AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PRESERVING HOUSING MEMORY IN POST-WAR LEBANON CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED HOUSES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

by
TRACY ANTOINE NEHME

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Political Studies & Public Administration
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
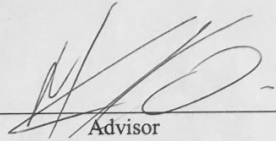at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon
April 2018

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PRESERVING HOUSING MEMORY IN POST-WAR LEBANON
CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED HOUSES AND NEIGHBORHOODS
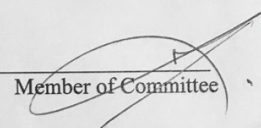
by
TRACY ANTOINE NEHME

Approved by:

_____   _____
Dr. Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, Assistant Professor   Advisor
Political Studies & Public Administration
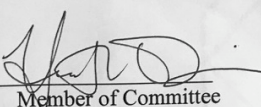
_____   _____
Dr. Charbel Nahas,   Member of Committee
Distinguished Practitioner of Public Policy-in-Residence
Political Studies & Public Administration

_____   _____
Dr. Heather O'Brien, Assistant Professor   Member of Committee
Fine Arts and Art History

Date of thesis defense: April 27, 2018

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THESIS, DISSERTATION, PROJECT RELEASE FORM

Student Name:

_____NEHME_____TRACY_____ANTOINE_____
Last   First   Middle

☒ Master's Thesis   ☐ Master's Project   ☐ Doctoral Dissertation

☒ I authorize the American University of Beirut to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis, dissertation, or project; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes.

☐ I authorize the American University of Beirut, to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of it; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes after:

    One ---- year from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.
    Two ---- years from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.
    Three ---- years from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.

_____   10-05-2018
Signature   Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Tracy Antoine Nehme   for   Master of Arts
                                            Major: Public Policy and International Affairs

Title: Preserving Housing memory in Post-war Lebanon. Case studies of selected houses
       and neighborhoods.

Beirut is unique in the makeup of its urban fabric. Built across centuries, it combines several architectural styles and influences along with a diverse population mix of different classes, religions and ethnicities. After the civil war, destroyed heritage, buildings, neighborhoods, and communities raise the issue of memory preservation. Memory remains vivid in the many abandoned buildings scattered around the city, like a story begging to be told. With the recent wars behind us, the Lebanese people have trouble reconciling the past with the present, and cherishing memories. New threats, from the abandonment of heritage houses to an aggressive real estate market, are putting at risk our national heritage and leading to gentrification and a loss of the previous population mix. Rather than transposing global concepts like gentrification or demonstrating empirically well-established trends like the disappearance of heritage houses, I will tell you stories of selected sample of traditional houses with rich and complex histories that embody major public policy housing issues, I will use the memory lens throughout the study. Through these case studies, I will outline public policy housing issues without the pretense of having all the solutions but rather to expose the inner working of housing in Beirut along with its challenges. Memory can be preserved through the physical walls of houses but also through its residents. This led me to question the reconstruction policies of certain areas, and to compare two different post-war reconstructions of Solidere and Haret Hreik. Here again, memory, erased by violence and force, needs to be rebuilt from scratch and conserved. I touch upon existing policies related to reconstruction, including housing, rent control and real estate policies. I end my thesis with the realization that in all the above cases, the main issue is the absence of the state, which is replaced by private initiatives, which fail to put people at the center of the issue, tending to their private interests, disregarding memories, communities and urban fabrics.

CONTENTS

Chapter

PICTURES

FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a country still unable to agree on how to tell the story of war to its children, art and research might provide a start of a methodology for dealing with its inconsistencies. Following Rancière's statement that 'writing history and writing stories come under the same regime of truth',[1] what matters is not how war affected Beirut's urban infrastructure but how abandoned houses and their stories could be a way for us to re-appropriate our city, affected by segregation, violence, neoliberal policies and lack of state intervention.[2]

I have been photographing for the past six years abandoned houses all over Lebanon. These houses have been mostly deserted since the civil war that tore the country from 1975 to 1990, and most of them are being destroyed. They trigger my reminiscent imagination of a better time when Lebanon was in its "golden years," as my parents' generation say. They were also a way for me to learn about the civil war, which no one talked to me about: neither in school history books, nor in the family, it was rather a taboo subject, and these houses helped me reconstruct the pieces of the little knowledge I had about the subject. The first abandoned house I visited was back in 2014, I was on one of my first photography expeditions with a fellow photographer. We were strolling through Rue du Liban in Achrafieh when we found an alleyway that led to what seemed like a very old, abandoned house. It spiked my curiosity, and I decided to go in. I was welcomed by a "Beware of Human" (sic)

---

[1] Jacques Rancière, Le partage du sensible : esthétique et politique (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000), 61

[2] (Buchakjian 2017)

tag on the wall. It was a two-story house with an interior court, yellow walls, blue windows and a brick roof. We started exploring, one room at a time, fearful of stumbling on inhabitants in every room, but the house turned out to be empty of humans. Things seemed to have been left in a hurry, as we found tons of books, in Arabic, English and German. As I discovered later while talking to researcher Gregory Buchakjian,[3] this particular house was a rare remaining sample of residential buildings articulated around courtyards. It was not meant to be inhabited by a single family; rather, it functioned like a residential building with several units articulated around the courtyard. Discovering this house by pure coincidence was an eye-opener for me, and it started my interest in abandoned traditional Lebanese houses in Beirut and in the fight to preserve Lebanon's cultural and architectural heritage.

Picture 1 - Rue du Liban house - Beware of Humans

In Beirut, many houses were abandoned during the war, and some were abandoned after the war, when real estate developers bought the houses and expelled their occupants, or

---

[3] Conversation I had with Gregory Buchakjian in Hamra on February 2017

the owners immigrated and sold the houses for land revenue. These houses appear as a testimony of the violence of the war, and their presence today, crumbling and covered with bullets, say a lot on the fact that Lebanon did not yet turn the page on the war. It is understandable that the Lebanese want to take the high road to modernity to compensate the lost time during the war, but modernization should happen while preserving the cultural richness of the capital and its surrounding cities, since they are the main attractions that the tourists, including younger generation Lebanese like myself, come to see.

These abandoned buildings appear as things of the past that are not quite of the future yet. They stand in an abyss between what Lebanon was and where it wants to be. This is what anthropologist Victor Turner calls liminality: the rite of passage or the process of shifting from one social status to another. In our case, the house is shifting from its status of old traditional Lebanese house to an abandoned dwelling with a danger of extinction. In this "in between", the house is stripped from its usual identity.[4] In an abandoned space, rules of society are suspended. Rituals carve out a space out of time to entertain our ideas and ideals. They take us out of our routine and invert the rules.

The conflicting relationship of the Lebanese people, including myself, with their history affects today's city through the desire to push Lebanon into modernity, literally abandoning its heritage. In some cases, this leads to whole neighborhoods being displaced, people being forced to leave due to spikes in rental rates. It is not only affecting the architectural fabric of the city but, also, its social cohesion. This leads to gentrification, which is not a new phenomenon. The term was created in 1964 by British sociologist Ruth Glass

---

[4] (Turner 1974)

when referring to the variations she observed in the social structure and housing markets in certain areas of London.[5] Gentrification is the process of renovating and improving a district so that it conforms to middle-class taste, thereby displacing the working-class urban population. One of the arguments I make in this thesis is that heritage preservation leads to gentrification. This occurs when light is shed on an old neighborhood for its heritage value, leading to a capitalization on its cultural value, which pushes prices upward and leads to displacement.[6]

Abandoned dwellings also lead to another issue, which is housing. Having so many abandoned buildings while some people are struggling to find a place to live is counter-intuitive. This leads to some of these houses being inhabited by squatters, illegal immigrants or refugees. A squatter might benefit from public housing but not of low-income housing, since he cannot afford the down payment needed for the loan. Drawing from this housing problem, I will do a comparison between two post-war reconstructions. The first one being the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut after the civil war, started by Solidere, a private real estate company, in 1994, covering an area of 191 hectares including historical ruins and monuments[7]. The second one being the reconstruction of Haret Hreik, an area of 40 hectares[8], after the 2006 Israeli summer war, the Wa'ad project undertaken by a Hezbollah-backed NGO called Jihad al-Bina'. The reason I chose these two case studies is to show the inefficiency of

---

[5] (Lupton, History and Explanation of Gentrification 2010)

[6] (Herzfeld 2009)

[7] (Ghandour and Fawaz 2010)

[8] (Ghandour and Fawaz 2010)

the state when it comes to housing and urban planning, and the fact that private initiatives like the ones of Hariri and Hezbollah are coming into action to fill a gap left by the state. The main issue I have with these private initiatives is that they work for their own interests, which is here either financial gain or political stance, and not for the greater good of the people.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH QUESTION & METHODOLOGY

My goal here is to understand the spatial localization of memory in the context of houses and neighborhoods, where cultural memory overlaps with individual memory. Indeed, human memory is mostly spatial, the space possibly being a house, a country or the body. A place acquires its history through several experiences that give it its meaning and history. When a heritage house is transformed into a museum, it loses the memory of its residents: its function has changed. Memory here can be split in two: the material memory and the community memory. While the material memory is preserved simply by preserving the materiality of the house, its walls, its architecture and design, the community memory is harder to tackle, since it touches upon people's past experiences, the community life, the way commerce was done, and the residents' habits and customs. The main question that drives my thesis is the following: How does housing memory come in play in post-war Lebanon, when it comes to heritage preservation, gentrification and housing or neighborhood reconstruction? I will use my case studies to build relation between these different elements, not so evidently interrelated: housing memory, heritage, reconstruction and housing in Beirut.

The methodology that I used in this thesis is based on case studies of abandoned traditional houses and renovated neighborhoods. The chosen places will be studied under the lens of Lefebvre's *Spatial Triad*: a certain space is the representation of its inhabitants and users. The triad is between the "perceived space", called the special practice; the "representational space," called the lived space; and the "representations of space", called the conceived space.[9] The "perceived space" is about the physical city and its maintenance and daily life in the city, the "representation of space" is the written documents, maps and city guides which are about conceptions of the urban areas for administrative purposes, produced by architects, engineers and urban planners. The "representations of space" are the cultural memories by the residents in a certain urban space and the way artists, poets and writers talk about the urban space and create an emotional bond to it.[10]

If we apply this to the Rue du Liban house discussed in the introduction, the "perceived space" would be the door leading to an abandoned house with wild plants growing in it, the "representational space" would be an upper class residence now transformed into an empty space used by squatters, and the "representations of space" would be the graffiti on the walls or the fact that photographers are coming in and immortalizing the house through their lens. On a larger scale, if we apply Lefebvre's *Spatial Triad* to a certain neighborhood, the "perceived space" would be the physical neighborhood, the "representational space" would would be the routine and daily life that the urban designers or developers want from this neighborhood, they come in form of zoning plans, maps, master plans and designs.

---

[9] (Briercliffe 2015)

[10] (Leary-Owhin 2015)

and the "representations of space" are the aspirations that artists, writers and residents have of the neighborhood.

CHAPTER 3

HOUSING MEMORY

3.1 Persistence & Change

Our ability to memorize from the past to the future, and find ways to share these memories with others constitute the most essential feature of human cognition. The relationship between past, present and future transcends time through memory. Our encounters with our past gives us the chance to tell stories to others, transform our individual biographies into a larger social one.[11] Continuity and discontinuity are tied to memory since both infer time as a duration. The successful transmission of memory leads to continuity across generations, while the loss of information or "forgetting" leads to change. This entails that the modes of transmission play an important role in the continuity or discontinuity of the past. This thesis aims at gaining a better understanding of the processes of memory in post-war Lebanon, by focusing on the fate of its houses and neighborhoods, through neighborhood reconversion, gentrification and heritage protection or destruction. In my research, I approach the topic of memory as a multi-layered phenomenon, touching upon sociocultural continuity and transmission. My objective is to focus on the survival of the past through certain elements related to housing in Beirut. When I walk into an abandoned house, I feel the past fighting the future, with no present in between. I learned about the war from the walls of abandoned houses in Beirut, I learned to find the old demarcation line when the bullet in the walls became more and more concentrated. I learned about the terror of the war when I saw houses abandoned in a hurry, with all belongings still in place. Same for a gentrified neighborhood, I

---

[11] (Adam 1990)

see the old houses against the new ones, with an undetermined present state. The traditional houses are neglected, as if the past was not worthy of care and affection, while new, highly modernized buildings showed how much some Lebanese preferred to live in little luxurious bubbles, oblivious to the past that hurt them, longing to feel like they are in Paris or London, and not in precarious Beirut.

3.2 Time Scales & Narrative Structure

Reconstructing the past involves storytelling, although the story's structure is not necessarily conforming to the plot rules.[12] Memory is not reconstruction but rather made of elements of interpretation, therefore, writing about it is not an easy task, it remains seen as an 'incomplete project', always shifting in terms of perception and purpose.[13] It is important here to make the distinction between memory and history. While history is a linear reconstruction of past events told in an objective and non-emotional manner, memory invites to a revision of the past, therefore bringing it into the present, and acknowledging its continuous presence.[14] This distinction is found in Nora's analysis of the places of French memory: the sites, monuments, buildings where memory is crystallized, called 'lieux de mémoire', exist because there is no situation where memory is part of the everyday life, called 'milieux de mémoire'.[15] There are many ways in which memory can be translated, whether small and hidden or material and monumental, it always leaves a legacy for the future generations. In some cases,

---

[12] (Casey 1987)

[13] (Lambek 1996: 242-3)

[14] (Lowenthal 1975)

[15] (Nora 1992)

9

memory resides in the stones of an old house, but it can also reside in a neighborhood and the community life around it. Disrupting the physical space of the house does not only affect the house, but also its surroundings. In the same way, reviving a neighborhood or reconstructing it should take into account its memory and the history of its inhabitants.

3.3 Place, Architecture and Memory: An Intimate Relationship

Place and memory hold an intimate relationship. As per Sofia-Irini Spanou in her thesis on "Housing Memory: Architecture, Materiality and Time", places are "named, talked about, lived and remembered".[16] They are physical spaces, as well as sociocultural and biographical objects. In my thesis, I focus on the memory in place in houses and neighborhoods. I view houses as social agents that help us understand the way people remember[17] and a way to social continuity. The key to understand how these physical spaces create memory is to go through their different stages of construction, renovation, deterioration and abandonment, all this in relation to the people living in them. My research is therefore not problem-oriented but rather qualitative and descriptive of the current housing situation in Lebanon. The house will be used in my study as a physical and symbolic component where the past is discussed in relation to the future, and I will be emphasizing the role the house has in the identity creation of the Lebanese people in the post-civil war period.

Architecture has been extensively used as a metaphor for memory. This relationship between architecture and memory illustrates how architecture interacts with our minds, and

---

[16] (Spanou 2008)

[17] (Connerton 1989)

not just as the "mental space of a cognitive map".[18] By creating physical boundaries, architecture allows the mind to have a structural framing.[19] Memory and place are therefore mutually dependent, place anchors memory and gives it duration. Destroying a place, due to war for example, will therefore lead to the destruction of memory. A way of preserving it would be to reconstruct it physically, and to allow the same life around it, in terms of inhabitants, customs, and activity. Memory might be linked to the architecture and the walls of the place, but it is not enough to have these physical aspects to maintain it. An example would be the transformation of a traditional house from a residential unit to a guesthouse for tourists. The physical is preserved, in terms of authenticity and design, but the house no longer serves its past purpose, which is to be a home for a family or group of people.

3.4 What Time is This Place?

Joyce and Hendon claim that materiality plays a crucial role in 'transforming fleeting identities into historical facts'.[20] Houses make the relationship to the past visible and relevant to future generations. If the urban fabric is disrupted, the relationship to the past breaks. Memory is no longer available for future generations to understand their past and their history. The older generation accuses us of being disconnected from our history and past, while not offering any help in discovering it. Rather, the war is a taboo topic that is preferably not discussed, and our traditions are something to be ashamed of and we should look instead at the Europeans for examples of modernity and lifestyle. The connection between memory

---

[18] (Spanou 2008)

[19] (Schutz 1967)

[20] (Joyce and Hendon 2000: 143)

and materiality goes both ways, each drawing from the other to keep meaning from the past and present. The house, beyond its functional role, offers a framework for how these meanings are understood in different historical settings.[21]

Similar to humans who go through different life rituals, houses go through 'rites of passage'. From construction, to inhabitation, to destruction or renovation, a house is the product of its history. The same can be said for a neighborhood, which can go through many stages in its history, community life, social class of residents and types of houses. Once we established that both houses and neighborhoods have memory, we can move to see in which way we can preserve that memory. Firstly, we can preserve it by protecting the building materiality, which is architectural heritage. Second, we can preserve its function, by maintaining its residents and community.

CHAPTER 4

PRESERVING MEMORY: HERITAGE & GENTRIFICATION

4.1 Scattered Memories

4.1.1 The Rose House

I visited the Rose House for the first time on February 10, 2018. It was a particularly warm Saturday, with gathering clouds and wind announcing an upcoming storm. All I knew about the Rose House was that it was on the Manara, and so I drove there with a friend, who told me he's seen it before. We parked next to the lighthouse, at the end of Manara, and saw the imposing pink mansion looking down at us. Getting there wasn't too difficult, we walked

---

[21] (Wilson 1988)

up the streets and got to the bottom of the house. It was a four-story house, with a huge

garden. We got to a green metal door that led to the garden, it was closed. My friend proposed

we try our luck from the other side. As I was peeking from the fences, I saw movement on the

balcony of the house. There were people there, and they looked like visitors. This comforted

me knowing that I'll be able to get to the house. We started our walk uphill. We went up long

stairs that led to a street called Manara. A new tower building on our right contrasted with the

small colored houses on top of the stairs. As we walked, I tried to image how this place

looked like fifty years ago, it wasn't hard: the old stairs seemed unchanged, the little hill

overseeing the sea, and the small colored houses, all were still there. As we continued our

walk, we got the old lighthouse, a striped black and white tower, with a little house annexed

to it. We continued our walk and right after the lighthouse, the pink building appeared before

us. We were welcomed by a group of people, probably the ones I saw on the balcony. They

were part of a collective called Urban Sketchers, and were getting ready to sketch the house.

Their aim was to put Lebanon's gems on paper, "to raise the artistic, storytelling and

educational value of on-location drawing, promoting its practice and connecting people

around the world who draw on location where they live and travel".[22] They warned us about a

broken staircase leading to the second floor. The ground floor door was locked and we

couldn't go in. We went up the stairs that led to the entrance of the first floor. I was surprised

by the relatively conserved interior. The space we entered seemed to be the main living room,

with a chimney in the middle and beautiful arcades made of colored glass. Details from the

chandelier to the carved doors to the mosaic chimney hinted that the place was especially

---

[22] (Urban Sketchers 2018)

refined and luxurious for its time. The ground floor also had two bedrooms with a sea view, a bathroom, and the arcaded balcony that the Rose House was most famous for. The terrace overlooked the Manara, the new lighthouse and the sea. It was made of yellow stone, and design colored floor tiles. The view was breathtaking. It was easy to imagine previous owners enjoying the Mediterranean as far as their eyes could see. Whoever had the chance to live in this house must have felt the responsibility of its history and its legacy. I imaged intellectuals, businessmen and politicians standing exactly where I was on the balcony, feeling successful and fulfilled to live in such a privileged place of beauty. We then went back inside to get to the second floor, passing by a blue-tiled kitchen with bright red paint scattered on the walls that made it seem like a crime scene. The second floor was made of two empty rooms, a bathroom and the rooftop. We then went down stairs leading to the garden, I found the green door that I first stumbled upon on our way to the house. My friend opened a door that led us to a dark gym, with a bathroom. The equipment was recent, much more recent than the rest of the house. We were puzzled by this weird addition to the house. We continued in the garden, getting to an empty fountain, surrounded by wild grass and palm trees. Facing the fountain, the house's facade was broken down, like an open wound, inviting us in. We entered into an impressive space that seemed like a hammam. Openings were carved into the ground, but some elements didn't add up. There was an oriental balcony like the ones you would see in mosques. There were also lockers in another room that didn't seem as old as the rest of the house. I later found out that architect Fadi El Khazen transformed the basement as his home in

the seventies[23]. We went up the stairs to reach the entrance again, passing by large mirror-like walls. We greeted our sketcher friends one last time and left.

Picture 2 – The Rose house in 2018 (exterior)

Picture 3 – The Rose house in 2018 (interior)

I left the Rose house feeling worried. The house was like a dream, out of time and space. It was a treasure, vulnerable to the public, to thieves, and to passing time. It was

---

[23] (Tele Liban Official 2017)

unwillingly attracting tourists and artists, but the thrill over it also constituted a danger for it. The place was fragile and needed renovation and care. I remember standing next to the chimney, looking at the broken mosaic pieces, calling me out, I could take a souvenir, a tiny little piece, but how could I dare to take more from this house, already so damaged? I didn't touch anything, but quickly understood how attractive it would be for people to steal from it. Who was protecting the house? Did it have an owner? Who lived there? I needed to find out more about it. After doing some research, I discovered that the house was bought in 2014 by Hicham Jaroudi, the president of the Riyadi club and a real estate developer, who is planning on renovating the house with architect Jacques Abou Khaled[24]. According to an interview Mr. Jaroudi gave to An-Nahar on May 13, 2017, the renovation should have started last June[25]. Still, here we are ten months later, and the house is still deserted and accessible to the public. The Rose house was built in year 1882. It was made of four floors, with a garden and a pond. Its size was 2,890 square meters. Its interior comprised traditional characteristics like marble columns, marble floor and woodwork. The staircase's handrail was in shape of a rose, which further explained the name of the house. In the late fifties, Ross Lynch, the press secretary for Culture in Lebanon from the American embassy, inhabited the Rose House. In the years 1963 and 1964 John Firn, American artist friend of Pablo Picasso, lived in the house. In the 90s, the house was threatened of destruction and was to be replaced by a luxurious residential tower. Minister of Culture at the time Michel Edde classified the Rose house as a heritage building in

---

[24] (Makarem 2017)

[25] (An-Nahar Online 2017)

order to save it.[26] The Rose house was then known as the Ardati house, from the family who owned it, then as Beit El Khazen, from the name of the family who rented it for more than 50 years. Fayza El Khazen came back to Lebanon in the beginning of the 90s and founded Edition Terre du Liban, a publishing house specialized in Lebanon's history. During those years, the Rose house became a cultural and intellectual hub.

Picture 4 – The Rose House and the old lighthouse

---

[26] Resolution no.24, in the 30th edition of the Official Newspaper (15/07/1996)

Picture 5 - The Rose House at the time of Fayza El Khazen

In 2014, Fayza El Khazen was in the process of moving out of the house and accepted the request of Tom Young, a British artist based in Beirut, to reside in the house and paint it over the summer. Tom Young has been painting abandoned houses and even managed to save a few ones by negotiating with the owners, finding new buyers, exerting media pressure and turning the sites into cultural spaces. Tom Young produced sixty paintings around the house and made an exhibition in the house visited by around 6,000 people.[27] Young met the new owner Hicham Jaroudi and proposed to transform the place into a cultural hub, where Mr. Jaroudi would receive a percentage of the sales of Young's paintings. The daughter of Mr. Jaroudi, Nadia, coordinated with Young to make this happen, as they had a very similar vision to what role the house should have.[28] I sat with Tom in January 2018, and

---

[27] According to a conversation with Tom Young

[28] (Tele Liban Official 2017)

we discussed the Rose house. He had no updates on the fate of the house, and was worried about how much longer it would remain standing.

It seems like the fate of this house is linked to one person, the owner, and no amount of awareness or policies can change that. The Rose house is heavy with memories, and its walls tell so many stories, it would be a shame to lose them. While the material memory is still standing, and somehow preserved, the community memory is on hold, until the owners decide which function to give to this space. Putting these houses in the hands of private owners, whether declared as heritage sites or not, still means the same thing: the house's fate will be linked to the interest of the owner, memory might be neglected, or worse, completely erased. Let us now move to a slightly more successful story, the Boustani house.

4.1.2 The Boustani House

The Boustani house is the first steel frame house built in Beirut in 1873, and it now appears as one of the biggest houses in Mar Mkhaeil. It is at a crossroad, and every time I stopped at the traffic light, I would wonder why it was abandoned and wished I could visit it.

Picture 6 – The Boustani house with direct sea access

It is through a random conversation with Tom Young that I learn about the history of

the Boustani house. It was build by banker Salim Habib Boustani in 1873 and commissioned

by an Italian architect, which explains the unique architectural mix of the house, with a touch

of classical Roman style. In the 1940s, the house was the residence of British Officers who

fought the Vichy French regime, and helped the Lebanese Independence movement to free

Lebanon from the French mandate in 1943. In 2009, the house was bought by a Syrian

businessman, who had a plan to renovate part of it.[29] The house opened for its first public

exhibition in June 2016, with a show called "7 Rooms 7 Artists". While Tom Young was

supposed to be one of the exhibitors, he refused once he learned that the owner at the time

wanted to destroy the house and split it between two residential towers, with a road in the

---

[29] (Young, Beirut Arts Club, Mar Mikhael (Beit Boustani) 2017)

middle, while keeping the facade only. The chosen artists were all non-Lebanese residing in Beirut.[30]

In 2017, things turned around, and the house was bought by Nabil Debs, a businessman and art enthusiast that planned on renovating it. At that time, they invited Tom Young back to the house, to finish the work he started a few years back. Tom started his art residence in the house, giving workshops to underprivileged children with his wife, Noor Haydar. On December 13, 2017, a six-day exhibition took place inside the Boustani House, with the collaboration of four artists: Tom Young, Noor Haydar, Karim Sakr, and Nadine Sures. Tom Young organizes these cultural events as a way to save the house, stating that they are "a way to bring a sense of community and togetherness to society, instead of modern developments which are soulless private compounds for the elite".[31] In an interview with An-Nahar, Tom Young states that "photography and performance are sometimes more appropriate mediums through which to mediate delicate memories".[32] The memory of this house has been celebrated, and with art, a bridge between past and present was made. As we can see in the below picture, where photographer Karim Sakr created a double exposure photography of the wedding picture of one of the house's inhabitant, putting the picture on the same stairs where it was taken. The transparency between the photograph and the actual place it was put in brings back memories alive.

---

[30] (7 Rooms 7 Artists – Beirut Conversations launches at Beirut Art House 2016)

[31] (Nasser 2017)

[32] (Nasser 2017)

Picture 7 – A double exposure photo by Karim Sakr

Picture 8 – The façade of the Boustani house in 2018

Picture 9 – The interior of the Boustani house in 2018

This house is like many others in Mar Mkhaeil, where the old is fighting with the new. With the start of the renovations, the material memory of the house is definitely preserved, while its community memory is not, since it will probably be turned into a cultural space or guesthouse. This house was salvaged out of luck due to its new owners, which happened to care about heritage. What if it is sold again? It is not a permanent solution, and the fate of these houses remains in individuals' hands. Mar Mkhaeil, the once "*rue à caractère traditionnel"* street has become a disfigured half-modern, half-traditional street. Old neglected buildings stand shyly next to high modern ones, while developers sell to wealthy customers the 'village like' feel of Mar Mkhaeil, which they are themselves slowly killing. This change in the neighborhood's infrastructure, affordability and inhabitants, known as gentrification, is a ramping problem in many Beirut neighborhoods.

4.1.3 Mar Mkhaeil

Mar Mkhaeil, a neighborhood that is both residential and commercial, witnessed

gentrification starting 2008.[33] The neighboring nightlife scene in Gemmayseh spilled over to

Mar Mkhaeil, with pubs and restaurants followed by art galleries and new up-and-coming

design shops. Mar Mkhaeil has now become a trendy neighborhood, where luxurious

residential towers stand side-by-side old traditional houses. What made Mar Mkhaeil

transform from a calm *"rue à caractère traditionnel"* to a modern area with overpriced

towers emptied from its soul? When real estate developers realized the potential of Mar

Mkhaeil, they started buying lots and merging them together to form larger ones. Many

owners had an incentive to sell since most of their tenants lived on the old rent law, and

therefore the owners were not getting the real value out of their plot.[34] The authenticity of Mar

Mkhaeil, its prime location and initial affordability of prices led young artists and designers to

settle their businesses there. This, along with the developers' plan, led to a rapid increase in

prices and the transformation of the neighborhood, with some old shops having to move out

because they could not longer afford it. According to a 2011 survey by Zouein el al,[35] there

were two waves of creative entrepreneurs establishing in the area: the first settled in 2008,

attracted by the low prices and the authentic feel of the neighborhood, and the second wave

settled in 2010/2011, attracted by the already existing cultural and artistic vibe of the

neighborhood. A 2012 survey by Ashkarian states that twelve shops closed their doors in the

past three to four years and that some locals are facing socio-cultural displacement.[36] Walking

---

[33] (Krijnen and Christiaan, Capital, state and conflict: the various drivers of diverse gentrification processes in Beirut, Lebanon 2015)
[34] (Krijnen and Christiaan, Capital, state and conflict: the various drivers of diverse gentrification processes in Beirut, Lebanon 2015)

[35] Marieke Krijnen 2015

[36] Ibid

today in Mar Mkhaeil is a desolating journey. The street is eaten up by modern buildings, while the few reaming old buildings are falling apart, mostly abandoned. I once longed to live in Mar Mkhaeil, attracted by its closeness to the city, vibrant art scene and authentic feel, and was shown around by a real estate broker who took me to a new tower being built. He boasted about the small market and restaurants under the building, which will mimic the old Mar Mkhaeil. He also talked about being able to go by foot to run some errands, as they do in Europe. When I asked about parking, he remained vague, especially about the visitors parking. The street was so narrow that such a huge building being constructed in such a tight place seemed unreal. The building was selling fast, he said, although it was till under construction. I remember my ignorance at the time about gentrification and how the building looked completely alien to its immediate surroundings.

Picture 10 – Mar Mkhaeil's urban fabric

Heritage appears to be the dominant discourse of the wealthy, while gentrification appears to be a negative side effect of this heritage discourse, affecting the poorer classes. To

understand more both concepts, let us delve into heritage and gentrification with their definition, processes and impacts.

4.2 Heritage

4.2.1 Definition & Concept

Heritage as a cultural concept peaked in the 1970s when UNESCO coined the term "World Heritage", where it defines "cultural heritage" as:

> *Article 1:1*
> *• "Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;*
> *• Group of buildings: shall include all groups of separate or connected buildings and their surroundings, whether urban or rural, which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of value from the historical, artistic, scientific, social or ethnological point of view;*
> *• Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view".[37]*

From these definitions, I am mostly interested in buildings as individual architectural heritage and groups of buildings as heritage neighborhoods.

4.2.2 Heritage Protection Policies in Lebanon

The Rose house and the Boustani house are not the only case of endangered architectural heritage in Lebanon. Although so far, they succeeded in overcoming the wear of time and neglect, some other houses were not as resilient. According to Agence France-Presse, out of the 1,200 old houses that were inventoried in the mid-1990s by the Lebanese

---

[37] (Ahmad 2006)

Culture Ministry, only 400 are left.[38] What are some of the policies and institutions dealing with the protection of Heritage in Lebanon?

Municipalities are the local governmental institutions with the most direct effect on the cultural and architectural heritage. Their responsibilities include implementing urban projects, like water, public transport and cleanliness. They also receive applications for construction permits, issue building permits and enforce local building regulations. Municipalities have important implications in housing-related issues, for example, they determine the fee rate for the construction permit, authorize housing construction, authorize the destruction of old buildings or their rehabilitation (article 49 of decree no. 118/1977) and set the fee for the registration of the lease agreements (Law no. 60/88).[39]

There are several governmental institutions tackling the protection of heritage: the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA), a technical division of the Ministry of Culture responsible for the protection and promotion of national heritage sites in Lebanon, the Ministry of Tourism responsible for the site operation and management, the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU), a division of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport that develops regulations and coordinates urban planning, created after the civil war to help reconstruct the Lebanese infrastructure. The DGA is responsible for all archaeological sites and historic monuments. Under the still valid law on Antiquities of 1933, the state remains the owner of all archeological sites while the DGA is responsible for their management, preservation and protection. Despite the law, most of today's development plans are started

---

[38] (Sandals, 2019)

[39] (UNHCR 2014)

without the DGA's consultation or approval and without taking into consideration the importance of archaeology and heritage. An example here would be the Downtown Beirut city plan, which completely ignored the archaeological heritage and history of the site. The problem with the DGA's administrative framework is that it dates back to 1966 and is therefore completely outdated. Its initial organizational scheme divides it into four departments: the secretariat, the Museums Department and the Excavations Department, and the Archaeological Monuments Department. Another institution dealing with heritage is the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), established in 1977 to coordinate large-scale urban planning intervention, directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office.

The first and only binding law on the preservation of heritage dates back to 1933, Law 166 protects buildings and monuments that are from the 18th century and before, mainly archeological remains, but not the most recent architecture.[40] In 2010, following a civil society movement against the rapid destruction of heritage buildings, a committee under the Culture Minister and the Beirut Governor, was put in place to limit the demolition of traditional houses. This ministerial decree is not legally binding and remains very weak against the developers and politicians focused on profit making.[41]

A law to protect heritage buildings has been passed to Parliament in October 2017.[42] This heritage law develops clear mechanisms for the protection of heritage sites and for the

---

[40] (Kanafani 2016)

[41] (Kanafani 2016)

[42] The law was approved by the government, but still needs to be ratified by Parliament

fair compensation of affected owners. As per Save Beirut Heritage's statement, the law has

three goals. First, protection and classification by describing the administrative and legal

processes through which the Ministry of Culture can classify buildings or neighborhoods as

protected heritage sites. Second, the transfer of development rights (TDR) allows owners to

keep their heritage buildings while benefiting from the value of their land elsewhere in the

city. Third, tax and fiscal advantages, financial incentives like important tax reductions or

exemptions are given to owners and buyers who renovate heritage buildings.
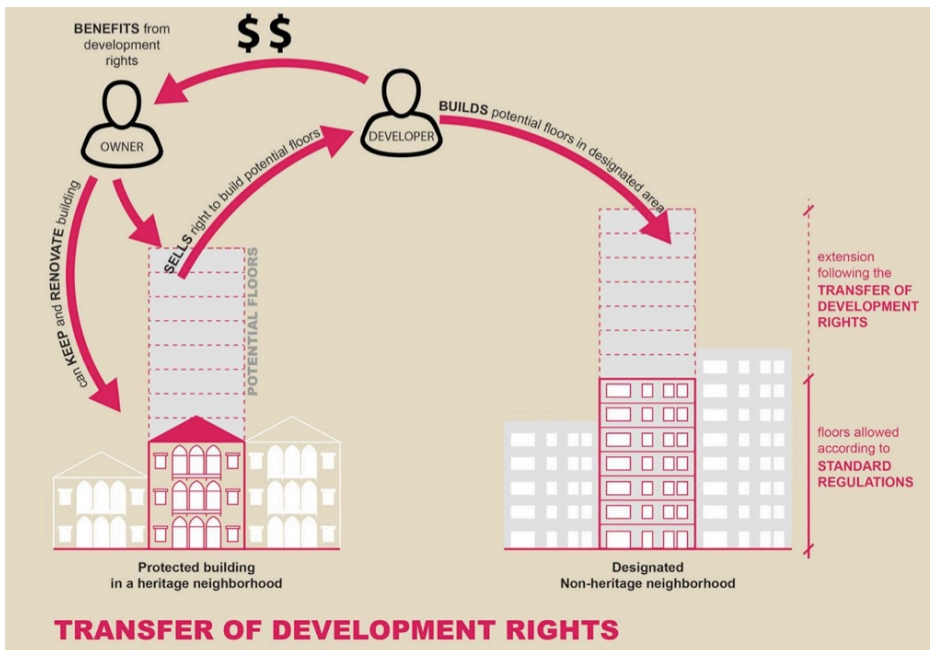
Figure 1- About the Heritage Law: Transfer of Development Rights (Save Beirut Heritage)

Above is an infographic developed by Save Beirut Heritage to explain the new

Heritage Law. In theory, the TDR law aims to compensate the owner of a heritage house for

the opportunity cost of not redeveloping the land on which the heritage house is built. The

state would grant him development rights to be sold to a developer. The developer would then

use the acquired development rights to build additional area in another development. In other terms, the owner of the heritage house gets the right to sell the development rights for additional floors he could have developed or sold to a developer. Some problematic points related to this TDR law are to be considered: Would there be a minimum stage of restoration required before providing the heritage status? How easy will it be to sell and transfer the development rights without changing the urban fabric of the neighborhood? The development rights will have a value that is linked to the location of the original heritage house. As an example, a heritage house in a high-end neighborhood would lead to ten extra floors in a neighborhood of similar valuation. Is it realistic to expect a new development to add ten extra floors above the existing rights in a neighborhood? The sale of development rights has their share of issues, and need to be tackled in more details once the law is applied.

Is anything else being done from a policy perspective for building regulations and laws that aim at the protection (or destruction) of Lebanese heritage? After the war, the rebuilding of the Solidere district aimed at attracting international investors, caused tax-exemption and special regulations.[43] The Lebanese building law was written in 1940, based on the French model, and remains unchanged despite new post-war conditions. Centered around design criteria such as building height limits, surface exploitation, built up area, and street setback, the building law enables new building forms while concealing historical specificity.[44]

---

[43] (Saksouk n.d.)

[44] Ibid

Some additional existing laws also put heritage houses at a disadvantage, like the Law of Construction voted in 2004 allowing for 30% extra plot exploitation and 25% raise in building height, the Law on Antiquities, and the 1992 Law on rent.[45] In 1995, Law 402/1995 endorsed hotel developers to double their exploitation ratios, and also encouraged developers by increasing building allowances in general. Decree 2791/1992 allowed for increased building allowances by amending the implementation decree of the national building law and then modifying the law completely with the establishment of a new law that increased the allowable built-up areas (Law 646/2004). Another law facilitating non-residents and non-nationals to acquire property was established in 2001 (Law 296/2001) and established companies in the form of holdings (Law 772/2006) or joint-companies (through IDAL, Law 771/2006).[46] These laws favor the flow of capital in the city by encouraging developers to build new towers and luxury apartments, while disregarding old houses. This pushes the process of heritage destruction further, and creates a 'rent gap' where landlords prefer to demolish their old buildings to build new, more profitable ones.

The effectiveness of the structure of organizations put in place to protect heritage is hindered by many factors. First, the lack of co-ordination between the DGA, the DGU and the local municipalities is problematic due to overlapping mandates and conflicting visions. Second, legislative bottlenecks deter the preservation of cultural heritage. Lebanese laws governing archeology and cultural heritage need to be updated. Third, real estate market demand and the lack of financial incentives have accelerated the disappearance of traditional

---

[45] (National News Agency Bulletin 2015)

[46] (Krijnen and Fawaz, Exception as the Rule: High-End Developments in Neoliberal Beirut 2010)

31

houses, especially in the capital. Fourth, while laws governing the protection of

archaeological sites themselves are sufficient, mechanisms of implementation are not.

Another impediment is the complexity of property ownership and occupancy patterns

and rent regulations. Following the 1960s approach to urban planning, most city centers were

classified as commercial zones allowing for maximum exploitation.

The destruction of heritage is leading to gentrified neighborhoods, with residents

being forced out due to financial reasons and moving into other neighborhoods, less central

and less expensive. Let us now go into the definition and processes of gentrification to

understand its impact on Beirut.

4.3 Gentrification

4.3.1 Definitions, Processes & Impacts

In 1964, British sociologist Ruth Glass noticed a change in the neighborhood of

Islington. Previously known as a working-class neighborhood, with mostly Indian

immigrants, Islington started witnessing young "creatives" appropriating its Georgian terraces

and intimate squares. Ruth Glass coined this class phenomenon by adapting the British-ism

"gentry" into a process-inflected term, gentrification.[47] Early definitions of gentrification

focused on the residential housing market and the rehabilitation of existing properties. Since

then, the definition has become broader, including vacant land and newly built designer

neighborhoods transformed to meet the expectations of a new middle-class.

---

[47] (Thomson 2014)

The Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines gentrification as: "The process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents".[48] Two theories exist for gentrification: the first is the production-side theory, viewing gentrification as an economic process with the rent gap theory by Neil Smith and the second is the consumption-side theory, viewing gentrification as a socio-cultural process, with the emergence of a middle-class with new needs by David Ley.[49] There are many initiators of gentrification, from artists, developers to public authorities; all play different roles depending on the type of gentrification the neighborhood is witnessing.

Gentrification can be explained around three main components. First, the origins of the term point to changing social structures in big cities. The shift from manufacturing-based industries to service-based industries resulted in a change from a working-class structure to a white-collar structure, in search for a residential location surrounded by cultural activities, leisure spaces and retail facilities. Second, this change in class structure led to a change in cultural orientation, with the middle-class more interested to live in the heart of the city rather than in the suburbs, where little was happening in terms of culture and entertainment. Third, gentrification was a movement of capital and not people, according to Neil Smith who studied the evolution of gentrification.[50] The driving force of gentrification was the difference between the potential value of urban property versus their actual land value. This difference

---

[48] (El-Achkar 2011)

[49] Ibid

[50] (Smith 1979)

led to a 'rent gap' exploited by real estate agents in search of higher profits.[51]

Real-estate price

Displacement
Prices increase
Developers
Initial Gentrifiers

Loss of social diversity
Displacement of locals
Under-occupancy
Decrease in affordable housing
Increase in local service prices

Reduced unoccupied housing rates
Rehabilitated properties through investments
Further development in area
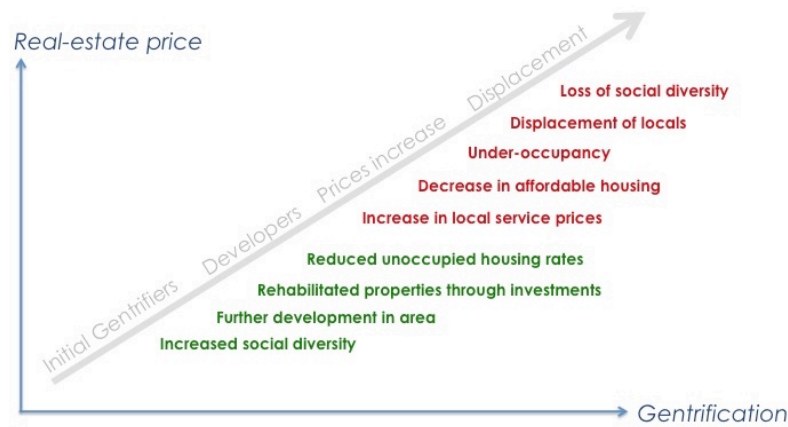Increased social diversity

Gentrification

Figure 2- Stages & Impacts of Gentrification

According to Timothy James Pattison in "The Process of Neighborhood Upgrading and Gentrification: An Examination of two Neighborhoods in the Boston Metropolitan Area,"[52] gentrifying neighborhoods go through four stages: the first stage consists of a sample of pioneering individuals ranging from designers to artists who decide to buy and renovate properties in a certain urban area. No displacement occurs at this early stage. At the second stage, some subtle promotional activities start to occur, driven by real estate agents. Since there are a lot of vacant houses at this stage, they are still easy to acquire. This is usually when the media starts getting interested in the neighborhood, and a plethora of articles and media coverage is created. Developers start converging to the area and urban renewal begins. At stage three, the physical improvement of the neighborhood becomes apparent, and house prices start increasing. Well-maintained properties become part of the middle-class market,

---

[51] (Mitchell n.d.)

[52] (Pattison 1977)

34

while residents of poorer properties are forced to relocate, due to an increase in price or pressure from developers to sell. Tensions start rising between newcomers and older residents. In the final stage, gentrification increases to a higher number of properties, with an influx of residents from the managerial middle-class. Small retail stores start to emerge, and commercial activity flourishes. This leads to a further increase in housing prices, and further displacement of both renters and homeowners.

Depending on your social positioning, gentrification does have some positive impact, as in increasing property value in the concerned neighborhood, reducing unoccupied housing rates, increasing fiscal revenues, increasing social diversity, encouraging further development in the area and rehabilitating properties through private and state investments. Yet, while real estate consultants, politicians and the middle-class find the gentrification process to be a method of attracting new taxpayers and countering urban decay, the less privileged dwellers previously residing in the area experience an increase in living costs, a breakdown in their social networks, and the risk of being evicted from their homes and entirely displaced from their communities.

In the long run, some of the less positive effects of gentrification include an increase in rent prices and the displacement of the original residents. Displacement could be direct (physical or economic) or indirect.[53] Displacement can have many causes, it could be due to eviction, increased rent, or the fact that the rented house was sold.[54] This could lead to an unsustainable rise in housing prices, resentment from the original inhabitants that could lead

---

[53] (Khechen 2014)

[54] (Florida 2015)

to revolts, a decrease in affordable housing, an increase in local service prices, a loss of social diversity, replaced by higher-income residents, population loss leading to under-occupancy and an increase in cheap housing demand on neighboring areas.[55] Richard Florida points to the complicated link between gentrification and displacement, which is not always clear. Displacement depends on how fast gentrification is going. If gentrification is slow, displacement can actually decrease.[56] Let us go over some definitions of displacement, the first is by Grier and Grier's: "When any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and;

1. Are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent;
2. Occur despite the household's having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and
3. Make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable".[57]

Another definition of displacement is by Lee and Hodge, in which it is "private action including abandonment, demolition, eviction, condominium conversion, mortgage default and the termination of a rental contract".[58] While Lee and Hodge's definition is broader, it specifies the fact that displacement must stem from a private action, and can therefore not be caused by the state or municipality, while Grier and Grier's definition focuses more on the specific conditions that lead to gentrification.

---

[55] (Lupton 2010)

[56] (Florida 2015)

[57] (Freeman and Braconi 2004)

[58] Ibid

Gentrification is not only happening in cities like London or New York: "A 1976 study by the Urban Land Institute found that nearly half of the 260 cities with a population over 50,000 had undergone gentrification, defined as a marked expansion in middle-income housing in the form of rehabilitated single-family dwellings, mostly in historic districts, initiated by affluent, educated young professionals with an increasing desire for the kind of cultural and intellectual pursuits which are generally found only in the central cities— performing arts, museums, libraries, seminars, etc."[59]

Revamping strips of the city means more money for the municipalities. This pushes policymakers to shift their attention from "demolishing city centers for highways and public housing to granting historic district designations, investing in fixing broken windows and, most importantly, rezoning and offering tax exceptions in fringe areas".[60] Most policymakers refuse to acknowledge the departure of prior residents to less expensive homes nearby (displacement), choosing to focus solely on profit making.[61]

4.3.2 Anti-Gentrification Policies in Lebanon

According to Marieke Krijnen from the Orient-Institute Beirut (OIB) and Christiaan De Beukelaer, a PhD researcher from the Institute of Communications Studies at the University of Leeds, in their 2015 paper on "Capital, State and Conflict: the Various Drivers of Diverse Gentrification Processes in Beirut, Lebanon", the following processes influence

---

[59] (Thomson 2014). The source does not indicate where in the world these cities are located

[60] (Thomson 2014)

[61] Ibid

gentrification in Beirut: civil conflict and sectarianism, the overlap between public and private spheres in Lebanon's political system, and the diaspora capital (as a main driver of Beirut gentrification).[62] Other Beirut-specific aspects of gentrification according to the National News Agency are lenient legal frameworks for developers encouraging them to continue their development craze, investments of the Lebanese diaspora leading to a rent gap and high exploitation ratios.[63] Ownership problems can also affect gentrification. Owners can be absent, share ownership, or have special socio-economic status that might lead them to sell more easily under pressure.

Today, the lack of an urban planning strategy and the free pass the government is giving to developers makes gentrification impossible to control in Beirut. Gentrification has to be solved not by a building-by-building basis but rather at a neighborhood level. It is not only the government's role to fight gentrification but also the residents and collectives on the ground. A bottom up approach is necessary to raise the voice of the people and some initiatives are implemented by civil society to encourage that.

4.4 Initiatives Led by Civil Society

Some artists made their lifetime work to fight against the destruction of heritage, like Tom Young. Villa Paradisio, an old house on the verge of destruction, was taken over by Tom Young, who convinced the owner to make it a cultural hub, and after serving for three years as a culture center, it was rented by the European ambassador, who fell in love with it. Villa

---

[62] (Krijnen and De Beukelaer, Capital, State and Conflict: the Various Driversof Diverse Gentrification Processes in Beirut, Lebanon 2015)

[63] (National News Agency 2015)

Paradisio is now in good hands, renovated and the proof that social activism can make a difference.[64] Yet more impressively, Mona Hallak, a Lebanese architect and activist, spent fifteen years lobbying to save the Barakat building from destruction. She was awarded the "Ordre National du Mérite" by the French Ambassador in Beirut in recognition of her accomplishments in preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of Beirut.[65] After the Beirut war, the owners of the Barakat building, which was situated on the Green Line and was a strategic spot for snipers, wanted to destroy it. Activists and architects, including Mona Hallak, protested again this demolition, claiming that "Lebanon cannot move forward from the civil war until it creates a "collective memory" and then uses that unified account of civil war events to heal some of the divisions fracturing society today".[66] The subject of the civil war in Lebanon is still taboo and is not found in history schoolbooks. Beit Barakat, now known as Beit Beirut, will be the first war museum in Lebanon, breaking barriers and reconciling the Lebanese with a memory that is still too vivid to be remembered.

The foregoing accounts of artist activism bring up the question of the Lebanese identity after the war. Once the fighting ended, what happened to the strong opinions, hatred and blaming that the Lebanese had towards each other? In "Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety", Grillo defines 'Cultural Anxiety' as the fear of a culture that feels threatened,[67] similar to what some Lebanese are experiencing when they see the last remains of their architectural heritage getting destroyed.

---

[64] (Young, Tom Young 2017)

[65] (Mitri 2015)

[66] (NOW 2007)

[67] (Grillo 2003)

Several NGOs are fighting for the preservation of cultural heritage in Lebanon. The "Association pour la Protection des Sites et Anciennes Demeures au Liban" (APSAD), is the oldest NGO on this subject, with an annual budget of around USD 60,000 used for restoration projects, awareness campaigns, conferences, publications and exhibitions.

Another NGO is the Association for Protection of Lebanese Heritage (APLH), which works mostly on creating awareness and building an online exhaustive list of all buildings and monuments with a historical or cultural value. Save Beirut Heritage's is the most publicized NGO and the one with the biggest impact on social media, its website contains an alert form where we can point to an old house risking of being demolished. It started in 2010, founded by Naji Esther, who went directly to Salim Warde, the Minister of Culture at the time, and managed to put a six-month hold on any building demolition.[68] Lobbying was also done to publish a ministerial decree that states that every demolition permit must be cosigned by the Ministry of Culture, therefore giving power to the Ministry to stop the demolition of traditional homes. In 2008, a Heritage Law was drafted by Salim Warde, but it was never discussed in Parliament. In 2016, a second draft law by Raymond Araiji was proposed to Parliament, but was also put aside. The succession of Ministers of Culture, with different priorities and the reluctance of Parliament to discuss any law concerning heritage, makes change on a policy level challenging.[69] While talking to Naji about the strategy of Save Beirut Heritage, he told me that it is very difficult to work on a long-term plan, since they are in a constant emergency mode. Every time they receive a call about a building being demolished,

---

[68] According to a conversation I had with Naji Esther in March 2017.

[69] Ibid

they start working immediately on it, and they have stories where they were able to keep houses safe after five years of lobbying, only to be destroyed in one night following the order of a high ranked politician.

Although still shy and scattered, initiatives taken by artists, civic society and NGOs are an effective way to raise awareness on the heritage issue, making the public aware of the urgency of the situation. Protecting Beirut's architectural heritage contributes directly to protecting neighborhoods from gentrification. By reducing the number of demolished houses, we reduce the number of new modern high-end buildings.

Gentrification is getting more and more awareness in Lebanon, and two pioneers of the grassroots movement are a collective called Public Works Studio and an initiative started by the American University of Beirut called AUB Neighborhood initiative. Public Works, established in 2012 by architect Abeer Saqqouq and designer Nadine Bekdash, is a multidisciplinary research and design studio with a mission to engaged in critical and creative work on a number of urban and public issues in Lebanon. Projects aim at studying, designing and implementing alternative strategies for urban planning and decision-making in Lebanon. Public Works' mission stems from the belief that residents should actively participate in the fate of their city, and that policy-making should be a democratic process, not an instrument of power. The AUB Neighborhood initiative is focused on the surrounding of AUB's physical location, which is Ras Beirut, an area that is being gentrified. Its aim is to protect the public good of the area, while promoting its "livability, vitality, and diversity through innovative

outreach activities and multidisciplinary research."[70]

These initiatives help preserve heritage, maintain memories, and nurture the
neighborhood's social cohesions. Architectural heritage is linked to the physical memory, and
preserving it helps preserve this memory, with the risk of disregarding another type of
memory, which is that of the community and people living in these buildings. Sometimes, due
to war or natural catastrophes, the physical buildings are no longer here, and a city needs to be
reconstructed from scratch. How then, do we preserve history and memory in these cases? I
take here two post-war reconstructions to showcase the different policies put in place by
private companies, when the state fails to do its part, and leading to private interests being put
before the interests of the community.

---

[70] (AUB 2018)

CHAPTER 5

PRESERVING MEMORY THROUGH RECONSTRUCTION

5.1 Haret Hreik Reconstruction Policies

After the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war that torn Lebanon, Hezbollah created an NGO 'The Solemn Promise Project' (Mashru' Wa'ad al-Sadiq) to reconstruct a destroyed Beirut southern suburb, Haret Khreik. In August 2006, the area was in ruins after 33 days of Israeli bombings. Hezbollah initiated the reconstruction of Haret Hreik as the Islamic Resistance (Muqawama Islamiyya) against Israel, considered the 'Zionist entity'.[71] This reconstruction claims to be for the Shi'a to have a solid place in the city and the nation, over any profit making objectives. In order to understand how Haret Hreik evolved, let us go back to the history of the neighborhood. In the 1960s, Haret Hreik was part of the misery belt surrounding Beirut, it was a mix of Shi'as and Christians. After the war, the area became mostly Shi'a, with a predominant ideology of the Amal Movement and Hezbollah. The strong Islamic Resistance of the area against Israel's occupation remained after the war and developed into a middle-class movement fighting for Shi'a citizens' rights and position on the Lebanese political scene. The neighborhood became home to many leaders from Hezbollah, and the many social organizations that grew around the party, including "networks of hospitals, clinics and pharmacies and social service and educational NGOs, as well as micro-finance youth and sports organizations, a newspaper, television station and online news websites that address social, cultural, political and economic topics".[72] It is precisely from this allegation

---

[71] (Hourani 2014)

[72] (Harb and Leenders 2005)

that the Lebanese State accused Hezbollah of acting as a "State within a State" after the 2006

war, to which Hezbollah replied that the Lebanese State itself was non-existent. One of the

reasons Hezbollah was doing all this was, according to their discourse, because of the lack of

State intervention in the area and its absent role in defending the Shi'a community. The

Siniora government after the war started the reconstruction through several institutions and

with over a billion dollars aid from the United States and Saudi Arabia.[73] Haret Hreik's

reconstruction was supposed to be privatized, but as the government plan failed, Hezbollah

took over the project. Using one of its affiliated associations called Jihad al-Bina' (the

construction jihad), Hezbollah coordinated with the Order of Engineers to start damage

assessment and reconstruction as soon as the war ended. Since it was impossible for the party

to undertake the rebuilding alone, it created an NGO with the name 'The Solemn Promise

Project' (Mashru' Wa'ad al-Sadiq) aiming at ensuring the residents' return to the area. Eight

architects and urban planners from different sectarian backgrounds were placed under the

direction of the president of the Order of Arab Architects, in order to rebuild around 300

buildings, including 3100 apartments and lodging 20,000 people.[74]

---

[73] Personal interview of Najib Hourani with a Beirut based journalist, June 2012 (Beirut)

[74] (Hourani 2014)

Picture 12– An advertisement in Cedar Wing: the inflight magazine of Middle East Airline, AirLiban. Issue #100, August-September 2007

The financing scheme of the Wa'ad included private donations from Lebanon and the region, Hezbollah's own contribution and the individual right-holders' government compensation. The way Wa'ad overcame collective action problems from owners and tenants was through the power of attorney to be appointed as a legal representative of each individual (*wikaleh*). This procedure was a way to overcome problems that Solidere claimed to have with right-owners.

The Wa'ad was not only a project of reconstruction, but a broader project of rebuilding a neighborhood, its people and activities. It linked the buildings with life and the urban with inhabitants. This contrasts with the Solidere project of buildings with no humans. Urban space is "not as an abstract three-dimensional enframing of space to be divided into

neat volumes to maximize efficiency or saleable square meters"[75]. Here again, we come back to Lefebvre's concept of perceived space, which in this case is the daily life of Haret Hreik's families and communities. This space evolves outside of the urban planner and architect's control, taking a life on its own. Memory was taken into account when the neighborhood was rebuilt, as a way of improving the broken reality by intervening in a context-specific manner. While the material memory, which is the physical aspect of the buildings, was not taken into account, the community memory was. The Wa'ad claims to a better modernized representation for the Shi'a community all while taking into consideration its people, community and tradition. The future here is not independent from the past, but a normal extension to it.

The reconstruction of Haret Hreik was achieved five years after it started, in 2012. The majority of residents and businesses came back to the area, and Haret Hreik is a now a vibrant Shi'a urban community. One downside was the exclusion of other political parties from the area, very much controlled by the Hezbollah. Wa'ad benefited mostly to owners to the expense of tenants. Celebrating property ownership appears to be more liberal than what claimed to be the people-centered mission of Wa'ad. Since the majority of rentals in the area were informal, tenants received rental subsidies for a year or more, depending on the cases. Few renters benefited from this. The situation for returning renters was similarly difficult and expensive, leading most of them to be priced out of the neighborhood. The ones who were subject to rent contracts after 1992 had less protection in terms of rent control, long-term contracts and succession rights. Gentrification could not be avoided, and people most

---

[75] Fawaz 2014

vulnerable to gentrification are renters, not owners. The revitalization effort done on the neighborhood naturally led to an increase in prices. This pushed out a lot of the previously installed small businesses and low-income renters. In the absence of state mechanisms that insure the protection of tenants, the Wa'ad project unwillingly contributed to the gentrification of the neighborhood, giving back Haret Hreik to its most fortunate dwellers (the owners), while driving out the least fortunate (the renters).

As found in the Wa'ad 'Project's General Characteristics' on their website, the project's aim appears to be primarily the speed of the implementation, at the expense of the improvement of building layouts and public spaces.[76] The aim of Hezbollah was skipping any delay and the political stand of resistance and revival against the enemy, and not so much the social fabric or preservation of memory. This shows in Nasrallah's speech in May 2012 upon the project's completion: 'in the face of this destructive war that aimed to turn to change people's life into hell, there was a military, media, and psychological resistance, as well as a war of reconstruction, survival and steadfastness.'[77] Reconstruction here appears to aim at preserving the (pre-war) present rather than looking towards the future, like Solidere. It is mostly a political stance towards Israel and the Lebanese government, showing the resilience of Hezbollah and its capacity to relive from its ashes.

---

[76] (Randall 2014)

[77] (Waad Rebuild 2012)

5.2 Solidere Reconstruction Policies

   To understand the post 2006 war project for Haret Hreik, it is important to situate it

in the broader post-civil war reconstruction of Beirut. Before the war, Downtown Beirut was a

commercial, cultural and transport hub, linking different parts of the city together, and with a

varied class and communal diversity.[78] In 1983, the reconstruction of Beirut was taken by

OGER Liban, an engineering company owned by Rafiq Hariri. Demolition began at the end

of the year, with the purpose of cleaning up the area from the rubble, this is when the central

district witnessed some major destructions of important buildings, along with Souk Al-

Nouriyeh, Souq Sursuq and parts of Saifi.[79] The takeover of Solidere represented the

abdication of the State's role in the reconstruction of Beirut. Another issue that arose in 1991

was the fragmentation of property rights, along with inheritance disputes. The solution

decided by Solidere was to expropriate all the land in the city center in order to have a single

real estate company taking care of the reconstruction. This was done by Law 117 in

December 1991, which built the framework for such a company, legalizing the expropriation

of private property in the old souks to the benefit of Solidere, a private holding company,

which was "the ultimate expression of the dissolution of any real distinction between public

and private interests or, more accurately, the decisive colonization of the former by the

latter".[80] This expunged claims of right-holders to "5043 homes and apartments, 7092 shops

and businesses, 5597 offices and 1368 workshops and 702 warehouses, 343 hotels, 361

---

[78] (Makdisi 1997)

[79] (Makdisi 1997)

[80] (Makdisi 1997: 672)

restaurants and 45 bars"[81] that were present in this area in the pre-war period. In the spring of 1992, demolition continued. Buildings were demolished with much more explosive than needed, which caused damage to surrounding buildings, which were then demolished under the pretense of being beyond repair. This is how, by 1983, 80% of the structures in downtown Beirut were destroyed.[82] Unlike popular belief, Solidere was not rebuilding the area, but rather supervising the reconstruction. Its main functions were to supervise, finance, rehabilitate certain buildings and manage and sell the newly built properties. "In retrospect, it becomes quite clear that from at least 1983 there has been a concerted effort to wipe the surface of central Beirut clean, to purify it of all historical associations in the form of its buildings, to render it pure space, pure commodity, pure real estate."[83]

The reconstruction of Beirut led to the construction of 15,000 new buildings, the eviction of squatters in the city center and on the green line, and the building of large facilities like hospitals, roads, sport stadiums and university campuses.[84] These projects led to even more displacement, especially in central Beirut. Presented as the project for the economical rebirth of Lebanon, Solidere transformed the destroyed city center into a high-end commercial hub, excluding de facto any dwellers before that, and destroying the little heritage that remained there. Since the beginning of construction, "more buildings have been demolished

---

[81] Hourani 2014, p.5

[82] (Makdisi 1997)

[83] (Makdisi 1997: 692)

[84] Fawaz and Peillen 2003)

than in almost twenty years of artillery bombardment and house-to-house combat".[85] Some dwellers who lived and worked in the city center were seen as "threats" to modernity and were excluded, among them 40,000 owners, tenants and investors.[86] Other residents also suffered the same fate. The Shi'a in the area have been moved out of the city center to surrounding slums. It was mainly against this model that Hezbollah started the reconstruction project in Haret Hreik, pushing the Shi'a community for equal participation in the political scene.

The motto for Solidere's reconstruction project was 'An Ancient City for the Future', which architect Bernard Khoury criticizes because it 'evokes and links the past and the future, but shrugs off any notion of the present'.[87] Did Solidere really erase the present, by focusing more on the memory of the past and the future? In terms of restoration, Solidere reconstructed a good chunk of Ottoman and Mandate era buildings, along with major churches and mosques.[88] Yet, not all heritage was preserved, and the ones saved were only kept because of their commercial or touristic value. Beirut Souks, which were supposed to revive the old souk, are principally filled with luxury boutiques and high-end stores and restaurants, automatically excluding a portion of the population, and not faithful to the memory of the old merchant souks. While Harek Hreik reconstruction was mainly a political stunt, Solidere's aim remained a commercial one.

---

[85] (Makdisi 1997: 662)

[86] (Hourani 2014)

[87] (Amaya-Akkermans 2012)

[88] (Khalaf 2006)

5.3 Reconstruction & Memory

Did Wa'ad really preserve the memory of Haret Hreik? Hezbollah's complete

centralization of the project gave little room for other players to intervene. The previous

building infrastructure was not taken into consideration and the new allocation of common

building facilities and public spaces was decided by Hezbollah alone, without anyone else's

input. Therefore, the boundaries created by the war were reinforced and consolidated by the

Wa'ad reconstruction. The negation of the historical memory of the neighborhood along with

the seemingly dissatisfaction with the pre-war infrastructure leads us to believe that Hezbollah

was dissatisfied with the area before the war. This dissatisfaction shows mostly in the motto

chosen for the project "*nu'amirouha ajmal mimma kanat*" (we will rebuilt it more beautiful

than it was before).

Comparing the Solidere with the Haret Hreik reconstruction makes us realize that

reconstruction in both cases allowed for accepting the geography of war as a fact. In both

cases, the reconstruction did not account for the pre-war fabric of the area, which becomes

stripped of any individual, social and political memory. Memory and space are both erased, to

make place for the new space that is either economic, like in the case of Solidere, or political,

like in the case of Haret Hreik. The centralization of the reconstruction authority in both cases

leads to the erasure of all other authorities, like family, community or the government.

While the Wa'ad project is claimed to be Hassan Nasrallah's 'most beautiful

promise'[89], envisioning the reconstruction as anti-Israeli and pro-Shi'a, Solidere's project is

asserted to be the project for economic renewal. Funding also plays an important role in the

international positioning of the reconstruction. While Solidere was backed up by the Gulf,

Hezbollah's Wa'ad was funded by Iran.[90]

For Solidere, the new frontier between the rebuilt city center and its surroundings

symbolizes the boundary between the space-time of postmodernity and that of a hostile

modernity.[91] This frontier can also be understood in class terms: Beirut is no longer identified

as itself, but rather "to have taken on in its own space the disarticulation of the global

economy, to have literalized the problematics of uneven development".[92]

According to the sociological idea that space is dialectical and mobile[93], Edward

Randall argues that space influences political and socioeconomic relationships.[94] A space can

be divided, restricted or forbidden. The Lebanese government does not have sovereignty over

the space of the city, which explains the involvement of non-state actors, like Solidere and

Hezbollah. There is also a link between the physical and the emotional. Buildings are seen as

permanent, so when destroyed, they can engender loss of memory and of a collective

---

[89] (Randall 2014)

[90] (Randall 2014)

[91] (Makdisi 1997)

[92] As Neil Smith points out, "uneven development [is] the geographical of the contradictions of capital" (Neil Smith, Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the production of Space [Oxford, 1991], p. 252)

[93] (Sawalha 2011)

[94] (Randall 2014)

identity.[95] This reconstruction obliges us to choose a particular historical narrative, an urban memory for its collective spaces.

In terms of memory preservation, Solidere did try to preserve the material memory of central Beirut by constructing buildings with traditional looks, but completely disregarded the community memory, since no community there at the time was protected or kept, but rather, it was wiped clean of "unwanted" people.

5.4 Housing, Real Estate & Rent Policies

To better understand the reconstruction and the evolution of the housing sector, I talk below about the main housing and real estate policies in Lebanon, along with the rent law evolution.

The first housing law in Lebanon issued in 1962 aimed at facilitating residency to Lebanese in need, whether middle or low income, in cities and villages. Law 118-1977 aimed at facilitating the construction of social housing and housing loans. These laws indirectly recognize the right to housing for all.

Policies encouraging real estate development are shown in the 2004 building law.[96] From tax cuts to bank facilities, this law encouraged the grouping of several small plots into bigger ones, enabling the construction of modern towers, which are in need of wider base areas.[97] According to Krijnen and De Beukelaer, "real estate is one of the most important

---

[95] (Bevan 2006)

[96] (Krijnen and Fawaz 2010: 250-1)

[97] Nahnoo 2012: 2

sectors in the Lebanese economy".[98] Politicians protected the real estate sector with laws increasing maximum building heights and exploitation factors, with a zoning plan (1950s), and the establishment of the Higher Council for Urban Planning. This restructuring plan led to the application of tax reforms, construction laws that helped foreign acquisition of properties and land.[99] Heightened real estate activity led to gentrification in several neighborhoods and population displacement. The traditional "low-rise 1950s apartment buildings with shops on the ground floor" have now been replaced by high-rise, mostly empty, glass towers.[100] The diaspora also plays an important role in real estate investments and the resulting rent-gap in Lebanon's political economy play a big role in gentrification. The rent gap theory developed by Smith is when "value (capital) becomes trapped in obsolete buildings occupying land that has a much higher potential value."[101] The influx of foreign Gulf investments in Solidere properties pushed a 400% price rise between 2000 and 2010.[102] While the above laws mainly affected the owners, the renters were also affected by a new rent law that I discuss below.

Old lease contracts, where tenants have the right to continuously renew the rent contract, provide housing for more than 500,000 dwellers in Beirut, Tripoli and other Lebanese cities.[103] With the lack of state policies for affordable housing, the old rent was a way of affordable housing after the war. It is interesting to note that the old rent law only

---

[98] Ibid, 285

[99] (Krijnen 2013)

[100] Ibid, 286

[101] (Krijnen, 2013: 5)

[102] (Balanche 2012)

[103] (Bekdache, Basbous and Saksouk 2017)

applies to urban residential properties, and not villas with gardens, which explains why so

many of them are abandoned and falling apart.[104] In 1992, the old rent law was terminated for

new leases. With property prices increasing, low-income tenants were no longer able to afford

the rent, which led to many evictions, or relocation in areas outside of Beirut. Many owners

were interested in renovating their buildings or destroying them and building new, more

profitable ones, which led them to evict renters with a compensation of property valuation. In

2016, there is an estimate of 170,000 households still abiding to the old rent, out of 210,000

renters in Beirut. A new rent law was passed in April 2014, without any social considerations

or on-the-ground assessments, aiming at doing justice to the landlords who believed the old-

lease to be unfair towards them. This law allows landlords to increase rent over a six-year

period by a yearly fifteen percent for the first four years followed by twenty percent for the

two remaining years.[105] This new law turned renters and owners against each other, while the

state made no effort to solve the situation. Put in place after the civil war, the old law aimed at

protecting impoverished families who needed to rent in the city. As a side effect, it depleted

the wealthy of many small landowners, for whom some rent was the only income.[106]

As per a study made by the Legal Agenda, it is mostly large capital owners that

benefited from the new rent law and the law is a sign of "the power of the Parliament's

commitment to give precedence to owners of large capital and their interests, even if this

---

[104] (Kanafani 2016)

[105] Ibid

[106] Ibid

requires sacrificing the state's main function of promoting social harmony."[107] The old tenants come from a diverse sociocultural background, and bear with them memories of the urban and cultural history of the place, and have a key role in keeping the social and class diversity of these neighborhoods. The new law is increasing sectarianism and class segregation, with stronger demarcation lines between areas. Public authorities are no longer caring for the urban and social fabric of a neighborhood, but rather service their own real estate and development interests. This leads to a general mistrust from the lower class towards the state, turning towards religious and sectarian leaders for authority. The right of housing should not be reduced to the right of ownership, but should cover all people, from the poor, to the elderly, to refugees, and people with disabilities.[108]

The old rent law has served partly as a low-income housing subsidy, albeit from owners and not the government. Subsidized loans have broadened the reach of house ownership while putting others out of reach because of increased prices, however, exclusions remain around people with no income, lower income than threshold, and people with no rights, like squatters or refugees.

The main institution in Lebanon working on low-income housing is the Public Corporation for Housing (PCH), under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Established after the dissolution of the Ministry of Housing in 1996, its main role is to facilitate the access to housing for low-income people through different banks giving out low-interest loans. Other institutions dealing with low-income housing are the Displacement Fund established at the

---

[107] (Khechen, Vulnerability and Displacement in Beirut 2016)

[108] (Bekdache, Basbous and Saksouk 2017)

end of the civil war to help displaced people return to their original place of residence, and the Directorate General of Cooperatives, with very little contribution.[109]

With no price ceiling for houses, the middle-class's purchase power is pushed even lower. It is not in the interest of politicians to support price ceilings or subsidies since they are profiting from this (developers, bankers and decision makers have common interests). In this case, once again, civil society is filling the gap.

5.5 Initiatives Led by Civil Society

After the public upheaval that the new rent law created, Public Works Studio started an initiative in 2015 called "Narrating Beirut Through its Tenants' Stories", aiming at studying the impacts of the new rent policies on the tenants in Beirut and implementing counter-strategies that would protect people's rights to affordable housing. Six workshops were implemented in several Beirut areas: Bashoura, Badawi, Tareek Jdeedeh, Mossaitbe, Roum, and Chiah. The workshops consisted of mapping abandoned buildings, vacant housing units, evictions and changes in ownership. Their aim was to historicize "housing in relation to neighborhoods, while addressing the question of how do people - who are not covered by any property rights - inhabit the city?"[110]

At one of the talks given by Public Works on the tenants' situation in Ras Beirut[111], a representative from Beirut Madinati, Nahida Khalil, talked about some of the initiatives they

---

[109] (UNHCR 2014)

[110] (Bekdache, Basbous and Saksouk 2017)

[111] "Public talk: the Ras Beirut Housing Situation" hosted by Public Works at Dar Al Mussawir on January 25, 2018.

were doing. Following the municipal elections, Beirut Madinati noticed that 80% of people didn't vote, and they have been working on a grassroots pilot project in Zokak El Blat and Mar Mkhaeil for a year, where residents tell them their top three problems and propose solutions, which are then presented as master plans to the municipalities. One tenant from Ras Beirut told me the following: "How do you explain to your children that you have to move out? Nobody thinks about that, all this lost cultural value in moving out."[112]

Public Works do not only do workshops and studies, they also help raise awareness on housing issues. I participated in a walk done by Public Works in the neighborhood of Bachoura, where we talked to the tenants, took pictures, and saw the urgency of the situation. Situated next to Beirut Digital District, Bachoura is at the verge of being gentrified, which will lead to mass displacement. Indeed, most people in this neighborhood are low-income workers, small businesses, refugees or foreign workers.

These issues remain at the verge of public discourse. Politicians are not interested in defending them, and the controversy of illegal residents and refugees complicates the situation even further.

---

[112] Ibid

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Today, Lebanon still has issues dealing with its many memories. From the destructive civil war to the race to modernization, preserving memory becomes complicated when we realize that there are many conflicting memories. Preserving memory becomes then, problematic, and sometimes ends up being completely disregarded. Any kind of preservation of memory should first and foremost put people at its center: from preserving memory through building materiality, which is mainly architectural heritage, leading to the issue of gentrification, to preserving memory through the community, like reconstructing a whole neighborhood. Both require an equal focus on the past, present and future, taking into account the community, the interest of the local residents, all while protecting both owners and renters. Only through a fair policy put by the State protecting all parties and social classes can there be a peaceful cohabitation and a vibrant community.

Institutionalized neglect, the process of economic and legal policies that encourage the decay of old houses and neighborhoods, is not only leading to the destruction of our heritage, but also completely disregarding the need for urban affordable housing, social care and economic opportunities in the city. This gets dismissed to the benefit of the neoliberal state, focusing on keeping real estate as profitable as possible.[113] These institutions include the new rent control law that puts owners and tenants against each other, building regulations that encourage modern renewals with high profit margins and tax reductions for developers,

---

[113] (Kanafani 2016)

almost non-existent heritage policies that are easily ignored by politicalized real estate developers and owners, neoliberal policies that ignore history and focus on modernization and profit, a Lebanese financial system mainly dependent on the real estate sector, and obsolete religious inheritance laws that fragment ownership. A shift needs to be made in the heritage preservation discourse. Heritage should not be seen as a profit-making machine nor as a burden to the neoliberal real estate development but rather as a driver to an increased cultural, social and financial viability.

As for the underlying issue of gentrification, it is not only due the lack of heritage protection and people moving neighborhoods, it is also the lack of urban planning policies and the absence of disincentives to stop the real estate rise and housing costs. Another factor affecting gentrification is sectarianism, which plays a crucial role on Lebanon's urban map. The "fear of the other" encouraged by some sectarian leaders and popular discourses is making the segmentation between areas stronger than ever.

Space is a political claim. The reason I compare the Solidere and Hezbollah reconstruction strategies is because 'they both set themselves against the 'city', as Mona Fawaz states in City and Soul in Divided Societies.[114] Both projects are independent of government control, represent private interests instead of public ones, and draw on different historical narratives and memories: Hezbollah as a resistance to Israeli coercion, and Solidere as an economical and commercial integration of Beirut in the Arab world. Solidere stands out from the rest of Beirut, as an elitist bubble, physically restored but void of any social memory. Memory here is misused and played in a way to benefit some private interests. This is

---

[114] (Bollens 2012: 185)

possible due to the lack of policies governing the housing sector in Lebanon. While the old rent law allowed owners to repossess their properties by paying a compensation for the tenants, leading to both direct and indirect evictions, the new rent law will lead to even more evictions, forcing out of their houses the most vulnerable population, which finds itself with no other housing alternative, since no public housing policies exist in Lebanon. It is important in spite of this situation not to stigmatize neither landowners nor tenants. Just as some landlords are exploiting renters, some renters are also exploiting the situation. The rise of housing prices, along with the neoliberal system of maximizing profits and minimizing state intervention makes affordable housing difficult for both renters and owners.

The many initiatives taken by civil society are filling the gap between state intervention and people's needs on the ground. From new grassroots political movements to NGOs, on the ground assessment and policy work is being done to bridge the gap between heritage protection, anti-gentrification policies, housing issues and the aggressive real estate market.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu Zaki, Rasha. "The Cacophony of Reconstruction Continues in Dahiya." *Al-Akhbar.* April 2010. http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/52786 (accessed March 2018).

Adam, B. "Time and Social Theory." *Cambridge: Polity Press*, 1990.
Ahmad, Yahaya. "The Scope and Definitions of Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible." *Taylor & Francis Online.* August 2006. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250600604639 (accessed March 2018).

Amaya-Akkermans, A. "Beirut: Reinventing or Destroying the Public Space?" *The Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities.* May 23, 2012. http://hac.bard.edu/news/post/?item=5885 (accessed April 2, 2018).

Interview with Hicham Jaroudi, the Rose House owner. Directed by An-Nahar Online. Performed by An-Nahar Online. 2017.

AUB. *The Neighborhood Initiative.* 2018. https://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Pages/VisionandMission.aspx (accessed 2018).

Balanche, F. "The Reconstruction of Lebanon." In *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution*, by A. Knudsen and M. Kerr. London: Hurst, 2012.

Battah, Habib. *About The Beirut Report.* 2014. http://www.beirutreport.com/about-beirut-report (accessed 2017).

Bauman, Zygmunt. "Identity in the globalizing World." *Social anthropology.* 2001.

Bekdache, Nadine, Monica Basbous , and Abir Saksouk . "On the Repercussions of Rent Policies on the City and Everyday Life." *The Peace Building in Lebanon News Supplement.* August 2017. file:///Users/tracynehme/Downloads/PEACE%20BUILDING2%2016%20july%202017%20p 13-14-15.pdf (accessed March 2018).

Bevan, R. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War.* London: Reaktion Books, 2006.

Bollens, S. *City and Soul in Divided Societies.* Routledge: Abingdon, 2012.

Bolton, Matt. *Is art to blame for gentrification?* August 30, 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/30/art-blame-gentrification-peckham (accessed October 9, 2017).

Briercliffe, Simon. "Using Lefebvre's triad ." *Up the OS Road.* January 2015.
https://uptheossroad.wordpress.com/2015/01/23/using-lefebvres-triad/ (accessed October
2017).

Buchakjian, Gregory. "The Lives and Deaths of Inhabitants in Abandoned Houses." *O A R:
The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Journal Issue 1, 30–46.* 2017.
http://www.oarplatform.com/ (accessed 2018).

Casey, E.S. "Remembering: A Phenomenological Study." *Bloomington: Indiana University
Press*, 1987: Chapter 6.

Cole, J. "Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar." *Berkeley:
California University Press*, 2001.

Connerton, P. "How Societies Remember." *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 1989.

Dalal, Myriam. "From SoHo to SoAd: Adlieh's Growing Arts and Culture District." *Beirut.*
October 2013. https://www.beirut.com/l/28474 (accessed November 2017).

Davey, Melissa. "Gentrification, Street Art and the Rise of the Developer." *The Guardian.*
October 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/05/gentrification- street-
art-and-the-rise-of-the-bogus-block-party (accessed October 2017).

El-Achkar, Hicham. "The role of the State in initiating gentrification: The case of the
neighbourhood of Achrafieh in Beirut." *Hicham El-Achkar.* December 2011.
http://hishamashkar.org/sites/default/files/Master%20Research.Hicham%20Achkar.December
%202011.pdf (accessed October 2017).

Eriksen, Thomas. *Overheating, Le Monde est trop plein - Cities.* London, 2016.

Fawaz, Mona, and Isabelle Peillen . "Mapping Slums in Beirut." *UCL.* 2003.
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Beirut.pdf (accessed 2018).

Florida, Richard. "The Complicated Link Between Gentrification and Displacement."
CityLab. September 2015. https://www.citylab.com/equity/2015/09/the-complicated-link-
between-gentrification-and-displacement/404161/ (accessed November 2017).

Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five misunderstandings about case-study research." July 2003.
http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1077800405284363 (accessed October 2017).

Francis, Ellen. *The Fouad Boutros project raises more questions than it answers.* 2014.
https://hummusforthought.com/2014/09/23/fouad-boutros-highway-questions/ (accessed
2017).

Freeman, Lance, and Frank Braconi. "Gentrification and Displacement New York City in the 1990s." *Research Gate.* March 2004. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lance_Freeman/publication/249052109_Gentrification_ and_Displacement_New_York_City_in_the_1990s/links/54d1148f0cf25ba0f040ab22/Gentrifi cation-and-Displacement-New-York-City-in-the-1990s.pdf (accessed November 2017).

Ghandour, Marwan, and Mona Fawaz. "Spatial Erasure: Reconstruction Projects in Beirut." *Iowa State University* . 2010. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1047&context=arch_pubs (accessed 2018).

Global Heritage Fund. *Beyond Monuments.* 2017. http://globalheritagefund.org/index.php/who-we-are/beyond-monuments/ (accessed 2017).

Grillo, Ralph D. "Cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety." *Anthropological Theory 3.2.* 2003.

Grodach, Carl. "Arts, Gentrification, and Planning for Creativity." *Research gate.* January 2016. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carl_Grodach/publication/312449896_Arts_Gentrificati on_and_Planning_for_Creativity/links/587d496308ae9a860ff0f6be/Arts-Gentrification-and-Planning-for-Creativity.pdf (accessed November 2017).

Grodach, Carl, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch III. "Gentrification and the Artistic Dividend: The Role of the Arts in Neighborhood Change." *National Endowment for the Arts.* https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Research-Art-Works-Arlington2.pdf (accessed 2017).

Harb, Mona, and Reinoud Leenders. "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, Terrorism and the Politics of Perception." *Third World Quarterly*, 2005: 173–197.

Hourani, Najib B. "Post-conflict reconstruction and citizenship agendas: lessons from Beirut." *Taylor & Francis Online.* August 2014. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13621025.2015.1005949 (accessed March 2018).

Joyce, R., and J.A. Hendon. "Heterarchy, history, and material reality." In *The Archaeology of Communities. A New World Perspective*, by M.A. and J. Yaeger Canuto, 143. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Kanafani, Samar. "University of Manchester." *Made to Fall Apart: an ethnography of old houses and urban renewal in Beirut.* 2016. https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/56365392/FULL_TEXT.PDF (accessed 2018).

Khalaf, S. *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj.* London: Saqi Books, 2006.

Khechen, Mona. *An Inquiry into Current Urban Change Processes in Ras Beirut: Is This Gentrification?* Beirut, January 2014.

—. "Vulnerability and Displacement in Beirut." *Legal Agenda.* February 2016. http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=752&lang=en (accessed March 2018).

Krijnen, Marieke. "Filling Every Gap: Real-estate Development in Beirut." *Research Gate.* November 2013. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marieke_Krijnen/publication/266378307_Filling_every_gap_Real_estate_development_in_Beirut/links/542e52320cf277d58e8e9f0a/Filling-every-gap-Real-estate-development-in-Beirut.pdf (accessed November 2017).

Krijnen, Marieke, and De Beukelaer Christiaan. "Capital, state and conflict: the various drivers of diverse gentrification processes in Beirut, Lebanon." *Research Gate.* 2015. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marieke_Krijnen/publication/270286105_Capital_state_and_conflict_The_various_drivers_of_diverse_gentrification_processes_in_Beirut_Lebanon/links/552e57450cf2d4950717e038/Capital-state-and-conflict-The-various-drivers-of-diverse-gentrification-processes-in-Beirut-Lebanon.pdf (accessed 2018).

Krijnen, Marieke, and Mona Fawaz. "Exception as the Rule: High-End Developments in Neoliberal Beirut." *Research Gate.* July 2010. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marieke_Krijnen/publication/233514507_Exception_as_the_Rule_High-End_Developments_in_Neoliberal_Beirut/links/5427f66d0cf238c6ea7c6908/Exception-as-the-Rule-High-End-Developments-in-Neoliberal-Beirut.pdf (accessed November 2017).

Lambek, M. "The past imperfect. Remembering as moral practice." In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays on Trauma and Memory*, by P. and M. Lambek Antze, 235-54. London and New York, 1996.

Leary-Owhin, Michael. *Fresh Look at Lefebvre's Spatial Triad and Differential Space: A Central Place in Planning Theory?* London, 2015.

Lowenthal, D. "Past time, present time: landscape and memory." *Geographical Review*, 1975: 249-257.

Lupton, Bob. *History and Explanation of Gentrification.* June 2010. https://sites.google.com/site/gg2wpdermotmitchell/history-and-explanation-of-gentrification (accessed October 2017).

Makarem, May. *Dénouement heureux pour la Maison rose.* July 2017. https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1062266/denouement-heureux-pour-la-maison-rose.html (accessed February 2018).

Makdisi, S. "Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidère." *Critical Inquiry*, 1997: 660-705.

Mathews, Vanessa. "Aestheticizing Space: Art, Gentrification and the City." *Wiley.* June 2010. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/wol1/doi/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2010.00331.x/full (accessed November 2017).

Mitchell, Dermot. "Gentrification Processes." *Gentrification.* https://sites.google.com/site/gg2wpdermotmitchell/home (accessed 2017).

Mitri, Najib. *Lebanese Architect And Activist Mona El Hallak Awarded the "Ordre National du Merite" by the French Ambassador.* January 2015. http://blogbaladi.com/lebanese-architect-and-activist-mona-el-hallak-awarded-the-ordre-national-du-merite-by-the-french-ambassador/ (accessed May 2017).

Mokskowitz, Peter. *What Role Do Artists Play in Gentrification?* September 11, 2017. https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-role-artists-play-gentrification (accessed October 9, 2017).

—. "What Role Do Artists Play in Gentrification?" *Artsy.* September 2017. https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-role-artists-play- gentrification (accessed October 2017).

Nahas, Charbel. "Charbel Nahas." *Cultural Heritage Report.* November 2001. http://www.charbelnahas.org/textes/Amenagement_et_urbanisme/Cultural_Heritage_Report/JK-Appendices.pdf (accessed March 2018).

—. "Cultural Heritage Report." *Charbel Nahas.* November 2001. http://www.charbelnahas.org/textes/Amenagement_et_urbanisme/Cultural_Heritage_Report/JK-Appendices.pdf (accessed April 2017).

—. "Proposed Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Project - Conceptual Methodology." *Charbel Nahas.* November 2001. http://www.charbelnahas.org/textes/Amenagement_et_urbanisme/Cultural_Heritage_Report/D-Conceptual_Methodology_36-63.pdf (accessed April 2017).

Nasser, Zeina. "How art breathed life into a deserted mansion." *An-Nahar.* December 16, 2017. https://en.annahar.com/article/716607-how-art-breathed-life-into-a-deserted-mansion (accessed March 1, 2018).

National News Agency. "City Debates 2015 examines gentrification of Beirut and other regional cities." *National News Agency.* May 2015. http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/41309/nna-leb.gov.lb/es (accessed November 2017).

Nora, P. *Introduction. Between Memory and History.* Vol. 1, in *Realms of Memory*, by P. Nora, translated by A. Goldhammer, 1-20. 1992.

NOW. *Barakat Building, Sodeco.* 2007. https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/barakat_building_sodeco (accessed 2017).

Pattison, Timothy James. *The Process of Neighborhood Upgrading and Gentrification: An Examination of two Neighborhoods in the Boston Metropolitan Area.* Boston, June 1977.

Randall, Edward. "Reconstruction and Fragmentation in Beirut." *Conflict in Cities and the Contested State.* 2014. https://www.urbanconflicts.arct.cam.ac.uk/working-paper-29-edward-randall (accessed 2018).

Reuters Institute. *Habib Battah.* 2017. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/people/habib-battah-investigative-journalist-and-filmmaker (accessed 2017).

Rose, Gillian. "Visual Methodology: Researching with visual materials, a brief survey." 2016. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/visual-methodologies/book249907%20 (accessed 2017).

Saksouk, Abir. "Where is Law? Investigations from Beirut." *AUB Neighborhood Initiative.* https://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Documents/Abir%20NI%20Report.pdf (accessed November 2017).

Sandels, A. *LEBANON: Efforts made to save Beirut's historic architecture.* September 2010. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2010/09/lebanon-architecture-heritage-skyscraper-activists-politics-money-greed-gulf-dubai-ugly.html (accessed April 2017).

Sandels, Alexandra. "Lebanon: Efforts made to save Beirut's historic architecture." *LA Times.* September 2010. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2010/09/lebanon-architecture-heritage-skyscraper-activists-politics-money-greed-gulf-dubai-ugly.html (accessed October 2017).

—. *LEBANON: Efforts made to save Beirut's historic architecture.* September 2010. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2010/09/lebanon-architecture-heritage-skyscraper-activists-politics-money-greed-gulf-dubai-ugly.html (accessed April 2017).

Sawalha, A. *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City.* Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2011.
Schutz, A. "The Phenomenology of the Social World." *Northwestern University Press* , 1967.

Smith, Neil. *Evolution of Gentrification.* 1979.

Spanou, Sofia-Irini (Sorina). "Housing Memory: Architecture, Materiality and Time." *The University of Edinburgh.* 2008.

https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/4073/Spanou2008.pdf?sequence=1&isAll
owed=y (accessed 2018).

Stones that Talk: The Rose House. YouTube. Directed by Tele Liban Official. Performed by
Tele Liban Official. 2017.

Thomson, Steven. "As 'Gentrification' Turns 50, Tracing Its Nebulous History." *Curbed.*
November 2014. https://www.curbed.com/2014/11/5/10028070/tracing- the-history-of-a-
word-as-gentrification-turns-50 (accessed October 2017).

Turner, Victor. *Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: an Essay in Comparative
Symbology.* 1974.

UNESCO. *World Heritage Center.* 2017. http://whc.unesco.org/en/35/ (accessed 2017).

UNHCR. "Housing, land & property issues in lebanon implications of the syrian refugee
crisis" *UN Habitat.* August 2014.
https://unhabitat.org/housing-land-and-property-issues-in-lebanon-implications-of-the-syrian-
refugee-crisis-august-2014/ (accessed March 2018).

Unknown. "7 Rooms 7 Artists – Beirut Conversations launches at Beirut Art House."
Executive Bulletin. June 24, 2016. http://executive-bulletin.com/art/7-rooms-7-artists-
beirut-conversations-launches-at-beirut-art-house-2 (accessed March 1, 2018).

Urban Sketchers. *Our mission.* 2018. http://www.urbansketchers.org/ (accessed 2018).

Waad Rebuild. "Sayyed Nasrallah: Tel Aviv's Buildings Vs. Every Building in Beirut
Southern Suburb." *Waad Rebuild.* May 12, 2012. http://www.waad-
rebuild.com/pressinformation.asp?id=151&catid=28 (accessed April 2, 2018).

Whiting, Rebecca. "Beirut Digital District: High-Tech Development or Gentrification?" *Al
Akhbar.* December 2012. http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14510 (accessed November
2017).

Wilson, P. "The Domestication of the Human Species." *Yale University Press* (New Haven
and London), 1988.

WMF. *World Monuments Fund - Lebanon.* 2017. https://www.wmf.org/search/lebanon
(accessed 2017).

Wynn, Jonathan, and Andrew Deener. "Could gentrification save some cities?" *CNN.* October
2017. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/19/world/gentrification-in-cities/index.html (accessed
November 2017).

Young, Tom. *Beirut Arts Club, Mar Mikhael (Beit Boustani).* 2017. http://www.levantineheritage.com/lost-houses-beirut.html (accessed 2018).

—. *Tom Young.* 2017. http://www.tomyoung.com/ (accessed 2017).