

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

TACTICAL URBANISM AND THE REACTIVATION OF
RESIDUAL SPACES:
REVIVING AIN MREISSEH'S SOCIO-CULTURAL
HERITAGE

by

HAYAT KHALED GEBARA

A thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master in Urban Design
to the Department of Architecture and Design
of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture
at the American University of Beirut


Beirut, Lebanon
April 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Ibrahim Najem for all the beautiful stories about Ain Mreisseh.

Thanks to the American University of Beirut for providing the opportunity, resources, and facilities that made this thesis possible.

For my family and friends, thank you for the unbelievable encouragement. For my amazing support group, mom, dad, Khaled, Zari, Abir, and all other I can't thank enough for their intensive care and support.

My deepest appreciation goes to my thesis committee, Omar Abdul-Aziz Hallaj, prof. Mona Harb, and Rana Haddad, thanks for your support and inspiring feedback.

Many thanks for an amazing network of inspiring teachers and intellectuals, prof. Robert Saliba, Mona Khechen, Cynthia Myntti, Mona Fawaz, Hana Alamuddine, and many others.

Giulia, thanks for being a great fieldwork partner.

A very special thanks for the librarians, for the faculty staff; Sirene, Siwar, and Rabie, and for Mohamad, Rafik, Ali, and late Hassan for all their patience.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Hayat Khaled Gebara for Master of Urban Design

Major: Urban Design

Title: Tactical Urbanism and the Reactivation of Residual Spaces: Reviving Ain Mreisseh's Socio-Cultural Heritage

“Everyday spaces” are spaces in transition, spaces responsible for creating new social arrangements and forms of imagination (Crawford, 2010). Crawford praises an optimistic approach that aims at “reclaiming elements of the everyday that have been hidden in the nooks and crannies of the urban environment.” These are shaped in residual spaces which are marginal and not usually considered as valuable changing elements in the urban life. This thesis looks at this part of the social and human discourse of urbanism, where lived experiences become more crucial than physical forms in defining the city.

The frequent changes in the built environment and the demographical shifts of the neighborhood of Ain Mreisseh have affected the livability and socio-spatial relations of its inhabitants. In an attempt at enhancing social interaction in this area and empowering its residents to preserve its socio-cultural heritage, this thesis investigates Ain Mreisseh’s residual spaces, the everyday spatial practices of its inhabitants, and the different ways in which people appropriate space. Through relating these analytical layers, the thesis explores possible ways of employing “Tactical Urbanism” tools to answer how design processes can foster social exchange and strengthen the sense of community identity in everyday spaces. “Tactical Urbanism” is employed to achieve neighborhood empowerment and the activation of residual opportunistic spaces using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies. This thesis also highlights the existing neighborhood potentials in relation to tactics which can dictate and/or affect long-term development strategies. These layers are focused on supporting potential urban knots and creating opportunistic areas for social encounters and community development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has emerged out of the interest in “thinking small about our cities” (Sadik-Khan.J). This interest was developed through an urban design theory course by Professor Robert Saliba that introduced us to Everyday urbanism, this new field of planning and urban design which dismissed traditional approaches to improving life in cities. It has adopted ideas that incorporate smaller scale interventions on existing city fabric. In this sense, we can critically look at the pairing between architecture and urbanism which Koolhaas formulated under different categories of S, M, L, and XL (Duany, 2015). Here, Duany sees a gap in Koolhaas’s formulation; “it is missing the XS: the extra small category represented by tactical urbanism” (Duany, 2015). This type of urbanism, the tactical, branches out of Everyday urbanism and epitomizes one of the most social and participatory approaches to upgrading the city’s social spaces. It is also said to be the new vernacular of the creative city (Lydon & Garcia, 2015), where people become producers of their own space rather than mere consumers. In this thesis, tactical urbanism is used in an attempt to reclaiming not only space, but also social life in the neighborhood of Ain Mreisseh in Beirut.

The issue with cities like Beirut is that it has become so overcrowded, dense, and lacking any designated spaces for public life and social interaction. This is where Tactical urbanism becomes useful; you can look at the city as it is and find solutions using the existing social and urban fabric. The case of Ain Mreisseh in particular becomes very interesting because any attempt at reviving its socio-cultural heritage is

perceived as a hopeless case as it is a neighborhood affected by a negative public perception and continuous gentrification processes. However, Ain el-Mreisseh has a lot of potential in its XS residual spaces. My adoption of this neighborhood as a case study for this thesis is an attempt at changing these perceptions, and at embracing the remaining positive qualities of the complex social and physical setup of the neighborhood. The thesis also aims to contribute to a better understanding of how to intervene as an urban designer through tactical interventions in such spaces.

Through a detailed mapping analysis of the neighborhood's context and social structure, I intend to employ Tactical urbanism tools to reactivate Ain Mreisseh's residual spaces and preserving its socio-cultural heritage.

1.1.Case Study Profile:



Figure 1: Ain Mreisseh location within Beirut (Gebara, H., 2016)

This thesis takes Ain Mreisseh as a case study, one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city of Beirut. It was a coastal village characterized by a dense urban fabric and

strong social ties, and which today, like many other neighborhoods in the city, has lost its liveliness due to the frequent urban and demographic changes.

In 1974, the final extension of the Corniche, Rue du Paris, took place separating the neighborhood from the sea. Much of the existing fabric was destroyed to give way to the new extension. Many buildings and landmarks were demolished. Many of the existing beaches lost their “raison d’etre”, leaving them mere cafes barely surviving on the southern side of the Corniche. Thus, the area was ruptured and barely had any connection to the sea. At the time, the fishermen’s union advocated to preserve part of the fishermen’s port which resulted in building a bridge above the entrance of the harbor (Sawalha, 2010). The inhabitants of the area, however, lost their strongest identity with their isolation from the sea.

As more spaces of public interaction disappeared, Ain Mreisseh turned more into collective memories and stories of diving adventures and beach outings. The shrinking of public spaces forced the residents to restrict their activities to the small surviving harbor where most activities moved to. However, it remained primarily restricted to the fishermen, mostly a men’s place where women became increasingly uncomfortable to hang around.

One year after the highway’s extension, the civil war started and continued for a period of fifteen years. The neighborhood went through a phase of primarily demographic transformations and an urban development freeze. Many of the inhabitants fled the area or were displaced, and tenants from other areas settled in. After the war, the physical space was changing constantly. However, “the lives of the area’s inhabitants were on hold, resources were unstable, and no one seemed to know clearly

“how to play the game”, that is, how to negotiate urban spaces and rights”” (Sawalha, 2010). The reconstruction process was controlled by many political parties. It was hard for the inhabitants of Ain Mreisseh to relate to a governmental agency that could help them securing their urban rights. The rebuilding of downtown Beirut caused real-estate values to escalate in Ain Mreisseh because of its strategic location close to Solidere. According to Sawalha, “This sudden increase in land value complicated the residents’ relationships to their familiar spaces and intensified the state of uncertainty and unpredictability they experienced in the postwar era” (Sawalha, 2010). This also generated more demographic change.

The final phase of social and morphological change was after the civil war, due to the massive construction boom. Some new luxurious buildings were erected in empty lots or in replacement of old buildings. With the construction of the first high rise building in the neighborhood in 1995, Ahlam Building (meaning the dream building), such projects increased especially thanks to the support of the political elites and the state (Krijen and Fawaz, 2010). The character and identity of Ain Mreisseh has been changing with every constructed project. It has affected the urban morphology, the local economy, and the social fabric. Small lots have been disappearing and spaces for local small businesses became less available. Worth noting is the expansion of the American university of Beirut which has long been tightening the western borders of Ain Mreisseh. AUB has been buying land from the inhabitants to extend its area or in some cases to create parking spaces. Through this process of extension, AUB has played a great role in isolating Ain Mreisseh from Ras Beirut and the rest of Dar Mreisseh. These processes of gentrification and urban change deprived the neighborhood of its liveliness

and its vitality. It has not only affected the physical structure of the neighborhood, but also the social structure.

Ain Mreisseh is still surviving with few spaces and buildings that are mostly used exclusively by its old residents. Today, Ain Mreisseh is well known for the Corniche, its only public space, lively cafes on the waterfront, and the high-rise developments on the coastline. Old buildings, narrow streets, staircases, and common spaces are created through old rights of way and alleyways. Mainly these spaces are used as pedestrian shortcuts or simply pathways that link several old buildings together. The harbor is the most important place of gathering for the old families, namely the fishermen on the daily basis.

The neighborhood is also filled with remaining spaces that qualify as remnants of the old neighborhood's identity and as representations of people's socio-spatial practices. Unfortunately, most of these spaces are deteriorated, abandoned, and missing social life. Some of these spaces are rights-of-way and public stairs. Some are negotiated as public-private spaces, and some others are being appropriated in ways like planting, greening, and creating pedestrian alleys as shortcuts. These spaces are usually empty, or only functionally used. Ain Mreisseh has lost its vibrant social life quality. The neighborhood's socio-spatial activity is absent, and its development has been on fast-forward. The important value of these spaces lies in their potential to be connected in ways to create a network of activity areas in the neighborhood.

1.2. Research Problematic, Question, and Hypothesis

“The social life of cities should be assessed in part by the quality of their lived spaces and the extent to which numerous interactions between multiple 'counter publics' exist.” Hudson, J., Shaw, P. (2009)

The frequent changes in the built environment and shifts in demographics of Ain Mreisseh have affected the livability and the socio-spatial relations of its spaces and their dwellers. This thesis examines Ain Mreisseh and seeks to understand the factors behind the weakness of its socio-spatial activities, and to assess the attachment of people to the memory of this neighborhood. On the city’s scale, the neighborhood is disconnected from its surroundings, including the Corniche. But on the neighborhood’s scale, I was able to identify people’s contestations of the ongoing urban changes, albeit small in scale and temporary. These small spaces constitute what remains of the old urban fabric and have the potential to create new social encounters and public life.



Figure 2: The four main research problems (Source: Gebara, H. 2016)

The research questions responds to the problematic that identifies neglected residual and temporary spaces that were identified in the neighborhood, that are currently almost abandoned, and missing active social life. The thesis examines how can an urban design process-based intervention identify opportunities for developing alternative shared spaces to recover social activity and livability , and thus foster a sense of communal identity in the neighborhood? It poses as a hypothesis that creating a network of connected loose spaces in the neighborhood can contribute in reviving these small spaces and recreating social interactions between the residents and users of this fractured neighborhood. In other words, the thesis asks how can urban design use these fragmented series of what used to be spaces of public activity as catalysts that can bring back and protect the socio-cultural life and urban heritage of Ain Mreisseh, in additional ? Could urban design also enable and empower the community to use these spaces in more productive ways, say economically?

The objective of this research is enhancing public spatial practice , through providing a sense of place and chances for social interactions in the neighborhood among old and new residents, young and old generations, and between Ain el-Mreisseh and the rest of Beirut, especially Ras Beirut.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

My conceptual framework will be based on the different notions of everyday life and tactical urbanism and their relation to socio-spatial activities. I will also explore the different definitions of residual left-over spaces and the ways in which these spaces can contribute to enhancing the public practices and social interactions through space activation. Finally, case studies will be provided as to how these can cause long term change.

2.1. Everyday Urbanism: Between Philosophy and Common Sense

Margaret Crawford starts her book 'Everyday Urbanism' with this quote of Lefebvre, "But we are unable to seize the human facts. We fail to see them where they are, namely in humble, familiar, everyday objects. Our search for the human takes us too far, too deep. We seek it in the clouds or in mysteries, whereas it is waiting for us, besieging us on all sides" (Lefebvre, 'The Same and The Other'). To start with, Henry Lefebvre is one of the pioneer theoreticians who wrote about public space and the right to the city. He works on the importance of the ordinary in people's lives; the ordinary that forms a fabric of space and time defined by the everyday lived experiences and social practices of human beings. Lefebvre describes the daily life as a "screen on which society projects its lights and its shadows, its hollows and its planes, its power and its weakness." To him, the everyday life is so obscure that it is difficult to decode and

imitate. It is made of natural events which are usually unplanned and unprecedented. This concept of the everyday divides into two realities defined by Lefebvre as the quotidian and the modern. The quotidian represents the natural every day, the simultaneous, the timeless, and the humble. The modern, on the other hand, is manifested through the constantly changing habits affected by technological advancements and actions. To summarize Lefebvre's concept of production of space, he looks at public space as a social product which constitutes a triangle of conceived, perceived, and lived spaces. Each of these products are initial to understanding and studying space as a social product, the process to which it came to be formed, the way it is lived, and the way people are using it.

Everyday spaces are transitional spaces responsible for creating new social arrangements and forms of imagination (Crawford, 2010). Crawford praises the optimistic approach in the attempt of "reclaiming elements of the quotidian that have been hidden in the nooks and crannies of the urban environment". These discoveries can take place in overlooked marginal space, places not usually considered as changing elements in the urban life. Crawford believes in the social and human discourse of urbanism, that the lived experience is more crucial in defining the city than the physical form. She writes, "The city is above all a social product, created out of the demands of everyday use and the social struggles of urban inhabitants. Design within the everyday space must start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there."

The everyday is represented through the daily ordinary human experience in urban spaces. It is conveyed by the ordinary routines like commuting, trading, working, and moving through the city (Crawford 2010). Everyday spaces represent zones for social transition and opportunities for new social arrangements. The essence of these

everyday spaces is the diversity that takes place within them, where multiple experiences accumulate and differences collide within a single space. David Engwicht calls these spaces, “Exchange spaces”. He proposes that exchange spaces help establish and reinforce community structure. Such spaces can be local grocery stores or even walkable streets.

Crawford talks about “dialogizing” design which breaks the regular conceptual hierarchy of traditional approaches, where the everyday life allows it to be uniquely comprehensible and familiar to ordinary people. Thus social change can be created if backed by the lived experiences of the urban inhabitants. Solutions for this involve “modest and small in scale – micro utopias, perhaps, contained in a sidewalk, a bus bench, or a mini-park, in a rare non-totalizing moment” (Crawford, 2010). This encourages us to search for spaces that already exist and are under-utilized. Thus according to Crawford, we should consider everyday urbanism as a call of action, and an incentive through which designers can achieve more livable cities.

2.2. From Everyday to Tactical Urbanism: Time and Space

Everyday urbanism is one of the three main important disciplines in urban design, along with new urbanism and post urbanism. However, a more elaborate and focused approach, which represent a continuum and an elaboration of everyday urbanism, is tactical urbanism. De Certeau also introduced us to certain modes of operation through the daily life; first through strategies, which are based on place, and through tactics which are based on time. Strategies produce places that can be controlled and delimited, thus representing the practices of those in power. Tactics

depend on time, which gives a place some flexibility and looseness in function. Tactics operate without a proper place. They depend on chosen opportunities and moments, and on the pace in which the organization of space can change. This thinking about tactics in space production led to adopting the term ‘tactical urbanism’, which according to Jeffery Hou, is the use of modest or temporary revisions of urban space to seed structural environmental change. Lefebvre adds another way in which we can categorize the everyday. It intersects between two modes of repetition that coexist, the cyclical and the linear. The cyclical is the natural, the repeated changing events, like the day and night. The linear represents events that get measured with time, like schedules, lunch breaks, and bus stops. The intersection between the cyclical and the linear shapes our lived experiences. However, to Lefebvre, the above does not create social change. They are the spontaneous moments, which highlight the difference between what life is and what it can be, that can create that social change (Crawford, 2010). Finally, these understandings of time allow us to explore new realms of urban experiences, where multiple experiences accumulate and differences collide with the rhythmical nature of the space.

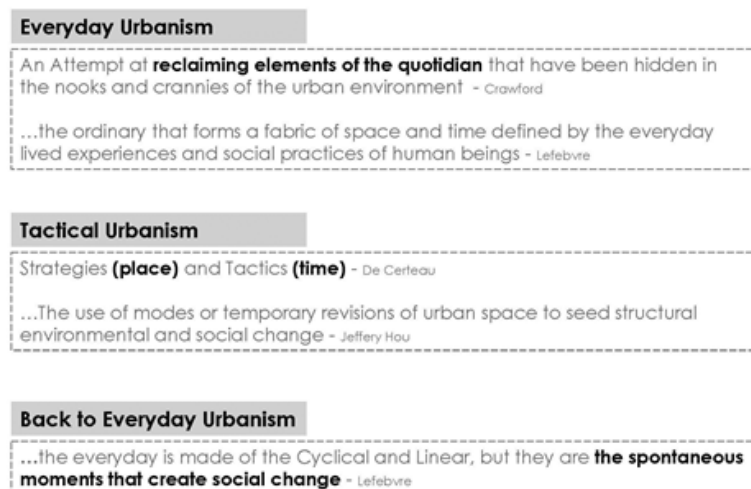


Figure 3: A brief of the transition from everyday urbanism to tactical urbanism (Gebara, H., 2016)

Another definition to the tactical is the vernacular. According to Crawford, “the vernacular is what ordinary people do in their everyday lives”. It is represented by local improvisations that are not strategic actions, but tactical responses to the physical environment, and thus, giving the spatial practices a temporal character. Similar to what the vernacular represents, tactics allow the social, cultural, and economic to have a two-way relationship with the built environment, they produce the environment and are reproduced by it (Hou, 2010).

2.3. Typologies of Space

The rapid development practices and increasingly centralized city structure have led to the formation of neglected spaces. This occurs when decision makers work regardless of the context and the interest of the neighborhoods. So with resource scarcity, population pressures, and the increasing demand for better quality-living environment, there is a necessity to start looking for existing spaces instead of creating new spaces for social encounter. The traditional planning approaches have proved to be unsuccessful in creating livable urban spaces. These approaches have started to dissolve and instead more inclusive processes are becoming more popular in which the public is playing a role in the decision making process (Crawford, M., Chase, J., 2008). So based on Crawford’s suggestion that solutions lie in the nooks and crannies of the urban built environments, spaces that already exist and are under-utilized, I look in this section at different typologies of open spaces which could present opportunities for social encounter and more livable everyday spaces and which will be related in the fieldwork to the different forms and processes of appropriation and negotiations over space.

Based on the literature, I divide typologies of space into two, functional typologies based on the use and status of space, and physical typologies based on the physical structure and composition of these spaces.

2.3.1. Functional Typologies of Residual Spaces

Throughout the following, I will present brief examples of definitions of spaces that are potentials for creating place-based public/semi-public spaces. In her book ‘Everyday Urbanism’, Crawford presents the concept of everyday spaces that go against, in practice and use, “the carefully planned, officially designated, and often underused public space”. A similar definition is Karen Franck’s loose spaces. Franck (2006) introduces the concept of ‘loose spaces’ where the unintended uses have the ability to loosen up the original use and function of a space into new perceptions and behavior. Her presentation of the public spaces, unlike how we might perceive it, provides this character of looseness in use rather than location. Franck marks, “The uses for which they were designed are now gone. What is discovered is not just the space but a new purpose for it.” For any space to be loose, people must first find it and explore the opportunities it offers for pursuing activities they desire (Franck, 2013).

Jeffery Hou introduces the ‘insurgent public spaces’ and defines them as spaces for temporary informal gatherings in urban sites. These spaces challenge the conventional, codified notion of public space and the making of space (Hou, 2010). However, Hou also defines public spaces in terms of accessibility, diversity, appropriation, and control (Hou, 2010). He describes how the everyday, personal, and collective uses of such spaces create “hybrid public spaces” that are distinct from their conventional and official form (Hou 2010). Similarly, the everyday activities and

informal events create new forms of public space which are transformed into sites of potentiality, difference, and delightful encounters (Watson, 2006).

Other definitions have been introduced by several authors regarding the different space typologies. One of which is the 'lost space' which Trancik (1956) used for his arguments regarding left-over spaces. Trancik's notion of lost spaces represents public spaces that are "in need of design, anti-spaces, and making no positive contribution to the surrounds or users." Regardless of using different terms, all authors find the best opportunities for the public in spaces which have fallen out of their original use.

2.3.2. Physical Typologies of Residual Spaces

The above classifications of space are based on the use and condition of these spaces. However, looking at the physical aspect of these spaces, other classifications emerge.

Residual spaces present options for providing linkages and re-adaptive uses for open spaces. These spaces are either public or privately owned but with low economic or development value and are considered waste spaces which can invite creative solutions. Carmona defines 'external spaces in-between' as spaces that have remained public but have simply been neglected and forgotten, and therefore are lost as positive people places. Worth mentioning are the "cracks in the city". Loukaitou-Sideris describes these cracks as "the in-between spaces, residual, under-utilized and deteriorating". These include vacant properties, streets, parking lots, and other "terrain vague." These spaces have the potential to be appropriated for improvisational and creative uses. These classifications of spaces fall under the open space category which

gives them no relation to ownership, size, type of use, or landscape character, and which according to Lynch, “can include all the negatives”.

In ‘*Residual Spaces Re-evaluated*’, Winterbottom presents three types of residual spaces, “non-spaces,” “left-over spaces” and “dual-use spaces.”

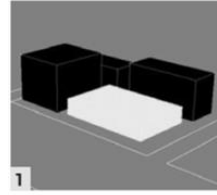
- 1- Non-spaces include median strips and rights-of-way along highways and roads.
- 2- Leftover spaces include odd geometric spaces adjacent to intersections, setback frontages, underpasses, and traffic islands. They are not programmed and not connected to the surrounding spaces.
- 3- Dual-use spaces are areas that become underused residual spaces for temporary periods of time, like parking lots that are largely vacant after business hours.

An added type of residual spaces is “abandoned spaces” which includes spaces which are not used but still provide possibilities to host alternative social activities. Such spaces can be abandoned lots or buildings.

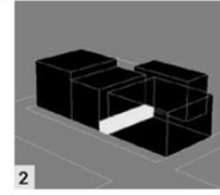
Based on the functional and physical classifications of space presented above, opportunistic spaces for social interaction and better neighborhood livability can be summarized into “informal, counter public space”, “abandoned spaces”, and “Left-over spaces”.

In order to understand the potential opportunistic uses of residual spaces, Villagomes gives a more in-depth classification of these spaces with regards to urban landscape:

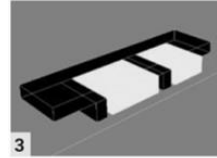
1-Void spaces: Large underutilized spaces surrounding buildings



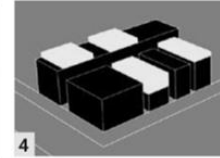
2-Redundant infrastructure: Infrastructure which is not in use anymore



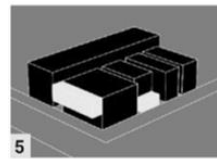
3-Spaces below: Spaces below



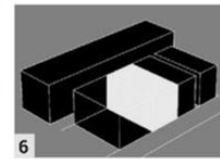
infrastructural elements such as elevated railway lines and motorway flyover



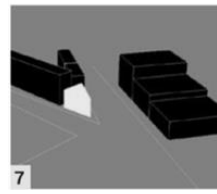
4-Rooftops: Underutilized rooftop spaces of buildings



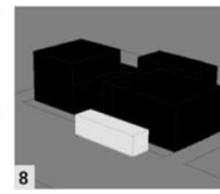
5-Spaces around: the result of new development in old context when new positioned buildings create new intermediary zones between the public street and the private interior space of the building



6-Spaces in-between: The result of urban demolition



7-Wedges: the result of intersection of conflicting urban grids or infrastructural lines.



8-oversized infrastructure: Over-estimated spaces for traffic

Figure 4: Typologies of urban residual spaces by Villagomez

The Transition between Public and Private, Threshold Spaces

In his investigation of the fine line that demarcates between the public and the private, Stavrides identifies threshold spaces which are transitional zones that bring out possibilities of interaction. He defines these spaces as “in-between areas which relate

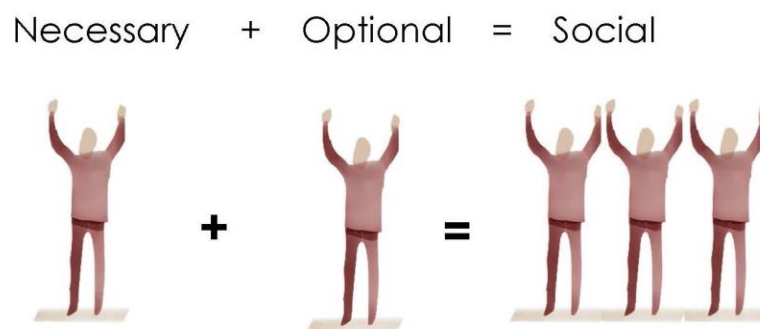
rather than separate”. The modern city is based on creating urban enclaves that foster social and class isolation. Stavrides thinks of urban thresholds as possibilities to creating urban porosity as an alternative to the modern city models. He states, “A city of thresholds could thus concretize the spatiality of a public culture of mutually aware, interdependent and involved identities” (Stavrides, 2013). “Recognizing such thresholds, the flaneur, and the inhabitant as flaneur, can appreciate the city as a locus of discontinuities, as a network of crossroads, turning points. In the unexpected connections realized by these thresholds, otherwise emerges, not only as a threat but also as a promise.” (Stavrides 2007:177). Thus thresholds create flowing, gentle transition between the various categories of open spaces.

2.4. Life between Buildings: Types of Socio-spatial Activities in Public and Common Spaces

It is important that after presenting theories of the everyday and opportunistic spaces for social activity, we look at how practices take place within these spaces. In *'Life between Buildings'*, Gehl presents three types of Outdoor activities, Necessary, optional, social activities. Necessary activities are those routine everyday tasks which happen independently and unconditionally of the exterior environment. These activities do not require others to participate. Optional activities are mostly affected by exterior conditions, like walking, standing, sunbathing. However, social activities require the presence of others in common spaces (playing, conversations, communal activities, and passive contacts). These activities happen in publically accessible spaces, and are the indirect result of the occurrence of both necessary and optional activities under better condition. Most of the social activities result from passive contacts in public space

(Gehl J. , 2011). According to Gehl, activities in public often stimulate other activities, under Klinger's formula of *“one plus one is three – at least”*:

“When someone is doing something, there is a clear tendency for others to join in, either to participate themselves or just to experience what the others are doing. In this manner individuals and events can influence and stimulate one another. Once this process has begun, the total activity is nearly always greater and more complex than the sum of the originally involved component activities.”



“one plus one is three – at least”

Figure 5: Production of social activity (Gebara, H., 2016)

2.5. Control and Management of Change

In the context of this conceptual framework, visions and implementation strategies to enhancing socio-spatial practices usually form a series of projects, over different time frames, with short-term and medium-term action and objectives with long-term positions. These are clearly threatened by the fast-paced development in cities. However, these short and medium terms solutions must work as catalysts that slow down the pace of development. If the short-term and medium-term actions do not work, however, the long-term position will not be achieved (Carmona, 2010, p. 210).



Figure 6: Process of management of urban change (Gebara, H., 2016)

In his book, ‘Public Places, Urban Spaces’, Carmona investigates the management of change that affects the urban social life. He states that, “as personal associations with our immediate environment are valued and we draw comfort from its stability, the loss of familiar surroundings can be distressing, particularly when experienced over a short period and on a large scale.” So control requires the involvement of key stakeholders, and the development of processes of involvement and consultation (Carmona, 2010, p. 205). When changes take place over a longer period of time and in an incremental manner, mixing the new and unfamiliar with the old and familiar, they are often seen as exciting but also comfortable and acceptable (Carmona, 2010, p. 206). Lowenthal (1981) argued against ‘over-abrupt change’ in the physical environment and in favor of ‘anchoring’ the ‘excitement of the future’ in the ‘security of the past’.

Regarding adaptability and sustainability, Moudon emphasized the importance of the pattern of landownership in enabling incremental change. Small lots enable constant fine-grain adaptation instead of the sudden and potentially devastating changes that come with large parcels. Smaller lots also gave greater individual control and greater variety – the more owners, the more gradual and adaptive the ongoing change:

‘the place looks a little different every year, but the overall feel is the same from century to century’. It can also be argued that sustainability requires a capacity for organic development, rendering clean-sweep redevelopment unnecessary. Given the dangers of disjointed incrementalism, it is important that some overall vision or set of rules is available to guide developments towards agreed objectives – however broadly defined – giving the confidence necessary to attract investment and ensuring individual increments will result in a coherent whole (Carmona, 2010, p. 208). Thus, this means slowing down development pace through creating better community attachment to the neighborhood, and deviate the way developers and municipalities think of the cities’ future. The slow process of change means a more stable relationship between people and space and more fixed identities. The slow pace of change means a slower pace of identity change and a more coherent set of relations between social and physical space.

2.6. Implementation: Open Space Activation through Action

Social activity is highly affected by counter-social changes in the urban environment. Changes that occur to the old city districts in which urban blocks turn into parking garages, gas stations, and financial institutions, cause the decrease in number of people, thus cause the decline in number of public activities and the deterioration of street environments. The street and common spaces become areas where nobody wants to be (Gehl, 2001). This can be addressed through stimulation, which concerns the most important subject: the people. However, in order for stimulation to work in a neighborhood scale beyond superficiality, a meaningful common denominator – an economic, political, or ideological sphere of interest – must exist among the expected users/residents (Gehl 2001, 50).

The society has become less interested in public matters and more driven by private interests and personal desires. The interest here is to create new types of activities that, through both their familiarity and unfamiliarity, will attract people to use neglected spaces. These spaces constitute a way to create new urban knots. This is made possible by stitching these spaces together and creating opportunistic areas for social encounters and community development. So I build here on the importance to use residual spaces and activate them through different urban design tools. Hou introduced ways in which insurgent spaces can be created; through appropriating, reclaiming, pluralizing, transgressing, uncovering, and contesting. He defines each as follows:

- “Appropriating: represents actions and manners through which the meaning, ownership, and structure of official, public space can be temporarily and permanently suspended. (Repurposing the existing urban fabric)
- Reclaiming: describes the adaptation or reuse of abandoned or underutilized urban spaces for new and collective functions and instrumentality.
- Pluralizing: refers to transforming the meaning and function of public space into a more heterogeneous public sphere.
- Transgressing: represents the infringement or crossing of official boundaries between the private and public domains through temporary occupation as well as production of new meanings and relationships.

- Uncovering: refers to the making and rediscovery of public spaces through active reinterpretation of hidden or latent meanings and memories in the urban landscape.
- Contesting: is the theme of struggle over rights, meaning, and identities in the public realm.” (Hou, 2010)

These actions are usually based on the urban context, ownership status, space typology, and use purpose. In the context of small irregular shaped, inaccessible, non-profitable, neglected space, the act of transgression is the most auspicious. Such spaces that resulted from planning restrictions or problematic site conditions provide chances for transgression through their re-appropriation, re-programming, and re-using of their original function (Hudson, J., Shaw, P., 2009). These engagement approaches tend to utilize the already existing physical spaces to cater to one’s needs and activities. Such explanations of transgression, as Winterbottom puts it, “allow us to contemplate whether we can rethink the public domain as less of a permanent attribute of place, and rather as an opportunity to allow constantly changing experiences and interactions with other groups, as a chance to meet 'otherness' and mediate an understanding of mutual difference.”

Activating residual spaces is not always enough to achieve social interaction. Using existing urban stock, like abandoned or under-used buildings with heritage qualities, can give us a variety of opportunities to connect both the public and private realms. These networks create a sense of inclusivity and belonging to the society as a whole.

2.6.1. Spatial criteria and Requirements

Space activation is an important step in the design of the everyday urban spaces. However, the success of these spaces lay in their sustainability. In order for this to be achieved, these spaces should be designed to provide a sense of place, be hybrid in character, and contribute to an urban porous network.

2.6.1.1. Sense of Place

“If space is allowing movement to occur, place provides a pause.”(Madanipour, 1996)

Madanipour defines places as spaces which incorporate socio-spatial relations. Place-making focuses on the creation or modification of physical spaces for everyday life. These spaces allow people to engage in a space that is programmed for different activities at different times of the day. In “Place-making in Urban Design”, Madden states that, “a successful place is that is well used”. Thus good places are busy because they draw people to use them constantly. She explains, “In a sense, ‘spaces’ are primarily physical settings that have yet to be turned into ‘places’. People may notice them but rarely stop”.

The concept of space-time is a dynamic one. When this is employed, place becomes open to a network of ever changing social relations. This implies certain criteria to a place, according to Madden (2011), accessibility, a range of activities for engagement, a level of social interaction, its image, and comfort.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

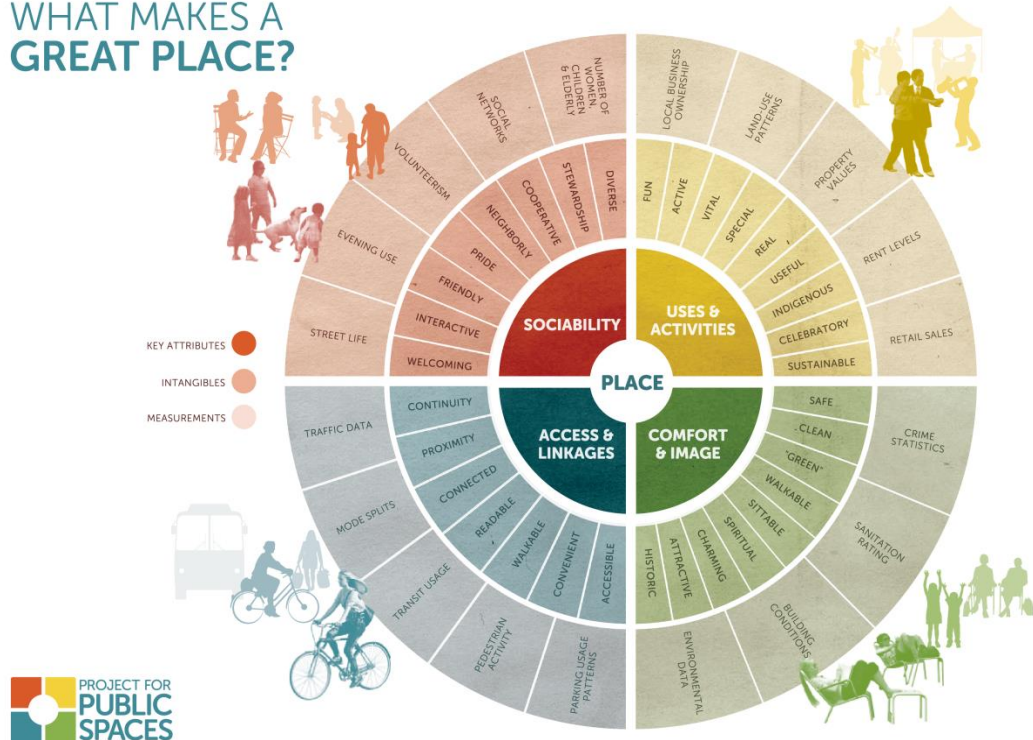


Figure 7: Placemaking diagram (source: Project for Public Spaces)

2.6.1.2. Hybridity

Hybrid spaces are semi-public spaces characterized by a transition between public and private. Hybrid spaces are usually privately owned and loose in character. However according to Trancik, “the emergence of a loose space depends upon: First, people’s recognition of the potential within the space and, Second, varying degrees of creativity and determination to make uses of what is present, possibly modifying existing elements or bringing in additional ones.”

2.6.1.3. Urban Porosity

Place-making incorporates openness. Places should not have boundaries around them, they should be constructed through “the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to the space ‘beyond’” (Massey, 1994:5). Thus urban porosity can be

seen as the ability to create infiltrations that connect through the urban fabric. These infiltrations take place in enclaves where they start adopting a semi-public character which affects the territoriality of the enclave itself. This is achieved by the transformation of border conditions. According to Richard Sennet, there is a clear differentiation between borders and boundaries. Borders allow infiltrations which promote coexistence, while boundaries are impermeable and promote segregation.

In the context of this conceptual framework, residual spaces should be of a porous character – linked through specific networks. The potential of a space to become loose may lie in its relationship to other spaces. When the edge is porous one can see and move easily between spaces or easily straddle the barrier between them (Franck, K., & Stevens, Q., 2013). Other than borders, building thresholds often appropriated as loose space are clearly enclosed on their side, but they generally offer graduated transitions into the public realm. Urban porosity is an active agent in enhancing coexistence in open spaces.

2.6.2. Case Studies

The core behind the previously mentioned concepts is designing for public practices and socio-spatial interactions. One of the most important practitioners who bases his work on that is Jahn Gehl. His international work and interventions in public space have proven to be successful in creating more livable and social urban spaces. Gehl provides a variety of strategies for creating public spaces and enhancing social interactions and place-making. He first starts with studying the urban space and people's practices of that space, 'the space psychology'. The next step is studying the potentials of urban spaces and the possibilities of changes that would make it more vibrant and attractive to the city dwellers. Following that, some public hearings and

professional workshops are organized to allow for the interaction between the society and professionals. Before the final intervention, a pilot project is implemented on the potential site to allow people to adapt and react to the new space and its new theme or function.

2.6.2.1. From Neglected Spaces to Quality Public Space

In the 'Adaptive Streets' how-to-booklet, Gehl Architects provide a sequence to creating quality public space in residual spaces, specifically rights of way. Thinking should take place on different scales. Starting from the general scale, there are important site considerations that need to be understood to be able to propose the optimum design interventions and recommendations. These considerations include the spatial conditions of the site, like scale, context, climate, views, place identity, sensory experience, and multi-functionality. After the site has been understood and studied, the uses of this site can be reviewed and activity programming with adaptive and flexible events can be proposed. The most detailed part is proposing the physical elements that provide a certain livelihood and attractiveness for human interaction with the site.

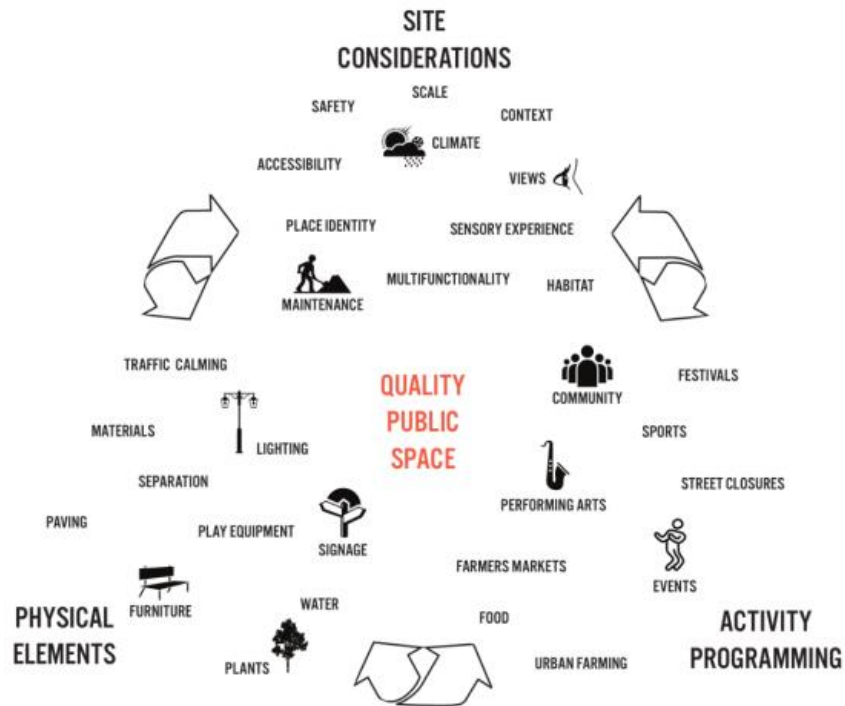


Figure 8: Site considerations provided by the Creative Commons' "Noun Project" (Source: Adaptive Streets)

2.6.2.2. Programming/ Strategies and Tactical Spaces

Most successful strategies to public space are those which allow the space to be flexible in its function and uses, which is mostly sustainable at small manageable neighborhood scales. Gehl introduces the strategy to create flexible programming of a space throughout the day. The more the uses through time, the more successful a space is. This is an interpretation of De Certeau's theory of time and space, the strategies and tactics. In experimenting how to enrich the public life, Nisha Fernando proposes the idea of open-ended spaces and streets. Similar to Gehl's approach, these spaces are open-ended to a variety of uses over relatively short periods of time. Positively, these spaces "enable a wide range of commercial and social activities that contribute to public life in cities without significant modifications to their overall physical fabric" (Fernando, 2013). Fernando also suggests different common characteristic of open

ended spaces like the diversity of uses, adaptability of different uses, fixed and semi-fixed elements, multi-sensory qualities, and their socio-cultural Identity. An example on this is Seattle’s Nord Alley. The alley was planned to host many different events and functions throughout the day. Sometimes the alley turns into a space for arts installations, film screenings, dances, and musical performances. This variety of space programming helps create a vibrant and lively space throughout the year.

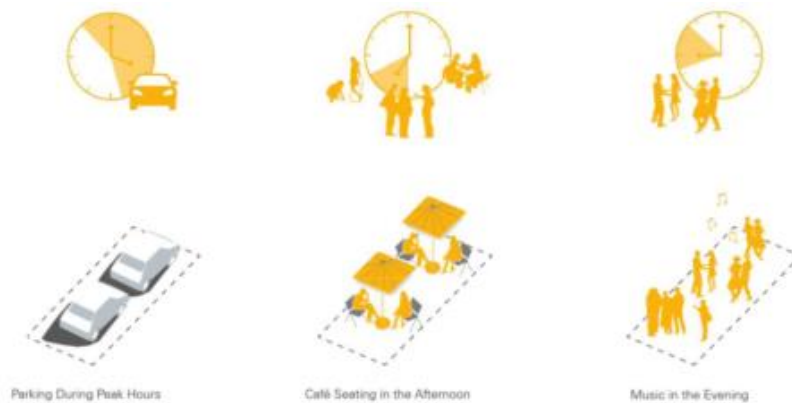


Figure 9: Space programming throughout time (Source: Adaptive streets)

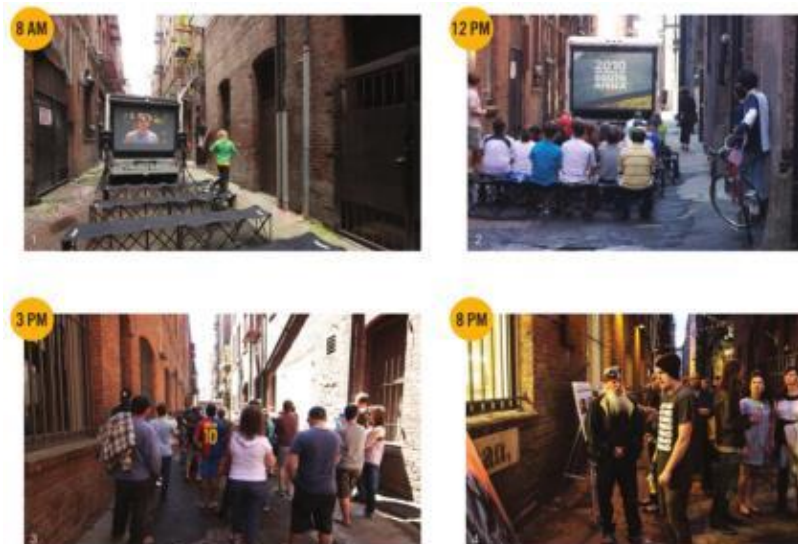


Figure 10: Seattle’s Nord Alley programmed to host different activities and events throughout the day (Source: Adaptive Streets)

LIGHTING

Safety, Scale and Extended Use

The way a space is used and feels at night is significantly impacted by lighting. It can provide a canopy, wayfinding or make a space feel pedestrian-friendly and scaled appropriately.



BICYCLE FACILITIES

Encouragement, Parking and Repair

Providing facilities that make bicycling easier and more convenient can include options for parking at the end of trips as well as support along the way such as ramps, fixed pumps and tools.



SURFACE MATERIALS

Variation, Color and Accessibility

Paint, permeable paving, precast concrete, cobble, wood, etc., can add interest and define space for new uses. Choose sturdy materials for longer-term interventions. Variations in material can indicate circulation, but should be easy for users to navigate.



PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Basic Needs and Comfort

Amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, bus shelters and kiosks help create pedestrian-friendly spaces.



FURNITURE

Fixed and Flexible

Furniture should provide invitations to stay in a space. Material choice impacts comfort; for example, metal can get very hot or cold. A mixture of fixed seating that is always available and flexible seating that is customizable is ideal.



INTERACTIVE OBJECTS

Activities and Play

Exercise equipment, game tables, ping-pong, instruments and artwork inspire spontaneous interactions and playful uses of urban spaces.



PLANTS

Ecosystem Services and Habitat

The many benefits that plants provide humans can be referred to as ecosystem services. From the shade trees provide, to the cleansing of both air and water, to stormwater mitigation, the impacts extend beyond people to the broader environment.



WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE

Navigation and Identity

A small sign can be used as a friendly invitation to a space. In larger spaces, consistent surface markings and materials can provide wayfinding.



Figure 11: Ways to activate your space (Source: Gehl Architects- Adaptive Streets)

2.6.2.3. Pilot Projects

One other significant example is Gehl's project of re-instigating a small neighborhood in Chongqing, China into the Megacity. The project focused on the links between urban development, public space, public transport and sustainability at an environmental, economic and social level. For this project, they worked with local initiatives to make sure the design principles and strategies are understood by the local community. Their work was also based on ensuring the protection of many positive and humanly sustainable aspects of the traditional Chinese city culture.

In Chongqing the main goals were to improve the quality of urban public space, revitalize street life and extending and improving a micro network of interconnected streets and public spaces. On the basis of their survey findings, they made recommendations & designed pilot projects to show people that things can be done differently. The pilot projects were implemented on existing spaces and put to better use so people can experience change first hand. These spaces were redesigned to encourage walking and social interaction in the inner city. The network of spaces also incorporated a variety of activity and events along them. By following the strategies and process explained above, they were able to implement this proposed public space network through connecting human-scale alleys with the harbor front and the different recreational spaces.

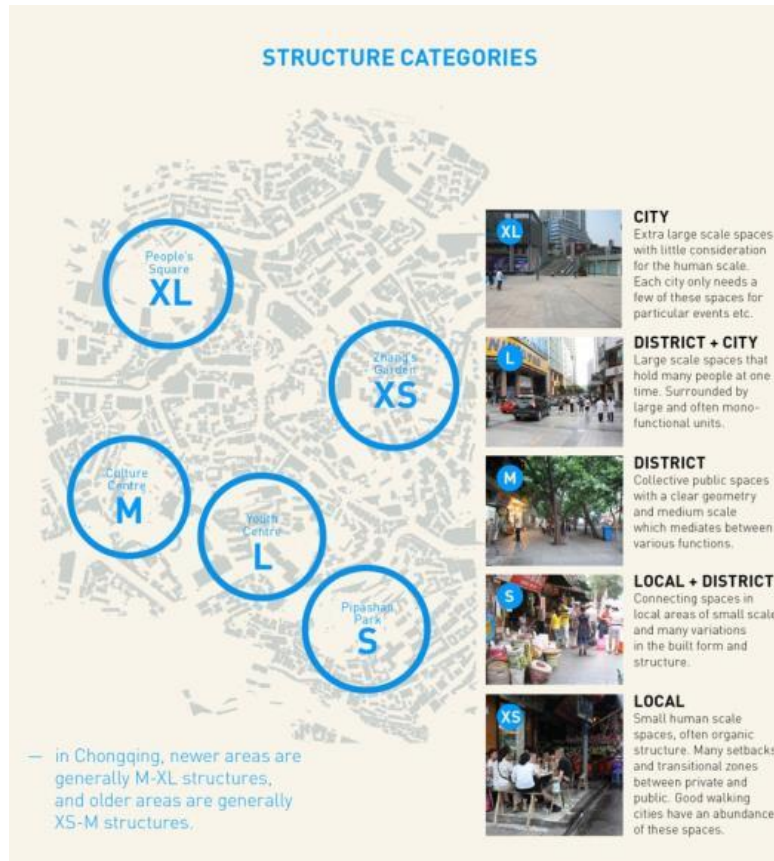


Figure 12: Classification of public space according to scale in Chongqing, China (Source: www.gehlarchitects.com)

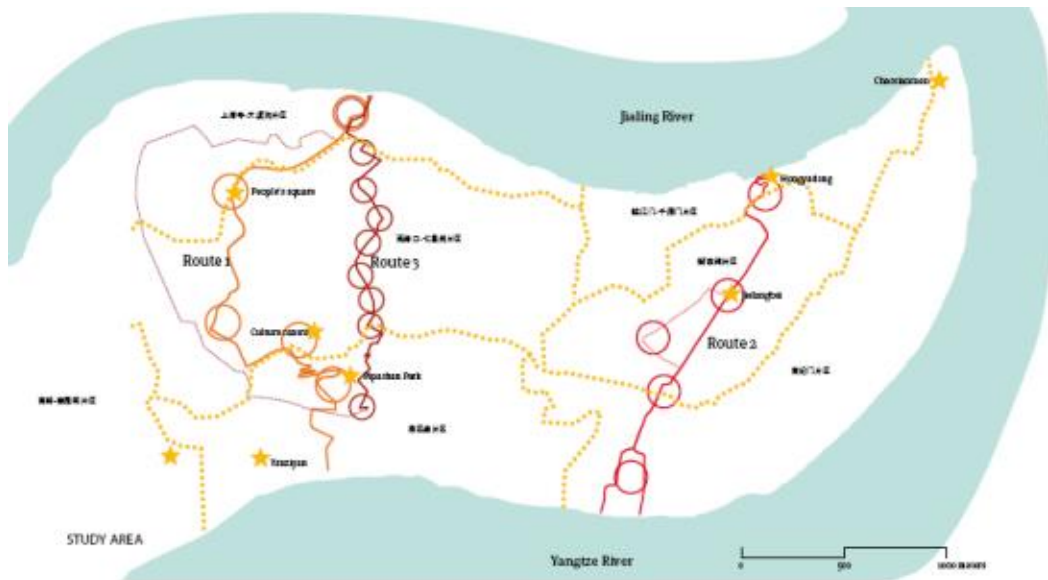


Figure 13: Proposed pedestrian routes in Chongqing (Source: Jiang Yang)

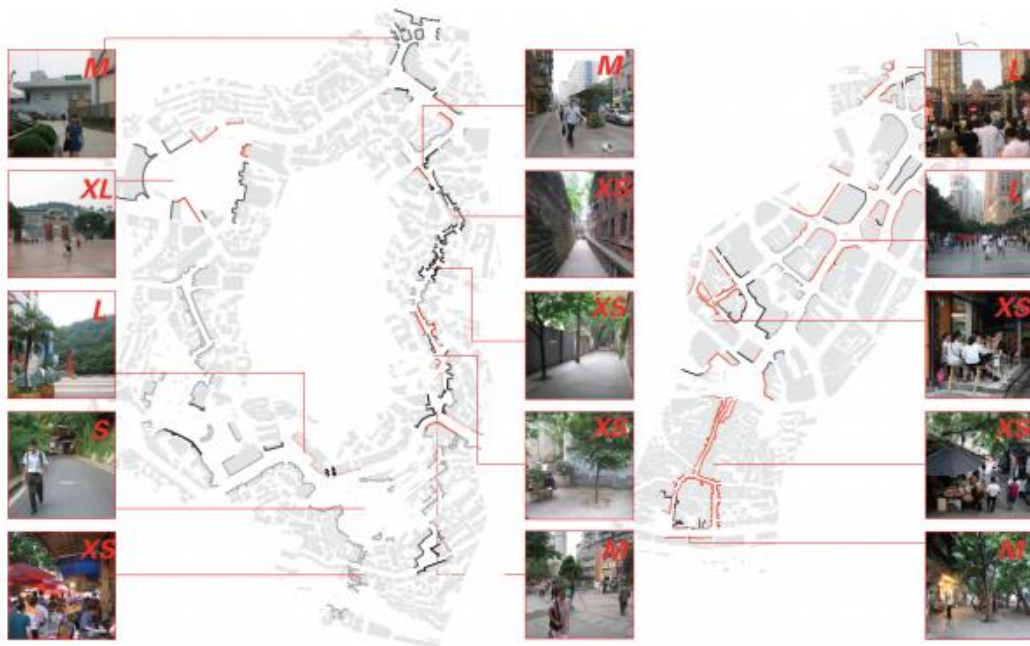


Figure 14: The spatial scale and frontage quality on the three routes of Chongqing (Source: Jiang Yang)



Figure 15: Strategy map for the three pedestrian routes proposed in Chongqing (Source: Jiang Yang)



Figure 16: one of the medium scale spatial interventions in Chongqing (Source: www.gehlarchitects.com)



Figure 17: Pilot project in Chongqing, China (Source: www.gehlarchitects.com)

2.6.2.4. Participation and partnerships

Most socio-spatial projects are leaning towards smaller scale, more manageable neighborhood interventions, where communities can initiate and implement the projects themselves. This reduces the time for implementation and provides results that may not be achievable through political advocacy. This of course can be implemented through the Participation and partnerships with the different main stakeholders, moving in a cyclical manner between bottom-up and top-down approaches that could help turn interventions into more feasible and long-term ones.

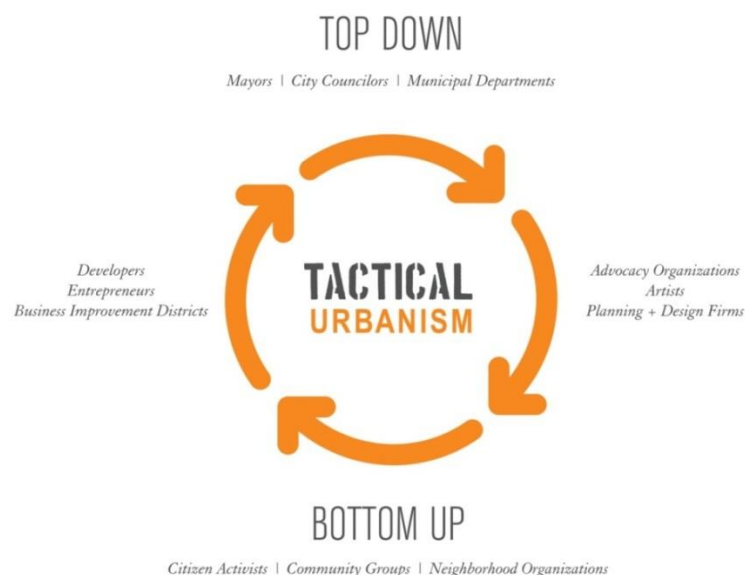


Figure 18: The cyclical movement of Tactical urbanism between bottom-up and top-down approaches

(Source: Lydon, M., Garcia, A., 2015)

Seattle urban dwellers are recognizing the value of residual spaces through their struggle to increase open spaces in the city. In “Residual Spaces Re-evaluated”, Winterbottom says the concerns of the residents were negative pedestrian experiences, lack of recreational opportunities, and the loss of neighborhood identity.

Neighborhood initiatives have initiated different projects to provide opportunities for intervention in contested, value-laden space and propose new systems of valuation. The approach led by Winterbottom resulted through three core standards, tactics, generosity, and absurdity. Rights of way and residual spaces were redesigned to accommodate pedestrians, pocket parks, and commercial activity. These were reprogrammed, sometimes dedicated for movement and storage of private cars, and for few hours a day, these became a space for rest, relaxation, and socializing in an area underserved by public open space. Artworks and lighting were added to increase people’s sense of safety in and enjoyment of the spaces. They were also able to help the community through understanding the process, implementation plans and guidelines, and the information on funding, resources, regulations, and permits. Below are two examples of spaces that were transformed into positive community spaces, the Fremont open market, and Phinney Ridge.

- *Fremont Open Market: Parking Lot as Town Commons*

On Sunday afternoons, a centrally located parking lot in Fremont becomes a “dual-use” space: During the week, it provides parking for businesses; on weekends it is used for a public, open-air market with crafts-people and food-sellers. The Fremont market is an example of a creative partnership between community interests and the private sector. The inclusiveness of the process was essential. The initiative team first

approached the owner, who supported the idea. Then the team met with area business owners, heard their concerns and included them in the process. During the day, the parking lot becomes a market place where to make it possible the team had to revise outdated codes and regulations that prohibited public markets, and the city subsequently placed signs directing the public to the market. On Saturday evenings in the summer, a blank wall serves as a screen for the Fremont Open Air Movies. Like a drive-in-theater without the anti-social nature of cars, the parking lot serves as a mass seating area.



Figure 19: A parking lot in the Fremont neighborhood also serves as a town commons, providing space for an outdoor cinema (top) and open-air market (Source: Winterbottom)

Many community groups are spearheading processes to vacate unused street rights of way and convert them into community parks and gardens. It is not always easy to convert unused rights of- way to community use, as public agencies are reluctant to

relinquish control of streets, built or not. The engineering department rejected the residents' request to block vehicular access to the street with permanent barriers, so residents joined the city's "Pea Patch" program to develop a community garden, considered a temporary use within the street. The upper portion of the site was planted with fruit trees and serves as a passive pocket park. Raised planting beds were built into the existing grades, providing garden plots for residents without private yards. Many residents come to watch and chat, while others come to tend their plots.

The garden has become a civic center for the neighborhood; community cookouts, celebrations (such as birthday parties) and gardening demonstrations are held there. Fall cleanup and spring start-up events also serve as annual social events for the community. The project has now extended throughout the city in different neighborhoods and now has a website where you can enter an interest list; pick a garden, and sign-up to get involved with community gardening. All the products that are cultivated are not for sale; they are either shared or given to charity of Seattle's Food Bank.



Figure 20: Street right-of-way converted to community gardens, Phinney Ridge neighborhood (Source: Winterbottom)



Figure 21: Practices in other neighborhoods influenced by the Phinney Ridge community garden project (Source: Winterbottom)

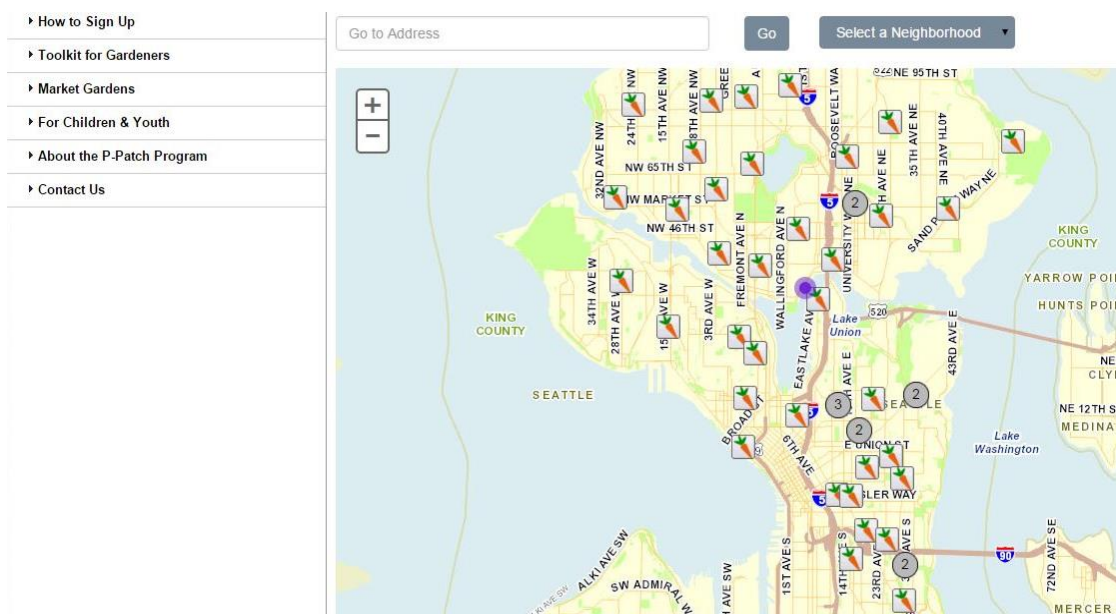


Figure 22: the website of the P-Patch community gardening project provides tool to organize the community gardens and their management (source: www.seattle.gov)

2.7. Lessons Learned

People prefer to be where there are other people, so they will choose to stay in places where there is more to see. We must relearn how to look more carefully at the existing urban environment and understand its potential and limitations. Within this context, the neglected and residual spaces left by the modernization process offer a great benefit to our ailing cities. For not only are they plentiful, but also, given their current

derelict state, they often require minimum economic investment to see drastic improvements, especially on the social level. On the global scale, the intense use of residual spaces occurs throughout older settlements, developing countries, and high-density centers where Western patterns of settlement are not viable (Hou, 2010). With humble gratitude, we must turn to these places and seek lessons regarding how to create more humane urban landscapes that fosters intense social activities.

The decisions to take actions in space come after understanding the urban environment, its potentials, and its limitations. Within the context of Ain Mreisseh, the neglected and residual space, left by the different processes of urban change, offer a great benefit to bringing back the liveliness of public practices and social relations in the area. The advantage is that these spaces are not only numerous but they also require minimum economic investment for creating a more inclusive, and ultimately, more livable environment. Based on the above conceptual framework, I will be investigating how the residual and left-over spaces can be managed, connected, and brought to life in form of spaces of publicness that will retain the neighborhood's public and social experiences, protect its heritage, and bring the neighborhood back to life. To achieve that, I will present a thorough analysis of the urban fabric and social activity in Ain Mreisseh on different scales of the neighborhood.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND FIELDWORK

3.1. Fieldwork Methodology

3.1.1. Introduction

The fieldwork methodology for this thesis was directed toward complimenting the conceptual framework and answering some of the research questions. My research follows a qualitative approach to data collection based on non-participant observations, mapping, field documentation, collection of previously published research, and online resources. The research starts with a general explanation of the site characteristics and components to a detailed exploration and analysis of the everyday spaces and the leftover residual spaces. Thus this section provides an inductive process from data collection, to analysis, leading to the design intervention.

Part of the research concentrates on the strategic analysis of the site's residual and open spaces using the everyday urbanism tools. These tools helped uncover the ways in which space is conceptualized and used by different actors. These tools will provide the main inputs for understanding how access to space can be defined and what opportunities lay behind these spaces.

3.1.2. Chapter Structure

I divide the analysis for this research into three units that interrelate into final findings and lessons learned; the spatial analysis, the socio-cultural and stakeholder analysis, and the strategic analysis. The physical analysis of the site provides an introduction of Ain Mreisseh with respect to the city, a historical analysis, and a contextual analysis. To understand the space through its totality, the contextual analysis consists of different scales, each associated with different methods of examination. Essentially, the neighborhood scale mapping and analysis allows for an easy transition to studying the lived spaces at a more detailed scale, documenting how people use them, and exploring how their use interprets their understanding of the notion of publicness. It is then followed by a strategic analysis of Ain Mreisseh, which involves an exploration of residual open spaces in the neighborhood, a general mapping of these spaces and their typologies at the scale of the neighborhood, and a detailed analysis of three case studies.

A socio-cultural analysis and stakeholder mapping section is broken down into a social profile of the neighborhood (old residents, tenants, new comers, and transients), social collectives and neighborhood initiatives, and stakeholders. The different networks that will be found through this section would help inform the implementation and stakeholder strategies for the design interventions.

Finally, the chapter is closed with the general findings from the analysis and lessons learned from existing practices in Ain Mreisseh.

3.1.3. *Sources of Data*

The data is collected through archival resources and previously published works, field mapping and observations, and online resources. Research using available data, legislative and historical maps, is essential in order to identify the potential of proposing any interventions in the area. Mapping includes all sort of data needed from the built environment, building heights and conditions, identity markers, urban transformations, transportation movements, and the different layers of left-over spaces like streets, alleys, old buildings, and rights of way. Mental mapping of the old and new resident's perceptions of the area was also essential in relating to their imagination and affiliating to the neighborhood. The research incorporated some observations and mapping of people's routes of movement around the area, and the ways in which they appropriated certain spaces. A mapping of collective and individual actions as an attempt to preserve the neighborhood's identity was one of the key element of the detailed analysis on the block scale.

An important aspect is the oral history provided by the original residents of the neighborhood. The oral history was documented through formal and informal interviews with different informant by Dr. Chbaro in his book '*Ain Mreisseh*'. These informants included the fishermen, the original residents of the neighborhood, some of the original families who moved from the area, and the people who work in the neighborhood. These documentations represent the memories and experiences in the neighborhood, the people's dearest places, and the spatial practices that used to take place. The oral history has a role in assisting the mapping of spatial potentials and prioritizing site interventions based on the importance of certain spaces and their significance to the neighborhood.

Note that the 2004 cadastral base map was updated by a colleague and myself in order to document the conditions of the different spaces in the neighborhood as they are today.

3.1.4. *Gaps and Limitations*

The main gap in the research methodology is that it is not highly based on personal interviews or neighborhood group discussions. The reason why these interviews will not be used in this research is to avoid redundancy and exclusivity of the findings. Interviews were conducted with members of the community in Ain Mreisseh; however, these did not cover a vast diversity of users. Several social profiles were not accessible, thus making the findings subjective to one social group.

3.2. Contextual Analysis

3.2.1. *Connectivity*

Ain El-Mreisseh is characterized with a prime coastal location and geography. On the city level, it stretches within the eastern side of the Beirut municipal district of Dar Mreisseh. It is also referred to be part of the greater area of Ras Beirut. It is connected to the rest of the city through the ring road and to the rest of the city neighborhood through important city streets (Figure 23). However, these connectors are peripheral to the neighborhood, meaning they do not cut through it. This has allowed the neighborhood to preserve its village like quality, having the heavy traffic go around

it instead of through it. On the other hand, the neighborhood suffers some isolation because of the many factors explained below.



Figure 23: Connectivity of Ain Mreisseh with respect to the city and its surrounding (Gebara, H., 2016)

Ain Mreisseh spreads down the hill to the northern coast of the city. The area's borders can be officially delimited by The American University to the west, Beirut Central district (Hotel district) to the East and Clemenceau to the South. It is a relatively small walkable neighborhood with an evident coastal identity and a relatively old urban fabric. The neighborhood is well connected to the rest of the city as explained above. However, it has suffered physical isolation due to three factors (Figure 24). The first is the expansion of the American University of Beirut; which has over the years expanded towards Ain Mreisseh through buying properties from Ain Mreisseh residents and expanding its gates and walls, preventing Ain Mreisseh to be part of the territory. The second factor is represented by the steep slopes between Clemenceau Street and Ain Mreisseh which creates a natural barrier to the neighborhood. The third factor is the

Beirut Central District ring road which created an infrastructural break separating the neighborhood from the center of the city center, and which creates unfriendliness of pedestrian activity between the two areas. After all, the coastal promenade – Corniche – remains the best connector to the neighborhood and the most popular.

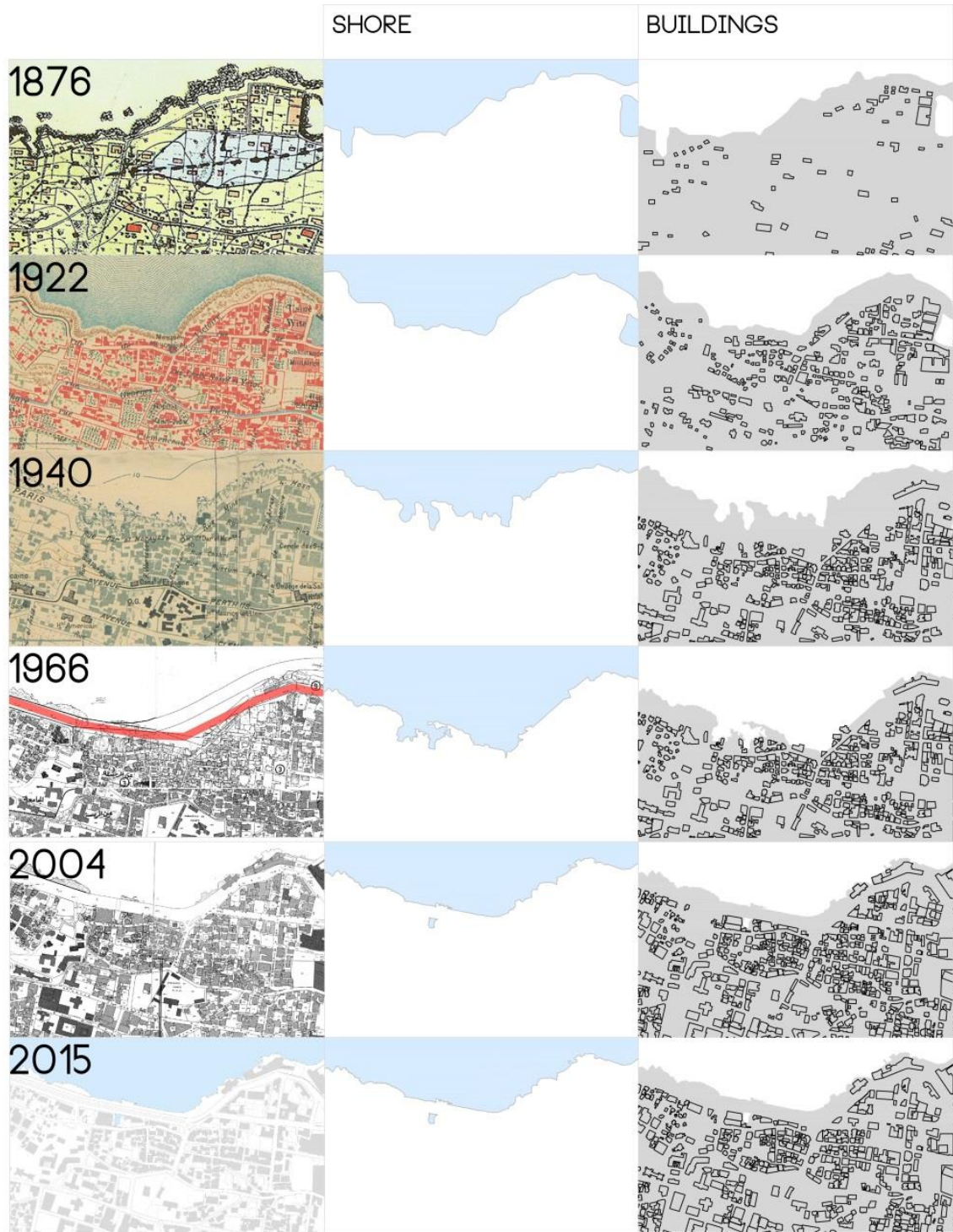


Figure 24: Ain Mreisseh connectivity to its surrounding neighborhoods (Source:Gebra, H.)

3.2.2. *Historical Analysis*

Much like the rest of Beirut, Ain Mreisseh has been gradually subject to urban transformations which caused the changes in its physical urban fabric, and its social construct. In this section, I will explain the different stages of transformation and the implications on the neighborhood's character and identity through an analysis of a set of historical maps from 1876 till 2015. The analysis studies the change in the form of the shore, the built environment, the lot divisions, sizes of blocks, and the streets.

3.2.2.1. Development of the urban fabric of Ain Mreisseh



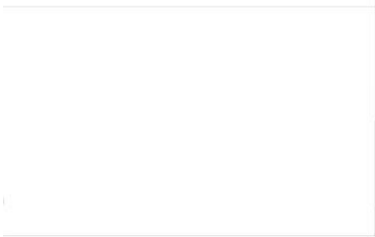
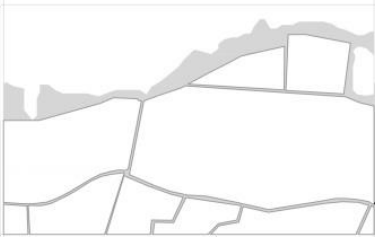



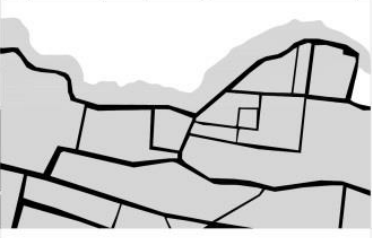

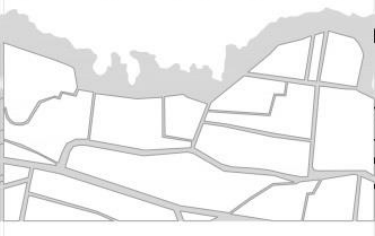
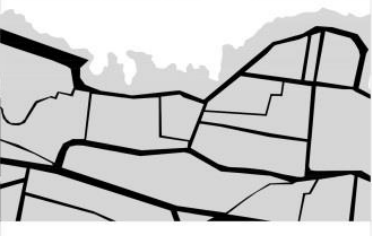


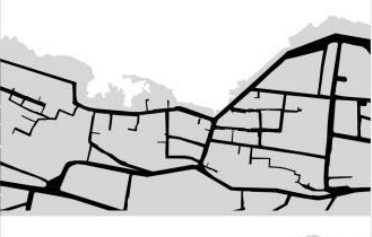

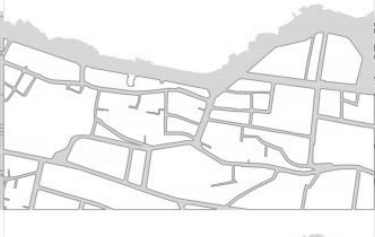




LOTS	BLOCKS	STREETS
		
		
		
		
		
		

Table 1: Historical urban transformation of Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

The historical analysis of urban transformation of Ain Mreisseh allows us to think of several significant periods of change in the life of the neighborhood that can be summarized as follows:

1876: Peri-urban Ain Mreisseh

- Ain Mreisseh was still considered a peri-urban area, being set outside the city's walls
- Buildings are scattered, and the area shows low built-up density with small surface areas. Most buildings seem oriented towards the sea (North). The Mosque appears to be the oldest and the only remaining building structure since that period
- There are no clear lot boundaries in this map. Land was mainly used for agriculture and orchards
- Most of the people in the area were fishermen, divers, and farmers
- Blocks can be considered as undefined, relatively because the streets are built to service buildings and connect the area to the city center. This shows that the streets were informed by the locations of buildings and their orientation

1922: Urbanization of Ain Mreisseh

- An apparent transition from being an agricultural peri-urban area to urbanization is shown in this period
- An increase in the number of buildings from 73 to 280
- A clear subdivision of properties and the establishment of new roads

1940: Urban stability and introduction of a new form of public space (Corniche)

- The creation of the Corniche and the change in some street names, like Rue de Victoire became Rue Dar Mraysse and Rue Minet El Hosn, and Rue Georges Picot
-

became Avenue Perthus

- The area shows a relative stability in the urban change from 1922 and 1940

1966: Urban regeneration of Ain Mreisseh

- A very slight increase in building densities, but change in the building character (introduction of modern buildings)
- A clear subdivision of lots and a clear demarcation of private properties and public properties (shown in the form of rights of way)
- An increase porosity of the neighborhood
- The planning of the extension of Corniche and Rue Ibn Sina appears in the cadastral

2004: Densification and change in the nature of public space

- Extension of the Corniche in 1974, leading to the destruction of traditional houses on the waterfront, the erasure of the coastal character of Ain Mreisseh, and the restriction to access to the sea
- The reduction of the size of the Port and the coastline, thus reducing accessibility to public places
- A relative increase in the permeability of blocks through an increase in the areas of streets, rights of way, and infrastructure connections
- There is also an increase in subdivision of lots which are the main cause of the increase in rights of way and permeability of blocks
- An increase in the built surface area and the building footprints (erection of mega buildings)

2015: Vertical densification of Ain Mreisseh

- On the eastern side we can observe that a lot of buildings have been recently
-

demolished in preparation for constructing new developments in the area, which shows less in the western area of the site.

- Increase of the size of few lots and thus the decrease in the number of individual lots in the area
 - The increase in the size of private properties within the borders of rights of way, thus preserving the porosity of the blocks in the neighborhood
 - The decrease in the surface built-up area and increase in setback areas. This is reflected in the building of high-rises which replace a number of old existing buildings >> this provides an example of opportunities for public space through the use of setbacks of high-rises.
-

Important to mention is the war period which came after the final extension of the Corniche in 1974 and which is said to have created a pause in the change of the urban morphology of the neighborhood. It has mainly caused a significant change in the social profiles and structure of the area. The post-war reconstruction boom came later and at a slower pace than that of the city center. By overlaying the different layers of the built environment throughout the years, we can observe the frequency of change in the neighborhood (Figure 25). The darker color indicates either permanence of some buildings or the more frequent change on a certain property. The lighter color indicates recent developments.



Figure 25: Frequency of urban transformation in Ain Mreisseh (Source:Gebara, H.)

3.2.2.2. Changes in building orientation

In attempt to understand the relation between building orientations, the streets, and the spaces around them, a simple exercise was done through tracing the two parallel façades of each building at a certain period of time and relating them to the street orientation. In 1922, we can see that most of the traced building façades are short with a relatively wider space between them. This indicates that the main façades were oriented towards the sea and the buildings were driven by the sea views and topography.



Figure 26: Mapping building orientation, 1922(Gebara, H., 2016)

In 1966, the density increases and some building orientations start being driven by the street form. Small spaces between the façade lines exist, indicating left-over spaces between the buildings. Some of these spaces are part of the street network, thus being rights of way. The traced lines are also aligned to the street with no setbacks.



Figure 27: Mapping building orientation, 1966(Gebara, H., 2016)

In 2004, the density decreases, the space between the building facades increases and the traced lines are longer, indicating the replacement of smaller buildings with bigger developments. Building orientations are still driven by street orientation and not views and topography. Although the buildings are becoming bigger, the edges of the traced lines are distanced from the street boundaries. This void space that we see represents the setbacks of the new developments resulting in more open spaces in front of buildings.



Figure 28: Mapping building orientation, 2004 (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.3. *Neighborhood Scale Mapping*

The context analysis of the neighborhood provides details of the neighborhood morphology and spatial features. It incorporates the presentation of the neighborhood built environment and architectural character including building heights, conditions, and land uses; mapping of the neighborhood landmarks, nodes, and views; Street hierarchy and pathways; mapping of the borders and boundaries represented through the different typed of edges; green areas and greening practices, and finally a conclusive division of the neighborhood into character zones.

3.2.3.1. Built environment and architectural character

Ain Mreisseh is characterized with its diversity in architecture and uses. A brief analysis of the architectural character of the neighborhood, the building heights and conditions, and the land uses, allow us to create a preliminary classification of the different character zones.

Generally, the evolution of the architectural character in Ain Mreisseh can be categorized as follows, the low-rise red roof tile traditional buildings, the medium-rise cement buildings, and the new high-rise developments. All three typologies came at different periods of time.

Today, the traditional buildings with their red roof tiles stand scattered between the high rises with their crumbling sandstone. After the war, a number of NGOs took it upon themselves to preserve some of these buildings as part of the cultural heritage of the neighborhood (Sawalha, 2010). However, these buildings are now being demolished and what is left is in need of protection. The inner alleys of the neighborhood are filled with cement buildings which were mostly built in the 60s or during the war. A number of these buildings still stand today and were repaired after the war by construction workers who added new floors and patched bullet holes (Sawalha, 2010). Along the coast line and in the inlands of the neighborhood, fall a high number of high-rises which have replaced traditional houses and cement buildings. These are built with bigger footprints and wide setbacks that are exclusive to its residents. The maps below provide an idea of location of the three building categories, their conditions, and the land uses.





Figure 29: pictures showing different building typologies and ages (Gebara, H., 2016)

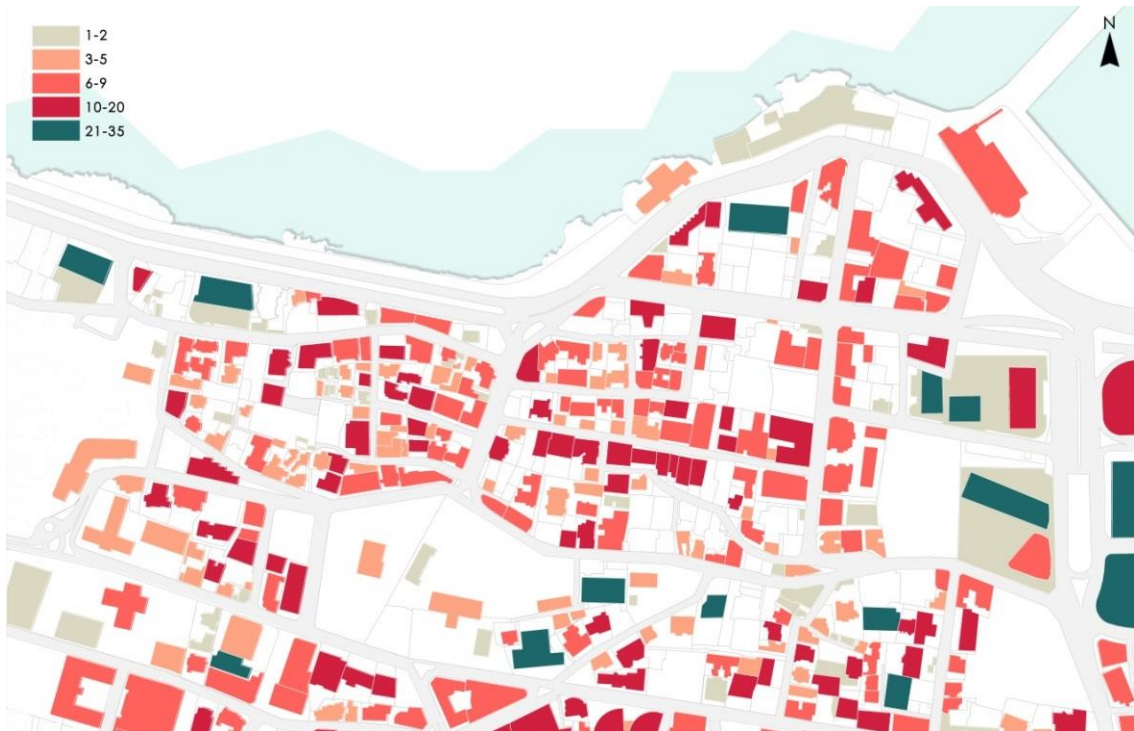


Figure 30: Building Heights in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

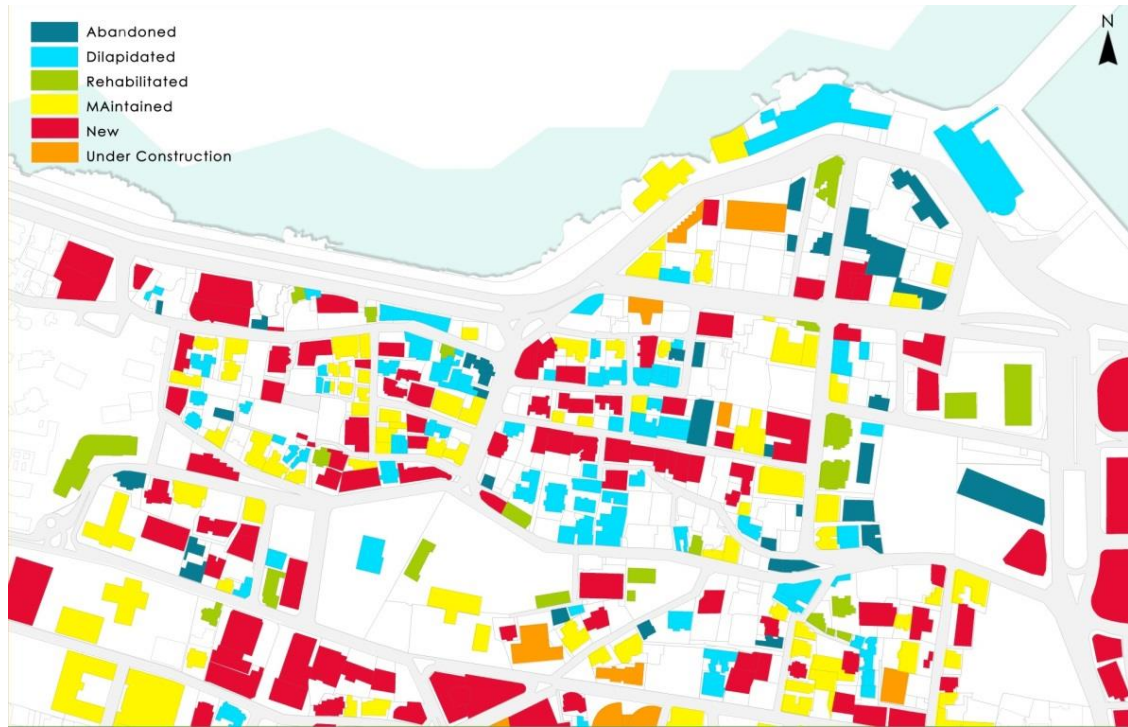


Figure 31: Building conditions in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 32: Land uses map of Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

From the above maps we conclude that there is dominance of higher buildings which are mostly either new, maintained, or under construction. Buildings which are

low rise are usually abandoned, dilapidated, and in some cases rehabilitated. There is also a dominance of residential use in the neighborhood, and a clear presence of institutional use which dominates the biggest plots. An optimistic number of empty spaces is mapped and represented by the brownfields, parking spaces, and rights of way. Note that the abandoned properties are represented in the land-use map by their original use.

3.2.3.2. Landmarks, nodes, and views

Landmarks in Ain Mreisseh can be classified into cultural, religious, socio-economic, and heritage buildings. The cultural landmarks include the Museum of Ain Mreisseh, Beirut Theater, and Beit Al-Muhtaref Alubnani (the house of the Lebanese craftsman). The Ain Mreisseh museum (Souffleur), which was named after a French submarine, was established by Ibrahim Najem in his own house. The museum is known in the neighborhood but it does not have much public exposure. Detailed explanation of the museum will be provided in the strategic analysis of the neighborhood. The Beirut Theater is the oldest theater in the city. It was renovated after the war and was put to use for a short period of time. It is currently abandoned and under threat of demolition. Beit Al-Muhtaref is an important landmark, and it includes two restaurants and an artisan shop which are very popular, mostly to people from outside the neighborhood.



Figure 33: Mapping landmarks, nodes, and views in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 34: The mosque of Ain Mreisseh (Left) and the Ain Mreisseh Museum - Souffleur (right) (Gebara, H., 2016)

The Ain Mreisseh Mosque is the only religious landmark in the neighborhood. It was built during the Ottoman period and is one of the oldest mosques in the city and has been part of all of Ain Mreisseh postcards. It represents the Sunni Muslims which the Druze helped to build. Facing the mosque is a concrete triangle symbolic of Jamal

Abdul Nasser which not only the residents of the neighborhood relate to, but also the rest of the city dweller. It is often used for directions.



Figure 35: Socio-economic landmarks (Gebara, H., 2016)

Socio-economic landmarks are often represented by the Port of Ain Mreisseh, the cafes on the coastline, local art shops, hotels, and shops. The sailing and fishing occupation is one of the oldest in Ain Mreisseh. Thus the people of Ain Mreisseh were the first Beiruty sailors and fishermen that proved skills in fishing all kind of marine animals, which made the Ain Mreisseh fishery a destination to the Beiruties, Lebanese, and foreigners.

The fishing profession in Ain Mreisseh is related to the life of a certain part of the area's community. 15% of the people in Ain Mreisseh depended on fishing as the main source of income, where they relied on the influx of tourists and foreigners who came to the area to buy fish (Chbaro, 2000). The Ain Mreisseh fishing port was the last natural fishing port in Beirut, before it was destroyed by the reclamation of the sea by restaurant, hotels, and beaches. Then the construction of the Corniche came to demolish these facilities and destroy what was left of the rocky coast. Ain Mreisseh also had the most important fishery in the city. Today, the only thing left for the fishermen is the Ain

Mreisseh fishing port which has been reduced to a minimal size due to new developments around. The fishermen still have access to the sea from under the bridge to sail their boats out of the port.



Figure 36: The fishing port cramped between highrises and barely visible (Gebara, H., 2016)

Many buildings in ain Meisseh are part of the cultural heritage of the city. Some of them are protected buildings and some others are under threat. The buildings which are not protected are mostly abandoned and can be rehabilitated and used as part of a neighborhood scale strategy to create social interaction and community empowerment.



Figure 37: Heritage building in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 38: A neighborhood with a traditional character (Gebara, H., 2016)

Views to the sea from the ground floor level are very few due to the presence of high rises and the blocking of the sea by different types of development.



Figure 39: Visual corridors in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

The most important landmark in the neighborhood is Dar El-Raysse (The house of the Raysse). This particular spot is located on what used to be the Normandy beach and related to the story of how Ain Mreisseh took its name. The location is where

a nun arrived on sea at the port and settled. The fishermen offered her a home. She started teaching their children how to read and right, and became a focal person in the neighborhood. Residents used to light candles every Thursday night and head to the spot where she used to stay and leave the candles lit. It became a kind of ritual to commemorate the value of Raysse. This practice has died with the older generation, and is now rarely practiced. The Normandy beach is now backfilled and no longer exists. It has become a residual space is still a public property.



Figure 40: The previous Jamal and Normandy Beach - years unknown (Source: Ibrahim Najem archive)



Figure 41: The previous Jamal and Normandy Beach after backfilling of the port (Source: Atallah)



Figure 42: The Jamal and Normandy Beach today - another residual space (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.3.3. Street hierarchy



Figure 43: Street hierarchy and pathways in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

As mentioned before, Ain Mreisseh neighborhood falls within a walking distance. It is well connected and has a sufficient number of streets.

- City scale connectors surround the neighborhood from the Northern and Eastern sides. These are wide streets with difficult pedestrian crossing and heavy traffic during peak hours.



Figure 44: City scale connectors (Gebara, H., 2016)

- The primary streets are the streets that are mostly used and known to people from outside the neighborhood. These cater for heavy traffic, especially at peak hours since they connect to Hamra and Bliss Streets. Sidewalks of these streets are not suitable for walking; they are tight and often non-existent.



Figure 45: Primary streets in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

- The secondary streets are tight and incorporate slow traffic which makes them adequate for future pedestrianisation or to become more pedestrian friendly. Secondary streets either connect directly to rights of way or to pedestrian pathways in

the neighborhood. These streets do not always have sidewalks. When they do, they are not pedestrian friendly and are sometimes appropriated by residents or businesses.



Figure 46: The state of secondary streets in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

- The rights of way allow for car access to certain properties, connect between different plots, and often incorporate social practices and spatial appropriation based on certain kinds of negotiations between the different residents.



Figure 47: Rights of way in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

- Pedestrian pathways are block-scale passageways which are responsible for the neighborhood's permeability. These pathways are either official cadastral lots which were the leftovers of city planning processes, or are unofficial pathways created through certain development constraints like setbacks.



Figure 48: Pedestrian pathways in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.3.4. Edges: Border and Boundaries



Figure 49: Borders and Boundaries in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

In relation to the pathways, connectivity, and permeability of the neighborhood, the study of the edges and status they deliver to space is important to understand the degrees of segregation and coexistence in the neighborhood. Boundaries, which are closed and impermeable, go around institutions, construction sites, and new residential developments. In some cases, building frontages form boundaries on their own due to

their side to side attachment and the absence of side setbacks. Parking lots, properties occupied by old buildings, and abandoned lots are mostly permeable through their borders which are open; the fencing does not have a closing element, openable; the fence can be easily opened by the user or pedestrian, or even transpassable, in cases where the border is represented by a chain or an obstacle for vehicular access. Note that this mapping was based on pedestrian accessibility only. A detailed spatial analysis that presents the different understandings of border and boundaries and the ways in which people delineate their properties is presented in the strategic analysis section.

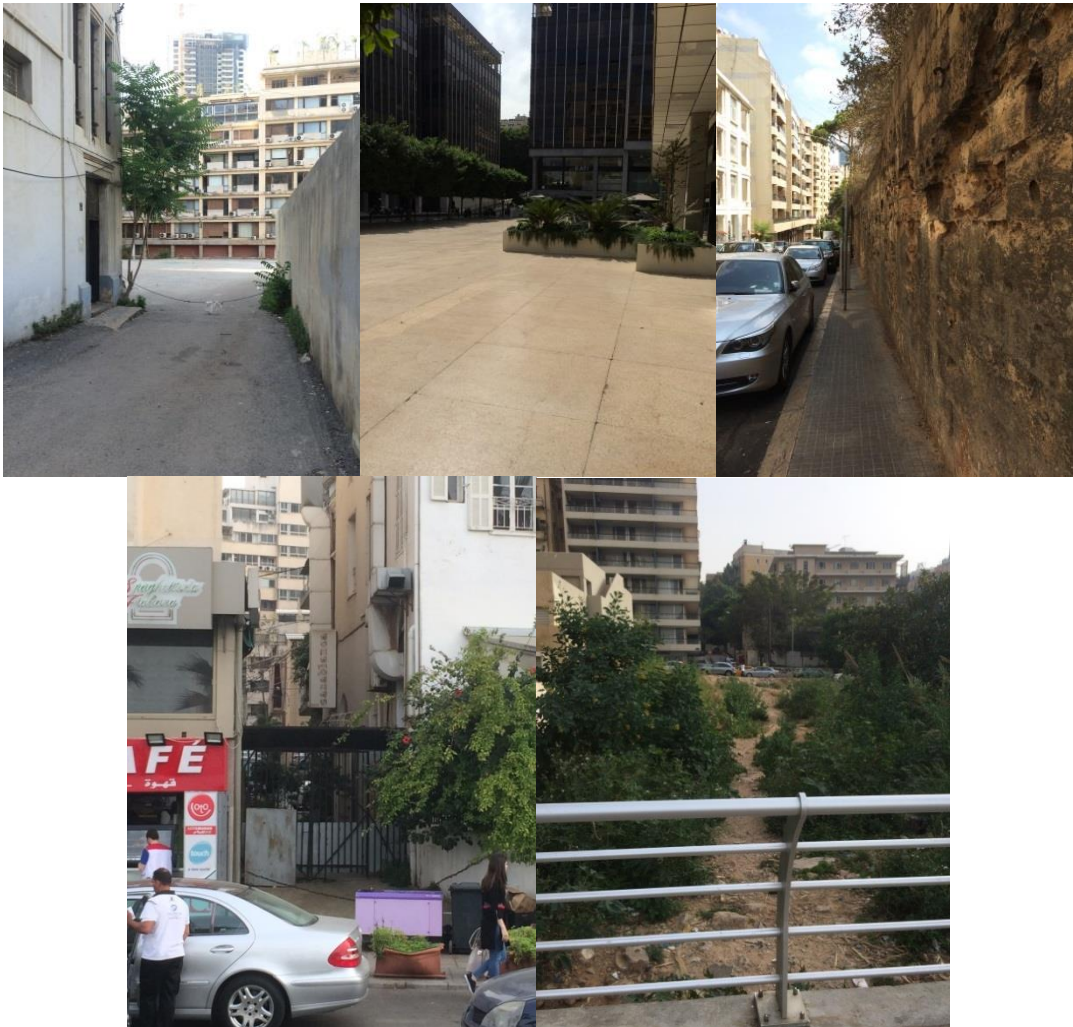


Figure 50: Borders and Boundaries in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.3.5. Green Areas and Greening Practices

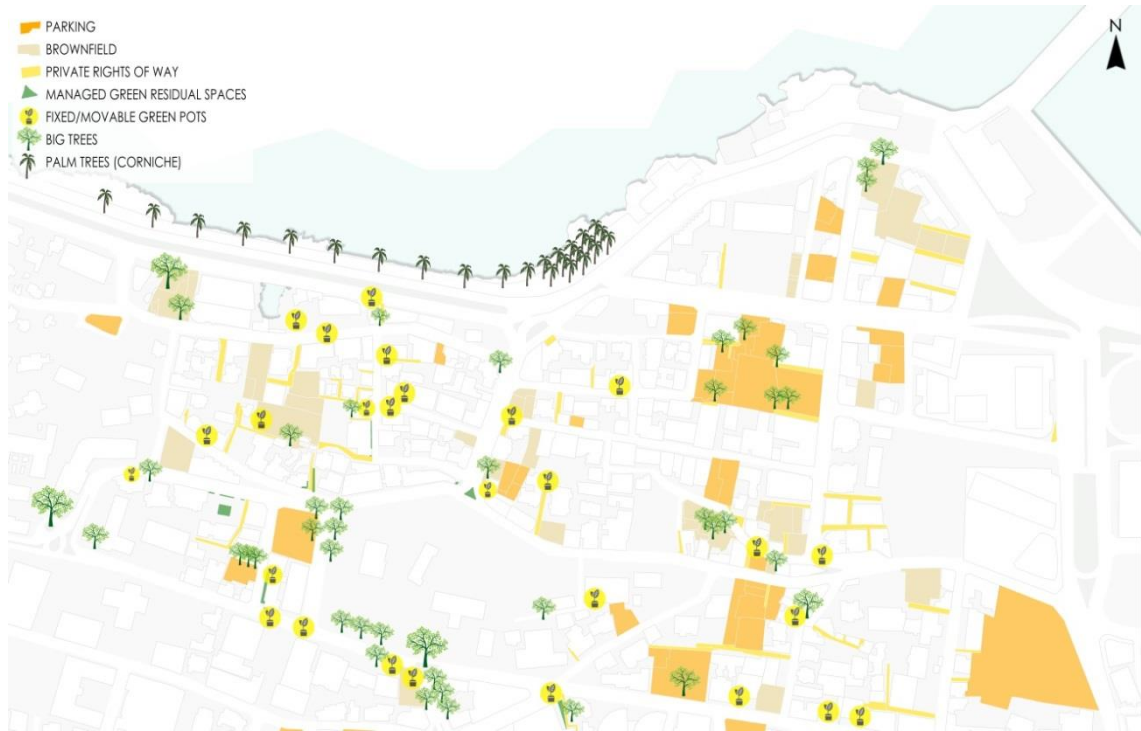


Figure 51: Green areas and greening practices in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

Mapping the neighborhood landscape was very essential to evaluate the importance of greening practices and the remaining green areas, in addition to looking at what this landscape provides of opportunities for intervention priorities.



Figure 52: Unmaintained green spaces (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 53: Movable green pots in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 54: appropriation of the street through green post and containers (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 55: Roof garden above the Ain Mreisseh museum (Gebara, H., 2016)

Throughout the neighborhood, we find different types of green spaces, brown fields or green abandoned lots, and managed green spaces found in street medians and building setbacks. Big trees were mapped as being important landscape landmarks in the neighborhood and which are found scattered all around. Greening and flower pots are a very dominant landscape feature often used by dwellers to delineate their properties or even the spaces they have appropriated. In some case we find movable or

fixed pots, green customized barricades, and planted trash containers. In Figure 54, we see how part of the public realm is appropriated by a street café which uses flower pots and planted trash containers to delineate a space for sitting.

An important shift in greening and landscape practices appears while comparing new and old developments. Old properties usually incorporate fruitful trees while new ones only incorporate evergreen or deciduous trees. This is important to take into consideration while looking at reviving old spatial practices in the neighborhood.



Figure 56: Urban agriculture (left) and green spaces for decoration (right) (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.3.6. Substandard Lots

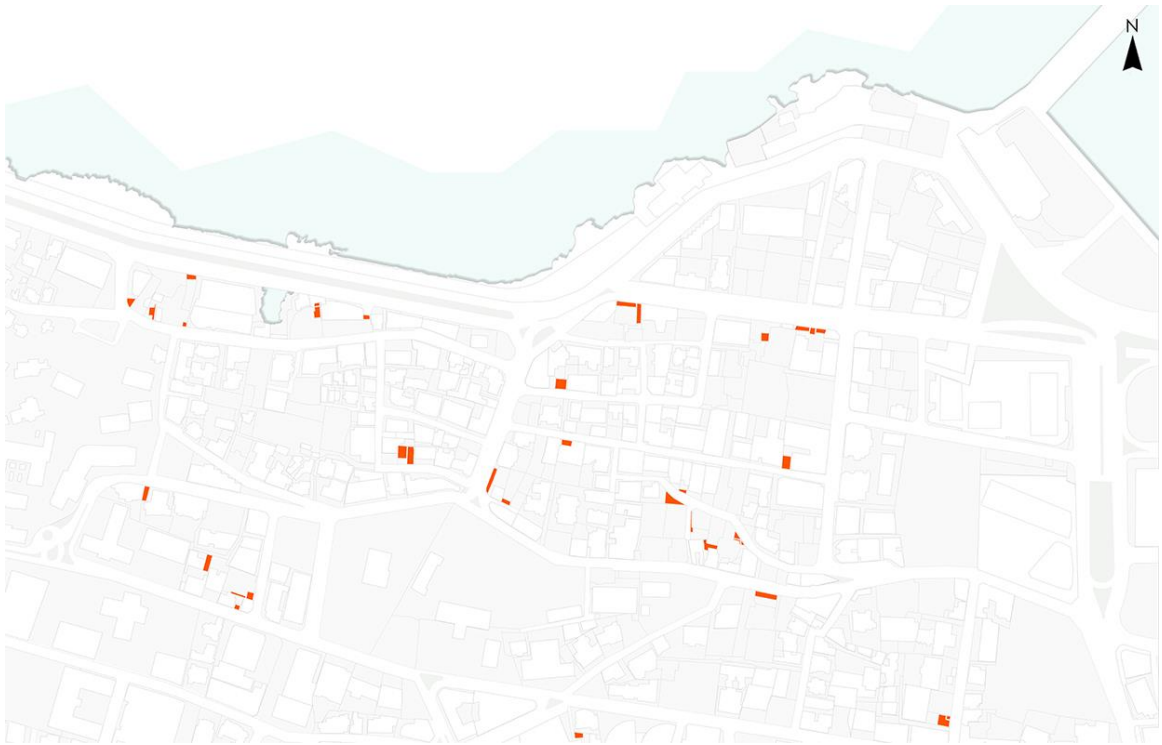


Figure 57: Mapping substandard lots in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

Ain Mreisseh falls under cadastral zone 3. The building law restricts construction on lots that have an area below 120 m² in this zone. These lots are called substandard lots in which developers mostly buy from their owners who cannot build on them and join them to surrounding lots, allowing them to invest on these properties. In the above map, substandard ‘empty lots’ were mapped, and which can be negotiated to be used as left-over or underutilized spaces. Substandard lots which are part of an existing development or a planned development were disregarded.

3.2.3.7. Character areas

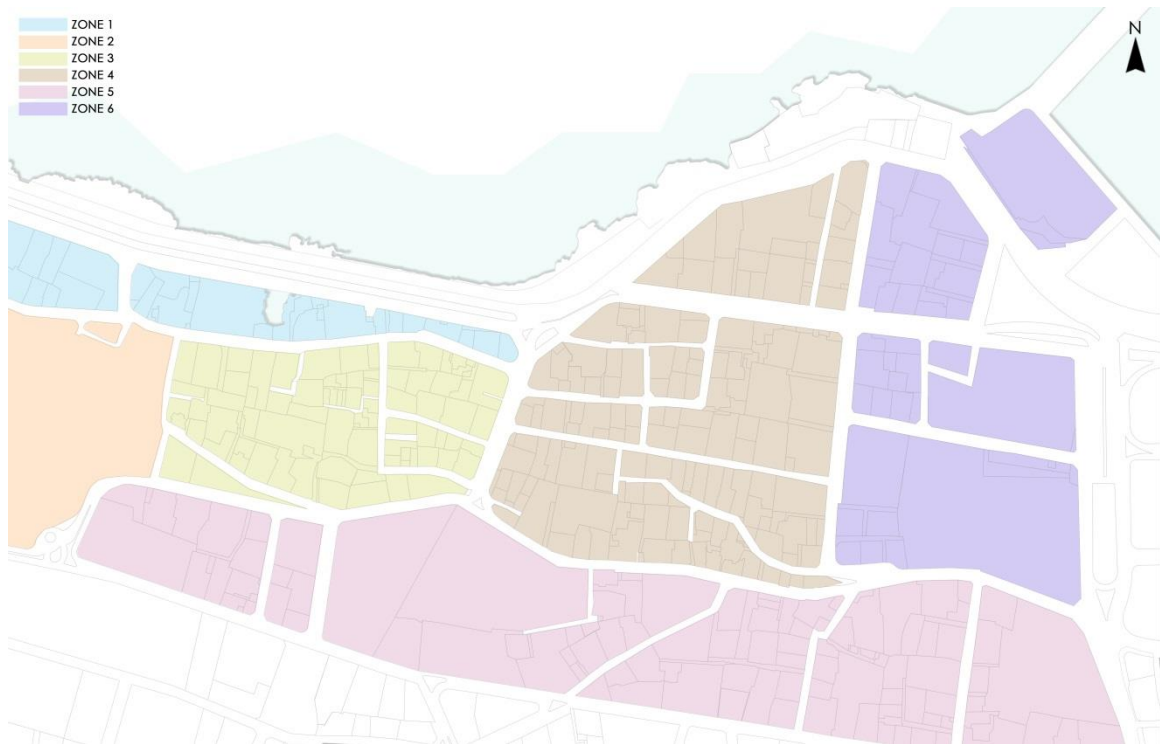


Figure 58: Character zones in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

As a conclusion to the context analysis section, the above map divides the neighborhood into six character zones.

- Zone 1: the waterfront zone. It is exclusive with new high rises and isolates the old fabric from the Corniche, making it almost non-existent to the wanderers on the coast. The only opportunity to create a connection could be through the post.
- Zone 2: AUB, which forms an isolated zone and boundary for the neighborhood
- Zone 3: The old fabric zone. This zone has witnessed change but at a very slow pace. It presents an unofficial permeability to pedestrians to experience hidden treasures and green spaces.

- Zone 4: The fast-forward development zone.
- Zone 5: Mixed zone
- Zone 6: Hotel zone. This zone is usually isolated and not very friendly to

pedestrians. It has also been stigmatized and marginalized after the civil war, which has led many of the properties to be abandoned, thus making the area less attractive.

3.2.4. Strategic Spatial Analysis

3.2.4.1. Mapping Residual Open spaces and their typologies



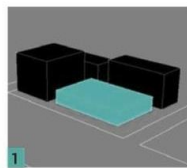
Figure 59: Mapping residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



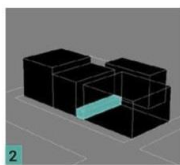
Figure 60: Ownership status of residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

Residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh were divided based on the conceptual framework. These spaces are divided into non-spaces (rights of way, median strips, and stairs), left-over spaces (setbacks, underpasses, traffic islands, and odd geometric shapes), dual spaces (parking lots), open spaces (Abandoned lots), and abandoned buildings. All of these are opportunistic spaces for future intervention and activity programming. They are also divided into public and private. We can conclude that most of these spaces are private.

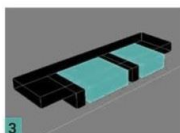
Below are examples from the site based on the detailed categorization of residual spaces by villagomez.



1
VOID SPACES:
Underutilized Spaces

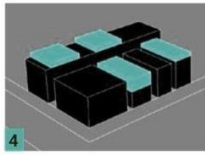


2
REDUNDANT INFRASTRUCTURES:
Infrastructure which is not in use anymore

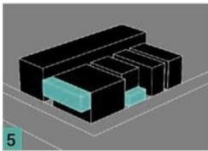


3
SPACES BELOW:
Spaces below infrastructural elements such as spaces under bridges

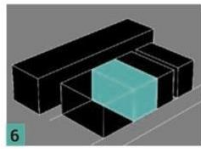




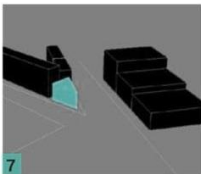
ROOFTOPS:
Underutilized spaces of buildings



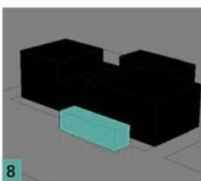
SPACES AROUND



SPACES BETWEEN



WEDGES



OVERSIZED INFRASTRUCTURE:
Overestimated spaces for traffic



Figure 61: Examples of the different physical typologies of residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

Ain Mreisseh has been affected by a public perception that refers to it as the area of the Corniche and the coast line developments, while the inlands are often overlooked as part of the neighborhood. People often look at the sea and give their backs to the neighborhood. If we look behind the coastline, we find many dominant spatial features, like the many remaining green lots where urban farming used to take place, the *zawarib* (narrow alleyways) which constitute the main feature of the neighborhood's old fabric and the different negotiations over space, and the many stairs which connect the neighborhood.

Many of the remaining green lots are residues of the greening and farming practices in the neighborhood. A lot of the houses had gardens, and some even included orchards. What we find today are traces of the old orchards and gardens of the neighborhood. Three years ago on Rawda Street, a house incorporated a garden, an orchard, and even some animals like chicken and ducks. The house and garden have been replaced by a construction site that belongs to the owners of the old building.



Figure 62: A construction site replaces an old building on Rawda Street (Gebara, H., 2016)

- *Zawarib (Alleyways)*

Alleyways are an important feature of the old fabric. These spaces are often used for parking and allow access from one plot to another. Some of these spaces are

appropriated for social activity like sitting in the sun, socializing, playing cards and back-gammon. Few of these spaces disappeared due to development or expansion, like in the case of AUB. The expansion of AUB has long been tightening the western borders of Ain Mreisseh. It has been buying land from the inhabitants to extend its area or in some cases to create parking spaces. It demolished all of the properties it was able to buy. However, one building, whose owner, Chaker Al-Aris, refused to sell, ended up in the heart of the campus (Chbaro, 2000). The Alleyway which was called “Zaroub Al-Mheb”, named after the family that was living there, disappeared. People still refer to that area as Zaroub Al-Mheb.



Figure 63: Spatial features in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

- *Stairs of Ain Mreisseh*

Ain Mreisseh is rich with stairs due to its topographic character. The Ain Mreisseh stairs (Daraj Ain Mreisseh) connect John Kennedy streets to post street. It was made of 78 stone steps filled with colored gravel before it has been replaced with

concrete steps and stone cladding. It is a main connector and usually used by the residents, students, and workers in the neighborhood. It also connects Hamra and Bliss to the Corniche zone.

Fifty meters away is another stairs with 42 steps that connects to Rawda Street. These stairs are more intimate and provide access to several building entrances. Sometimes children play on these stairs. Another special set of stairs are Daraj Al-Kantara (stairs of the Arch) which end at an abandoned structure of stone arches. In the eastern part of the neighborhood, is a set of wooden stairs that was built by the concierge of a nearby parking lot as a shortcut for himself and passersby.



Figure 64: The different stairs in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.2.4.2. Mapping Everyday Social Activity and Practices in Ain Mreisseh

Before the war, Ain Mreisseh's coastal character attracted tourists, fishermen, and divers. Its open views brought about different leisure businesses from cafes, nightclubs, and beaches. Most of the businesses were owned and managed by the local residents of Ain Mreisseh, like the Jamal, Nsouli, and Sibli families (Chbaro, 2000). Generally, residents living on the coast mostly adopted activities revolving around the sea, from fishing to diving, and in other cases they worked in businesses related to sea tourism and leisure activities.

However, in the inlands, people were mostly involved in farming and agriculture. Locals mainly practiced their social relations in two ways, either through informal encounters on the streets and alleyways, or through gatherings at their terraces and yards, the mosque, cafés, or the coast (Chbaro, 2000). Residents used to grow their own fruits and vegetables, engage in neighborhood activities, and organize community events. At that time, there were no completely private spaces, even their houses were opened to visitors, the gardens were completely accessible with no borders, and the sea was for all. This somehow gave the residents a culture of openness and connectivity.

After the war, many activities changed. Sea related culture has diminished and is now mostly limited to the port. Socio-economic activities have reduced, and so did tourism in the area. Regarding social space, most of the original residents kept certain permeability to the street, both visual and physical. Keeping this permeability allowed the old residents to preserve some of their social relations and allowed to keep some interactions with the passersby. Some created their own social space like in the case of the museum and the port. And some simply gathered in neighborhood shops and cafes.

A mapping exercise was done in attempt to map the types of neighborhood activities at different times a day. People were found sitting on folding chairs in parking lots and in front of shops. Some others were shopping in the local grocery shops of bakeries. Some people were just passersby. Most concentration of activity was on the Corniche, around AUB, Clemeceau, and Jefinor.



Figure 65: An abstract mapping of the social activities in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 66: The different ways of demarcating space through using furniture (Gebara, H., 2016)

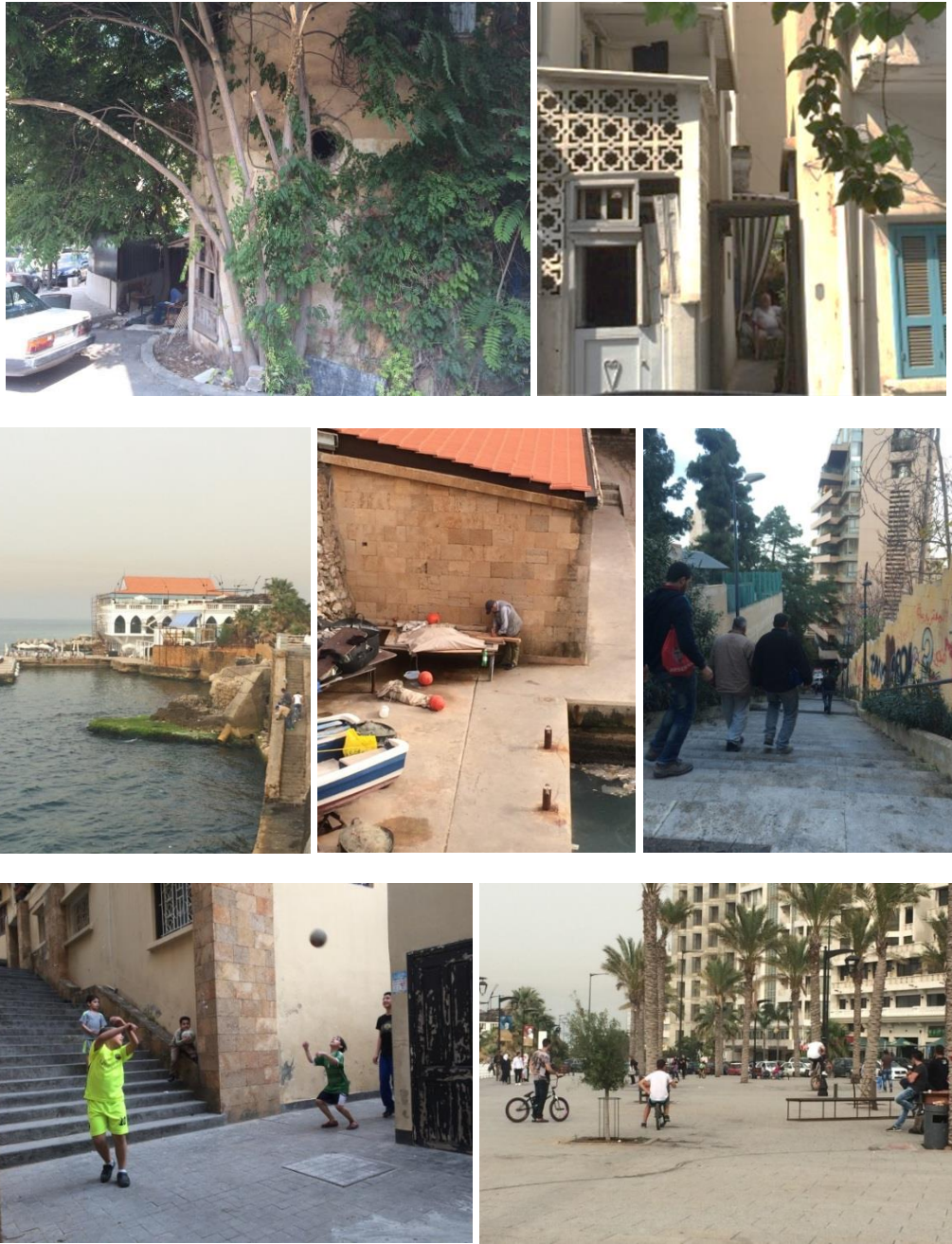












Figure 67: The different social activities in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

There is a relatively acceptable pedestrian movement inside the neighborhood. Some residents move around and do their everyday activities, some are just passersby, and some children play. This requires the instigation of interventions and the stimulation of public activities based on possible common denominators that could bring the different people together.

3.2.4.3. The state of residual left-over spaces in Ain Mreisseh

This section provides simple comparative examples of the state of residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh. Here before and after images are shown, the older images date back to 2002 and the later ones were taken in 2015. In some cases these residual spaces have improved and others are in state of deterioration.

	Before	After
<p>The stairs that lead to Rawda Street were recently renovated and widened. Although the sand stone wall has been replaced by a new stone cladding wall, the stairs are more welcoming and are wide enough to be noticed by stranger. These stairs are opportunistic spaces for future activities and interventions.</p>		
<p>This threshold space, which was a transitional zone between the private and semi-public space, has been closed with a wire mesh and allows less interaction of the residents with the neighbors.</p>		

<p>This right of way which allows access to several properties has been practically the same; only few improvements were made (wall pant).</p>		
<p>The state of these stairs, which are considered a right of way on the cadastral map, has deteriorated and is no less welcoming. It now provides access for workers at the construction site.</p>		
<p>Previously a parking lot, this abandoned residual lot has turned into a green field which holds potential for activities that bring about social interaction in the neighborhood.</p>		





<p>Daraj Al-Kantara (the stairs of the Arch) has gone through minimal change in the way it looks; random flora has been planted on the side. The old building has been replaced by a construction site.</p>		
<p>Ain Mreisseh stairs have been renovated and concrete stairs with stone cladding have replaced the old steps with colored stones.</p>		

Table 2: Comparative table on the state of residual spaces in Ain Mreisseh (2002/2015) (Sources: Alamuddine, H., 2002, Gebara, H., 2015)

3.2.4.4. Three case study areas

In this section, the strategic analysis moves to the scale of the details of the site, looking at how spaces are appropriated, the different borders and boundaries of space, the patterns of negotiation over the use of space, and how the different spaces generate different movement and activity patterns. Three cases are analyzed. The first two cases present examples of old neighborhood fabric, and the third present a more recently developed fabric.



Figure 68: Key map showing the three case studies for detailed analysis (Gebara, H., 2016)

- Case study 1:

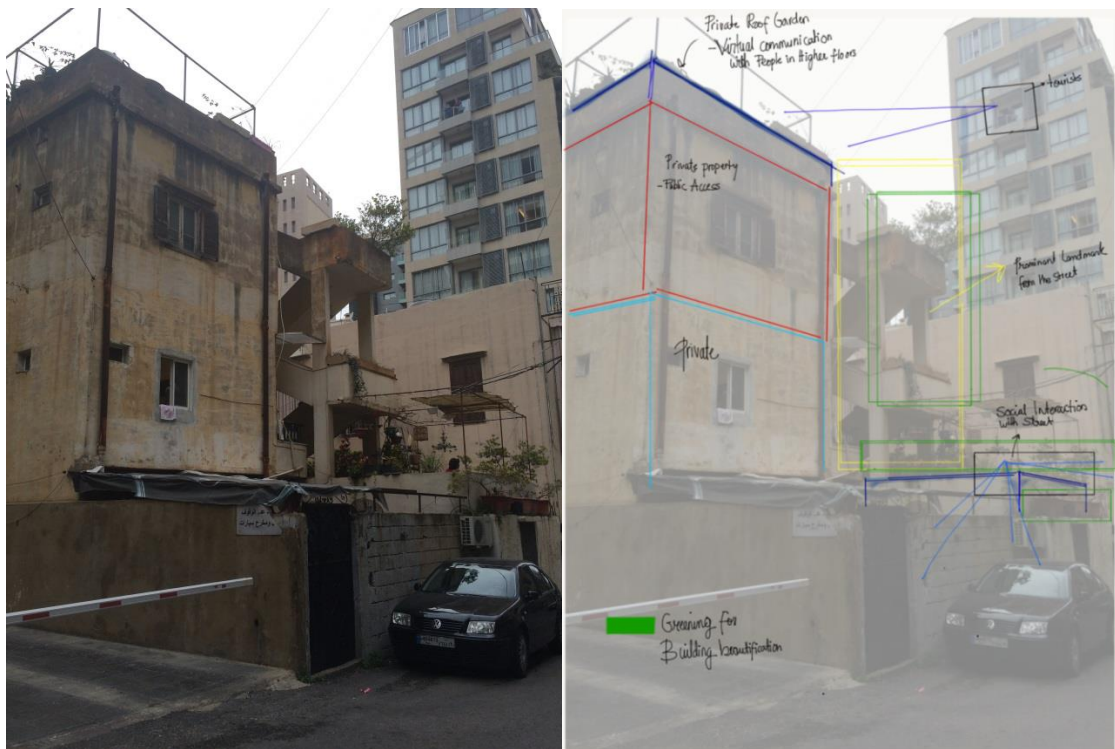


Figure 69: The building of the Souffleur museum presenting different spatial uses (private/semi-private)

People prefer to be where there are other people. “If the choice is between sitting in a private backyard or in a semiprivate front yard with a view to the street, people will often choose the front of the house where there is more to see.” (Gehl J. , 2001)

This completely relates to Ain Mreisseh’s old generation and old way of living. Ibrahim najem is always seen sitting under his vine tree on his terrace. He sits on a strategic road intersection which gives him visual access to 3 streets. No passerby can go unnoticed and mostly even without having a conversation with him. Not only does he social from his balcony, he also invites people over to socialize on his terrace as well. He has turned his balcony into a public social space instead of being a private space, even for strangers. At the roof, he created a spectacular garden which provides a

statement to his neighbors in the high rises, that his building is beautiful despite being old and not having any special architectural features.

In the back space, women sit around a table and socialize. For women, it is more comfortable to sit in the backyards where they can find more privacy and less exposure to the street.

In the studied right of way, negotiations over spaces happen simultaneously. What we see on the cadastral map does not really interpret what we see on the ground. The real lines drawn between what is public, semi-private, and private are overseen. The residual spaces from the setbacks are used to park the cars, and what is left of these spaces is usually used as a social space. People use heavy or fixed furniture to demarcate their territory, or movable furniture or elements in case of appropriation of someone else's property. If negotiations need to happen, they are mostly verbal and based on mutual understanding of the benefits of using a space.

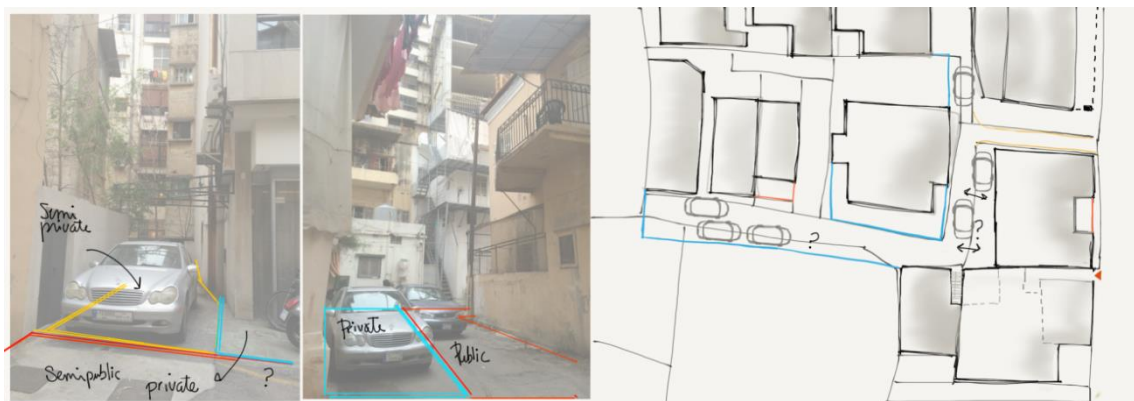


Figure 70: Comparative analysis between the reality of borders between private and public properties (Gebara, H., 2016)

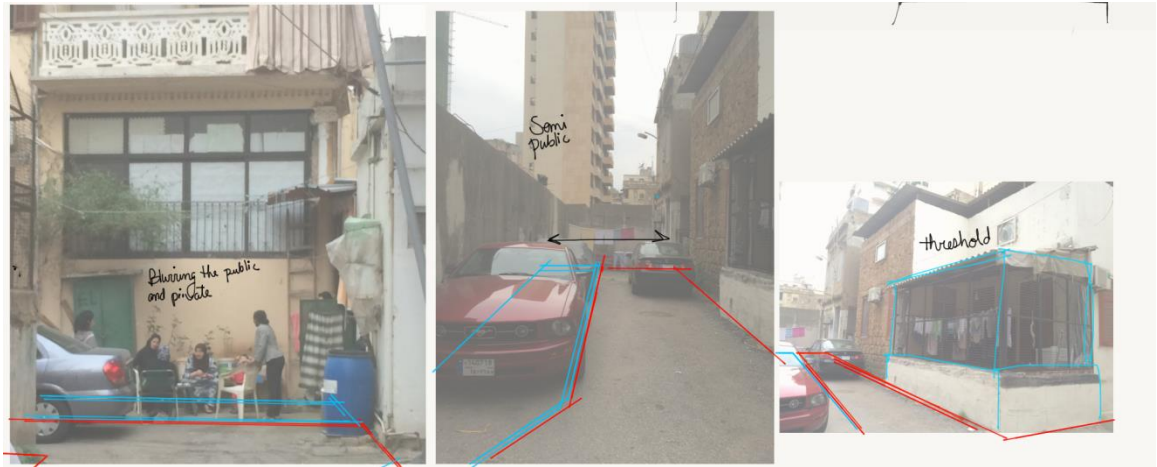


Figure 71: Comparative analysis between the reality of borders between private and public properties and the uses of these spaces (Gebara, H., 2016)

- Case study 2:



Figure 72: The two properties A and B incorporating several buildings (Gebara, H., 2016)

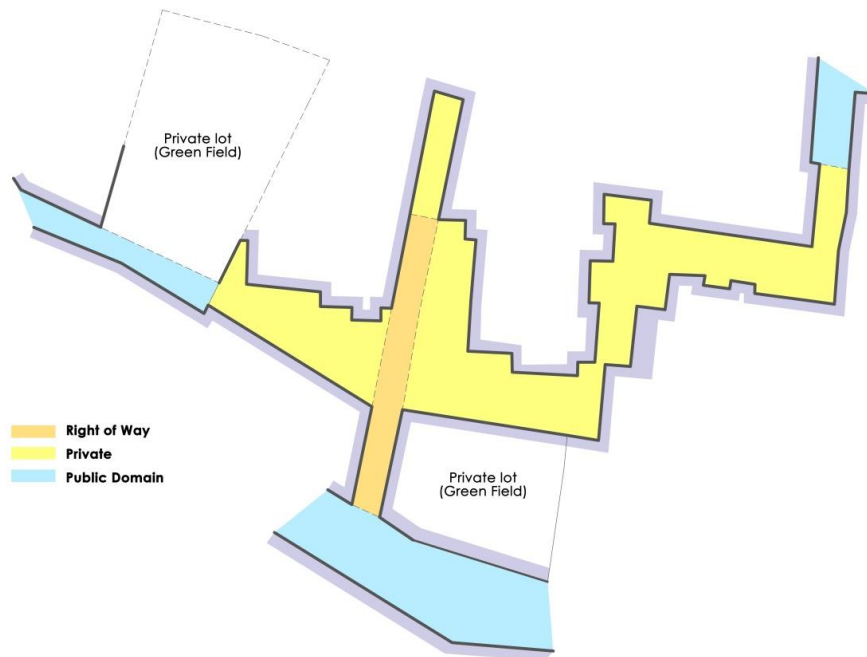


Figure 73: Status of residual spaces in Case study area 2 (Gebara, H., 2016)



Figure 74: The current state of the residual spaces in case study area 2 (Gebara, H., 2016)

This case study was chosen based on the uniqueness of the spatial configuration. It includes two of the few cases in the neighborhood where a single lot incorporates several buildings. This indicates that the use and sharing of space require formal and

informal types of codes and negotiations. In this case, the two studied lots are connected by a right of way which gives a feeling of access to a residential complex.

The development of lot A has created a residual space between the two buildings which is used by the residents to access the building entrances. This space is accessible from one side only, and is paved and gated in a way that would indicate the private state of the space.

Lot B includes three buildings that incorporate a left-over space used as a parking space for residents and as a pathway and shortcut by the neighborhood residents. Attempts to improve the liveliness of this space can be seen through the initiative of one resident to paint wall separating the property from a green empty lot. This empty lot is now abandoned after being occupied by an old building; based on what is seen in the historical maps. It is a relatively small lot which is not attractive for development and was left for nature to take over.

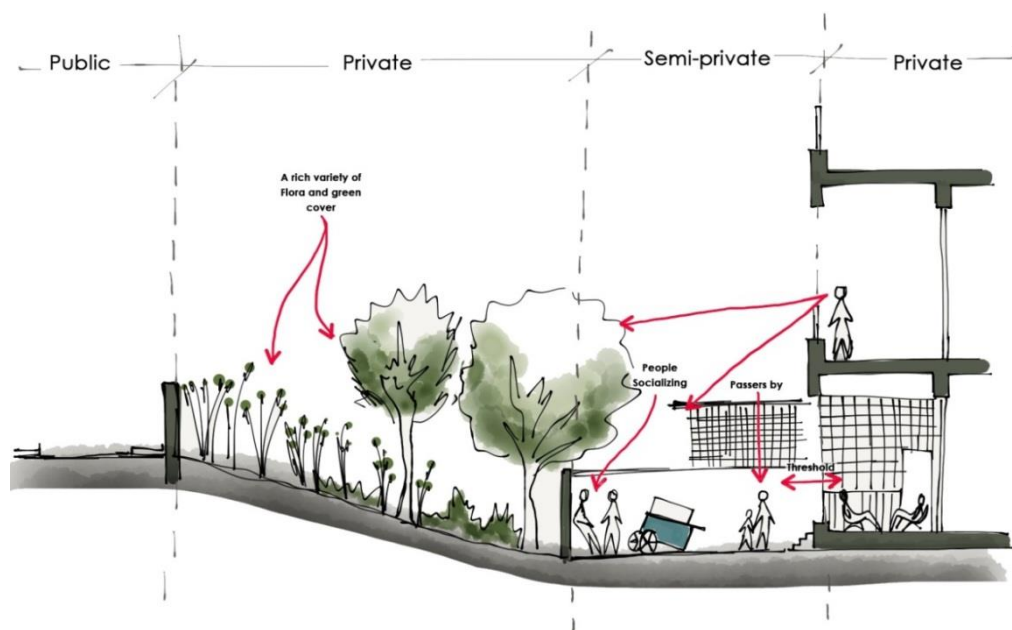
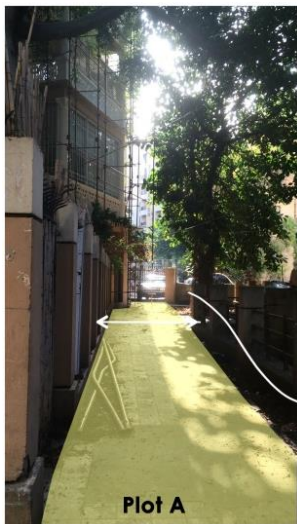


Figure 75: Section showing the status and use of residual spaces in case study area 2 (Gebara, H., 2016)



Case study 3:

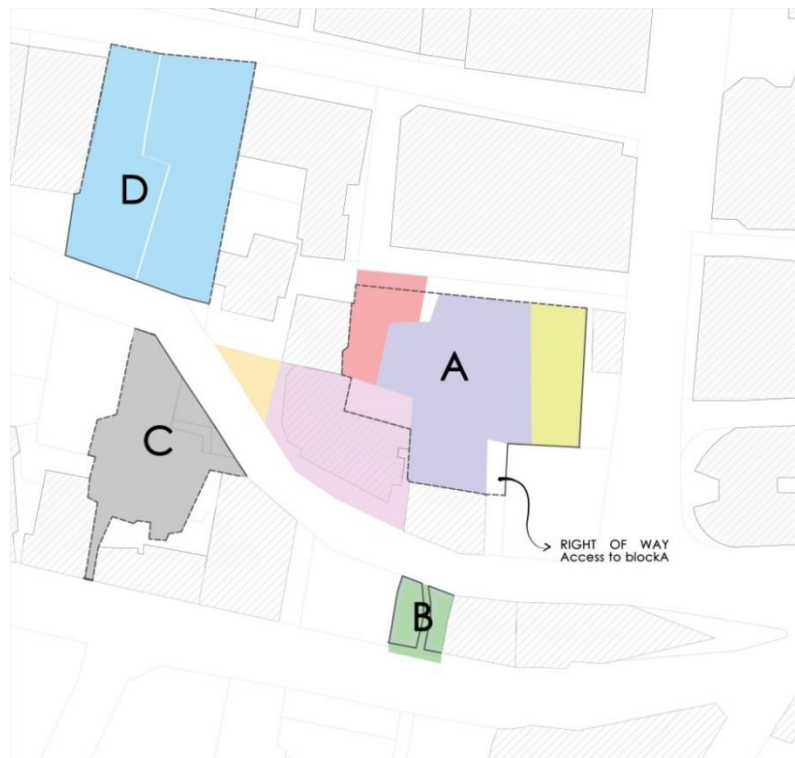


Figure 76: The distribution of residual spaces and lots in case study area 3 (Gebara, H., 2016)

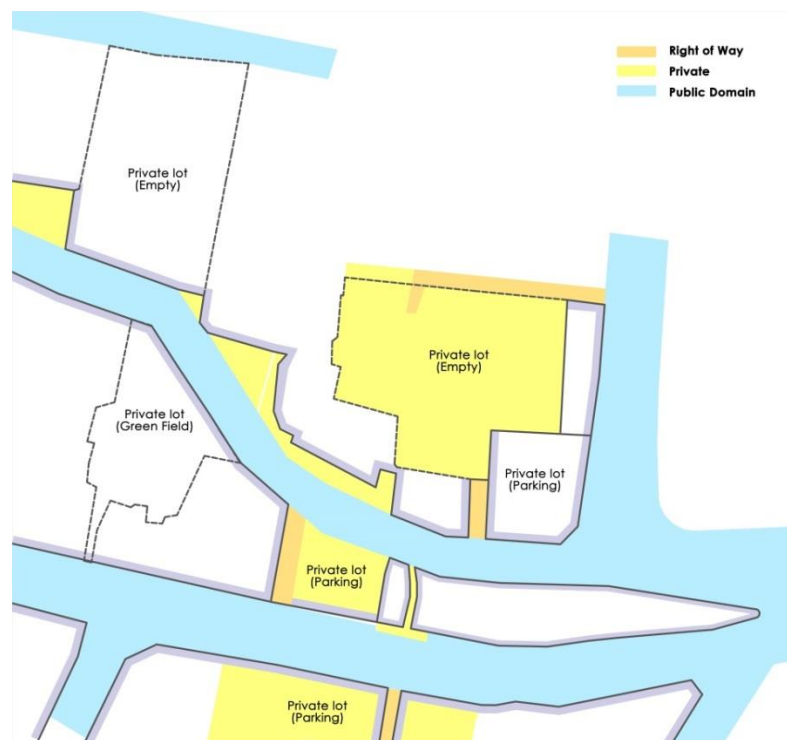


Figure 77: Status of residual spaces in Case study area 3 (Gebara, H., 2016)

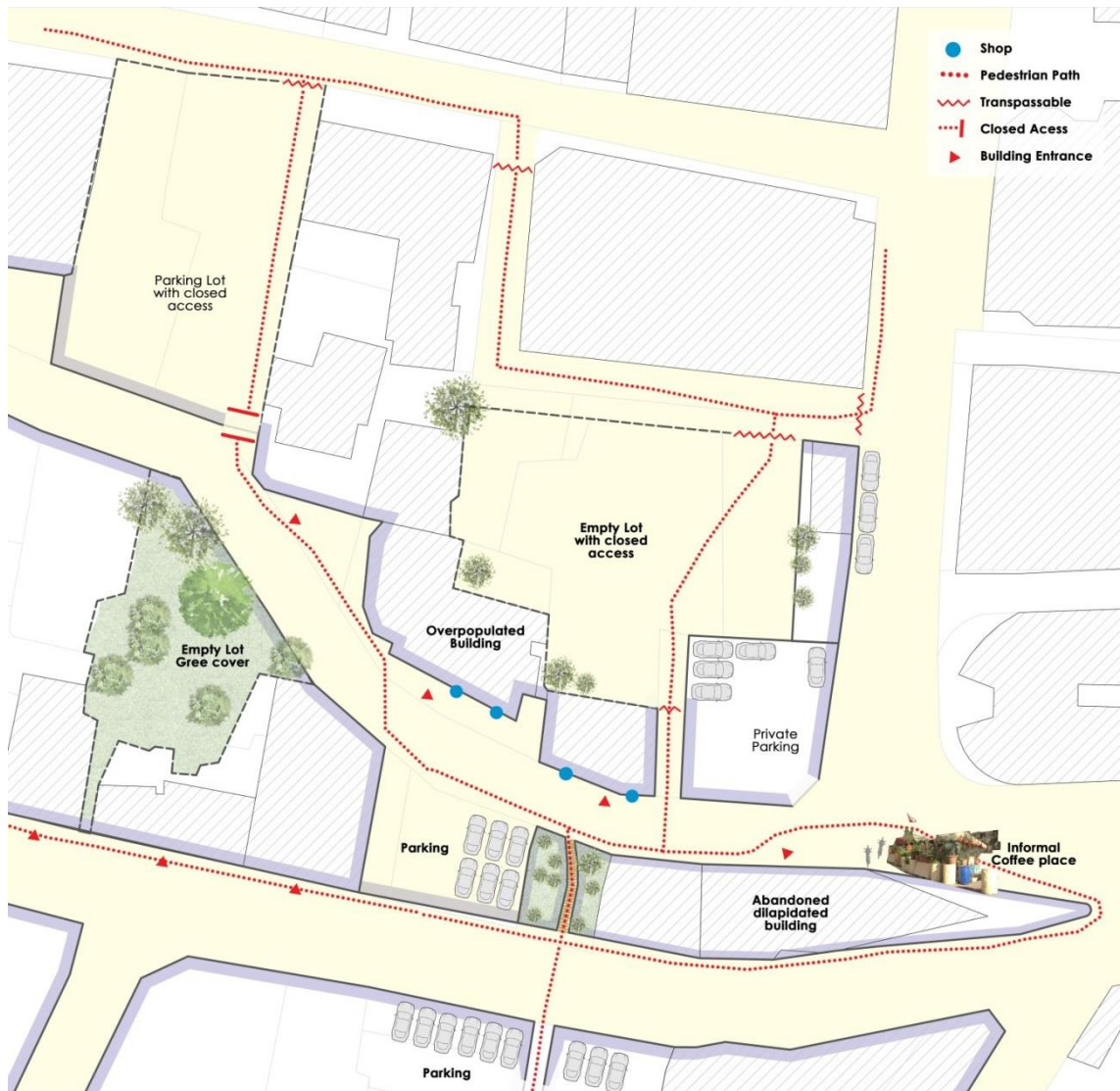


Figure 78: The current state of the residual spaces in case study area 3 (Gebara, H., 2016)

This case study falls near the hotel district. In this case, the types of spaces studied are not built. These are residual spaces which are underused. If we look at the cadastral map, we see different properties that are demarcated as one on the ground. The different types of borders and boundaries allow us to understand the status of these lots as a private property. In the case of the pink lot (see map – 3-A), the property is not defined by any type of borders or boundaries. On the level of the street, there is a partial blurring between what is private and public.

Lot B is a private property, where the concierge or the neighboring parking lot has negotiated with the owner to build the stairs. The stairs were built out of wooden panels collected from construction sites, and the handrail was made of steel bars and wooden sticks. The stairs are being maintained regularly. This green lot which has not been developed is a substandard lot which was affected by the planning of the street. This fact might have been the reason which allowed for the negotiations to be successful between the owner and the concierge.

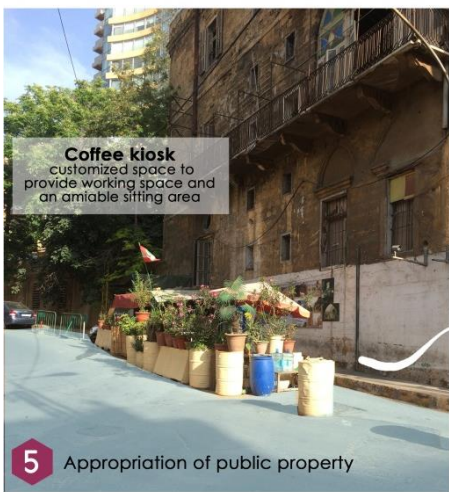
Another public practice can be noted with the structure-tuned-café on the corner of the street under the abandoned building. The man responsible for this café has appropriated part of the street and created a social atmosphere for him and his customers. He maintains the space around his café clean to preserve his reputation.

Strength is seen in the variety and diversity of the social construct of this part of the neighborhood, especially with the presence of the overcrowded building that hosts Lebanese tenants, Syrian refugees, and migrant workers. The level of interaction of the residents with the street is supported by the different levels of topography.





4 Unerutilised open space



Coffee kiosk
customized space to provide working space and an amiable sitting area

5 Appropriation of public property

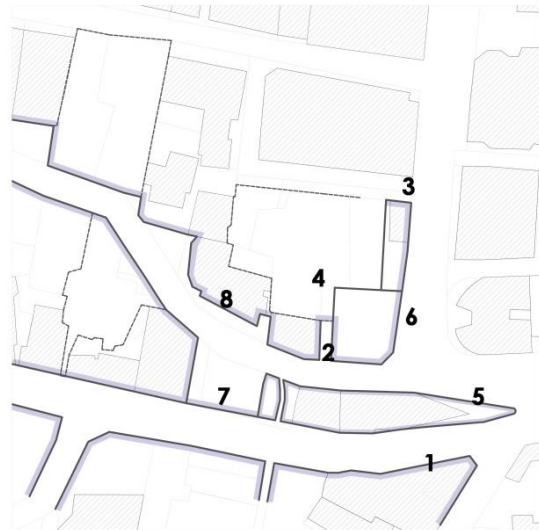


6



Stairs
were negotiated over with the owner of the plot to create a shortcut through the property

7 Negotiations over public use of private space



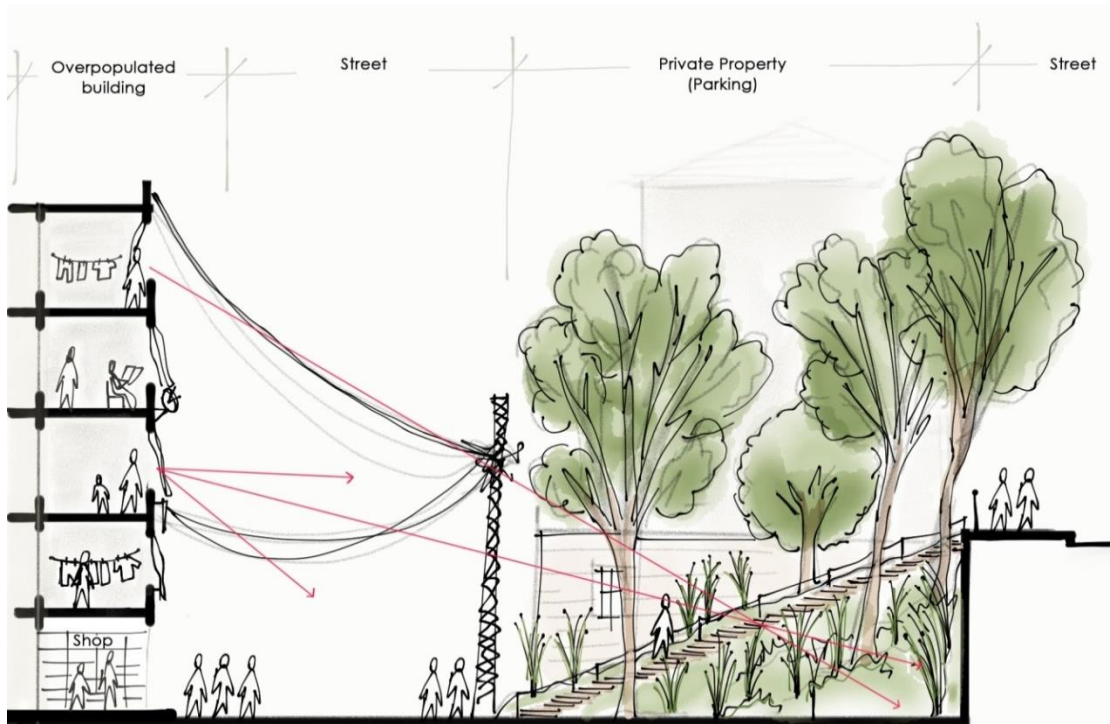


Figure 79: Section showing the relation between the different layers of the site in case study area 3 (Gebara, H., 2016)

3.3. Socio-cultural Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping

In order to understand how the neighborhood social structure and network relations, a socio-cultural and stakeholder analysis will be detailed into several sections. The first section starts with a general social profile, listing the social construct of Ain Mreisseh and the relations between the different categories. The second section explains examples of the different perceptions of space and neighborhood organization through samples of mental maps of some residents. The third section tackles the work and profiles of different social collectives which have been playing an important role in the preservation of the neighborhood landmarks and social relations. The final section concludes with a stakeholder mapping of the neighborhood.

3.3.1. Social Profile

The neighborhood of Ain Mreisseh consists of different types of social groups. The different groups can be identified as the old residents, the tenants, the transient community, the new residents, and the tourists.

- The old residents have been living in the area before the war. Some of them were displaced during the civil war and replaced by others who rented in the area. After the war, some of the original residents returned to their homes. Some of the old residents failed to preserve their properties and instead sold them to developers. Some have moved into the new buildings as part of the development deal and others moved out of the area completely. This category includes the fishermen, shop owners, and old property owners.

- The tenants are those who moved into the area and rented during the war or have rented later on. Most of these tenants are renting in old buildings which give them a state of temporality in the neighborhood and make them prone to eviction, especially those who are on old rent control. These tenants usually work around the neighborhood, send their children to close by schools, and have a direct relation with old residents whom they rent from.

- The transient community is made of people who are living in the neighborhood either for work or study. These are not permanently settled in the neighborhood but form an advantage for bringing diversity to Ain Mreisseh social structure. This social group includes students, intellectuals who work at universities, schools, hospitals, offices, NGOs, or other professions.

- The new residents are those who have recently moved into the new buildings. The negotiation between urban space and rights became very difficult as the new residents settled in their enclaves and thus the socio-spatial interaction disappeared and interaction between the different neighbors weakened.

- The tourists are somehow isolated from the neighborhood's social structure and are rarely part of the neighborhood social activities. These reside in the hotels and not usually aware of the potentials of the neighborhood as a touristic area.

- Other than these categories, it is worth mentioning the people who come from other parts of the city to either work or study or just stroll along the Corniche.

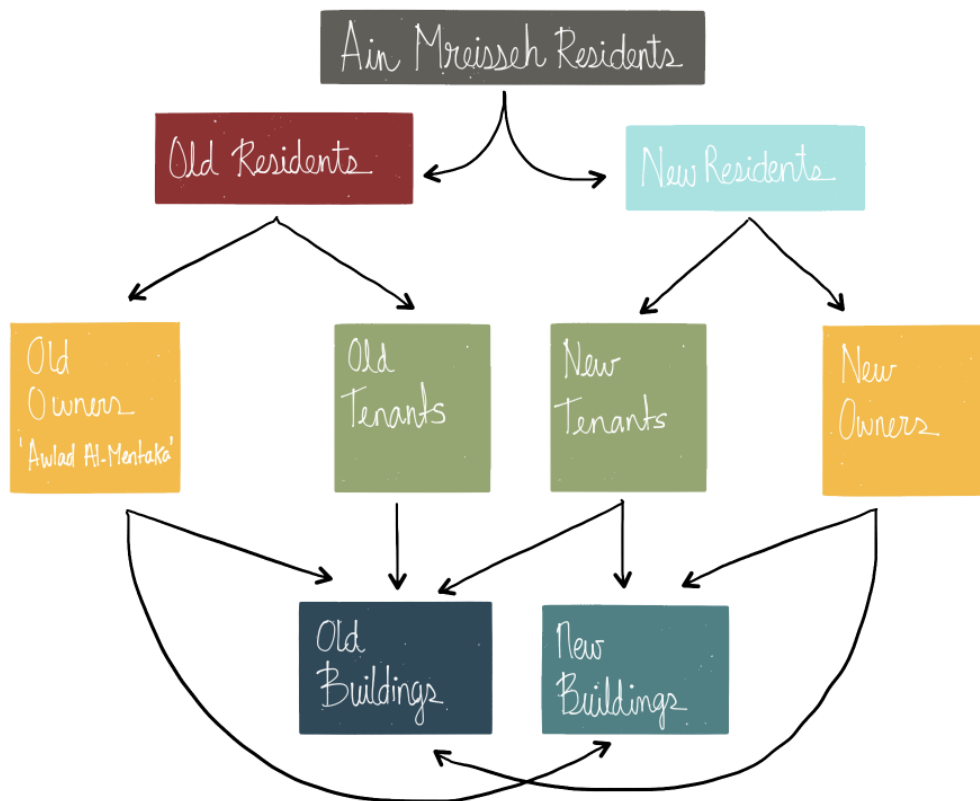
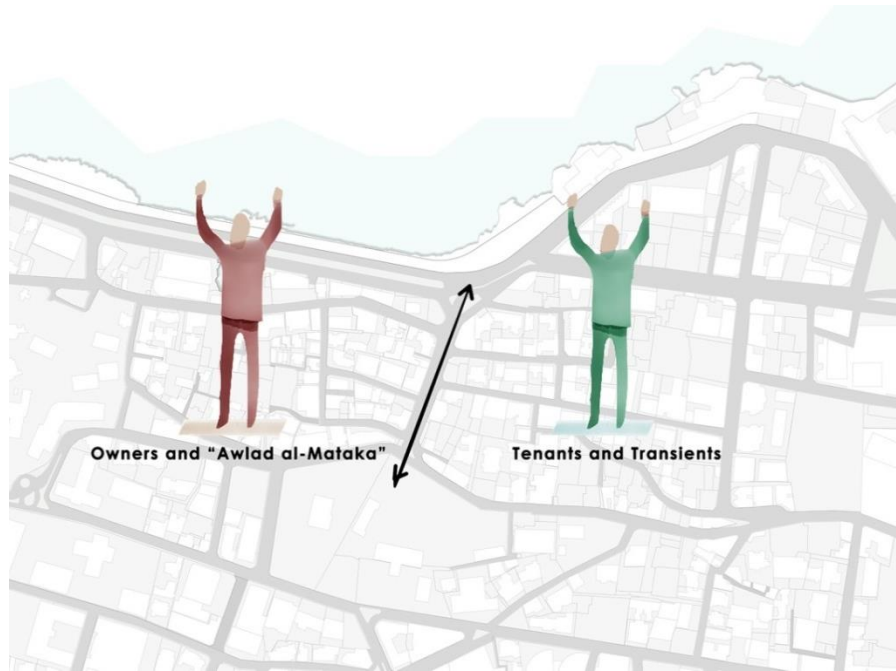
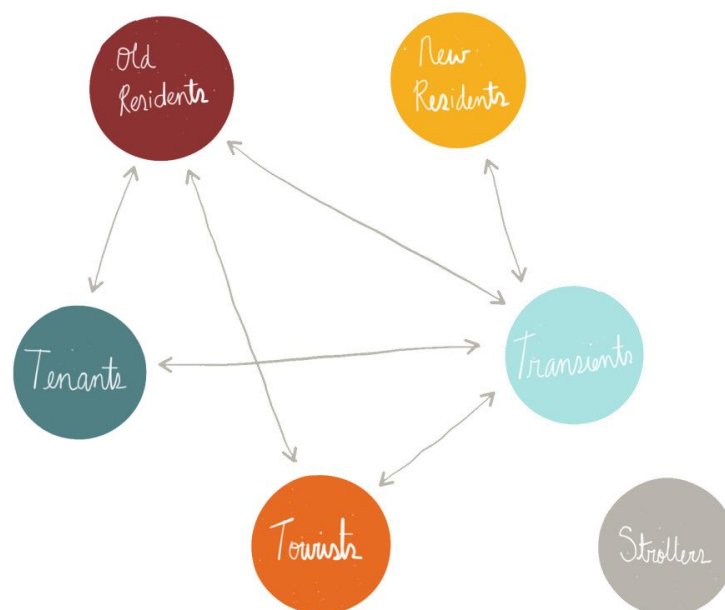


Figure 80: Network relations between the different resident profiles in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, H., 2016)

In relation to the character zones deduced in the previous section, the area can also be divided into two social character zones. The western area is dominated by the property owners and awlad al-mantika (English term). The eastern part of the neighborhood is mostly made up of tenants and transients. As mentioned in the literature review, the slow process of change means a more stable relationship between people and space and more fixed identities. This is proven by the stronger relationship of dwellers in the western zone of the neighborhood to their identity, especially that they still have traces of features left in the neighborhood like the fishermen port, the stairs, some houses, and Dar Raysseh.



The different relations between the social categories in the neighborhood are shown in the diagram below. Bringing the streets back to life in ways that are inclusive and interesting to all of these social groups, can create awareness that could support the less powerful to claim their rights and protect their neighborhood. Such interactions could also help the neighborhood self-sustain itself socially and economically.



3.3.2. Perceptions of space and neighborhood organizations

A set of mental maps of the neighborhood that were drawn by four of the old residents show their strong affiliation with the old shoreline. All except for the one drawn by the fisherman disregarded the new Corniche. All of them drew the old buildings with the names of the families and some also drew the new buildings. Zawarib (alleyways) and stairs were also drawn by the old residents making them spaces of nostalgia for the neighborhood. AUB was drawn as an isolated zone, and the mosque was part of all the maps. On these mental maps, the residents have written the socio-economic activities that used to take place in the neighborhood, like the locations of local coffee shops, the fishermen port, the hotels, and the old beaches. In relation to the mental maps, we can see the importance of families in the neighborhood through the naming of blocks, streets, and alleyways. The remaining old families still meet at the harbor on weekends, at the mosque, and at the remaining cafes.

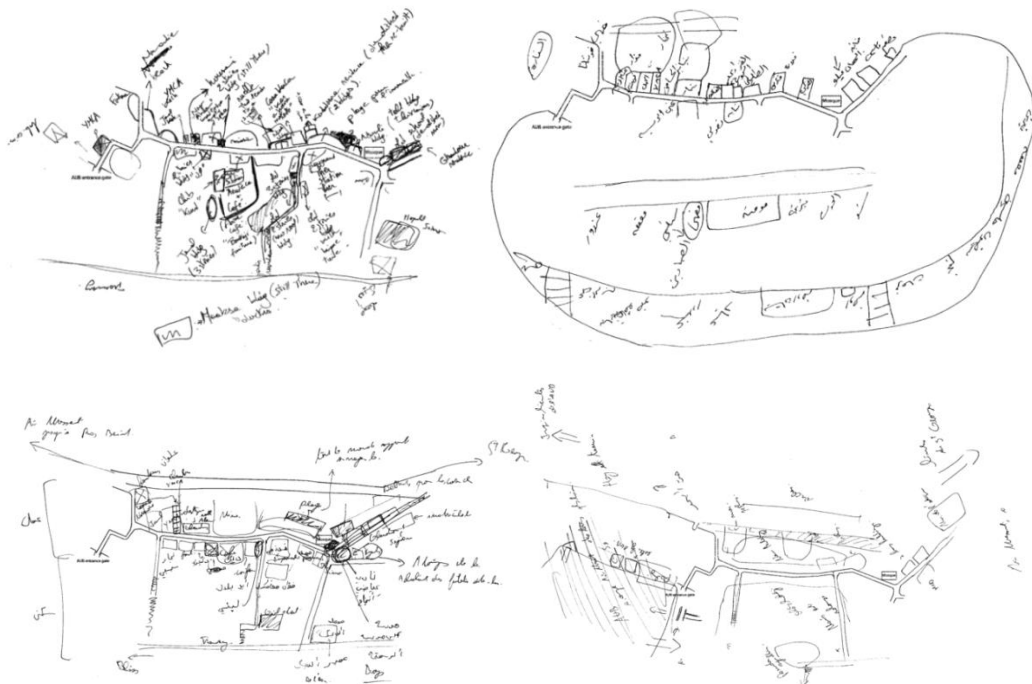


Figure 81: Mental maps drawn by the old residents of Ain Mreisseh (Source: Atallah) - Chech annexes 1,2,3,4

3.3.3. Social Collectives and Neighborhood Initiative

In Ain Mreisseh, many of the original residents formed informal and formal collectives to speak for the less powerful residents to have access to spaces they used to appropriate before and during the war (Sawalha, 2000). Among these collectives there are the fishermen collective, the mosque committee, the Association for the Revival of Heritage in Ain Mreisseh, and the Beirut Theater collective.

As Sawalha mentioned in her book, 'Reconstructing Beirut', "members of these collectives fought to maintain their spaces and to protect specific aspects of the neighborhood's heritage by relying on their recollection of places they cherished". By creating these alliances, they were able to protect public sites and even memories of their neighborhood. Because of the difference in status and nature of these spaces, the fishing port, the museum, the mosque, and the theater, these collectives used different tactics to protect these spaces which have become sites of collective remembrance and nostalgia. Some tactics included using past relationships, collective memory, and as a more practical tactic, pointing out to municipal laws (Sawalha, 2010).

- The Fishing Port (The Fishermen Collective):

The fishing port plays an important role in the neighborhood. It is a symbol of a struggle to preserve the right to fish and the right to this public space. The fishermen and residents have protested the right to have access to the sea after the municipality confiscated the fishing port in 1974 to make way to the Corniche. By then the size of the fishing port has been reduced several times. After the war, the development of the new tower to the western side of the port threatened its existence. According to Sawalha, the fishermen relied on their long history and presence in the neighborhood,

formed alliances with local associations, pressured politicians, and contacted the media in order to protect their space (Sawalha, 2010). Sawalha writes about an interview she had with the chief of fisherman,

“Abou Adnan al-sayyed is the spokesman of the fishermen. He used to spend all his time in front of his shack at the harbor. The space in front of his room at the port offered a social space for the fishermen and their supporters to congregate. Visitors often sat there, played cards, smoke pipes, and drank coffee. Abou Adnan is writing his memoirs about fishing in Ayn Mreisseh as a way of documenting the area’s threatened heritage.

The fishermen used their memories of the port to legitimize their attachment to the place and to argue for their spatial rights. For example, the chief fishermen, abou adnan, asserted his rootedness to the area by demonstrating a great knowledge of the landscapes and declaring the sea was more important than the lands.” (Sawalha, 2010)



Figure 82: The fishermen port - to the right the entranceto teh private yacht parking is seen (Gebara, H., 2016)

- *The Ain Mreisseh Museum – Souffleur (The Association for the Revival of Heritage in Ain Mreisseh)*

Collective action to preserve the heritage of Ain Mreisseh’s original residents organized itself into the ‘*Association for the Revival of the Heritage in Ain Mreisseh*’. This association created a local museum run by one of the local residents, Ibrahim Najem. The association’s tactic was simply to counter the erasure of the building by

creating a neighborhood museum that commemorates the neighborhood's past. The museum is part of Najem's house who dedicated a whole floor for it. The association's perception of heritage preservation is flexible; anything that is old or has been used by the residents of Ain Mreisseh has a place in the museum. Najem became the guardian of the neighborhood's collective memories. The two story residential building which has housed the museum also has the quality of a social center where residents of the neighborhood and strangers are welcomed. This heterotopic space functioned as an archive and a social place.

This approach adopted by the association, to resist change in the neighborhood through creating a heterotopia of time and space; a place you wouldn't imagine present inside one of the surviving old buildings, allows us to think of the unusual tactics these residents have used to protect the neighborhood.



Figure 83: Inside Ain Mreisseh Museum - Souffleur (Gebara, H., 2016)

- *The Beirut Theater (The Beirut Theater Collective)*

The Beirut Theater is the oldest in the city. It kept functioning even during the war until it was occupied by militias and performance was no longer permitted. In the post war period, a collective group of intellectuals who cared about the future of the theater renovated the one story building, using revenues from performances and funds. The theater functioned as a stage for performances, exhibition, and conference hall. It

was later closed in 2001 due to financial difficulties. The theater is now under threat of demolition.



Figure 84: Beirut Theater (source: Chbaro)

- *The Ain El Mraysseh Facebook Group*

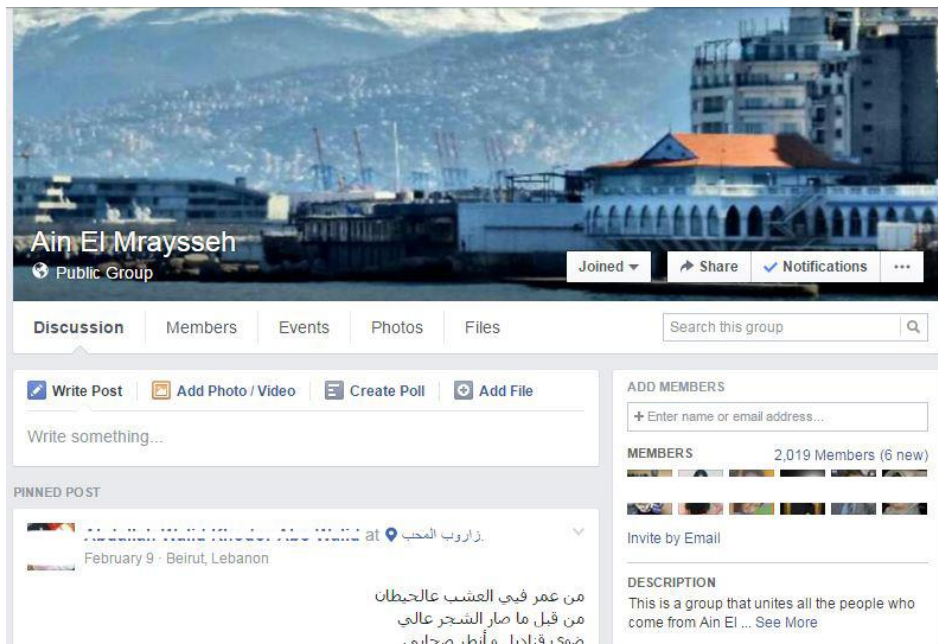


Figure 85: The main page of the Ain El-Mraysseh Facebook public group (Source: Facebook)

In an attempt to keep the memories of the neighborhood alive and the relations between the residents who either live in the neighborhood or have left, some residents have turned to social media and created a Facebook group called Ain El Mraysseh. This group has been active in keeping close relations between the residents and keeping their memories of the neighborhood alive. All members share old and new photographs,

event updates (announcements of deaths and marriages, even sickness), even invitations to gather over coffee. This initiative shows how Ain Mreisseh is still like a village and how most of the old residents know each other and try to keep their relations alive. However, there has never been any activity by strangers in the neighborhood group. This initiative could actually improve if interaction starts taking place with the rest of the social profiles and have a better public reach. This can be initiated through neighborhood activities.

3.3.4. Stakeholders

- *The local community*

The local community consists of the different social mentioned in the previously. There is a weak interaction between the different groups. The old residents and owners in the neighborhood are strongly attached to their identity and historical presence in the area. These are the residents who are registered in the Ain Mreisseh. They sometimes have representatives in the municipal council or the Lebanese parliament. Today, most of these residents are descendants who have inherited their properties. They mostly tend to sell these properties to solve inheritance issues and generate economic profit, regardless of the unwillingness and resistance of their ancestors to sell. There are however, few cases in the neighborhood that show the persistence of some owners and their resistance to sell, like in the case of Chaker Al-Ariss who refused to sell to AUB, and Rana Rawda who refused to sell her father's house which still stands today (Atallah). Some of the empty lots and old buildings are still present due to inheritance issues over them. Among the old residents are the

Mukhtars who have a strong role in decision making in the neighborhood; there are 4 elected Mukhtars in Ain Mreisseh.

Tenants are either old residents or have recently moved to the area. The old tenants have been moving out either due to the fact that the buildings where they used to stay were dilapidated or were sold to developers. The new tenants have almost no interaction or relation to the area's cultural or social identity.

Part of the local community is represented by the new property owners who have moved into the area recently. Some actually reside in their new properties and others are expats who invested in real estate and have left their properties unoccupied. There is a certain level of sensitivity from the old residents and tenants towards the new residents especially that these do not belong to the neighborhood and do not present initiatives to interact with them.

- *NGOs and Social Collectives*

The neighborhood hosts a number of local and international non-governmental organizations which are stationed in the area (example NRC, Norwegian Refugee Council, and YMCA, The Young Women's Christian Association). These organizations don't play a role in the neighborhood except for the economic revenue they from renting office spaces. Local collectives, explained in the previous section, don't have assigned physical spaces, but form important stakeholders in affecting decision making in the neighborhood. These have had experiences in resistance and demand for the right to the city in Ain Mreisseh.

- *Local institutions*

Many local institutions have coexisted and have been developed around Ain Mreisseh, among which are the American University of Beirut (AUB) and Ecole Supérieure des Affaires (ESA). AUB has been part of Ain Mreisseh's history. It has also been expanding into the neighborhood without preserving its features. Part of AUB's campaign as an important driver in the city is highlighting its relation to its surrounding neighborhood and its role in its development. AUB has also been preserving its upper campus on the contrary of the lower campus, where it bought properties from Ain Mreisseh residents and has demolished these buildings instead of preserving them. AUB cannot deny the importance of Ain Mreisseh as what it has contributed to the institution's prosperity. Ain Mreisseh has always hosted AUB Intellectuals and students and has also benefited from AUB's presence. AUB has created the AUB Neighborhood Initiative which is “AUB’s way of giving back to its neighborhood, by mobilizing the university’s resources for the public good, beginning just outside the campus wall.” However, its concentration has long been Ras Beirut and not Ain Mreisseh. AUB should start involving Ain Mreisseh as part of its Neighborhood Initiative strategy. ESA has also been part of Ain Mreisseh history, previously being occupied by the French Embassy. Today, it is a 35,000 square meter campus with a wooded park, all set inside the boundaries of a stone wall. ESA hold same responsibilities towards Ain Mreisseh as AUB. Both institutions should not deny the importance of them playing a role in the future of the neighborhood.

- *The fishermen*

The fishermen are part of the old residents. They own rooms in the port, and are sometimes partners with other residents, which helps them sustain and support their

profession. The fishermen are responsible for the port, its maintenance, and its sustainability. However, it is under threat of being underutilized due to development pressure around it and the conditions of sea tourism and marine life. People rarely ask for boat rides today. Part of the public is also unaware of the functions of the port, which needs to be enhanced. Some fishermen are now retired or working other jobs. The fishermen are important stakeholders in the neighborhood, as we see today the head of the fishermen community in Ain Mreisseh is running for the municipal elections in Beirut.

- *Developers*

Developers are the strongest stakeholders in this network. They are in control of the market and the economic forces in the neighborhood. Developers usually work based on their economic interest and profit. There are different developer profiles. Those who are not strong enough, build according to what is allowable by the construction law without requiring exceptions. However, the more powerful developers are able to build high-rises and enclaves on the waterfront through their accessibility to exceptions. In cases where the original owners refuse to sell, they use pressure and power to force them to do it. Developers should be approached through strategies that use the law and the power of the collective voices of the locals to deviate their development approaches into something that would contribute to the neighborhood's prosperity and economic and social sustainability.

- *Public Authorities*

The public authorities are mainly represented through,

- The municipality is responsible for dealing with the livability, services, and place-making of the neighborhood. We see a clear neglect of the neighborhood from the municipality. It is also responsible for accepting or rejecting construction and demolition permits in the city, thus playing a major role in the physical change of the neighborhood.

- The Higher Council of Urbanism, at the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU), is responsible for providing developers with exceptions to build the high-rises we see today. Along with the municipality, it also has the power to expropriate certain properties or order to dedicate 25% of certain properties with big areas to public use.

- The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MoPT) is mainly responsible for the maritime domain including the port and whatever falls below the Corniche.

- The Ministry of Environment (MoE) has the power to order Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for proposed developments and the ability to forbid certain development to protect the green sites and neighborhood environment.

- The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has a role in supporting the neighborhood to enhance the tourism sector in it, not only on the scale of the big hotels, but on the scale of the micro businesses and micro-economies. It can promote events and provide economic support for entrepreneurial touristic projects.

- The Ministry of Culture is responsible for demanding the protection of the cultural heritage of the neighborhood, whether through protecting buildings or enhancing cultural events, activities, and practices. A draft law has been presented by the ministry to the council of ministers regarding the protection of cultural heritage; it

has not been passed yet.

- *Touristic and leisure businesses*

The area includes few touristic businesses like restaurants and hotels. These businesses play a role in bringing tourists and strollers to the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the neighborhood tourism is weak, especially with the drop in the tourism sector in the country and the lack of activities in the area compared to other neighborhoods in the city. Some of these businesses have been in the area even before the civil war, some are new, and some are abandoned or have disappeared.

- *Local Micro-businesses*

Micro-businesses in the neighborhood are dependent mostly on the local residents and some depend on strollers. These include shops, supermarkets, grocery shops, bakeries, pharmacies, mechanic shops, touristic agencies, and car rentals.

Students in the nearby institutions and strollers also use these businesses. A good example of a business that stimulates activity is 'Beirut by Bike', a bicycle rental shop which attracts people from the Corniche to the inner neighborhood. However, people who rent bicycles are seen suffering during their crossing to the Corniche. Street cafes also play an important role in attracting people to the neighborhood, but the activities stay restricted to the coast.

- *Political parties*

Political parties used to have a huge presence in the neighborhood, especially during and after the war. They play an important role in decision making. The analysis of the different political networks and the political setup of the neighborhood is not within the scope of the thesis.

3.4. Findings

After the thorough analysis of Ain Mreisseh social and physical characteristics, I present below a list of potentials and challenges that can be concluded from the analysis. These will define the elements and issues that will be addressed by the general and detailed urban design strategies.

Table 3: Challenges and Potntials in Ain Mreisseh (Gebara, G., 2016)

Potentials	Challenges
Strategic location of Ain Mreisseh	Weak or no social interaction between the different social groups due to their complex setup
The diversity of the numerous residual spaces	Lack of green public spaces
The crowdedness of the Corniche which provides a potential in the case of proposing inland activities	The dominance of necessary activities over social and optional activities
Diversity of existing greening and landscape practices in the neighborhood	Weak contribution of institutions, like AUB and ESA, to the neighborhood
The presence of a residue of cultural heritage and practices which need to be enhanced	Weak pedestrian experience, walkability challenges, and unclear pedestrian network
The complexity of the ownership status of empty lots and abandoned buildings, which give a longer life and timeframe of existence to these spaces.	The high number of boundaries which affect the neighborhood's permeability
Diversity of potential future users (children, elderly, youth, workers, tourists, students, intellectual...)	Lack of legibility of neighborhood landmarks which suffer an introverted appearance through the disrespectful use of surrounding
The appearance of different types of negotiations over space (formal/informal)	The disconnection of the Corniche and the inlands and the lack of visual corridors
The presence of unbuildable and substandard lots that fall between properties that are not susceptible to change	
Neighborhood social collectives existing as a good example to learn from	
Diversity of character areas	
The diversity of land-uses	

CHAPTER IV

REVISITING AIN MREISSEH

Ain Mreisseh is presented with a lot of challenges that should be addressed with different urban design strategies using the multiple potentials of the neighborhood. The strategies are structured in a way to fulfill three theoretical purposes; reclaiming elements of the quotidian, creating new social arrangements, and allowing design to be comprehensible and familiar to ordinary people.

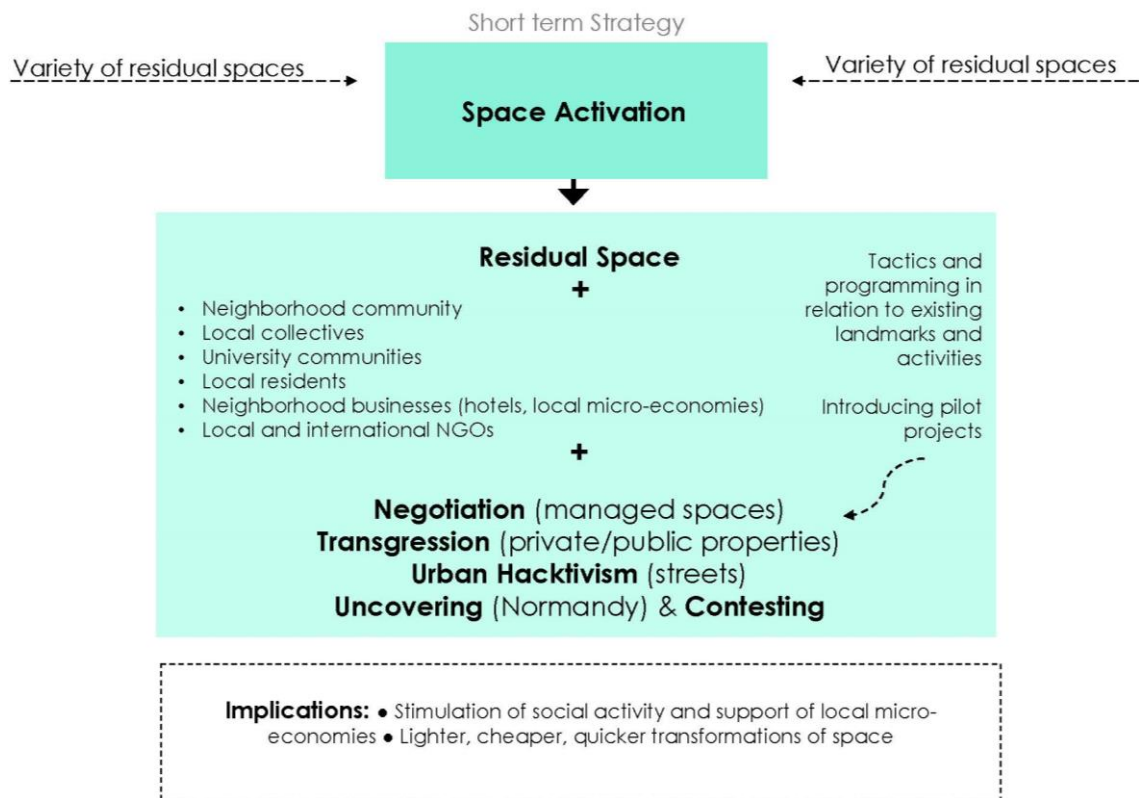
Upon analyzing the neighborhood of Ain Mreisseh, much potential for interventions were found on different scales and zones. The general design strategies are divided into short-term, medium-term, and long term strategies. These are driven by the previously realized potentials and challenges of the site and the following objectives:

Enhancing the relationship of the neighborhood to its surrounding neighborhoods.
Strengthening the relationship between the Corniche and the inner neighborhood.
Reviving neighborhood landmarks and cultural life.
Strengthening the neighborhood character and use of the potential networks between residual spaces and local landmarks and prime locations
Enhancing the neighborhood sense of place and livelihood.
Empowering the community to become active producers of space and not only consumers; to self-sustain and self-support itself.
Supporting the weak local micro-economies through interventions on residual spaces.
Enhancing social interaction in the neighborhood, especially between the different social profiles. Such interrelation would allow for empowerment of the less powerful.
Regulating and controlling the pace of new developments in a way to respect the neighborhood qualities and at the same time allowing for economic benefit.

4.1. The General Urban Design Strategies



4.1.1. Space activation



This strategy aims at the stimulation of social activity in support of local micro-economies (it form the first phase of interventions because it incorporates the lighter, cheaper, and quicker transformations of space). It is implemented through the creation of a network of residual spaces connected through pedestrian trails and the use of tactics and programming of activities in these residual spaces. Such interventions would include proposing and assigning programmed activities to the different types of residual and open spaces in relation to existing landmarks and public activities (Corniche). These activities are to be spontaneous, flexible, and low cost. This strategy would enhance the status of Ain Mreisseh as a social and public space and reduce misconceptions about the area's social status.

These activities are to be implemented by a set of stakeholders which are mainly the local NGOS, local collectives, university communities (landscape community, center for civic engagement, department of architecture...), local residents, city scale collectives (youth urban forum), and neighborhood businesses (hotels which can use this network as a proposed neighborhood tour). A special neighborhood initiative can be created in order to organize activities and manage stakeholder relations and implementation. It could also take the lead in promoting the neighborhood through crowd-funding for intervention ideas created by the neighborhood residents and implementing start-up or pilot projects. This initiative can be supported by the important stakeholders like the fishermen of Ain Mreisseh.

The use of residual spaces is driven by the state of each of these spaces. Substandard lots can be negotiated over with property owners, where the activities that take place in such spaces could bring modest revenue to the owner. In the case where the lot is a public property (like the previous Normandy beach), the users or

neighborhood initiatives can appropriate the space for temporary uses and activities (especially those related to Dar El-Rayse). In the case of Dual-spaces, activities that can be created weekly, monthly, or that could become part of yearly festivals, can be proposed to the owners, who would be interested in receiving revenues, and at the same time can contribute to the local economy (like in the case of neighborhood events). Marketplaces are an example of activities that can be serious bottom-up economic generators for local communities.

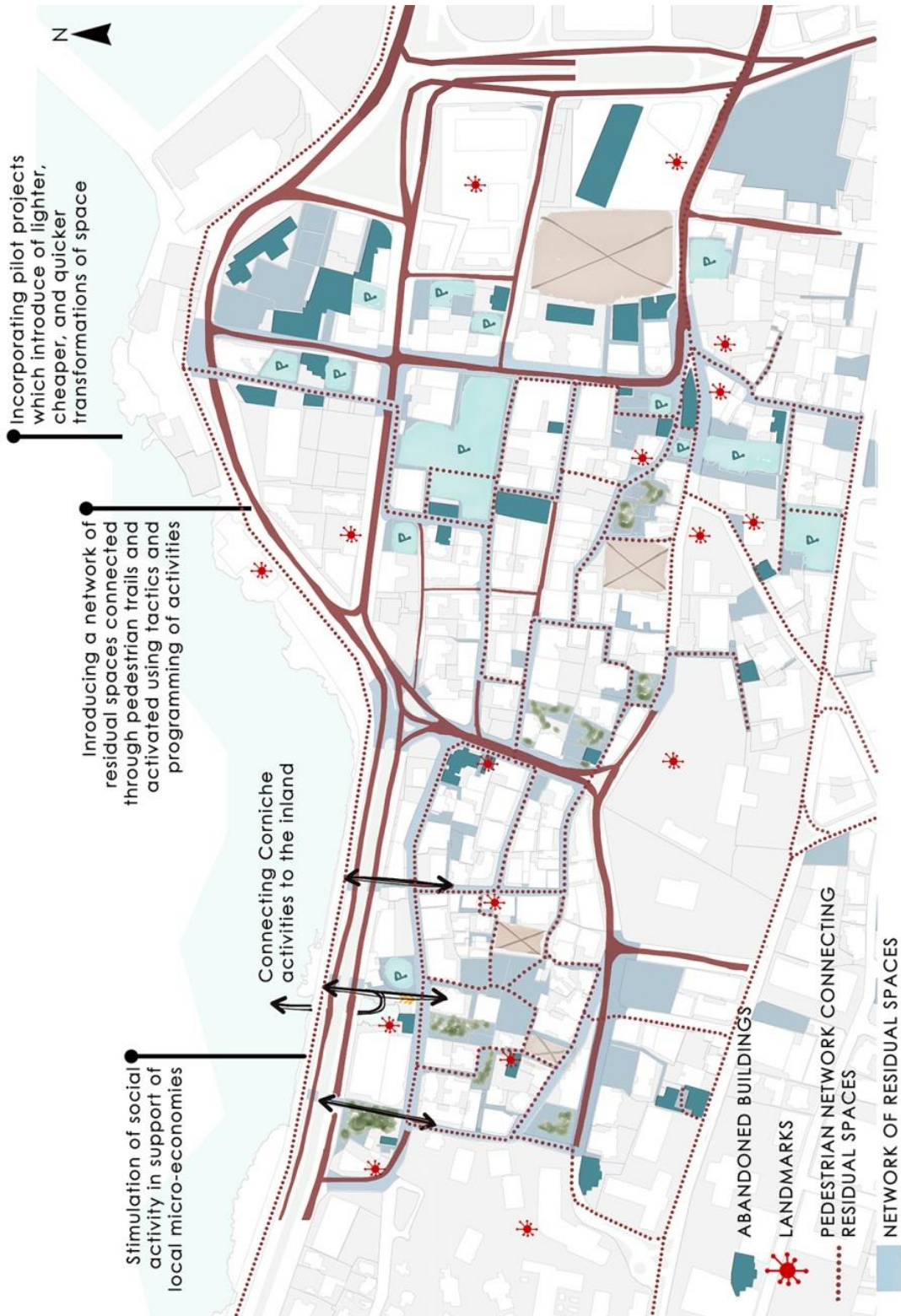


Figure 86: Space activation strategy (Gebara, H., 2016)

PROPOSED USES AND PROGRAMMING OF RESIDUAL SPACE NETWORK

Introducing **phase 1** pilot projects which introduce lighter, cheaper, and quicker transformations of space, and can turn into **phase 2** permanent transformations of space

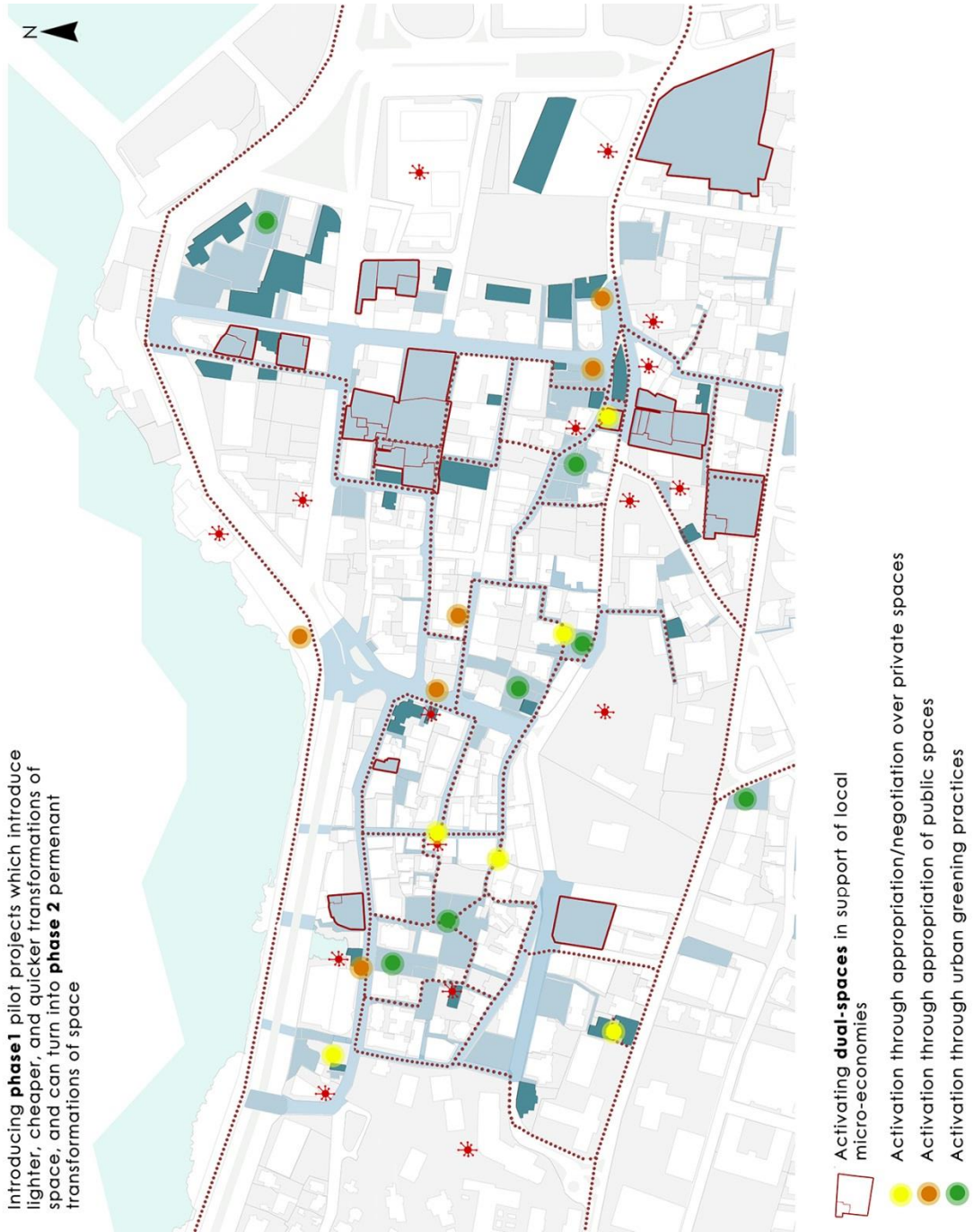
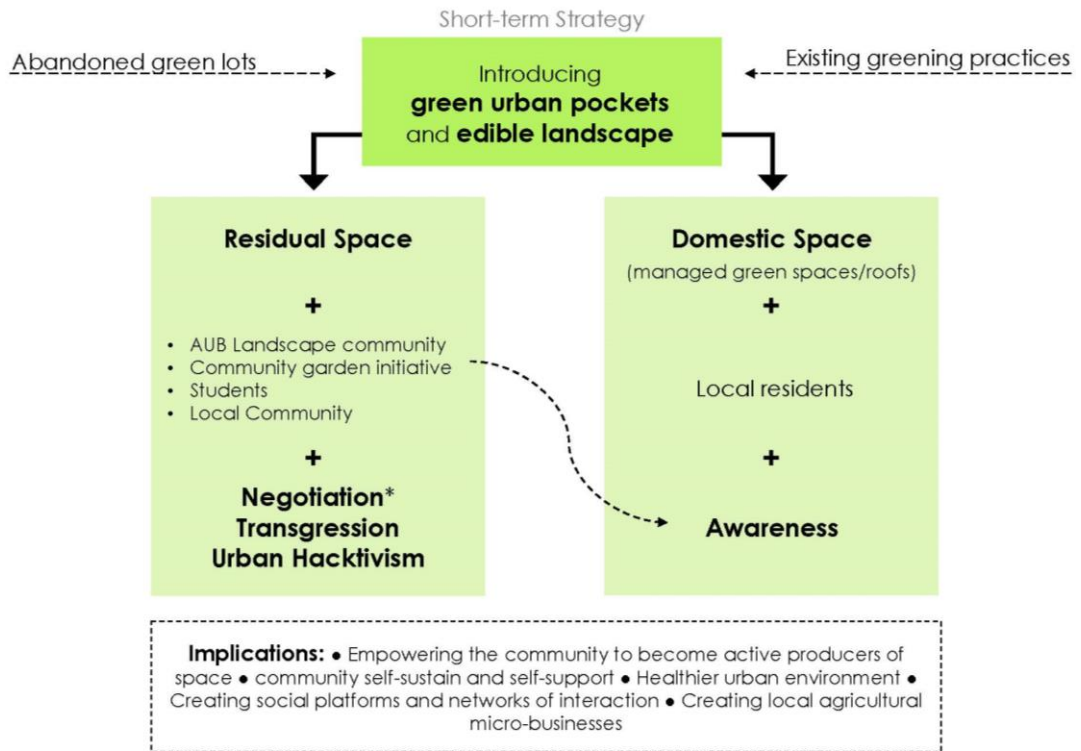


Figure 87: Space Activation Strategy (Gebara, H., 2016)

4.1.2. Introducing green urban pockets and edible landscaping



- Introducing a network of green urban pocket gardens which function on the different layers and typologies of residual spaces
- Introducing roof gardens and neighborhood urban agriculture in green fields and private properties space
- Supporting micro-economies related to agriculture through organic food markets and other types

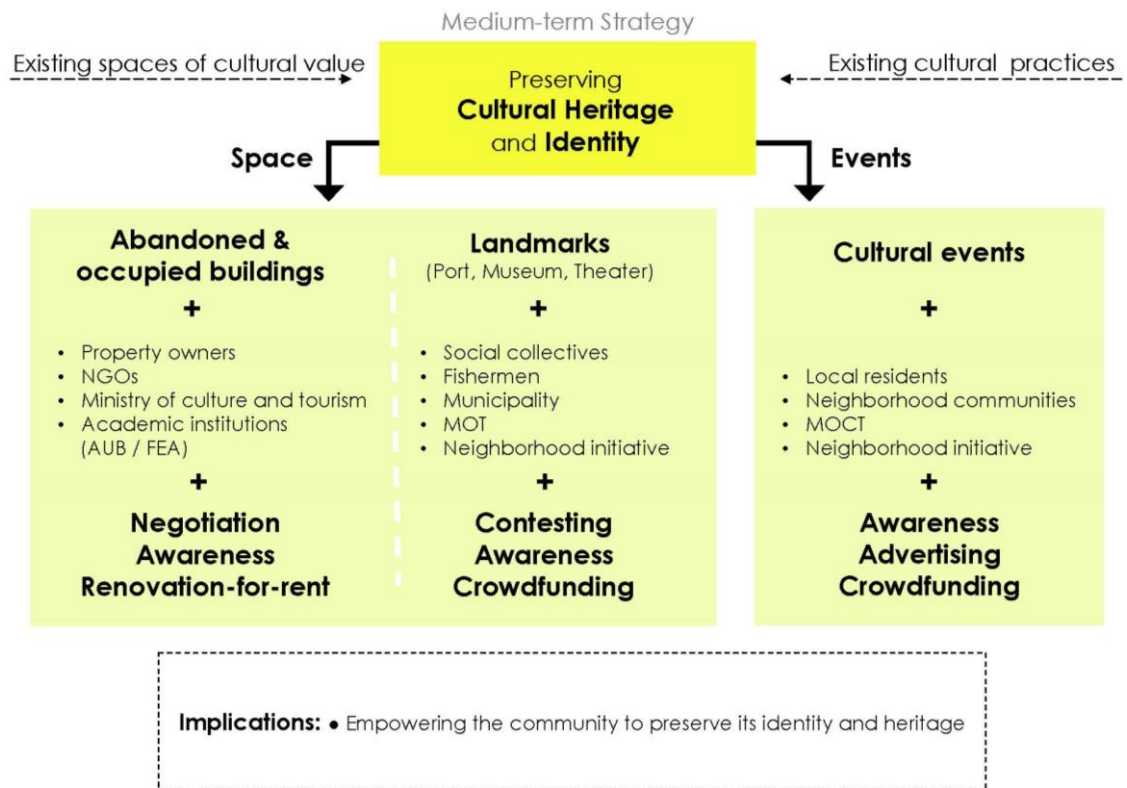


Through building on greening practices in the neighborhood, I propose a network of green urban pocket gardens which function on the different layers and typologies of residual spaces. The proposal of the network of green spaces and pocket gardens provides alternative public spaces and allows for spontaneous and planned social interaction (introducing roof gardens, pocket gardens in residual spaces, neighborhood urban agriculture in green fields and private properties).

The support to the implementation of such interventions could be through the AUB landscape community, local residents, neighborhood committee, Ministry of Environment, or even sponsored by big landscape businesses or environmental organizations. These have a role in creating awareness to the importance of urban agriculture like planting fruit trees, especially in the managed green spaces of new developments. Reviving this practice which used to take place in the neighborhood is also essential to the neighborhood's cultural sustainability.

A community garden initiative could take the role in negotiating over green residual spaces and arranging urban pocket gardens in which residents can participate in planting and cultivation. The use of these green spaces can also bring revenues for the owners and could improve the conditions of the sites. Such initiative can create a social platform and networks of interaction between the different types of residents in the neighborhood, students, and city dwellers. Greening practices could also happen in the form of urban hacktivism through appropriating public spaces and inserting green breathing spaces in the urban setting. This can be initiated by students and the local community. Important to note is the possible use of roofs as roof gardens and spaces for urban agriculture.

4.1.3. Preserving cultural heritage and identity



Implications: • Empowering the community to preserve its identity and heritage

This intervention aims at using heritage as a driving element for attraction of social activity and as a catalyst for bringing together the different social groups in the neighborhood. Its purpose is the protection of positive and humanly sustainable aspects of the neighborhood’s culture and spaces of identity, like the Ain Mreisseh museum, the theater, the port, and old heritage buildings. It divides into two types of interventions, those targeting space, and those reviving cultural events. The interventions related to spaces target the abandoned and occupied buildings and the landmarks. The first could be implemented through putting to function, rehabilitating, and reusing abandoned buildings with heritage qualities or even with good spatial qualities.

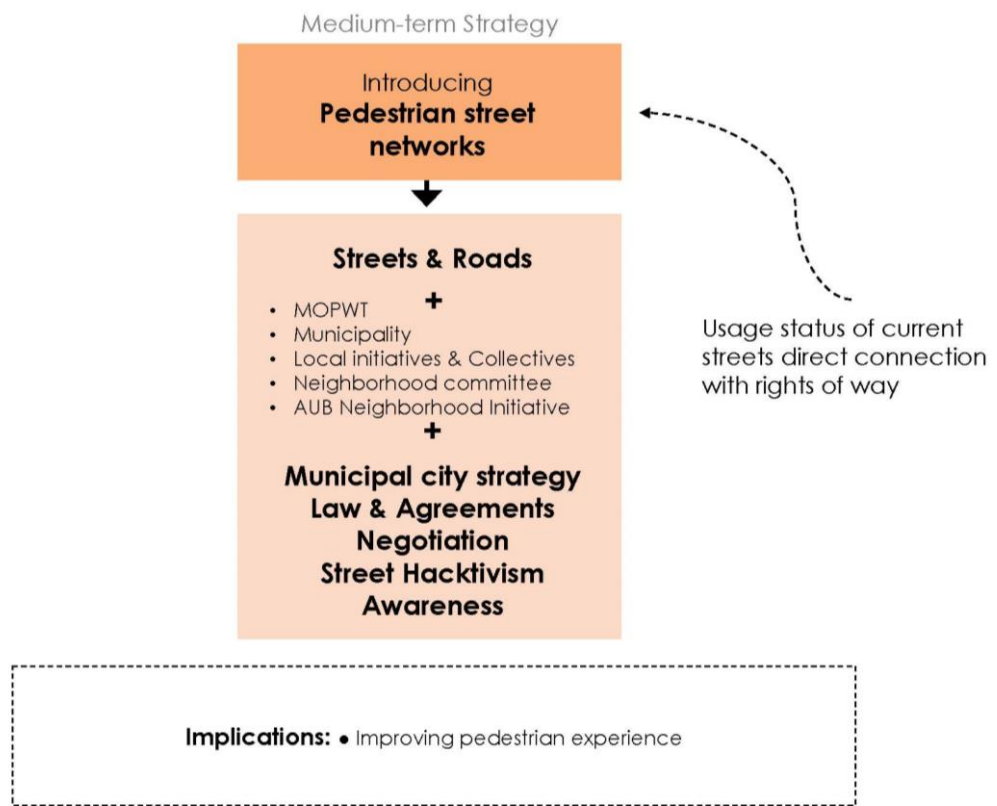
Since the protection of certain buildings have failed to be supported by the Heritage law through the ministry of culture, one strategy to preserve them could be

through a rehabilitation-for-rent strategy through neighborhood cultural and educational institutions like AUB, ESA, and even NGOs. These institutions have an obligation towards the neighborhood, especially that they are characterized with their rich cultural heritage. Buildings located around the enclaves of the institution can be part of their neighborhood preservation strategies (like in the case of AUB). An agreement can take place that allows these institutions to rehabilitate these buildings for few years without rent. After the agreement ends, the owner can start using his building to rent as offices, residencies, or even AirBnB furnished apartments. This strategy helps preserve the neighborhood heritage buildings, and allows the owner to keep his property instead of having to sell it to developers. Residual spaces related to these properties can be used for public purposes. An initiative should also be created in order to create awareness around the neighborhood concerning the importance of preserving these properties instead of selling and leaving the neighborhood. This also ensures the sustainability of the old social fabric of the neighborhood.



Regarding cultural events, these can be revived through annual and monthly festivities that could bring these events to life. One of these events could be the Dar Raysse walk which could attract tourists and locals through allowing the residents and fishermen themselves to tell the stories of the neighborhood.

4.1.4. Introducing a pedestrian street network



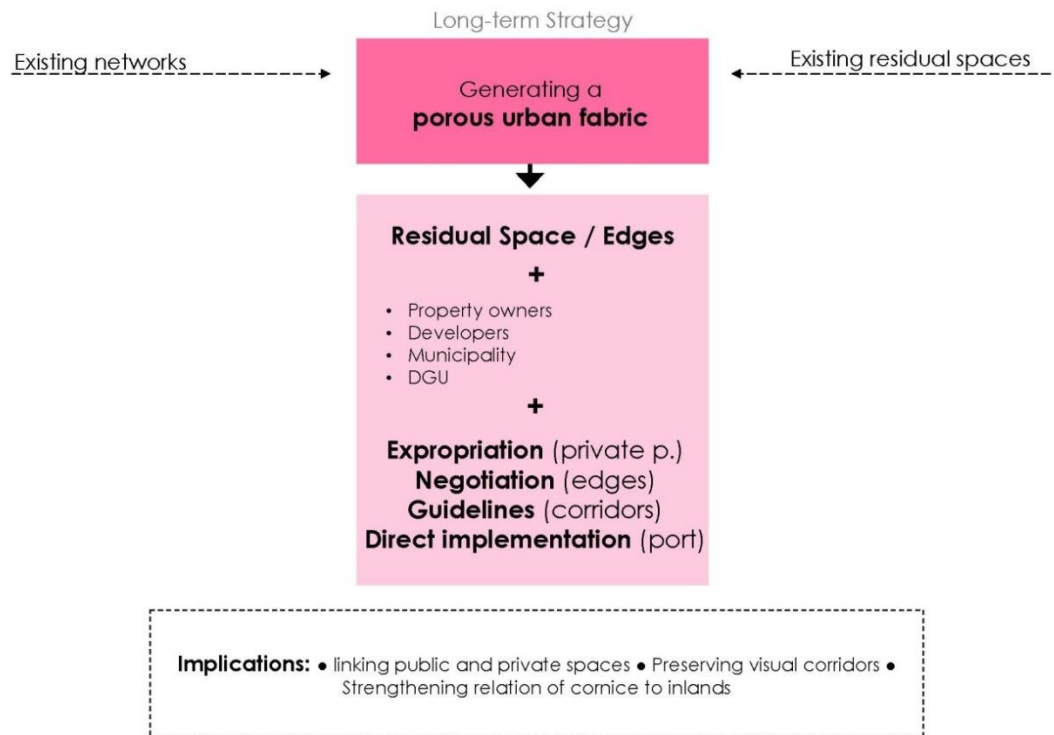
This strategy introduces a new street hierarchy that connects to the network of residual spaces and gives a more logical transition between the different neighborhood scales, taking into consideration the village-like character of the neighborhood. This is achieved through the complete pedestrianization of some streets, the creation of slow traffic measures, and the implementation of pedestrian friendly crossings.

The main stakeholder here would be the municipality of Beirut and the ministry of public works since it is an intervention done on public property. However, other neighborhood organizations like the AUB Neighborhood Initiative can spread awareness of the importance of such strategies and mobilize the local community towards it, like what it was able to achieve regarding Jean D'arc Street in Hamra.



Figure 88: Pedestrianization strategy (Gebara, H., 2016)

4.1.5. Generating a porous urban fabric



Moving through the different scales of interventions, we reach the long term strategies. Generating a porous urban fabric could be achieved through creating urban linkages and flowing transitions between the different categories of residual/open spaces, preserving visual corridors, and strengthening the relation of the Corniche to the inlands. It could also be managed through blurring the edges and borders by designing the interface

This strategy proposes:

- A network of possible linkages through public and private spaces that can be implemented through traditional negotiations which are based on mutual benefit
- Connections between the Corniche and the inlands through re-opening existing connections or creating new ones
- Urban corridors that should be enforced and respected by future developers and property owners

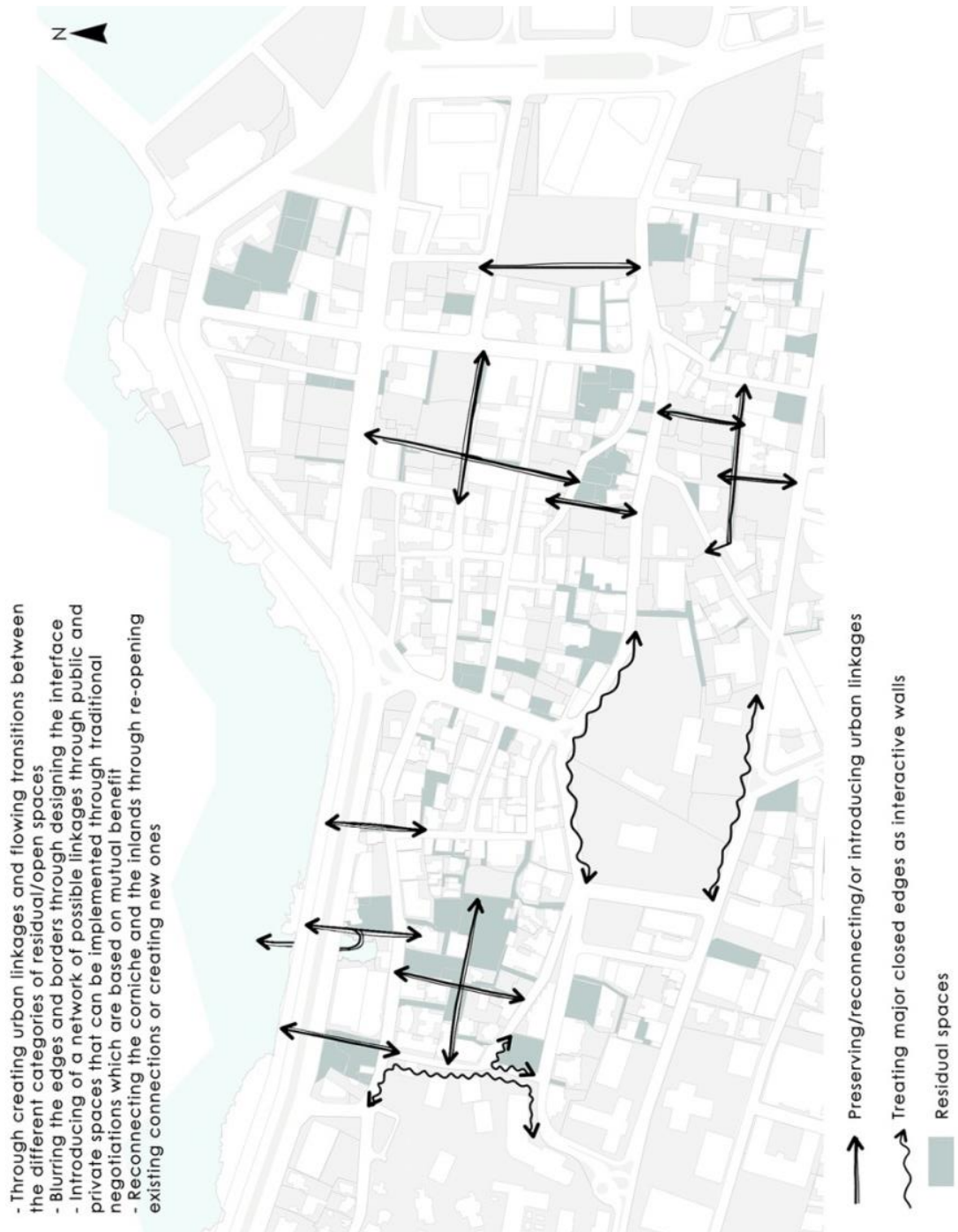
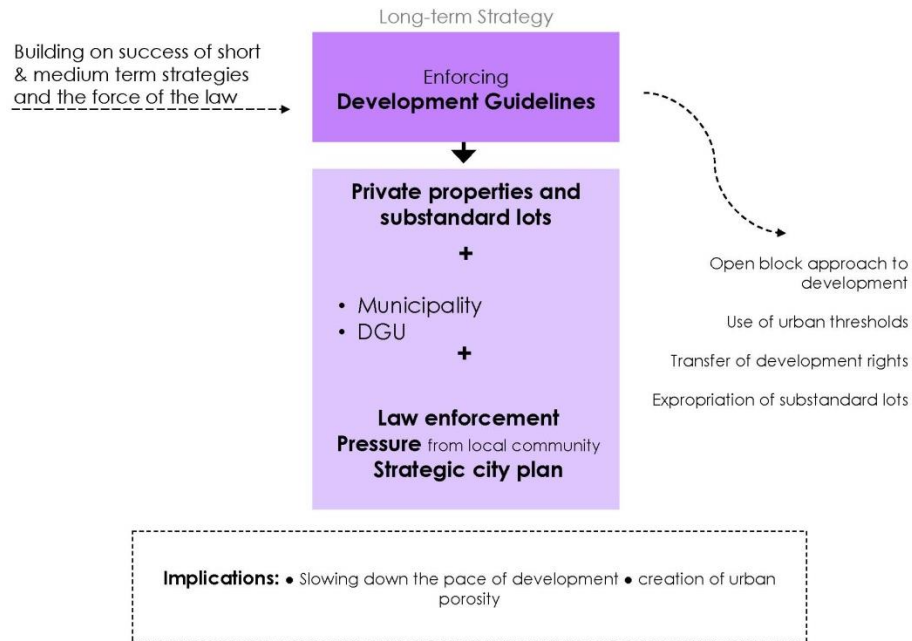


Figure 89: Urban Porosity Strategy (Gebara, H., 2016)

4.1.6. Development Guidelines



The final general strategy considers slowing down the pace of development through the transitional effect of the short and medium term strategies, which stress on the importance of considering residual spaces as potentials for interaction between the different social profiles and the importance of urban porosity and availability of private spaces that act as public practices.

This strategy can be achieved through:

- Imposing an Open-Block approach for future development which creates a porous urban environment and hybridity in neighborhood spaces (plus the 25% of huge developments that can be put under public use for big properties).
- Proposing urban thresholds
- Transferring of development rights and the protection of significant cultural heritage and open spaces in Ain Mreisseh
- Expropriating substandard lots which are surrounded by new or maintained properties and their dedication for public use

The implementation of this strategy would be supported by the law (taking into consideration a new functioning municipality and laws that are enforced), and the use of pressure from strong stakeholders and local community, especially when short and medium term strategies prove successful, thus becoming a necessary part of developments to provide such necessary spaces. This strategy should be related to a new strategic city planning scheme that would forbid exceptions and would force any new development to give back to the public.

4.2. Detailed Design Interventions:

Below I introduce few illustrations showing possible stimulation of social activity and activity programming in the different areas of the neighborhood which involve different phases of implementation. In some cases, interventions are introduced to bring about symbolic economic revenue to the residents through creating socio-economic activities in the residual spaces. These revenues can later be used in the gradual and incremental upgrade of the residual spaces. Most dual-use spaces like parking lots are used for bigger scale activities and events. These are the faster evolving catalysts in bringing about social activity to the neighborhood. Other residual spaces can be used as collective gardens for urban agriculture. All activities can be promoted through the creation of a neighborhood initiative that would take care of organization of events, management of stakeholder networks, and the promotion of the neighborhood as an essential player in the city fabric.

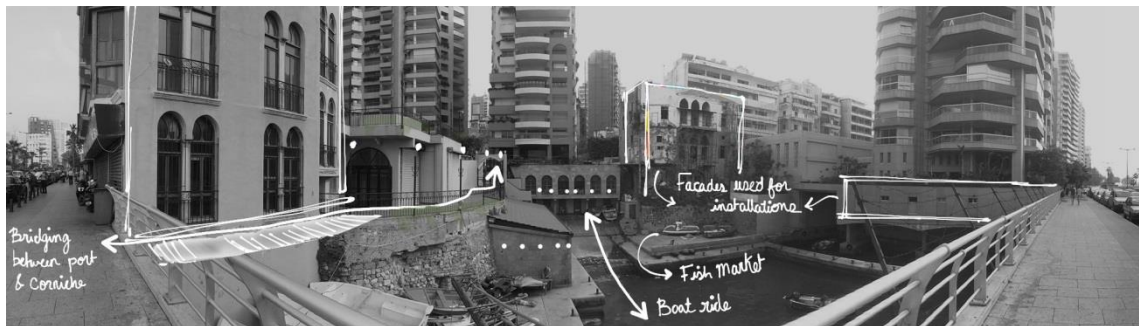


Figure 90: Bridging between the port and the Corniche through physical structure and the activation of the port as being the most important neighborhood landmark

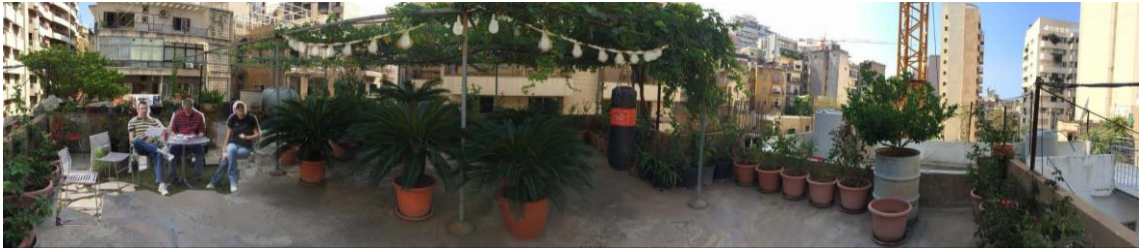


Figure 91: The use of the roof garden above the Souffleur Museum as a social space for visitors. This is also one way of bringing revenues to the owners



Figure 92: The use of residual space behind the Najem residence (Souffleur Museum) as spaces for social activity and social encounters



Figure 93: The use of creative markers and signage to lead to the landmarks and spaces of public use in the neighborhood



Figure 94: Primary phase of attracting economic revenue to the residents in case study area 2 for future upgrade of the block's residual spaces



Figure 95: Possible phasing of residual space upgrade in case study areas 2



Figure 96: Possible use of residual spaces - abandoned rights of ways - for urban greening and urban agriculture



Figure 97: Activity programming in residual spaces - Setback - and the preservation of heritage buildings in the neighborhood



Figure 98: Programming of activities and events in dual-use spaces



Figure 99: Re-imagining the streets of case study are 3 (street improvements, positive use of edges, and activation on the neighborhood scale through moving activities)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis is an attempt at bridging gaps between different social groups in the neighborhood of Ain Mreisseh through the reactivation of residual spaces and the preservation of the neighborhood's socio-cultural heritage, using urban research and design tools. Relying on tactical urbanism strategies that disturb the order of things, the thesis aims at empowering the local community, and turning the dwellers of Ain Mreisseh into active decision makers, actively engaged in the livability of their neighborhood. This approach allows for acupunctural corrections, manipulations, and incremental transformations of space, aiming to make of these spaces catalysts for positive and durable social and spatial change.

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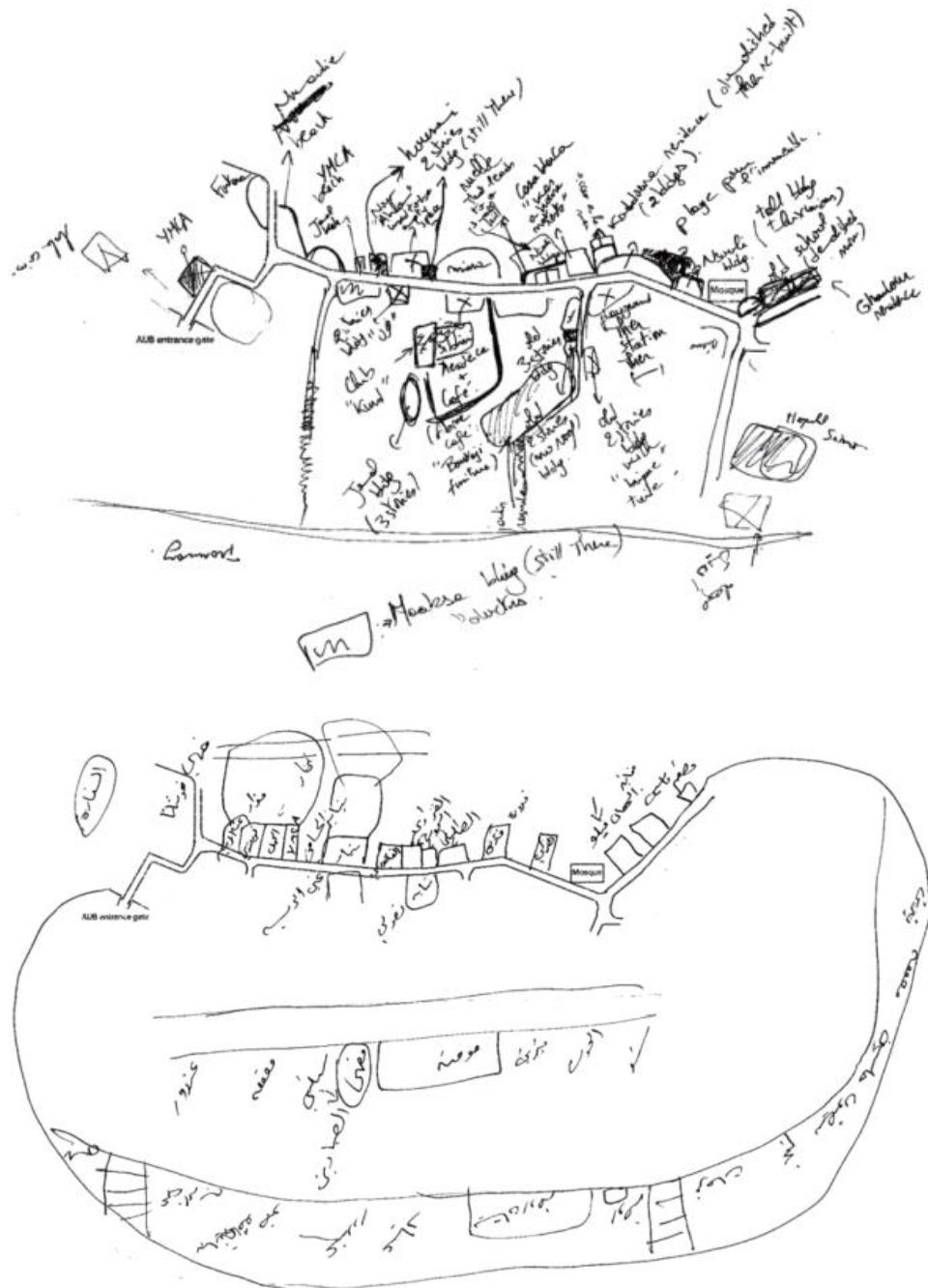
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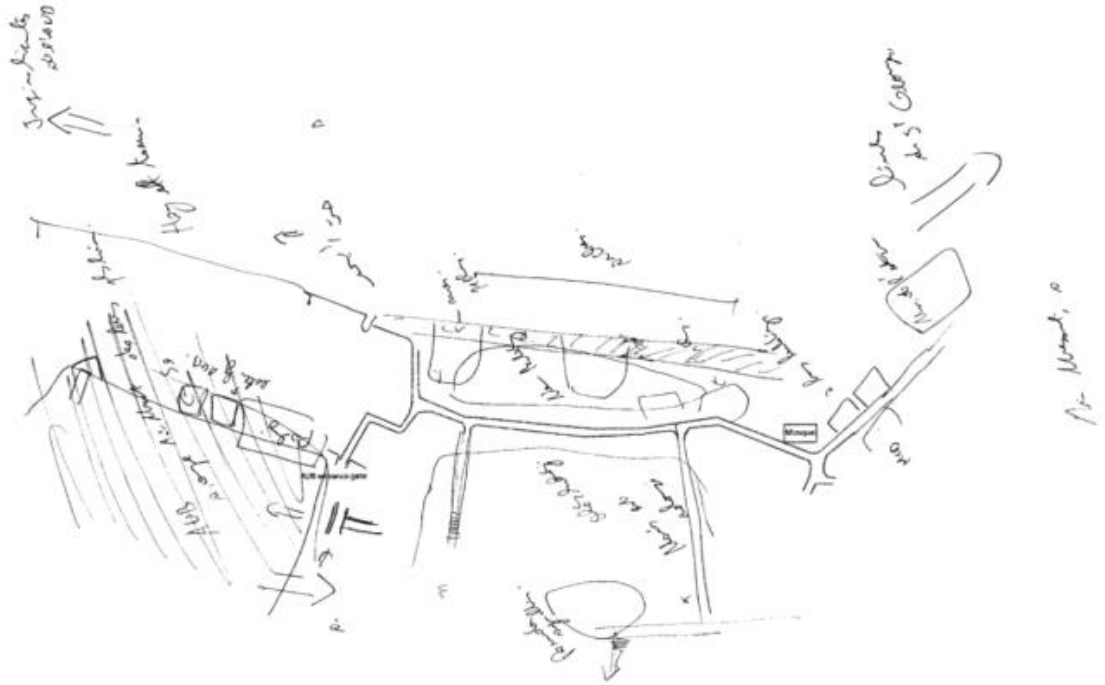
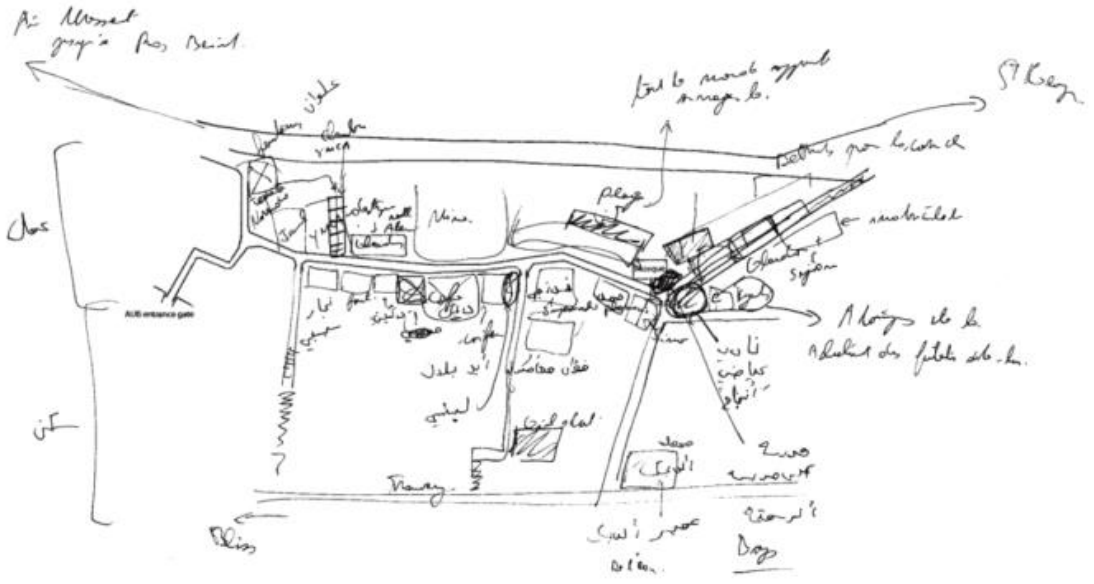
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ANNEXES

Annex 1:

Mental maps drawn by residents in Ain Mreisseh (source: Atallah)





Annex 2:

Screen-shots from the Ain Mreisseh Facebook page.

February 15 at 12:46pm

سيحان الله كيف الدنيا بتتغير
هون كان بيتنا، شوفوا كيف صار
كان بيت سراج طابفين حد المنفا، بيت خالد السبسي، بيت سراج بلزقوا، بيت ابو
عبدالله البارودي فوّه لاحقاً بيت مكى وفوقوا بيت ابو كمال داوود للميله الثانية بيت
ام اسماعيل قذاح لاحقاً بيت مطر وفوقوا بيت ابو وليد النقيب الله يرحموا غير العائلات
الثانية اللي منها متلاصفة بالبناء رزق الله
كنا كلنا جيران اليوم كل واحد بديري المهم الله يحمي الجميع ويحمي لبنان



Like Comment Share

52

View 12 more comments

February 15 at 9:47pm



و كانت عندنا ايام قديمة
اشتقنا لها

February 24 at 5:07am - Beirut, Lebanon

بي هاي الصورة بيت الطريف و بيت ميرزا
مين يعرف وين ؟



Like Comment Share

15

March 6 at 10:02am

يسعدني صياحكم جميعا



+ 6