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Let the Dead be Dead:
Memory, Urban Narratives and the Post-Civil War Reconstitution of Beirut

In a 1999 conference in Beirut entitled *Memory for the Future*, a prominent local politician and former candidate for parliament declared: «We should let the dead be dead. It is the only way forward.» Coming at the tail end of three days of discussion in which the post-war experiences of Lebanon, Rwanda, South Africa, and France and the role of memory in post-war reconciliation were discussed, compared and contrasted, this statement seemed quite remarkable for the purported pragmatism it presented.

The Lebanese civil wars ended in 1990. Fifteen years of protracted violence (1975-1990) left approximately 200,000 dead, around 300,000 injured and 800,000 permanently displaced in a population of around 3.5 million.[1] The state was marginalized and lost its physical, institutional and territorial control over the country. The capital Beirut was severely fragmented and partially demolished, its historic center and the areas extending out from it transformed into a no man's land between the warring factions. A large portion of those displaced settled in the informal settlements of its southern suburbs that witnessed unprecedented growth during the war years.[2] Lebanon's infrastructure was also significantly damaged. The World Bank and other international agencies estimated total financial losses at $25 billion, real per capita income half of what it was prior to the war while an estimated 200,000 professionals and skilled workers had emigrated out of the country.[3] Another 17,000 citizens remain missing.

In this post-civil war context the city and nation obviously had to be thought anew—what was important in this process was who thinks? Who acts? Who still speaks for whom? How was the disaster of a long civil war addressed through the work of the city's planners and what image of the city was implicit in its post-war reconstruction? Given the legacy of the civil war—that is the penultimate point at which the official markers of national identity were violently challenged by a multitude of alternate voices—those questions acquired a certain critical urgency. This became manifestly clear in 1992 in a series of conflicts, which erupted over different spaces in Beirut.

This paper will examine the place of the dead and of memory in the post-civil-war reconstitution of Beirut's urban and architectural landscape. I use a particular reading of one specific conflict over a small mausoleum in Beirut's city center to inform and structure my analysis of the contemporary context for Lebanese nation building and the centrality of Beirut, the capital city for that project.

Off with their Heads

In May of 1992, during the demolition of the last two medieval souks in the historic city center of Beirut the remnants of a small mausoleum suddenly made headline news. Located in the city center at the end of Souk el Tawile, the mausoleum, revealed by war bombing that partially destroyed the building in which it was situated, was rapidly claimed to be a shrine housing the remnants of a Muslim Shi'a mosque caretaker. Hizbu'llah[4] quickly cordoned off the structure and the building was declared a religious monument, thus indestructible under the mandate of Solidere. For the following weeks, nearby inhabitants transformed the structure into a small shrine for «pilgrims» from around the city, especially its southern suburbs where the majority of the city's Shi'a population lives.[5] As stories of strange events and miracles were being reported in city cafes and parlors, rumors of voices, sightings of ghosts, and the inability of those in charge of demolition, despite repeated attempts, to destroy the building proliferated in the local press.[6] Reports of the broken hinges of the first bulldozer, the shattered motor of the second, failed dynamite attempts and the smell of orange blossom filtering through cracks in the wall recurred in these articles. A short while later it emerged that even though the structure, a seventeenth century Mamluk building, was indeed a *tekkiya*

dedicated to a religious figure Ibn Arraq, he had been a Muslim Sunni rather than a Muslim Shi'a. Ironically, his effective hatred for Shi'as had led him to condone their death by any means!!

Several questions are brought to the fore by this incident. The most obvious and immediate question is why would Hizbu'llah rush to proclaim a shrine in an area where the Shi'a community, a traditionally rural population that began to migrate into the city at the turn of the century, was not historically present and thus did not own property? How does one interpret this incident in the framework of post-civil-war reconciliation and more specifically in the scope of proposed urban/architectural schemes for this country? Why this turn to the supernatural at this precise juncture in time and who were those ghostly specters haunting the [re]consolidation and [re]construction of the nation and of national identity?

Re-Building Beirut: Political and Economic Imperatives

The Lebanese civil wars officially «ended» in 1990 through a regionally brokered political agreement called Al Taef.[7] The post-war Lebanese state embarked on a wide scale reconstruction plan to both rehabilitate its institutions and physically rebuild the country. The imperative of Lebanon's post-war reconstruction drive and specifically the rebuilding of the city center was identified at the onset by the Prime Minister at the time, Rafic el Hariri, as the need to re-capture Lebanon's «national vocation» as the «international» financial capital of the East, and thus re-insert Beirut into a global narrative. The most grandiose development projects focused on revitalizing Lebanon as the «Switzerland of the Orient» and on [re]building the capital Beirut.[8] In the words of Prime Minister Hariri, this process entailed the «transformation of [Beirut's central district] into a modern financial and commercial center [and] as symbolizing the rebirth of the country and the determination of the Lebanese to rebuild their capital.» Similarly Beirut's historic core was described as the «national heart» of the country, thus linking the rejuvenation of both economy and nation to the rebuilding of the center of the city.[9]

This dual role identified for Beirut; that is the need to project the nation both externally and internally also presented a conundrum for the planners involved in the project; a tug of war between the denationalization of urban space inherent to contemporary global capitals, and the need to «nationalize» a once fragmented city and the capital of the country. While the denationalization of the city demands a certain abstraction, the nationalization of urban space requires its grounding in territory and history. In other words, contrary to the assertions of much recent literature around the homogenous, universal and abstract character of national identity and citizen, the assertion of national identity takes on «particular» or «modular» forms of citizenship.[10]

Consequently, to [re]claim Beirut's position on the global scene and project a cohesive image to the outside world, the historic center and with it the city's identity, had to be de-territorialized, «liberated» from all existing codes and reference points to both past and present. Lebanon's national identity had to be projected through the city center as a comprehensible whole, as its capital Beirut became a node in a network of global cities identified by Saskia Sassen, as cities that no longer depend on their immediate hinterlands for their economies.[11] Inside many of those global cities a new politics of centrality and marginality is created with massive investments in downtowns and little resources in the peripheries. To claim this position, Beirut's city center had to be transformed—to paraphrase Marx's famous discussion of money—into a purely ideal mental form necessary for understanding the ultimate abstraction of capital.

Internally, the reconstruction plans for the city center of Beirut were informed by a series of primary political and economic concerns. To re-establish its political dominance which was severely undermined through 15 years of war, the state had to enact its territorial imperative in a physical space not implicated in the territories of any of the warring factions. Two large urban development projects were launched for Beirut: the first Solidere or the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of the Beirut Central District and the second Elyssar meant to undertake the reorganization of the city's southern suburbs that contained the city's largest informal settlements.[12] The city center had to be «recovered» from the vagaries of war as the locus upon which the state could express its existence and spread its hegemony in opposition to the fragmentation of national space induced by the war. At the same time, the area of Ouzai, a mix of publicly and privately owned land that grew during the war into the largest informal housing settlement in the city housing predominantly lower-class Shi'a war-displaced or economic migrants, was directly identified with the chaos and the absence of the state during the war years. While the first project was to signal the «recovery» of pre- war Beirut's position of eminence in the region, the second proposal was to index the

«liberation» of the city from the effects of this conflict. In what follows, this paper will elaborate on the reconstruction of the city center and speculate about its relationship to Elyssar. The discussion of the city center project will focus on two aspects only; the location of memory in the urban policies and architectural iconography that were used and their concomitant reinterpretation of rights to the city.

Urban Actors

Post-war reconstruction of the city center included a variety of local urban actors representing the public and the private sectors as well as local inhabitants.[13] In addition, local militias in control of areas occupied by displaced populations also played an active role in initial negotiations around the center. However, not all of these actors played an equally effective role. In short, the CDR hired Dar el Handasah Consultants[14] (DAR) to redesign the center. At the same time, members of Oger Liban, Prime Minister Hariri's private firm were either appointed to senior positions in government, or acted in a consultative capacity to CDR placing private capital in control of the foremost planning agency in the country.[15] Designs were carried out in Cairo. Upon approval by the CDR, the project was then brought to Lebanon as the endorsed master plan for the city center. It was presented locally at a series of specially held meetings.[16]

The Plan

As presented, this project proposed a radical reconstitution of the city center at the procedural as well as the programmatic and design level. A private real estate company, Solidere, was created to reconstruct the area within boundaries that had been delineated in past plans. This company had a dual basis: an imported model and local planning laws. The format of the company was based on a model created in Saudi Arabia for the renovation and reconstruction of areas surrounding the holy shrine in Mecca.[17] However, the general provisional laws for a real estate company already existed in Lebanese urban planning laws as well as in the articles of establishment of the CDR. Initially envisioned as a public-private partnership for the purposes of large scale urban renovation and regeneration, these laws were amended in 1991 to allow the total privatization of the reconstruction of the city center.[18] Under the new formula, property boundaries were eradicated and ownership transferred to the company.[19] 50% of the shares of the company distributed amongst current property owners in a ratio equivalent to the value of their property.[20] The remaining 50% of the shares would be bought by investors, none of whom could control more than 10% of the shares at any one point.

At the programmatic and design levels, the proposed plan included a quasi-complete overhaul in the urban and architectural character of the area as well as in its economic functions. In brief, the city center, 119.1 hectares of an existing urban fabric, named by the planners as the «traditional» Beirut Central District (BCD) was supplemented with an additional 45.8 hectares of land reclaimed from the sea. Relying on a synthesis of picturesque planning and Haussmanian civic monumentalism, the plan is marked according to its planners by «the themes of grandeur which mark the center of a capital city; the «Grand Axes»; high buildings; new roads and boulevards; the new city park; the public and religious buildings.» These three parallel «grand» axes cut through nodes deemed of «national significance»; the two Sérails or the military barracks constructed by the Ottomans in the 19th century and today housing the prime ministry and the CDR; the Place de L'Etoile, with the parliament and national library, all constructed between 1926-1930 during the French mandate over Lebanon; and the Place des Martyrs, named after the Arab nationalists that were hung by the Ottomans in 1916 and considered one of the most major public spaces in the city.

In addition to all religious edifices and a select number of residential buildings, these venues formed the crux of the preservation, conservation and renovation aspects of the project.[21] The company also instated a selective program for the recuperation of historic buildings along with a comprehensive program of archeological digs undertaken with the assistance of UNESCO and the Directorate General of Antiquities.[22] The rest of the urban fabric was destroyed and re-planned, with new street layouts, zoning and building criteria. This new layout comprised primarily of financial districts, built to the Manhattan model, and residential areas, such as Saifi, created as contemporary «urban villages». Most of the previous functions that the center housed, especially those that catered to the lower- and lower-middle-class sectors, such as Souk el Bale (second hand clothing) or Souk el Fashka (wholesale cloth), of the Lebanese population were eradicated.[23] The 4,000 displaced citizens who had resided in the peripheral regions of the city center during the war were given monetary compensation and made to leave.[24]

Architecture, Memory and Right to the City
This project made evident the particularities of the neo-liberal approach to the role of architecture in the post-war reconstruction of national identity and of citizens' rights to their city. The practices enacted by the project concretized at different levels, and in unanticipated ways, the urban transformations that occurred during the war years. This project symbolized the cumulative end to the «emptying out» of the center enforced by the militias during the war period. Separated from its pre-war social context by 15 years of violence, the eradication of property rights, and the obliteration of previous functions that the center used to house through the destruction of their buildings, insured a quasi-total divorce between the center and its socio-urban context and redefined, once more, rights of access to the city.[25]

This attitude towards identity and rights is further betrayed in the politics of representation utilized in the project. With the eradication of the existing fabric of the city, and the voiding of the social content of property, architecture's relationship to the sociopolitical context within which it is being implemented is not addressed. At the urban level, representations of the center envisage it with no apparent links to the rest of the city or country. Beirut is erased, the center presented as an exclusive entity floating in a non-existent city. A perspectival tradition dominates the planning process, with the organization of facades to be looked at and vantage points to see from. The streets are wide and clearly visible, terminated by high towers from which one can have a totalizing view of the whole city, while the daily practices of citizens who survived 17 years of civil war are simply eradicated from the drawing. According to Mr. Challak, the president of CDR at the time, «...if you have a strong central power, the streets of the city are wide. They are straight. When political power collapses, they change into winding streets with dead ends.» One then wonders if what is desired is the eventual extension of this apparent order, of the center to the rest of the city.

More critically perhaps, assigned the status of an object: a symbol and a signifier, the architecture of the project regresses into a picturesque pastiche and fabricated motifs supposedly reflective of various communities. Descriptions of the three main axes of the project recall the «modern» capitals of Europe and America. Paris is evoked through the Champs Elysées, which cuts through Borj Square; Washington through the Sérail complex now Capitol Hill; New York, through the mini-Manhattan on land reclaimed from the sea. This language, used to describe the project, seemed to be subscribing to the collective memory of expatriate Lebanese to entice them back.[26] Yet the iconographic images, which were used, plundered the city's fabric for motifs ostensibly representative of this elusive national identity. The architecture of the Saifi urban village for example sought components from Ottoman and French mandate residential buildings located within the same area such as arches and columns. These were used as surface ornaments, with no connection to the structures behind them. At the same time, Beirut's last remaining medieval souks are destroyed in the name of creating a new center for the city, and then reconstructed under the guise of «preserving» its Mediterranean identity.

The drive informing these «recuperative» initiatives was not the preservation of a particular urban fabric or a specific lifestyle or the restoration/conservation of one period in the city's history. It was about the preservation of elements deemed emblematic of one aspect of identity, a selective plundering that saw in the center's historic structures components open to interpretation and renewal deemed necessary for the nostalgic recall of a bygone past, or the emphatic assertion of a contemporary condition. The cumulative impact of these actions is a patchwork center with renovated pedestrian and office areas from the French mandate period, and a series of isolated monuments, historic and religious, standing amidst large stretches of empty land and parking lots. More critically, by isolating the religious edifices from the urban fabric and daily living rhythms that once enveloped them, these structures were transformed literally and metaphorically into icons of the post-war era.

While the project de-contextualizes architecture by eradicating the city's historic fabric, the proposed structures manipulate scenery, ornament, and façade to create a site loaded with historical allusions. The project of memory in this instance is quite selective in the details of what it includes and what it omits. In an attempt to create the modern space of Lebanese identity, difference is suppressed and details are forgotten in the actual renderings of the project. The architect omits the more immediate past to reach out to an idyllic and revered time, the eternal past just waiting to be rediscovered, the designated pre-war «golden age» of Beirut. Beirut, according to its planners is to «regain» its status as a Mediterranean port city, the gateway between the east and west. This past discussed as if it simply existed, overlooks the fact that it is actually a paralyzed past that is being plundered. In trying to create an image for the state and a locus of power, difference is eradicated under the guise of unification. Memory thus is not about addressing the

trauma associated with neither the civil wars, nor the strife over national identity and belonging to the city. Memory is now about closure of that past, about forgetting, that is the replacement or displacement of that past with another. The conflicts over the meaning of Lebanese nationality which have plagued the country since inception are not questioned, while persisting attempts by all the religious communities in Lebanon to fabricate a politically distinct and almost sovereign «imagined community» of their own are abjured. More importantly, by rejecting multiple notions of identity as a precondition for reconstruction, the state preempts the multiple experiences that different communities have undergone. The fragmentation enforced by the war, and the coercion implicit in peace-generated homogeneity, is in this sense commensurate.

These representations present a self-enclosed narrative, be it programmatic or historical, which uses perspective to close and seal the rest of the city whenever it can. Urbanity and national identity are transformed into a complete picture with a constructed past and future. The past here is transformed into a question of representation and not of responsibility; and here the representation voids private memories and painful histories. The present is simply foreclosed, bracketed outside the image.

Ghostly Specters and Alternate Memories

Yet if the city center project seems to isolate memory, it also invokes the extremes of forgetfulness. It acts as a form of denial, not of memory and forgetting, but of the ability to tell the difference between remembering and what it means to forget. However, as Maurice Halbswachs has argued, memory is not free floating but in fact needs a social framework within which to function. Through this framework, memory is to guide experience by linking one to traditions, customs and religious beliefs. As he points out «a man who remembers alone what others do not remember resembles somebody who sees what others do not see. It is as if he suffers from hallucinations.»[27] In other words, memory had to be linked to lived experience; retained and transmitted through generations through a complex web of social relations. For many of the current inhabitants of the city center, and its previous owners, the end of the war and the start of reconstruction did not signify an erasure of the war and a new beginning, but rather the beginning of their own loss; that is the beginning of a different kind of war. The 4,000 displaced residents who lived in the center were forced to relocate, as were many of those who lived in its immediate peripheries or who owned properties there. In a series of interviews conducted by researcher Yasmin Arif into the impact of the Solidere reconstruction project on the current residents of the downtown, recurring tropes of loss and desertion at the end of the war rebound. In the words of Abu Fouad, «For us the older generation who grew up together, no matter what will happen to the Burj now, we don't care. What we care for is the years that were gone from our lives, and now, after the war, we look back and realize that all the places that we remember are no longer there—they are a desert land now.» His wife continues, «... there was war but it was safe [here]... it was very stable... When you look around now, you see only destruction and despair... there is no one anymore. The people that you talked to will also have gone by the end of the month. *I am here today, but I don't know if I will be here tomorrow.»*[28]

In these instances, individual memories and acts of remembrance intertwine in complicated and unpredictable ways with the declared need to «forget» the war, to erase it from collective existence. Lebanon's history is isolated in the project to the temporal/topographic sites of institutional significance, transformed into the nation's sites of memory; sites which according to Pierre Nora, emerge when there is a perceived break with the past, whilst the politics of everyday city life are totally eradicated. History and memory are represented as purely temporal and chronological rather than spatial and relational. History is used to privilege particular readings of political identity and national subjectivity as «real». Arrival into this «national» history, as represented in the project, erases not only the past of the viewer but also that of alternative communal histories. *«I am here today but I don't know if I will be tomorrow.»*[29]

However, knowing the past is no longer, if it ever was, confined to the compulsory time frames of national historiography—the reality is that the nation is not, if it ever was, the site or frame for memory, and national history is no longer the measure of what people know of their past. Official attempts to channel memories constantly face the intangible and unexpected surfacing of the past, not only in individual narratives, but also in the form of haunting, in the return of the ghost which as Gordon points out only comes into play when memory cannot recall the violent event it has been subjected to.[30] What could the emergence of the ghost around the Mamluk mausoleum, in the interstices of the city center and in the midst of ongoing demolitions no less, represent but the ghost's insistence on justice by bringing into view the thousands of dead and «disappeared» and displaced for whom no place could be found in the project?[31] Can one not read

this act perhaps as a symbolic protest against a program that was extending the politics of exclusion enacted by warring factions during the war into the reconstruction and reconciliation process? For, as Derrida suggests, to speak of ghosts is to also address the questions of inheritance and of different generations.[32] Leaving aside for the moment, Hizbu'llah's political interest at the time in establishing a territorial foothold in the city center, the wide-scale currency of the ghost in the city epitomizes the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, a demand for justice and ethics from both the future and the past by the ghost, which «*begins by coming back*».[33] Read from this perspective, this event can be interpreted as both a rejection of the post-war reconstruction approach which relied on the suppression of varying rights and claims to the city.

This incident drives us to rethink the location of the city in memory and its role in the process of defining modernity and national identity. By virtue of its historical and topographic position, Beirut's city's center inaugurated a crisis of representation for successive post-war governments—for many to possess its image, was tantamount to possessing the future (and history) itself. In this sense this project became emblematic of an ambiguous kind of political imagery. In the absence of a clearly defined national identity, the project strove to construct an ideal space for a post-war society redefined selectively and along singular class lines. Through its representations the reconstruction project is presented as a critical complement to the viewer's own identity by removing and repairing the menacing alterity of the war. All references, both visual and verbal, to war-related issues were eliminated from the picture. Similarly this imagery attempted to re-confirm the «political center's» territorial re-possession of the historic center and thus secure a «secular» vantage point liberated from the binds of religious affiliation that underwrite political participation in Lebanon.[34] Through the selective displacement of citizens, or their removal from view, the state reclaimed the process of constituting national and political identities from within the heart of the capital city. The physical destruction of the city and its long [re]construction become forms of collective therapy in which the «death» of the city—its «cleansing»—so to speak is meant to rid the nation of memories of the multitude of deaths that continue to haunt its making.

Whose City is this Anyway?
That the war was catastrophic for the Lebanese is undisputed, but the legacy of incomprehensibility, which lies at the heart of this catastrophe, has yet to be recognized. In the absence of any open and public discourse on the constitutive role of the civil war and on questions of national history and individual memory, the state's actions are pre-empted by the ghostly specters of sectarian bloodshed, which seem more real today than 12 years ago when the war ostensibly ended. By focusing their efforts on the reconstruction of the capital city, and simply «letting the dead be dead» successive post-war Lebanese governments effectively re-asserted the hegemonic role of the city as the geographic local and of the economy as the symbolic terrain for identifying national identity. In this context, rights to the city are re-interpreted from within the logic of post-war reconstruction that evokes an international role for the city rather than a process of reconciliation that turns the city inwards, onto its own territory.

However, as Cathy Caruth suggests, «history like trauma, is never simply one's own,… history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas».[35] Liberating the city from the binds that tie it to its reality does not necessarily release it from responsibility towards its citizens. The coupling of the state and of private capital in Beirut produced a powerful historicist discourse that acts upon urban space and population. However, the historicism of this discourse fails to grapple with the challenge that cities pose. By this I mean the question of spatiality that the city highlights. Not only is the urban built environment defined by its position as a nodal point in the geographical landscape of capital, the very organization of the city as society entails spatial divisions and relations and not distinctions between different stages in the march of history. What sets middle-class neighborhoods apart from slums is not time but space; not just physical space but also the space of power. One manifestation of the problem that the historicist discourse encounters in dealing with the socio-spatial organization of the city is that, despite the promise of a new beginning that this state of emptiness created by the project offered, the development of the downtown today represents a purified, ideal space for a neo-liberal phantasm that remains unable to reconcile the multiple needs of a pluralistic and un-integrated society. While transitory cohabitation is occurring, namely in dense commercial spaces focused on consumption, these have yet to open the way for a more substantive project of social reconciliation in the city. As a recent study on around 2,000 car users indicates, around 70% of those visiting the city center were from within its municipal boundaries (around 50%) and adjacent Mount Lebanon (another 20%).[36] Furthermore, a large majority of residences in the city center are currently occupied by expatriate populations that visit the city periodically.[37]

Another manifestation of this historicist discourse is the problem posed by what Ashis Nandy calls the «unintended city» that is the city that was never part of the formal «master plan» but always implicit in it. This «unintended city» is comprised of the large and growing number of poor living in the informal settlements and inadequately organized areas in Beirut's various suburbs; inhabitants who provide the cheap labor and services without which the «official» city could not survive.[38] Exploited and disenfranchised, the existence of this other cannot be acknowledged by the official city as part of itself. Viewed from the lens of postwar reconstruction often taken to mean modernization, this displaced and evicted mass of Lebanon's growing urban poor refuses to «bow out of history», and exhibits a consistent willingness to return and «illegitimately» occupy large public spaces. The refusal to «bow out of history» points to a general problem intrinsic to the nation-state's historicist discourse of modernization—the inability of its linear narrative to acknowledge the spatiality of historical processes, the uneasy coexistence of the modern and the «traditional», the intrusion of the rural into the urban, the combined emergence of official and unintended cities. The city's historical geography of power, culture, and society resists its representation as evolution and development. From this perspective Elyssar, the large development project for the informal settlements in the southern suburbs of Beirut and all negotiations over its future are part and parcel of a redefinition of urban citizenship; one which includes diverse forms of identification with Lebanon as a nation, and Beirut as a city. In the process of juxtaposing the projects, a series of questions are raised about the notions of center and periphery or the rural and urban. The permeability of spaces and their constant appropriation and mutations also questions the viability of discussing city boundaries, especially in places such as Lebanon where the city is the country.

Notes

[1] There are no official figures yet of the total number of dead and injured. The length of the conflict and its episodal nature meant that for example the total number of those killed in specific massacres, especially those that targeted informal human settlements such as Tell ez Zaatar or the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila, can never be determined since the number of inhabitants was not known. Moreover, as is common in most conflicts, the game of numbers was also critical to the process of the war with each side inflating and conflating figures according to their needs.

[2] During the long years of the war successive population displacements in various parts of Lebanon and of Beirut took place under violent conditions. See YAHYA, Maha, *Forbidden Spaces Invisible Barriers: Housing in Beirut*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Architectural Association, London 1994, for detailed accounts of population displacements and resettlements, housing strategies and territorial divisions during the 15 years of civil strife, and YAHYA, Maha, «Reconstituting Space, The Aberration of the Urban in Beirut», in KHALAF, Samir and KHOURY, Philip (eds.), *Recovering Beirut, Urban Design and Post War Reconstruction*, E.J. Brill, New York 1993, for a concise description of the fragmentation of urban territory during the years of civil conflict.

[3] It is not clear whether this includes actual material damage to infrastructure etc. only or has considered losses incurred from the loss of potential capital investment in the country over the period of the war.

[4] Hizbu'llah or the «Party of God» was founded by a group of dissidents from Amal, the main «representatives» of the Muslim Shi'as, in the summer of 1982 during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the siege of Beirut. Initially called Islamic Amal, the militia was publicly launched as Hizbu'llah in 1984. Between 1984-1991, and in the absence of state institutions, Hizbu'llah created an interconnected system of NGOs. These provide a variety of social services which include health care, the maintenance of sewerage and infrastructure, the construction and paving of roads, education etc. During the war years, these services helped Hizbu'llah consolidate its territorial control over parts of the southern suburbs of Beirut and establish the organization as serious political contender in the country. See NORTON, A.R., *Amal and the Shi'a Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1987; SHARARAH, Waddah, *Dawlat Hizb Allah: Lubnan mujtama'an Islamiyan* (The State of Hizbu'llah: Lebanon as an Islamic Society), Dar An-Nahar, Beirut 1996 and YAHYA, Maha, op. cit., 1994.

[5] Shi'as and Sunnis are the two major sects in Islam that emerged after the death of the prophet Mohamed as a result of a conflict over who would succeed him as the leader or Caliph of the Muslim world. In general the Shi'as as a sect have been considered as the underdogs and have faced persecution at the hands of different political dynasties including the Ottomans. In some parts of the world remnants of this conflict persist to this day with adherents of a conservative strand of Sunni Islam accusing the Shi'as of being heretics (such as the Wahabis in Saudi Arabia). In Lebanon these divisions are not really in evidence and tend to flare up only at times of extreme sectarian tensions—and even then amongst small sectors of society.

[6] The person in charge of demolition relayed to me at the time that they had avoided using live ammunition and dynamite in the vicinity of the mausoleum and had resorted to bulldozers instead because they were afraid of damaging it (private interview, May 1992).

[7] Al Taef is the name of the city in Saudi Arabia where negotiations between all the parties, both international and Lebanese to end the war took place. The Taif accord (1990) addressed the disproportion in political representation in the country, which traditionally occurs along religious lines. Allotment of parliamentary seats became equal amongst the two main religious groups; Muslims and Christians. More importantly, article 53 of the agreement, made the appointment of the ministerial cabinet, previously part of the executive powers of the presidency, one of the duties of the prime minister. The post of the Prime Minister itself, also once a presidential prerogative, is now appointed by parliament. For a well articulated evaluation of these accords and their impact on inter-communal living in Lebanon see BEYDOUN, Ahmed, *The Torn Republic: The fate of the Lebanese formula after al Taef*, Dar An-Nahar, Beirut 1999 [in Arabic].

[8] Since the French mandate period Lebanon was often referred to in popular culture and tourist brochures as the Paris of the East and the Switzerland of the Orient. The former metaphor specifically was used to justify Lebanon's overwhelming focus on its service industry which by 1975 made up close to 2/3 of the economy.

[9] Interestingly enough, this project whose first public incarnation appeared in 1991, is the first attempt by any Lebanese architect since the establishment of Lebanon as an independent nation-state in 1920 to imagine and represent a vision of Lebanese identity.

[10] GOSWAMI, Manu, *Producing India: From colonial economy to national space*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004.

[11] SASSEN, Saskia, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1991.

[12] Prime Minister Hariri was the prime mover of both of these projects. His interest in both areas predates the post-war period to 1983 when a brief lull in fighting led many to believe that the conflict was over. However in the absence of a comprehensive development, reconstruction and reconciliation plan for the city and the country these projects remained piecemeal and further consecrated the class and economic divisions in the country. See YAHYA, Maha, 2005 for an assessment of post-war reconstruction policies on social developments in the country.

[13] In addition to CDR, public sector representatives included the Beirut municipality, the Directorate of Urban Planning (DGU), and the General Directorate of Antiquities (DGA); the private sector comprised mainly Oger Liban, as well as the property owners, tenants and the different trade associations; and civil society included various NGOs namely concerned with architectural heritage.

[14] Dar el Handasah Consultants is the largest Engineering Company in the Middle East and ranks eighth in the world.

[15] Al Fadel Challak, the founder and director of Oger Liban, the company founded and owned by Prime Minister Hariri (1982), and the head of the Hariri Foundation (1984) was appointed as the head of CDR. Until April of 1992, Mr. Challak maintained his office at Oger Liban, when the CDR moved officially to its main office in the renovated Sérail complex, also a gift (at a cost of 5 million dollars) from Mr. Hariri.

[16] These meetings held at different venues around the city including the Order of Architects and Engineers generated considerable debate and dissent around the project. See SALAM et al., 1994, for further details.

[17] Real Estate Holding Companies (REHCO) were formed in Saudi Arabia for the development and rehabilitation of different cities such as Mecca, Medina and Riyadh. Several formulas for public-private participation in these companies were tried. Beirut followed the Mecca model. (for further information please see UPPER COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF RIYADH, *Bornamaj Tatouir Mantakat Kasr el Hokom; Al Marahal Al Thaletha* (*Program for the Development of Kasr el Hokom Area; Phase Three*), Riyadh 1995; YAHYA, Maha, op. cit., 1994.

[18] Two arguments were used to justify this action. The first was that the financial inability of the state to undertake the reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure would cause significant delays in post-war rehabilitation and delay the process of investment in the country. The second was that the intertwined property and tenure relationships, namely the parcelization of land due to inheritance and the tangled web of tenant rights resulting from outdated rental laws, and complicated by the passage of 17 years of war would hinder if not completely stall the reconstruction process.

[19] Select property owners were allowed to retain ownership of their properties according to very strict criteria.

[20] Legal commissions were formed for the sole purpose of estimating the financial value of the said properties. Accusations of gerrymandering followed. With minimal venue for appeal, owners had little choice but to accept whatever estimates were made. One of the main problems regarding this process was that estimates were based on the value of the land at the time—that is substantially destroyed properties in a derelict part of town and not on the potential value of centrally located property once reconstruction began. Moreover, Solidere's current financial crisis, caused in part by tremendous overspending on infrastructure and a general recession in the country, has led to a considerable loss in the value of its shares, generating further losses for those property owners.

[21] According to the country's cultural heritage laws, which date back to the French mandate period, only structures prior to 1750 are considered as historically significant and therefore automatically preserved. In part this has created a situation where land is considered far more valuable than the building that stands upon it, a fact that has led to the avid destruction of the city's heritage followed by the construction of new structures in a process of constant self-renewal.

[22] Solidere was accused of destroying sites of significant archeological interest for developmental purposes. Moreover, much available evidence points to the fact that the «recuperation» of buildings was equally mercantile. See SADER, 1998.

[23] In addition, smaller businesses also deemed inappropriate for the center such as barbers, grocery vendors etc. were prevented from returning to the center through complex, and in some instances, prohibitive rules for the recuperation of previously owned or rented properties. As the lawyer for the company stated in an interview «we made sure that undesirable functions did not return to the area» (Solidere lawyer, private interview, 1997).

[24] These 4,000 individuals were squatting in abandoned buildings, especially in the Wadi Abu Jamil area, throughout the war. Most of those, namely of Shi'a origin, had been displaced from homes either in villages in the south of the country or from areas in the eastern (and for part of the war period predominantly Christian) part of the city. Most of those families took the money that they were given as compensation and moved to the southern suburbs, either the informal settlements along the Ouzai area or more recent developments along the former Green Line and in Hay el Sullum also in the southern suburbs.

[25] For a more elaborate discussion of the question of property rights see YAHYA, Maha, «Let the Dead be Dead: Memory, Architecture, Urban Narratives and Post-Civil War Nation Building in Beirut», in BENDER, Thomas, CINAR, Alev (eds.), *Locating the City: The Idea, Place, Politics, and Everyday Practice of the Urban,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, forthcoming 2005.

[26] Lebanon has a history of immigration, which dates back to the turn of the century, and especially the period of WWI, when famine struck the area. While exact figures for the numbers of émigrés during the war are not available, foreign ministry sources indicate that about eight million Lebanese of different generations reside in various parts of the globe. Of particular interest to the government were the financially affluent expatriates, many of whom reside in the major capitals of Western Europe and the US.

[27] HALBSWACHS, Maurice, *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1968.

[28] ARIF, Yasmin, *Presentation on Research Findings*, Center for Behavioral Studies, American University of Beirut, Beirut 1997. See also SAWALHA, Aseel, *Remembering the Good Old Days: The Reconstruction of Urban Space in Post-war Beirut,* unpublished PhD dissertation, The City University of New York, New York 2002. This theme of loss and disorientation brought about by the post-war reconstruction of the center is echoed in novels of the period. See for example BARAKAT Hudá*, The Tiller of the Waters*, Dar An-Nahar Press, Beirut 1998.

[29] Monumental was Nietzsche's derogatory epithet questioning any version of history calling itself permanent and everlasting.

[30] GORDON, Avery, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination,* University of Minnesota Press, London, Minneapolis 1997.

[31] In fact, the reconstruction of the center required the subsequent re-displacement of the 4,000 individuals who were squatting in the center, mainly to the southern suburbs which is controlled in large part by Hizbu'llah. The large majority of visitors to the mausoleum were those squatters and inhabitants from the southern suburbs.

[32] DERRIDA, Jacques, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, New York 1994, p. 21.

[33] This particular narrative and the visual and discursive forms it took are very influenced by the particular history of the Shi'a community in Lebanon both during the Ottoman Empire and the French mandate.

[34] See p. 3, footnote 7. BEYDOUN, Ahmed, op. cit., p. 3.

[35] CARUTH, Cathy, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History,* The Johns Hopkins University Press, London and Baltimore 1996, p. 24.

[36] This study, undertaken in July 2003 by transportation experts on a sample of around 2,000 cars, should not be treated as a scientific study. Rather it should be considered as a relevant indicator of visitors to the area.

[37] According to Solidere employees around 60% of residences in the Saifi «Urban Village» are owned by local Lebanese and the remaining 40% are expatriates and Gulf Arabs. These percentages change when examining new residences constructed along the coastline of the area and which are primarily owned by Gulf Arabs and Lebanese expatriates (private interview, May 2004).

[38] Even though a number of informal settlements have existed in and around the capital Beirut since the fifties their number and size have risen considerably in the post-war era. Unacknowledged and illegal, at best tolerated, these settlements and the informal market that has sprouted within them have been making up for the inefficiencies of public land management. This informal sector has proven adaptive and responsive and has been providing a large segment of the urban population with buildable urban land. Most house populations displaced during the war, populations displaced by large- scale infrastructure and development projects such as highways, low-income populations with limited access to the housing market, and migrant workers whose number increases and decreases along with the number and size of real estate and other development in the country. In the absence of a comprehensive survey, existing data on the size and demographic characteristics of these areas is sporadic at best. The informal settlements along the coastal zone of the southern suburbs are said to house around 60,000-80,000 individuals. See CHARAFEDDINE, Wafa, *Formation des Secteurs «Illégaux» dans la Banlieue-Sud de Beyrouth*, Mémoire pour le Diplôme d'Études Superieures Specialisé en Urbanisme (DESS) Institut D'urbanisme de l'Académie de Paris, Université de Paris VIII, Paris 1985; CLERC, Valérie, *Les Principes*

d'action de l'urbanisme: Le projet Elyssar face aux quartiers irréguliers de Beyrouth, unpublished PhD dissertation, Université Paris VIII, IFU, 2002; YAHYA, Maha, op. cit., 1994.