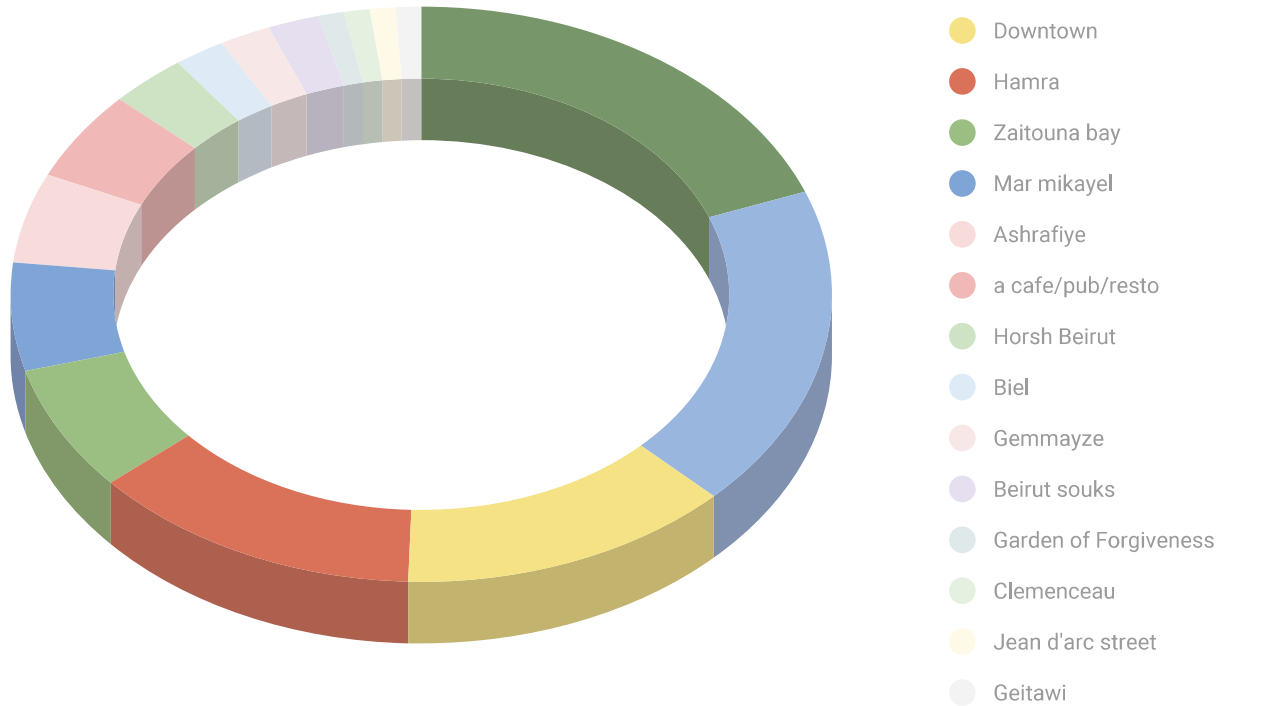
Figure 5.4,5.5 &5.6
Artwork by, Swiss graphic designer and illustrator, Seraina Noetzli

"It's very difficult to describe Beirut. But personally, I see it as a city of contrasts and diversity, a spirited and pulsating place with a soft core."
(Noetzli, quoted in Nabbout, 2013)



Favorites Places

Respondents' favorite places displayed a variety of types of public spaces that people enjoy in Beirut city. From university campus to a neighborhood area to a particular street, cafe, sandwich place or even a staircase.



The campus of the American University of Beirut was the most favorite place mentioned probably due to the fact most of the respondents were students. However, it is very understandable since it is one of the very few green places in the city. A green haven with many relaxing quiet spaces and a view to the sea. However, its drawback is that it isn't accessible for the public.

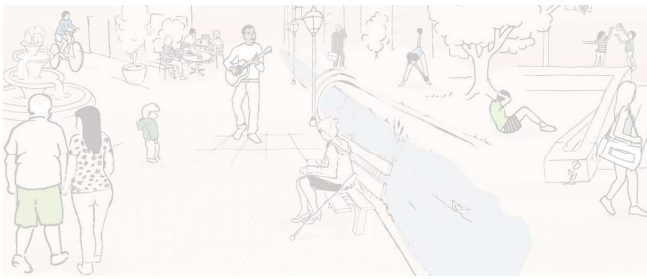


Image 5.10. Aerial view of American University of Beirut campus (source: internet)

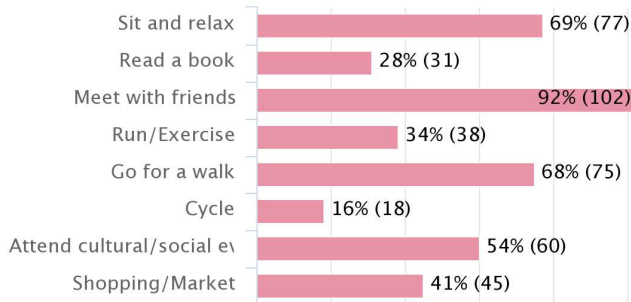
Hamra area is long known for its diversity of people, culture and activities. Surrounded by the two biggest universities in the city also contribute to its liveliness. It has its unique charm however just like many places in Beirut it suffers from constant challenges: horrible traffic and cafes and pubs businesses that shut down as they can't maintain themselves. There can be several reasons for that but one thing to point out is also the constantly changing trends in the city where people are always looking for something new.



Image 5.11. Hamra street (source: internet)



Common activities when in favorite places



Most frequently mentioned attributes

It was important to sort out the main attributes that identify the qualities of Beirutis favorite places. This helps us to understand what are Beirutis are looking for in public spaces.

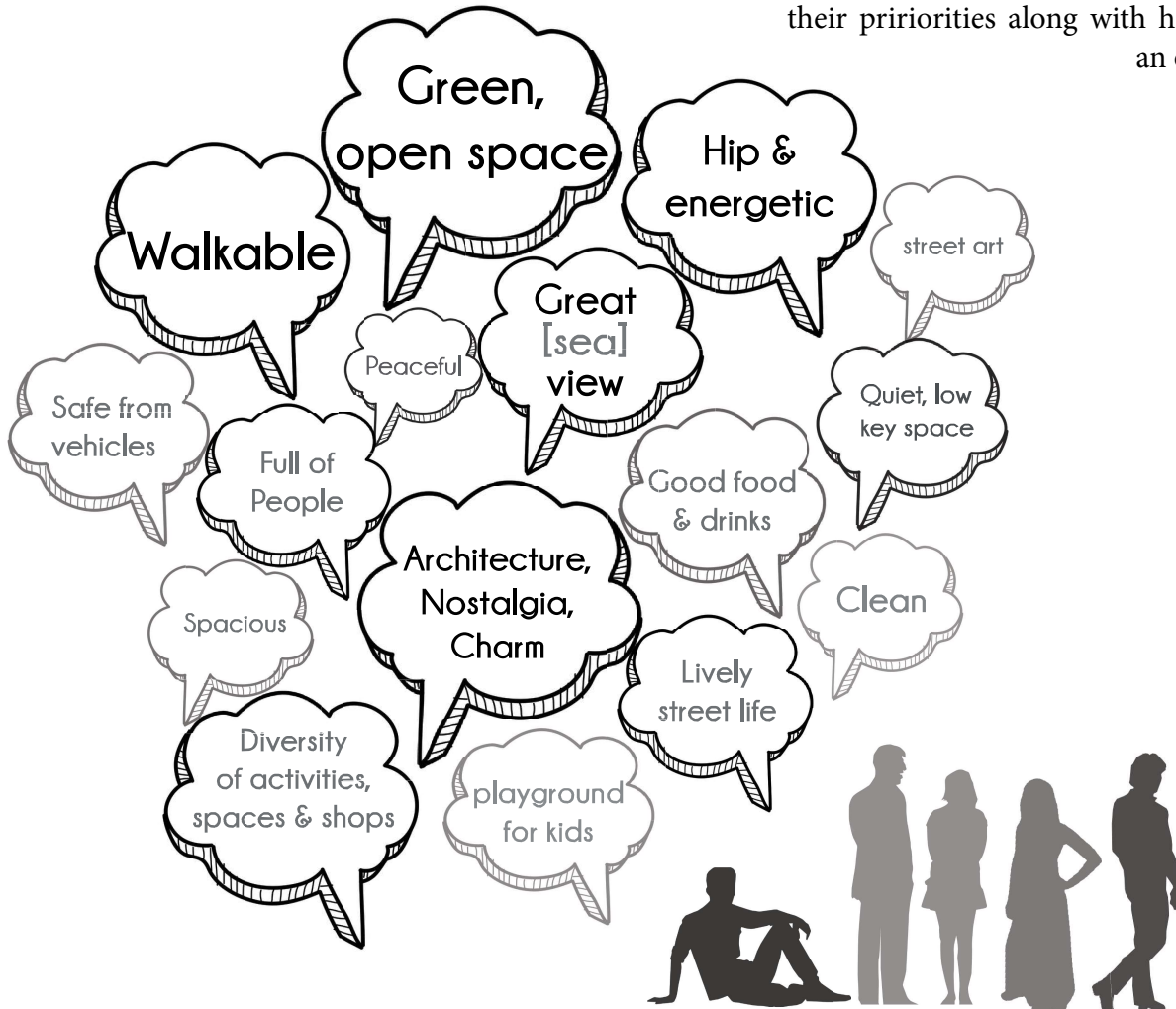


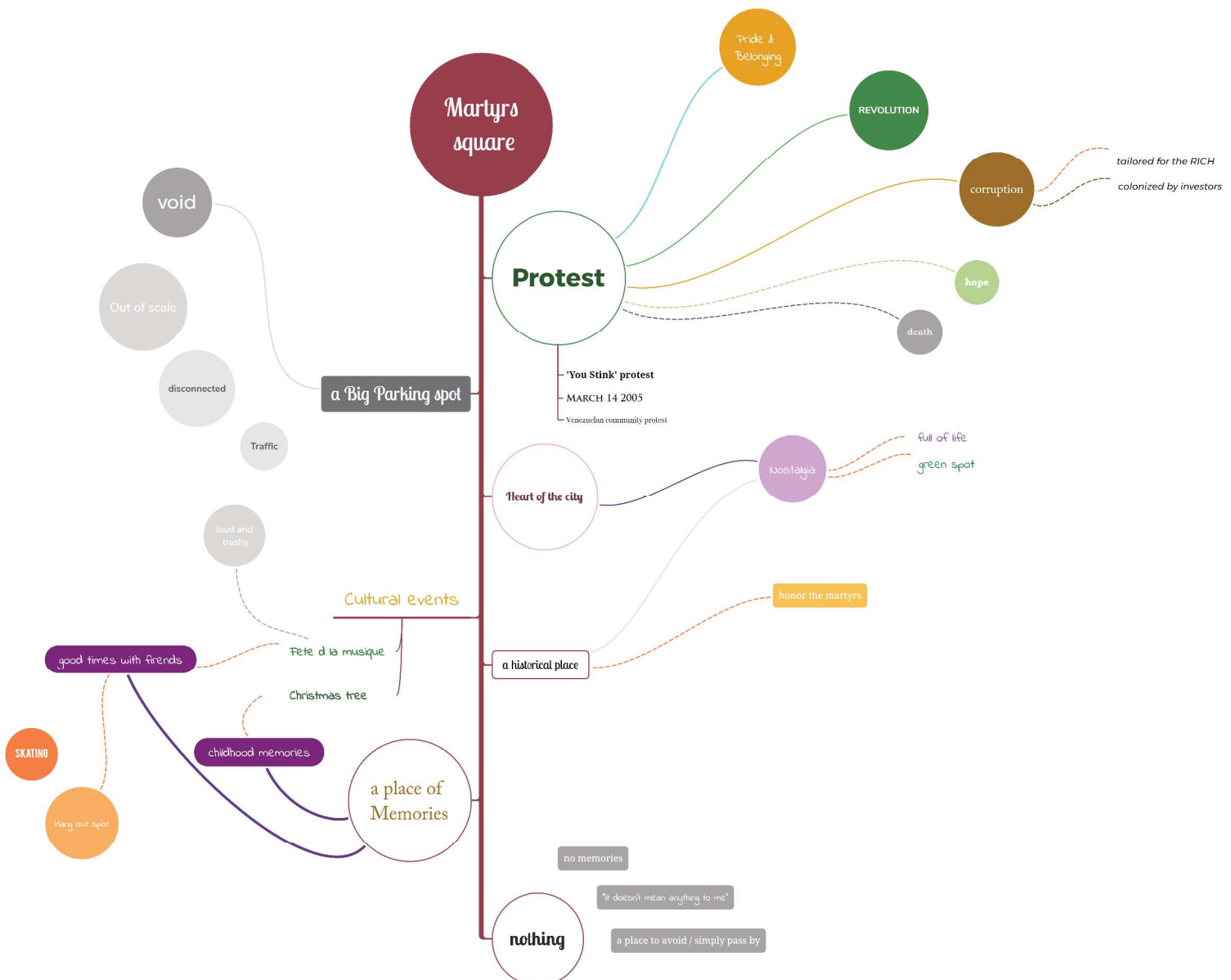
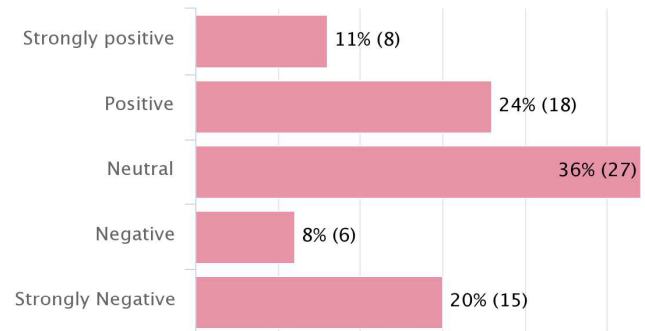
Image 5.12. Downtown area - iftar at farmers market (source: internet)

Socializing is of no surprise showed to be one of the main activities that Beirutis go after when enjoying to be in public spaces. It can be said that locals are always looking for spaces that are active, full of activities, where new things are happening and that allow for a comfortable experience while attending an event or meeting friends. At the same time, they appreciate spaces that have peaceful quiet corners where one would enjoy reading a book or simply sit and relax. In combination with what attributes locals appreciate in places, walkability highlights their priorities along with having greenery and an open space to enjoy.

Memories and meanings associated with Martyrs Square

Respondents had an almost equal distribution of positive and negative association with Martyrs Square. What is interesting to notice however the dominant association of a neutral feeling towards the square. What is also interesting to observe is that the Strongly Negative is almost twice the association of Strongly positive. When asked about describing a vivid memory in the square and what the place means to them there were several reoccurring themes. Many associated the square as a place of protest, a symbol of expression, getting togeth-

When you visit Martyrs' Square, you feel:



er, fighting corruption. However most of these responses described a sense of disappointment and false hope as well. Some had a more romanticized idealization of how the square was the heart of the city, full of life; despite the fact they haven't witnessed that time themselves but rather from stories they heard and read. Another train of thoughts was the square being a big parking space; a space that has been colonized by investors and tailored for the rich. A space that is not for use nor for the people. A place that is simply avoided and passed by. That is of course of no surprise since the square hasn't been activated nor intervened on since the end of the civil war. The third main theme involves many personal memories, a person who remembers the last day of high school and meeting up at the square, a person who met the love of their life there, a person who remembers the music festival and having a good time with friends. Some responses were descriptive and emotional while others used a word or two. The last dominant association is simply no association, no memories, no feelings towards the square. That is confirmed with the high percentage of a neutral feeling in the previous question.

"I mostly remember protests. The square now mostly feels like a graveyard of promises"

"...the square is a colonised place by investors, corrupt political leader a governmental strategy to hinder political activism in "public spaces"."

"We hear stories of how it used to be the heart of Beirut full of energy and dynamic activities. Now, history is erased, only luxurious empty buildings are build everywhere, following facadism."

"There was a protest there for the situation in Venezuela and the whole Venezuelan community came together and the tight bonding of the event with such strong feelings will always be linked to the square"

"I think my favorite memory is when I was a kid and my dad used to take us to see the Christmas tree. The people would be so happy and i used to get really excited going there."



Image 5.13 & 14 (below). You Stink protest, 2015 (source: internet)



Image 5.15. Fête De La Musique at Martyrs Square, 2014 (source: internet)

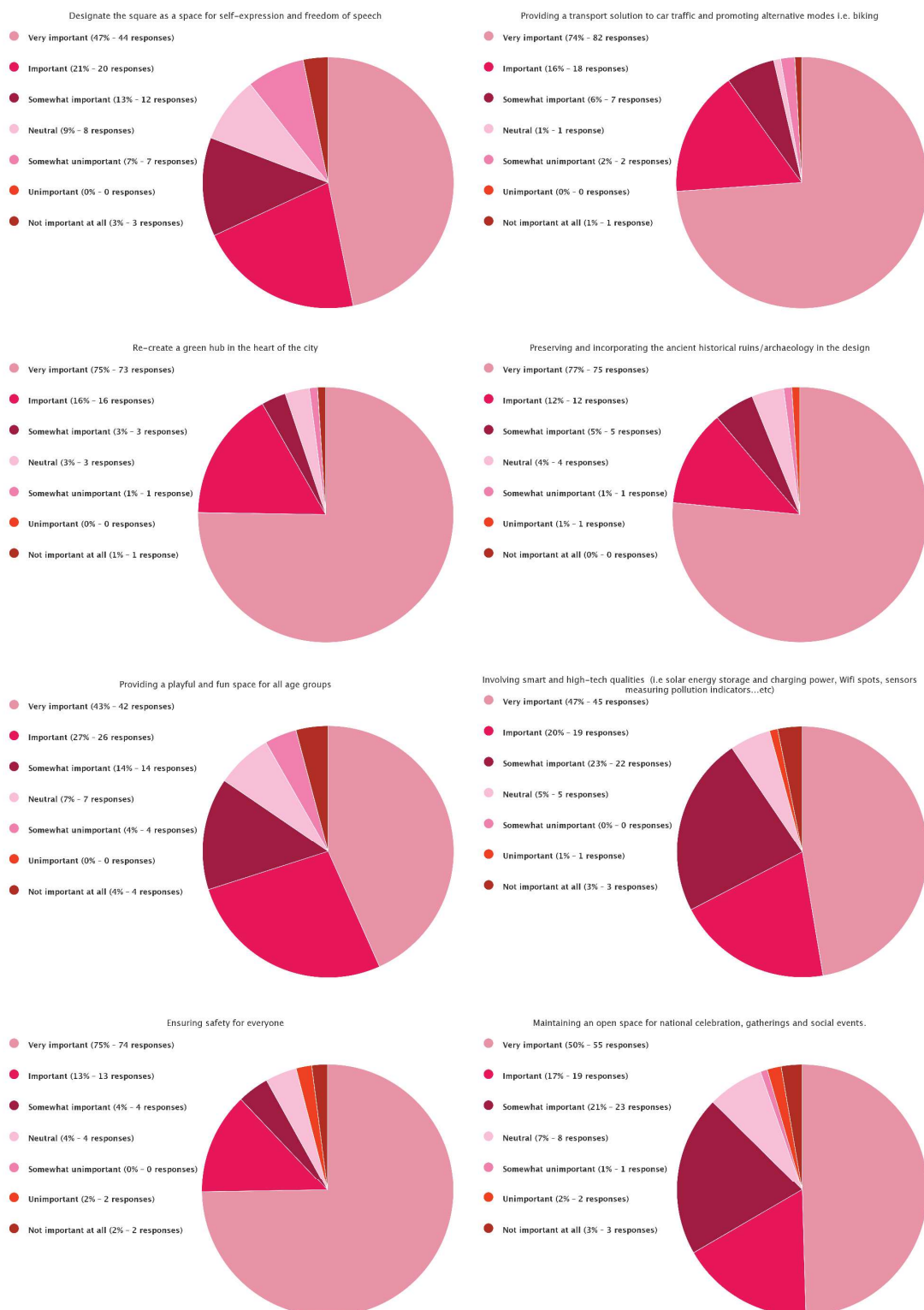


Image 5.16. Christmas tree at Martyrs Square (source: internet)

Design aspects for a future proposal, Martyrs Square

The last part of the survey, asked the respondents to rate the level of important of different design approaches for the future proposal of Martyrs square. It's very noticeable that the respondents rated every statement of positive importance. Four main concerns seemed to be the most commonly agreed on are:

- Providing a transport solution to car traffic and promoting alternative modes of biking
- Preserving and incorporating the ruins/archaeology in the design
- Re-create a green hub in the heart of the city
- Ensuring safety for everyone



5.7 Discussion

The survey results displayed a very interesting topics of how young adults perceive their city and square. Protests have become a vivid part of their memories and view of the square. While that reflects an image of unity, self expression however it comes with a strong sense of hopelessness and having to fight for basic life rights. And as many recognize the square's historic significance, they feel that idea of a once green space in the heart of the city is far from the future to be reclaimed. The square is strongly disconnected from its locals, from its function and from its city. Therefore activation is a necessary prime step in approaching this space. A new identity needs to be developed for the square, one that reflects the current identities in the city. Respondents have displayed a variety of activities, interests that portray the rich diverse lifestyles in the city. Planning efforts for this square should begin immediately by taking advantage of this diversity and bringing back the commerce and social life into the heart of the city. There are young creative minds but with no place to thrive. The square has great potential to reclaim its role as the cultural symbol of this city.

This chapter has provided information that feeds into the design approach to the square. We now understand how important for this square to remain an open demonstration space where people can come together after marching through the city. Therefore the future design needs to consider how the space can accommodate for big gatherings and holding a large number of people. There is a general revitalized interest in protest and marches in cities about many issues from women right to LGBTQ to political events globally. The need for protests reflects the thriving democratic public realm (Ford & Zorgan, 2017). Designers are, therefore, asking each other questions *reiterating the potential impact design can have on our collective experience of public space during protest events* (Ford & Zorgan, 2017). Thinking about both temporary interventions and future designs of streets and plazas, how can design help or hinder the experience of a march/protest?

This is an important layer to add into the approach to Martyrs square. It needs to accommodate for flexible uses and events. At the same time the square needs to provide a green space to enjoy from urban stress as we discussed earlier how Beirut suffers from a very low number of 0.8 m² of green space per person.

If you build it, they will come. A famous saying by the architect Jan Gehl would unfortunately not apply to Beirut's downtown spaces. It's been observed how the area enjoys neatly designed public spaces that are supposed to 'celebrate Beirut's modernity' but in fact a day can pass by without a soul using these spaces. Zeytouneh square for example designed by Gustafson, Porter & Bowman, implemented in 2012, or the Hariri memorial by Vladimir Djurovic. Both these spaces act as a art piece display rather than a public space. Activation and invitation are



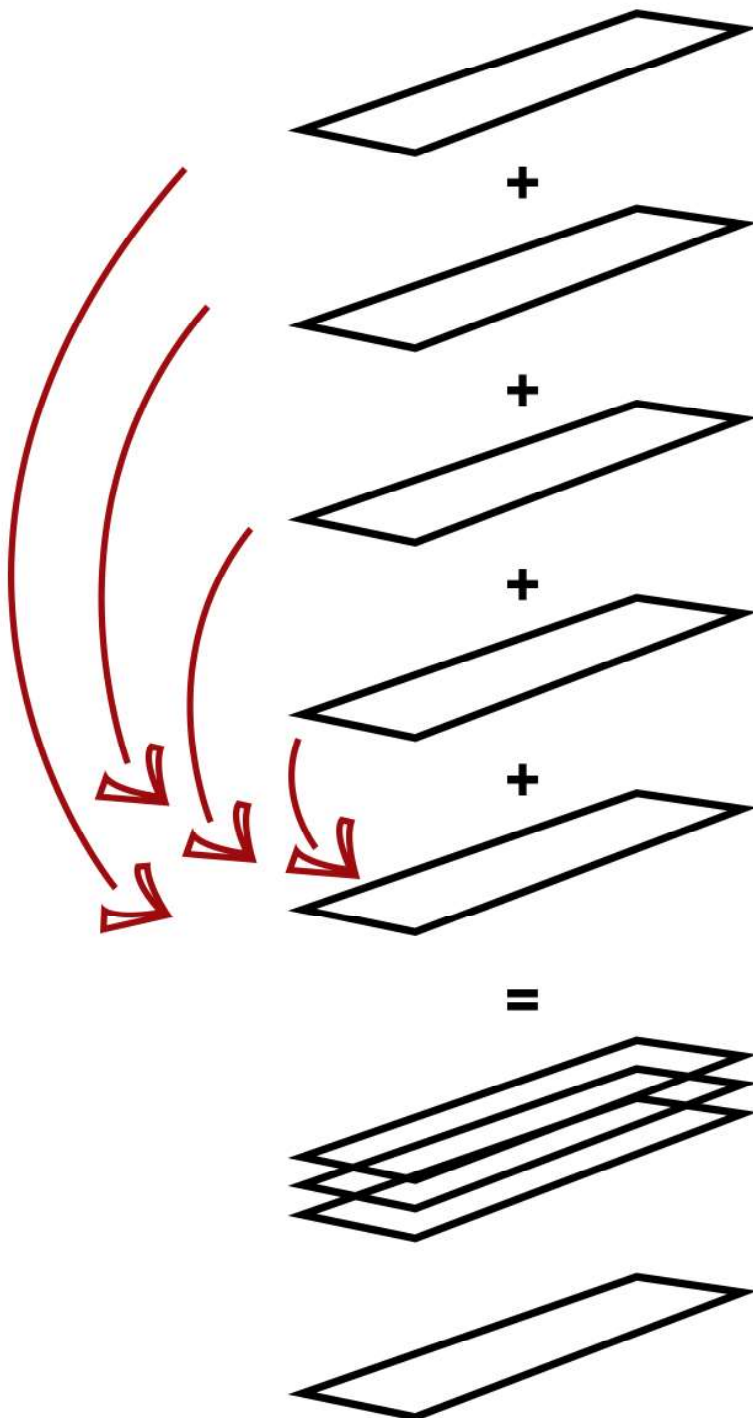
Image 5.17. Yoga event at Martyrs Square - 2017 (source: internet)

necessary part of giving life to a public space. These spaces need to be used and reused, consumed and exhausted in order to reach their full potential. Fencing spaces or guarding them with security is like strangling the life out of them and paralyzing their ability to improve the quality of life in the city. Therefore a strategy needs to be developed for public spaces that narratives an eventful life where people relate memories to these moments and become part of these spaces' lives. Inspiration can be taken from people and how they appropriate spaces. Yoga recently has become a popular practise that brings people together in outdoors spaces. Therefore it is necessary to listen to the locals and provide them with spaces.

Before proceeding to the design chapter, it would be useful to revisit methodology diagram at the beginning of this thesis and register what has been discovered so far about this square and how these information add a richer layer to understanding and approaching this square.



Image 5.18. Illustrated ideas how to enhance experience during march and protest events (Ford & Zorgan, 2017)



Literature study

public space as a Place for Urban Identity
 public space as a Playground
 public space as a Memorial

History and Story of the Place

a garden /green haven
 a symbol of diversity, modernity, heart of the city
 a reminder of conflict, resilience and recovery
 axis to the sea (post-war planning concepts)

Cityscape Analysis

a platform for the diverse social and cultural life
 a major node part of a network that connects existing
 and future green spaces;
 a place that is inviting and facilitates mental safety

Stakeholders' perceptions and opinions

a place for protest and self expression
 a place of cultural events and memories
 a hangout spot for meeting friends, playing music, skating, etc
 a place for pride, hope and national unity

Concept development

a flexible and spontaneous space that reflects the
 dynamic and diverse culture and life in the city;
 a playful open landscape with a new identity;
 a memorial that celebrates the present not the
 past

Design Solution

a multi-layered design strategy and phasing
 solution

Reflection

discussion and evaluation

Design solution

Design solution

Design solution

It is now time to explore the potentials of designing this square based on all the data that has been collected and analyzed about it. Such a task is not a linear process, however the following chapter will display the design concept and development that resulted in a possible design solution for the square.

1

2

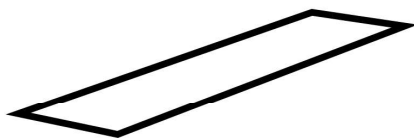
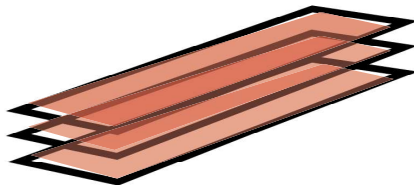
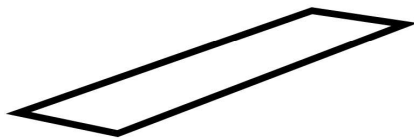
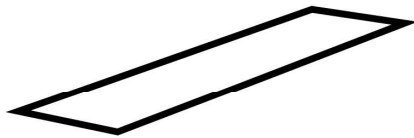
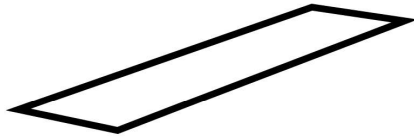
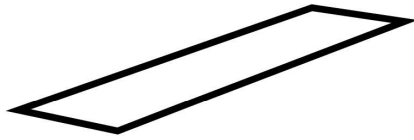
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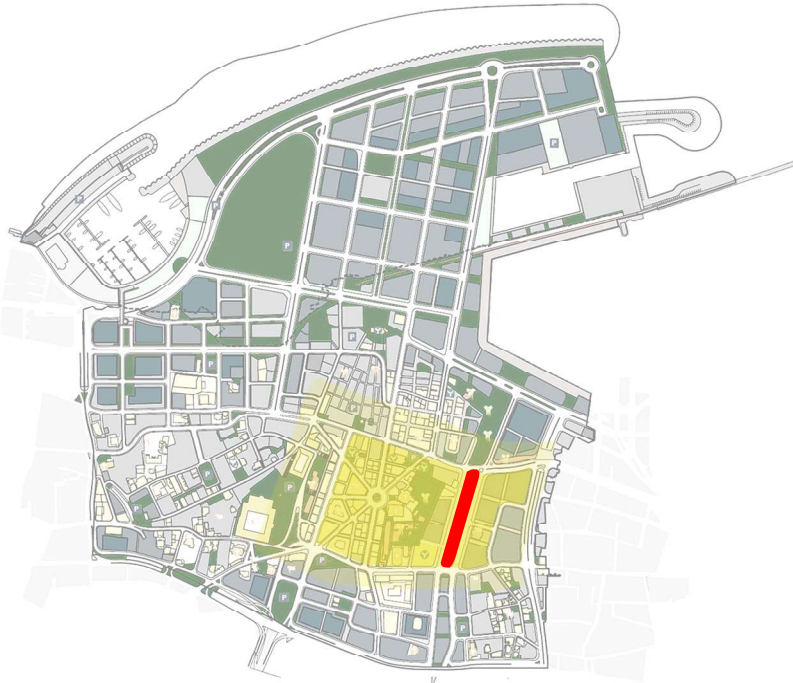
6

7



The Square in broader relations

Martyrs square has important role to play as a major node in a network of open spaces in the city. It has both a social and ecological function to fulfill on both the Downtown area and on the city scale.



The square as part of the city center

While the square is surrounded by archaeological sites and soon to be developed modern buildings, it will be a connecting symbol between history and the new.

The square has the role of extending the pedestrian only zone, providing more spaces for people and low priority for vehicle traffic.

The square in the city context

The square possess a unique location in the heart of the city yet with proximity to the sea line. Its development is an important stepping stone in improving and growing the network of green and open spaces in the city. It becomes the connection between the center and the rest of the city, the waterfront and inland



Design concept

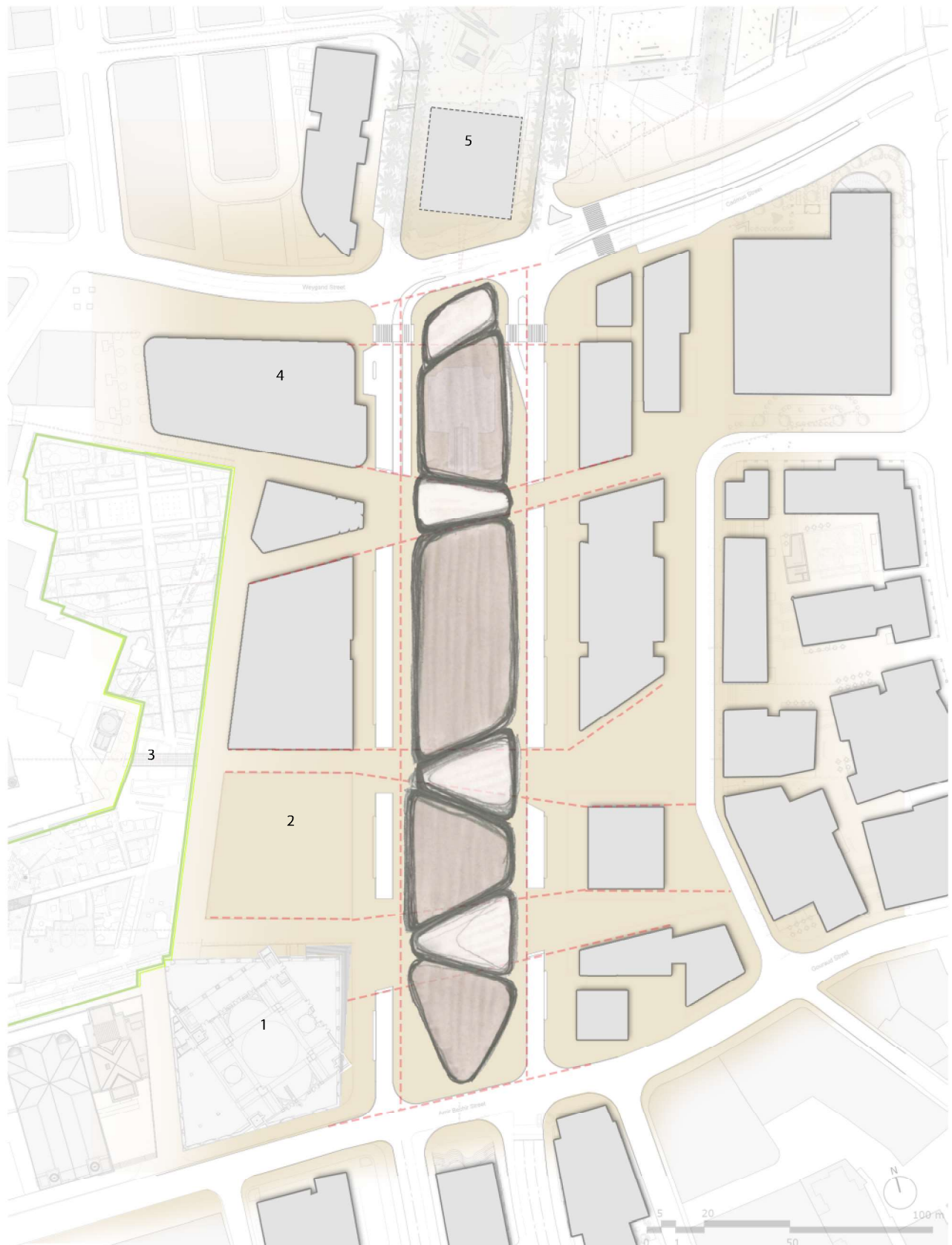
The first step of the design approach was to draw axes that will define how the design will be responsive to its edges of important landmarks and view points.



- 1 Mohammad Al-Amin mosque
- 2 Rafic Hariri memorial
- 3 Garden of Forgiveness - archaeology
- 4 Le Gray hotel
- 5 Beirut Historu museum

Design concept

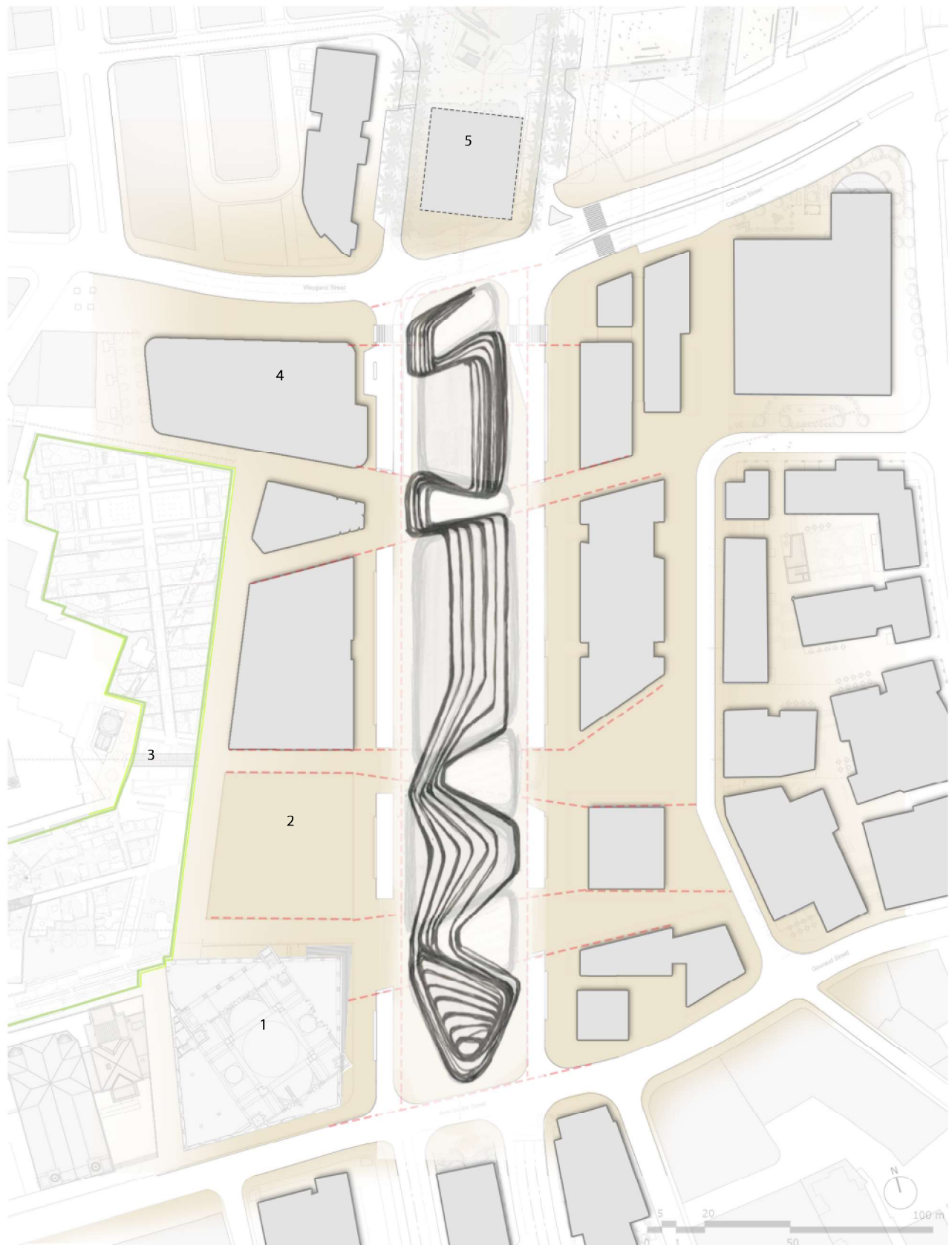
Then, a division of spaces is created based on the axes. These divisions form a series of spaces will allow for different uses and atmospheres.



- 1 Mohammad Al-Amin mosque
- 2 Rafic Hariri memorial
- 3 Garden of Forgiveness - archaeology
- 4 Le Gray hotel
- 5 Beirut Historu museum

Design concept

Design lines begin to form a harmonic connection between the spaces. These lines will become the base of the spatial design of the square.



- 1 Mohammad Al-Amin mosque
- 2 Rafic Hariri memorial
- 3 Garden of Forgiveness - archaeology
- 4 Le Gray hotel
- 5 Beirut Historu museum

Design concept

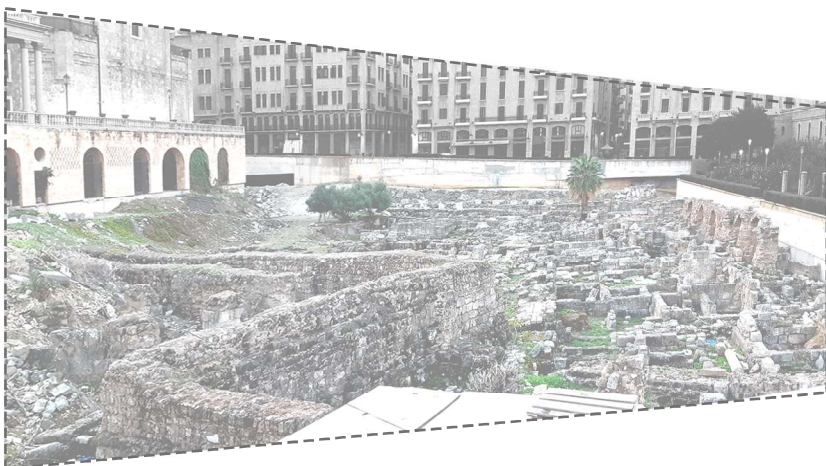
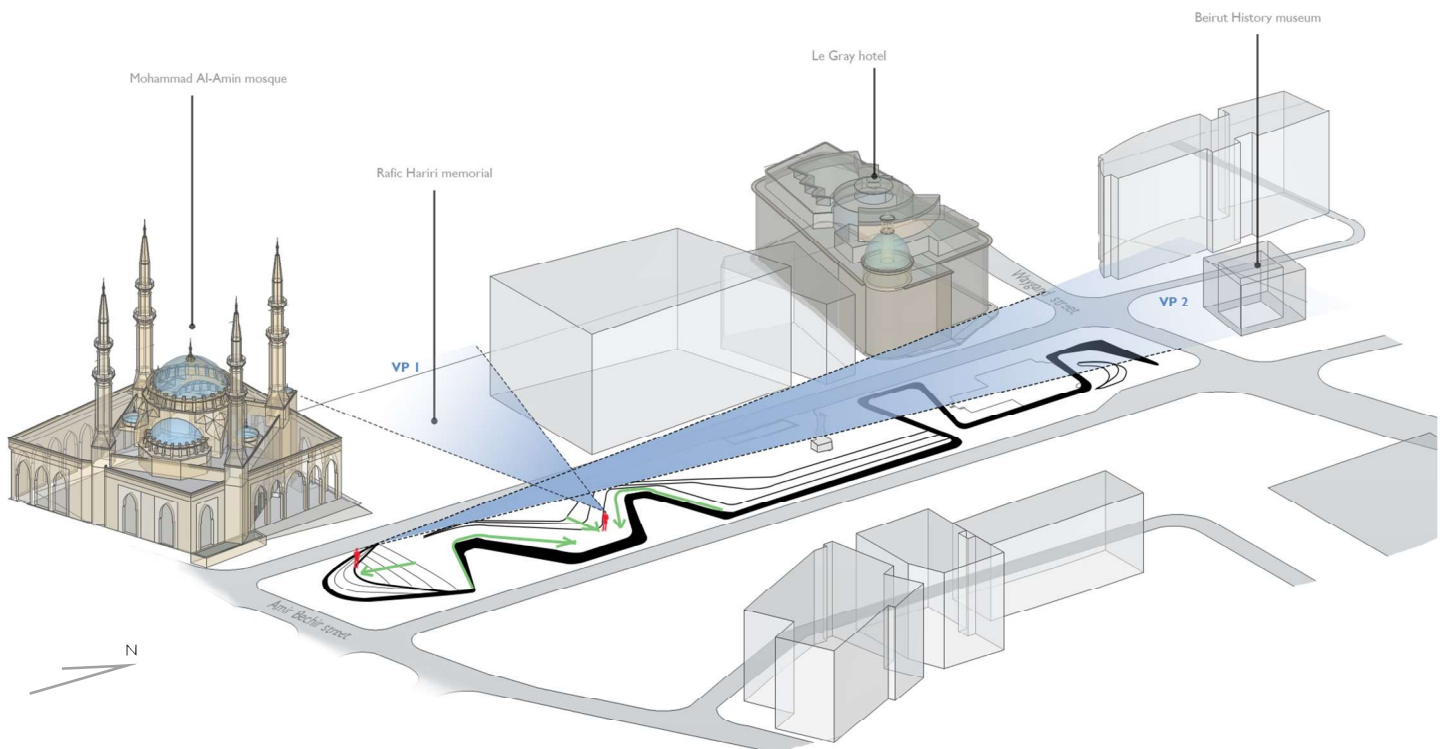
The tree alignment proposal follows the same idea of division of spaces by framing views and maintaining an open space layout.



- 1 Mohammad Al-Amin mosque
- 2 Rafic Hariri memorial
- 3 Garden of Forgiveness - archaeology
- 4 Le Gray hotel
- 5 Beirut Historu museum

Design development

The design lines are simplified to create a harmonious series of spaces. Slight change of landform is manipulated to achieve the goals of defining the two main view points, one towards the North, the sea view and one towards the West, the R H memorial and the Garden of Forgiveness view.



VP1
The view of the archaeological site of Garden of Forgiveness

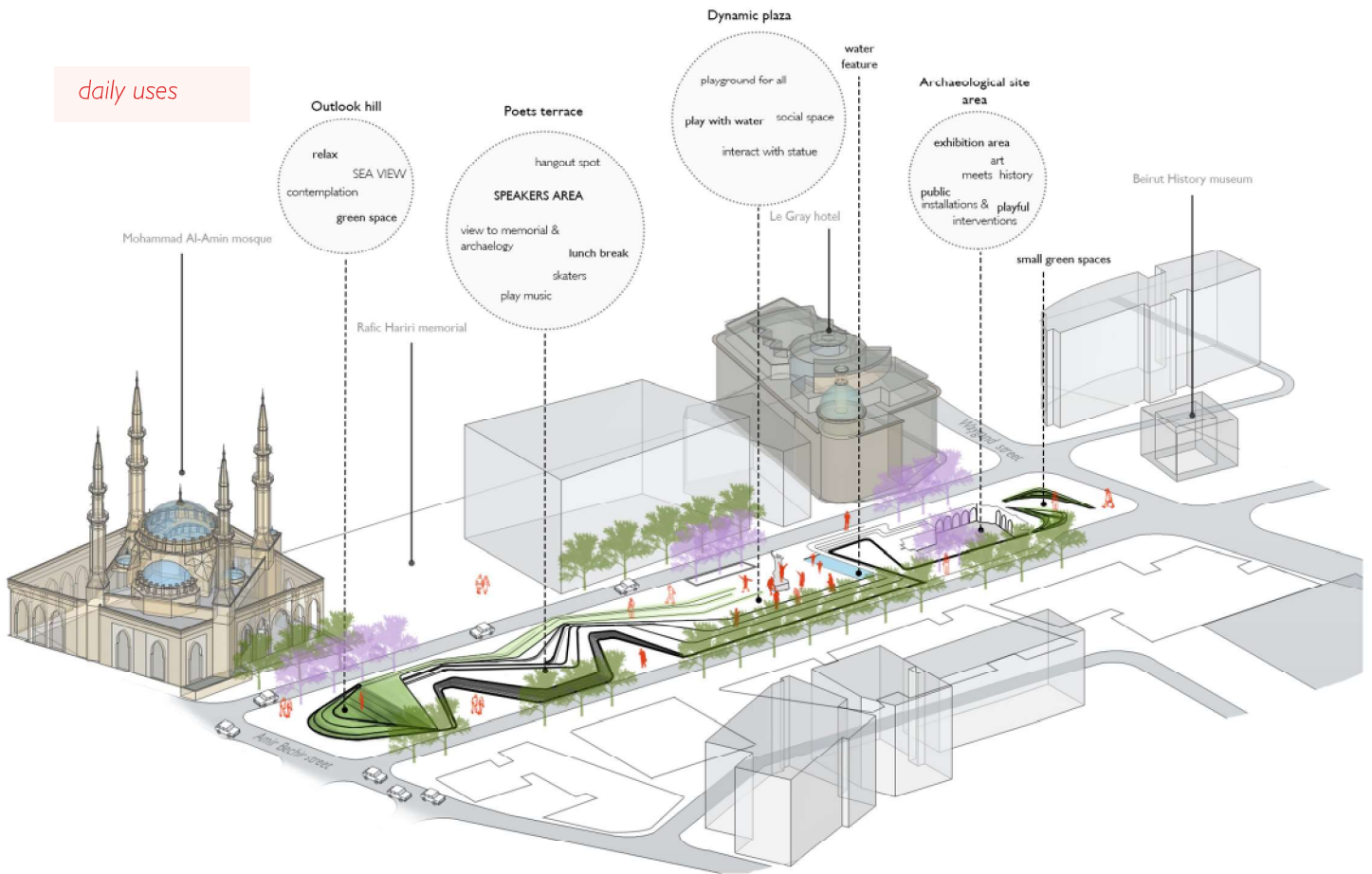
VP2
The view towards the sea



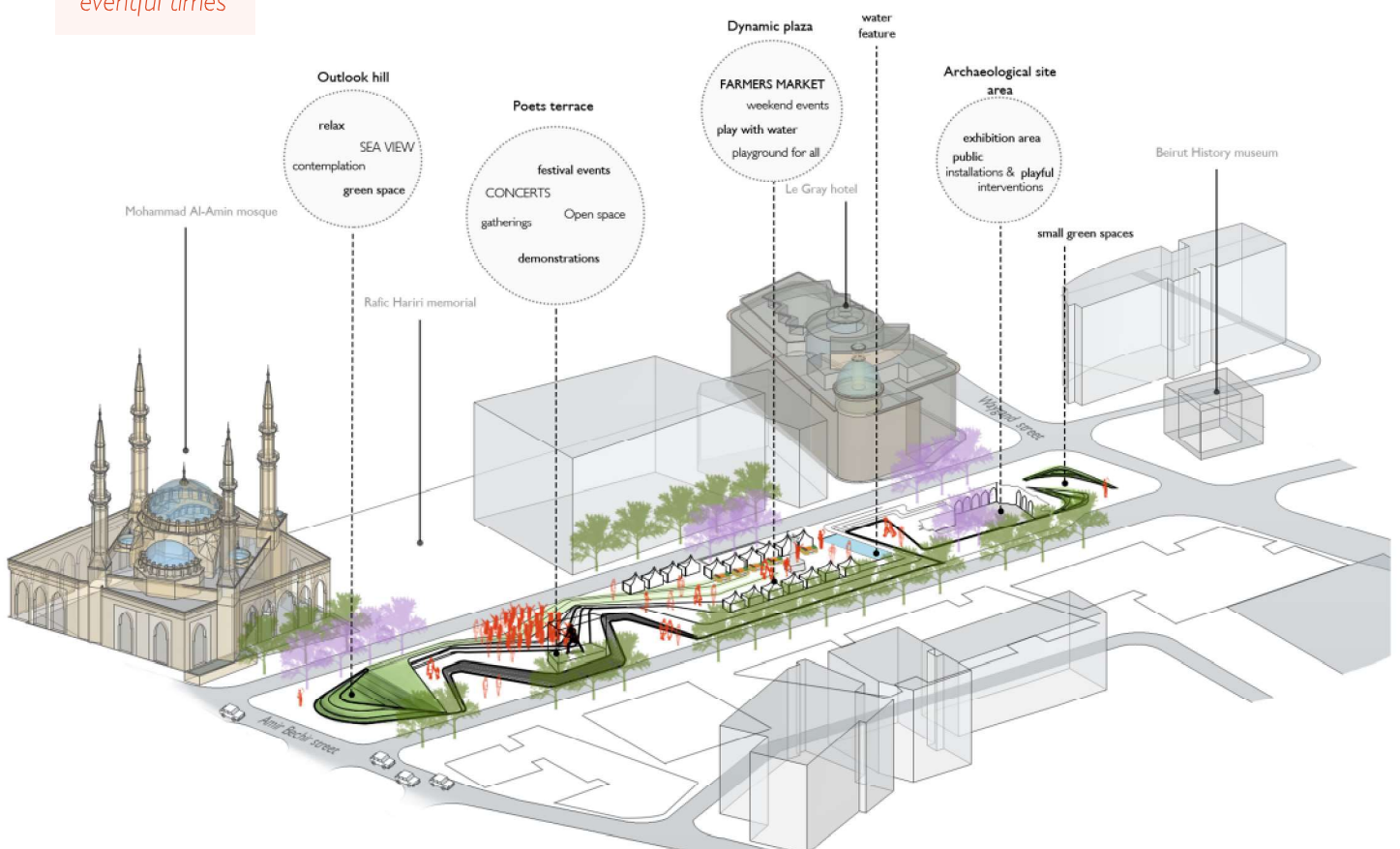
Functions of the square

The square will be a flexible space, where different activities can take place throughout the day, week and year. Each part of the square upholds a character of functions but also inspires for ludic and spontaneous uses.

daily uses

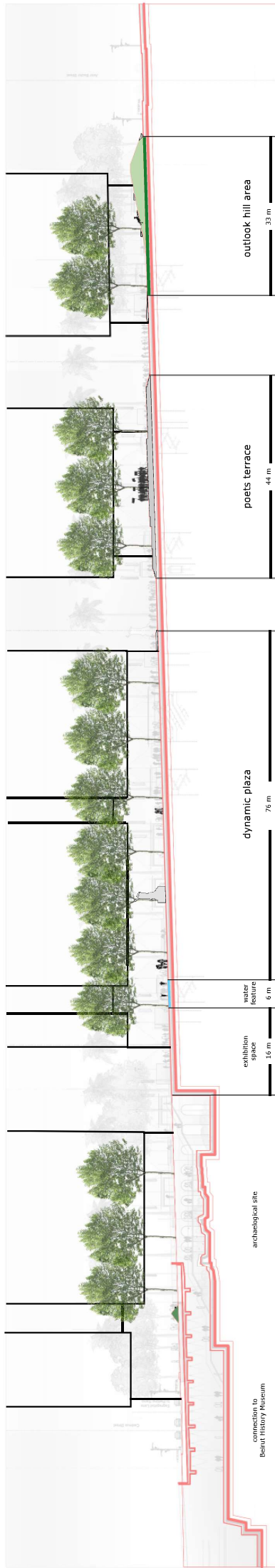


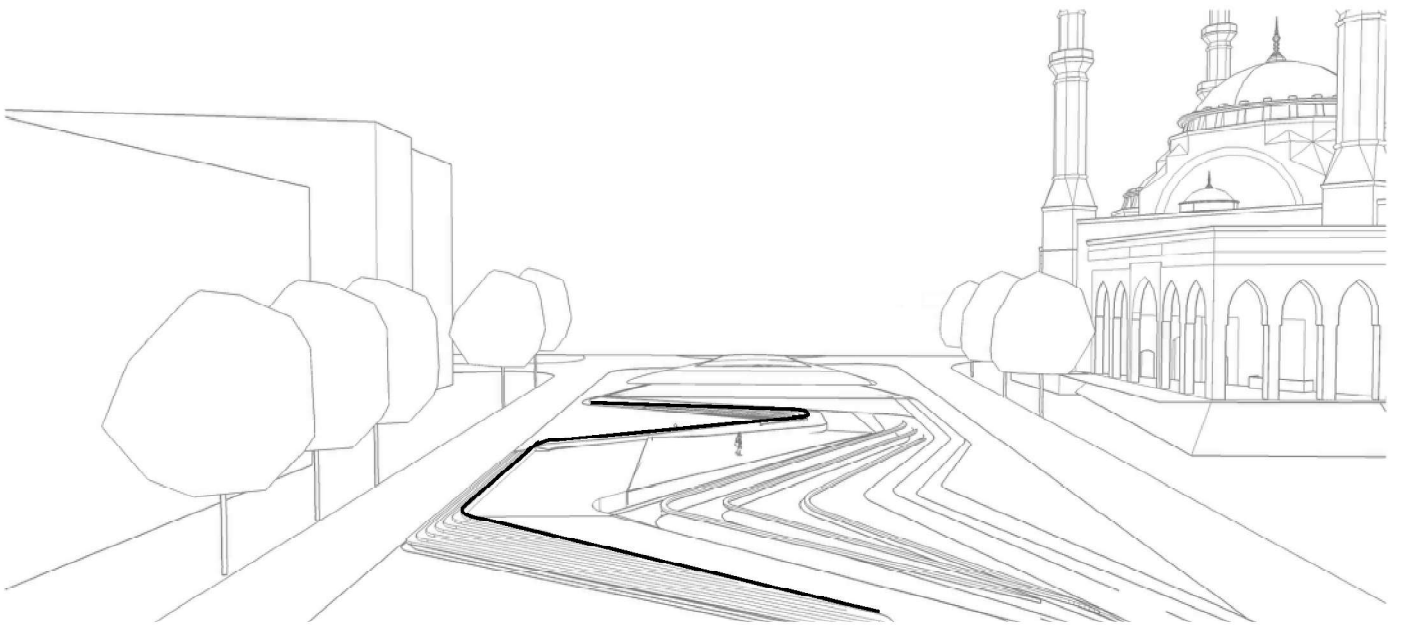
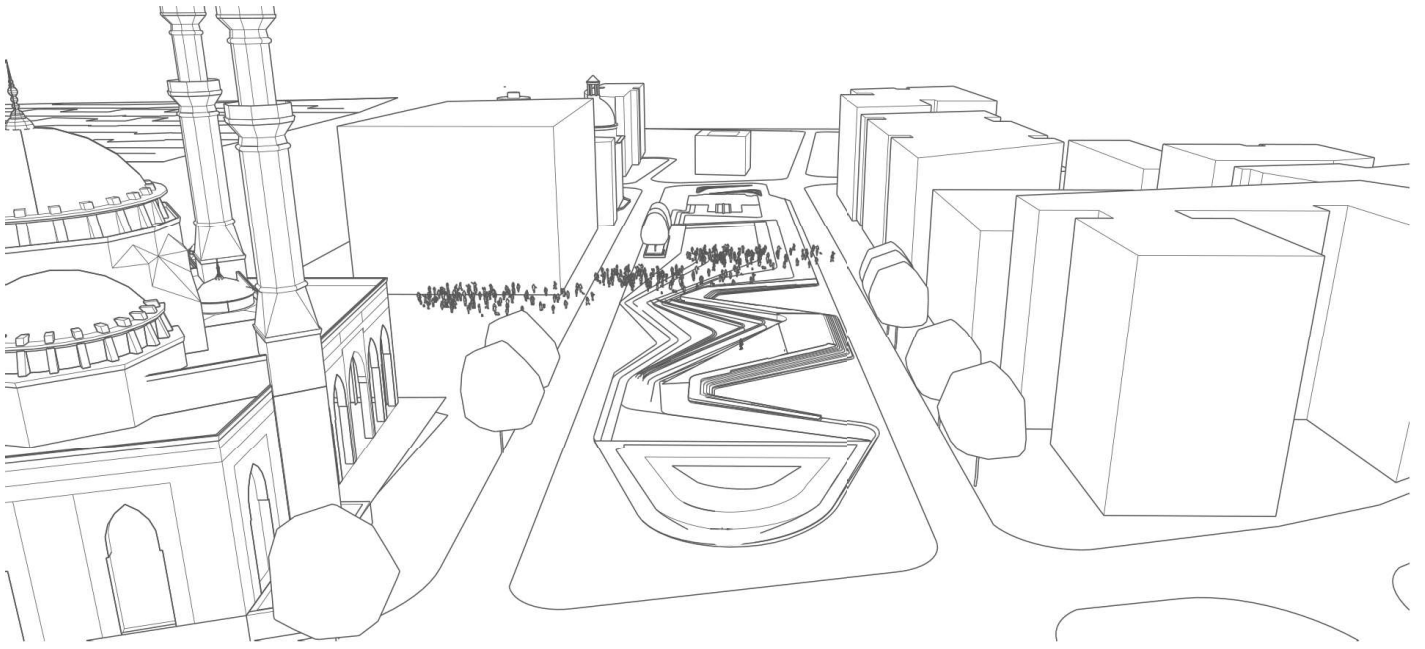
eventful times



Rendered plan







Reflection

Reflection

Reflection

1

2

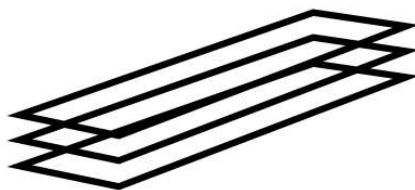
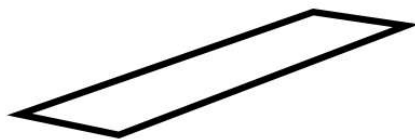
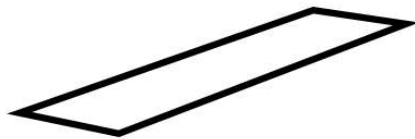
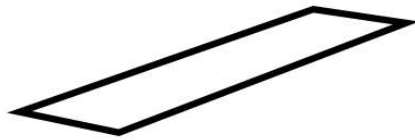
3

4

5

6

7



Phase I - Activate the square



This research has unraveled the many layers it takes to approaching and designing a public space. The literature study has raised awareness on the importance of understanding and applying the perception of people in the planning and design process of urban developments. While the result, from the survey and observations, portrayed a complex view and opinions yet it gave an in-depth look into the meanings people hold towards Martyrs square. The design process and solution provided a conceptual approach to Martyrs square. A lot has been discovered about this unique space. It holds a complex variety of values and designing it can not be a linear top-down process. Although this thesis project attempted to provide a solution for the contested space yet it should not be perceived as the final answer. Engagement and involvement of the people need to be taken to the next level. While this thesis project can be considered has taken the first fundamental step to participation with the public, the next steps will now be about considering a programming strategy that will activate the space and allow it to develop a new image in the minds of the people. To do so, phasing is a useful tool to create a feedback loop to the final design process of this square. Immediate interventions can take place to start igniting the spirit of the place. Such activities could include planning competitions, workshops and interactive events to invite students, artists and architects to create artistic and attractive interventions for the public to see and use. In addition, an idea of a temporary pavilion can be created to take responsibility of bringing life to the square. Markets, musical events should be more encouraged in the space as well. At the end of the day, the square has a lot of potential to achieve and it is in the involvement of people, giving it back to them and creating a sense of community will allow for the space to shine in the heart of the city again.

Phase II - Maintain activation on the opposite side

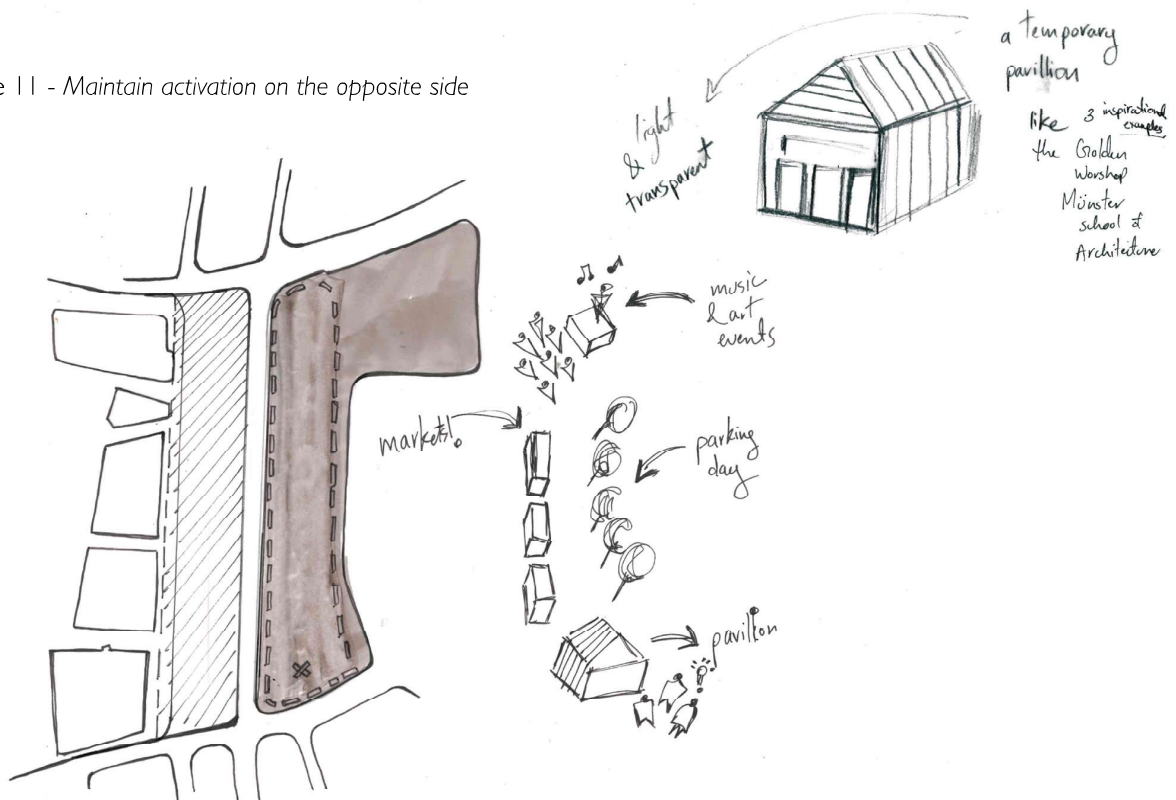


Image references

Image 1.1

Martyrs Square statue

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Image 1.2

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Image 3.5

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Image 3.7, 3.8, 3.9

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Image 3.11

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Image 3.12

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Image 4.5

Aerial view of Beirut Downtown, Solidere's project

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Image 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8

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Figure 5.1.

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Figure 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

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Image 5.2.

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Image 5.12.

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Image 5.16.

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