

Chasing Ghosts in Beirut;

Memory Politics, Claiming Space,
and Struggling for Citizenship in
Post-war Beirut



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Beirut...

What kills you is no longer the shattering shells of the rifle's rapid rattle.
No longer is it the searing sounds of shells shattering on the streets.
Nothing happens now.

Yet wearied we keep awake, tormented by thought.
The night is silent.
What are we doing here?
What do we search for in this city of scars?

We attempt to walk the walk, talk the talk,
Still we hear the echo of a rapid rattle of construction.
Fumes, a black veil which covers the urban,
Fills every crack of this dense city.

Melancholic, nostalgic, it wears us down.
Life has returned,
Yet, nothing happens now.

- Bob Rehorst



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements:	7
List of Acronyms:.....	8
Introduction:	9
Chapter One: Theoretical Framework	12
1.1: Collective Memory: Practices and Contestation	12
1.2: The City: A Place for Contestation of Representation	15
1.3: Citizenship: The Pursuit of Urban Identity	18
Chapter Two: Beirut’s Dance: Contextualizing Urban Beirut	21
1.1: Urban Separation; The Division of Beirut	22
1.2: Peace and Reconstruction.....	24
1.3: Modern Beirut: Resilient and Contested	27
Chapter Three: A discourse analysis on Solidere and its proponents’ narrative of Beirut’s post-war reconstruction process.	31
3.1: Solidere and the initial challenge of archaeology:	33
3.2: Solidere and the Challenge of Property:.....	35
3.3: Solidere and the challenge of the people	38
3.4: Beirut Souks: A Case Study	44
3.5: Historical BCD: A Modern Example	48
3.6: Scapegoating Solidere; Displaced Aggression.....	51
Chapter Four: Through the Eyes of the People: ‘The Struggle over Beirut’s Interior’	53
4.1: Solidere; Beirut’s Heritage: The Lost Legacy.....	54
4.2: Solidere; Kicking Down Doors	57
4.3: Hitherto Beirut’s ‘Achievements’	59
4.4: Beirut: ‘a City of Spectacles’	62
4.5: Grassroots interventions: Addressing Heritage and Memory	65
4.6: To Summarize: A Missed Opportunity	69
Conclusion.....	71
Bibliography:.....	76
Appendix A: Informant list	81

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List of Acronyms:

BCD:	Beirut Central District
BHT:	Beirut Heritage Trail
CCPDR:	The Civil Campaign to Protect the Dalieh of Raouche
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
DGA:	Directorate General of Antiquities
FPM:	Free Patriotic Movement
PM:	Prime Minister
Solidere:	la Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth

Introduction:

Mees Hehenkamp & Bob Rehorst

“For fifteen years Lebanon endured a civil war that transformed its capital city, Beirut, from the ‘Paris of the Mediterranean’ to a bloody battleground of rival sectarian factions. More than a decade after the civil war, Beirut is in the final stages of a multibillion-dollar reconstruction effort that has attempted to recreate the ‘old’ cosmopolitan Beirut” (Nagel 2002, 717).

The Lebanese civil war came to an end in 1990 and little was left from the once cosmopolitan city of Beirut. The physical damage was thusly large that the reconstruction could not be financed by the government. When foreign investors like the IMF and World Bank refused to provide financial support for political reasons, the decision was made to let the reconstruction of Beirut be executed by one company, namely, *la Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth* (Solidere) (Mango 2003, 47-48; Nagel 2002, 717). Solidere aimed to resurrect Beirut’s former cosmopolitan identity and saw its mission as providing “... a therapeutic role by founding the city on a sort of salvation-like amnesia that would protect it from the old ghosts which caused its destruction” (Haugbolle 2010, 86 in Nagle 2017, 158). Indeed, Solidere appears to favour a narrative of amnesia, where the more recent violent past of Beirut is purposely being neglected in order to establish a ‘new’ urban identity. The reconstruction process of Beirut carries with it a large set of complications for both state and society due to different interpretations and representations of the collective memory in Beirut society. Moreover, the differing interpretations and representations of collective memory result in Beirut’s urban identity being constantly negotiated. As such, the city represents a battlefield in the struggle over urban, and per extension, national identity (Nagel 2002, 724).

Criticism on Solidere appears to manifest itself throughout wide opposition, such as activist movements aiming to preserve, narrate and display parts of Beirut’s heritage which Solidere seems to discard. We argue that, due to the complications surrounding collective memory representation within the reconstruction process of Beirut’s urban landscape, a polarisation emerges between Solidere and those who oppose the company’s practices. In creating a deeper understanding of the controversy, we have identified three major theoretical lenses through which the context of contemporary Beirut can be studied, namely, Halbwachs’ (1950) collective memory, Lefebvre’s (1968) ‘right to the city’, and Osler and Starkey’s (2005) conceptualisation of citizenship. In doing so, we propose a combined theoretical framework

aiming to argue how politics of memory plays a large role in the construction and contestation of citizenship and identity within the urban context of Beirut. Collective memory, being the central overarching theme of this thesis, can be studied in the context of Beirut as a crucial dimension of the reconstruction in a society which has suffered from a violent past. Namely, as Szpocisnki (2016, 248) claims, urban space ‘should have something to say about us.’ In other words, from the citizen’s point of view, the ability by the state, or in this case Solidere, to accurately design and represent collective memory within the cityscape in an inclusive, rather than an exclusive manner, largely defines its legitimacy amongst citizens (Meyer in Young 2010, 176).

Contemporary literature regarding Beirut’s reconstruction, memory representation and Solidere, largely focuses on the narrative of Solidere’s opposition (Nagel 2002; Nagle 2018; Hermez 2017; Mango 2003). The critique is predominantly built around the notion that Solidere seems to implement a policy of amnesia in creating a new urban identity. However, what we aim to achieve, as a new and relevant insight for contemporary literature in this thesis, is to generate a dual narrative; illustrating both sides of the controversy. Following Sami Hermez’s (2017, 22) notion that “...acts of war generate acts of narration, and every narration needs to be named”, this research has as objective to give voice to both sides of the polarized controversy on the representation of the past in the contemporary urban landscape of Beirut. Therefore, we ask the following main question:

“How does the controversy of post-war reconstruction between Solidere and its opposition manifest itself in the context of memory politics and urban citizenship?”

In answering this question, the focus revolves around Solidere and its opposition, their practices regarding to claims made to the ‘right to the city’ and their goals for representation, narration and display of memory within the reconstruction process of the new urban landscape of Beirut.

This thesis is conducted by two researchers whom have resided within Beirut for a period of three months. The empirical gathered data has been acquired through means of participant observation and in-depth interviews. In researching the formal institutions illustrated in this thesis, we predominantly conducted semi- or unstructured interviews. The lesser formal conversations that were documented most commonly took place in one of the many cafés and bars in Beirut. Participant observation was performed through walking interviews where we accompanied multiple participants through Beirut Central District (BCD) as we followed them in their daily practices. The emphasis on semi- or unstructured interviews was chosen to allow

for serendipity. This proved fruitful throughout our research since the established knowledge of Beirut's controversies before our arrival did not include the controversy surrounding archaeology. Furthermore, in our experience, we found it to be useful to position ourselves in the field in a more informal manner. By this, we mean that we identified most commonly as two young students researching for 'merely a bachelor thesis'. As such, we believe that the common perception of us as researchers was deemed harmless. This perception enabled us to be able to make appointments with more reclusive authorities such as the Mayor and the Governor of Beirut, as well as notable high-level representatives of Solidere. Moreover, the holistic approach of semi-structured and unstructured interviews in combination with the perception of us being merely bachelor students, lowered the threshold for discussing sensitive topics. Our position in the field resulted in a fast establishment of rapport with most of our participants which, in turn, led to numerous stories regarding sensitive topics like expropriation, silencing and traumatic memory narratives.

The claims made throughout this thesis are a result of a culmination of theoretical analysis and ethnographic field research. The personal accounts provided in this thesis are illustrated in a narrative format in order to visualize the stories told about Beirut. In some cases, the participants are referred to by a pseudonym which will be illustrated by means of a '*' (See Appendix A). The reason for our use of pseudonyms is to protect the identity of our participants as some information provided is of a rather sensitive nature. In discussing such sensitive information, we assured informants that we would respect one's request for anonymity as well as delicacy with the information given to us. In the cases in which real names are used, informed consent has been established and permission to reveal these names was given. In all cases, we welcome comments or objections to our mode of identity processing.

What follows in chapter one, is a theoretical framework elaborating upon the three major theoretical lenses; (1) Collective memory, (2) the city: as a place for contestation of representation, and, (3) urban citizenship and identity. Thereafter, one will read an elaboration on the context of Beirut in relation to the theoretical framework in chapter two. In order to generate a deeper understanding of this idea for a dual narrative, we will illustrate two separate narratives in chapter three and four. Chapter three is about the narrative that is favoured by Solidere and its proponents and chapter four argues against this narrative. Finally, through this research we argue how the absence historical hegemony and divisions between chosen memory-narratives set the stage for an increasingly polarized society. Furthermore, we explored in what manner this is reflected through citizen's narratives and the cityscape.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

1.1: Collective Memory: Practices and Contestation

Bob Rehorst

Memory has been extensively researched by social thinkers ever since the Greeks, yet it was Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1902 who first explicitly used the term ‘collective memory’ as a reference of a distinct social perspective of memory (Schieder 1978, 2 in Olick & Robbins 1998, 106). However, when one describes the application and practices of collective memories in society, the term is usually ascribed to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs as one of the, if not the, major thinker in this field (Vromen 1975, 510; Storey 2018, 102-103; Olick & Robbins 1998, 106). Halbwachs’ initial thoughts on collective memory stemmed from a rejection of the Freudian notion of memory being an inherently individual matter (Olick & Robbins 1998, 109):

“There is no point in seeking where memories are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them...” (Halbwachs 1950, 38).

As such, to remember, one needs others. According Suzanne Vromen (1975, 511), for Halbwachs theory, the group to which one belongs as an individual serves as a system for recalling, recognizing and ensuring the continuity of collective memory. This rejection of the individual practice of memory is the first of four claims that Halbwachs makes in relation to the process of collective memory.

Halbwachs (1950, 51) second claim is that memory as collective property is never a resurrection of a ‘pure’ past, but a reflection of memory reconstructed under pressure of society. As an extension, Storey (2018, 103) argues that collective memory is a continuous communal practice of reconstruction and representation. This can be considered an extension of his first claim in the sense that our confidence in the accuracy of our memory is strengthened when we no longer reconstruct it alone, but through the eyes of another as well (Halbwachs 1950, 22). As a result, Pierre Nora (1989, 8) adds, memory remains in a perpetually evolutionary state, a process open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting.

As third claim, Halbwachs argues that remembering is always a practice which occurs in the present. He claims that “...a remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of

the past achieved with data borrowed from the present” (Halbwachs 1950, 69). According to John Storey (2018, 13) By this, Halbwachs means that memories do not make us revert to the past, but rather, it is the practice of remembering which brings the past into the present. This idea of remembering being a practice of reconstructing the past can be considered closely related to the notion of nostalgia. While nostalgia was originally considered a debilitating medical affliction in the 17th century in relation to soldiers longing for home during warfare, it has now developed in a more general and abstract definition (Hirsch & Spitzer 2002, 257-258). Since there is no possibility to return to the past, recollecting the past actively in the present generally includes a yearning for it; a pursuit for a ‘vanished world of yesterday’ (Spitzer 1998, 144; Boym 2001, 13–14 in Hirsch & Spitzer 2002, 258). Therefore, to study memory and collective memory specifically, “...is not to study the past, but the past as it exists in the present” (Storey 2018, 103). Consequently, Olick and Robbins (1998, 133) argue how memory is a central, if not the central, medium through which identities are constructed, including a shared sentiment of nostalgic memory. This shows how the active practice of remembering is an act that, not only takes place in the present, but largely defines present identities as well.

His fourth and last claim is regarding the question of how collective memory is embodied in society including place and materiality. Halbwachs’ (1950, 222) argument states how memory is an explanation of the creation of Holy sites through communal remembrance ascribed to such sites. In addition, Storey (2018, 104). concludes that embodiment of memory in a modern society manifests itself primarily in mnemonic artefacts such as shrines, statues and memorial sites.

These four claims made by Halbwachs allow us to reconsider memory and its meaning, representation and manifestation in a more theoretical way, which holds with it the function as a therapeutic alternative to historical discourse (Klein 2000, 144). Klein (2000, 140) refers to this ‘return to memory’ as a result of two reasons stated by Dominick LaCapra. Firstly, that ‘traumatic events’ of recent history have reignited our attention to memory as a discourse through transference; the most prominent example being the holocaust (Bonder 2009, 63). The second is that the interest in Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* has increased the attention to memory studies, because according to LaCapra, these sites of memory are generally also ‘sites of trauma’ (Klein 2000, 140). As a result, this obsession with memory can be argued to originate from our own guilt of destroying it with historical consciousness (ibid.). Klein argues here in accordance with Nora (1989, 7), because such sites of memory are largely explained and defined as *Lieux de Mémoire*. His central explanation for the existence of sites of memory is because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*; real environments of memory. These sites

emerge because there is no spontaneous memory, one must actively create spaces like archives and memorials because such memory activities no longer exist since there is no longer a *milieu de mémoire* (ibid., 12). It is because these sites are created by people, and therefore embedded in the culture that they have ‘something to say about us’ and it is their very presence that invokes a sense of the past. All the while generating a sense of emotional connectivity with those that the individual’s memory ascribes to the place (Szpocinski 2016, 248).

For Nora (1989, 19), the main goal of a *lieu de mémoire* is to “...stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death and to materialize the immaterial”. However, the timeless character of these sites originates from their capacity for social metamorphosis in the sense that an endless recycling of their meaning and variation in ascription occurs to whom these sites belong (ibid.). Such ascribed meaning to a place of memory originates from the collective memory and is therefore prone to contestation. On nostalgic memory ascription, a positivist and negativist narrative can be argued. Critics of nostalgia literature often argue that such feelings are often associated with looking back with a bitter-sweet and positive relationship, expressing a contrast between the ‘now’ and ‘then’. In this narrative, the latter is considered somehow simpler and better, less fragmented and more understandable than the former (Hirsch & Spitzer 2002, 258). The positivist point of view, argues how nostalgia can function as a resistant relationship to the present, a ‘critical utopianism’ which holds with it the imagination for a better future (ibid., 258-259).

So far, we have established that memory, according to Halbwachs’ first and second claim, is a communal practice which is ongoing and continuously reconstructed in society. The contestation of this reconstruction of memory in a society is, at an international level, discussed in the context of transitional justice (Meyer in Young 2010, 173). In this regard, contestation of memory is a dimension of reconstruction in a society which has suffered from a violent past and requires a confrontation of the past as a precondition for functioning political systems (ibid., 174). As a result, the legitimacy of a political system, such as the state, is largely defined by its ability to address the past in a manner that is compliant to the way memory is reconstructed amongst the society it aims to govern. Therefore, following Olick and Robbins’s (1998, 133) idea that a collective memory is perhaps the most important medium through which collective identities are constructed, the contestation of memory lies in the process of the state and its citizens both competing for the hegemony of discourse and interpretative patterns (Meyer in Young 2010, 176). In the next section, we will explore how this discourse of memory practices regarding place-making, manifests itself in an urban context.

1.2: The City: A Place for Contestation of Representation

Bob Rehorst

“The city is ‘Man’s most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart’s desire.’ But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live.” (Robert Park 1967, 3)

Park’s idea of the city as a place where ‘man remakes the world he lives in after his heart’s desire’ is an illustration of Lefebvre’s (1968) idea of ‘the right to the city’ where he states that this right is more than simply accessing the resources a city has to offer. Rather, as Harvey (2008, 1-2) argues, this right is a collective right since ‘making’ the city is an act of collective power laying claim over the processes of urbanization. In investigating the concept of the city, we understand it “...as constituted by its inhabitants through ongoing acts of making places” (Lefebvre 1996 (1968); in Till 2012, 6). Lefebvre’s right to the city, from a citizen’s-rights-point-of-view, is not a normality, rather, it is a manifestation, the result of a long-term political struggle in which collective claims were posed by groups of mobilized citizens (Purcell 2014,146).

As such, individuals’ realization of their agency grows and they begin to see themselves as capable of managing on their own (Lefebvre 2009, 147). Lefebvre argues that, as a result of this self-realization, institutions of control such as large corporations and the state begin to wither away (ibid.). Following this idea, Harvey (1973, 314) calls for a ‘genuinely humanizing urbanism’, a form of urbanism no longer based on exploitation, but rather is appropriate for the human species. Pinder (2002, 231) argues that such urbanism should be understood as a mode of ‘utopian urbanism’. His critique entails that the very essence of utopian urbanism as the “...the capacity to imagine and conceptualise social transformation and different urban futures...”, is thrown into question due to the rising influence of big corporations and money interests (ibid., 232). In other words, there is an increasing level of distancing through multiple modes of defamiliarization in the population in the sense that, opposing Lefebvre’s ideology of self-realisation, grass-roots influence by citizens is being shot-down by the forces of capitalist modernity (Gardiner 2004, 232). With this critique in mind, the notion of ‘genuinely humanizing urbanism’, as the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process of urban construction, appears to be more of an ideology rather than a practicality. In reality, citizens

rarely play decision-making roles and are, at the very best, providers of feedback and suggestions (Brenner et al. 2009, 2).

This debate between utopian urbanism and the corporate reality of capitalist modernity raises the question of who claims the right to the city, and what this claim entails? Karen Till (2012, 6) explores this idea in the context of what she calls ‘wounded cities’. Her argument fits within cities which are harmed by physical destruction, displacement and collective traumas experienced by its inhabitants. Cities that have experienced such destruction reignite the struggle for the right to the city because reconstruction is imminent. Moreover, wounded cities are inseparably linked to a violent past and as such, reconstruction requires the inclusion of memory-work (ibid.,8). Memory work, that is, the presence of the past in a present that supersedes it, but still lays claim to it is, according to Jean Starobinski, the essence of modernity (Augé 2008, 61). Modernity, as an ideology, relates closely to the notion of utopian urbanism since in a modern city, everything is combined, and everything holds together. The observant of a city following this modernity sees a combination of the old and the new, the past interwoven with the present (ibid., 89). On the other hand, however, the capitalist-fuelled reality of urbanism relates closely to what Augé calls *supermodernity*. In representing the past, supermodernity makes the old into a particular spectacle, it exoticizes fragments of the city, and these presentations of curiosities are rarely well-integrated (ibid., 89). As such, supermodern places do not integrate in the context of representing the past, they do not relate to the surroundings (ibid., 63). As a result:

“Supermodernity cannot aspire to the same ambitions as modernity, since non-places are the space of Supermodernity. When individuals come together, they engender the social and the organize places and give meaning. But, in the space of Supermodernity, it is inhabited by its contradiction: Namely, this space deals only with individuals.” (Augé 2008, 89).

Supermodernity therefore takes a more exoticizing approach in memory-work in the sense that it focuses on the presentation of historical curiosities instead of an integrated representation of the past. The increase in non-places of supermodernity is closely related to Guy Debord’s immense accumulation of spectacles in societies where modes of consumption prevail (Elsheshtawy 2008, 166). According to Elsheshtawy, Debord defines such a ‘society of spectacles’ being formed through places that are transient which contributes to a sense of alienation amongst the population (ibid.). In Elsheshtawy’s analysis of Dubai, he describes a global city with its spectacles such as shopping malls and a general design for capitalist

consumerism. The non-place is otherwise defined as transitory space, a space in which one stays only briefly, discouraging unnecessary lingering and hence attachment (Elsheshtawy 2008, 985).

Such a city, with a seemingly commercial character as Debord's society of the spectacle, demands an attitude from its population of passive acceptance. In cities conceived as such, "...there are no real people - merely passive consumers following the dictates of global capitalism" (ibid., 968-970). In the case of memory-politics, according to Augé (2008, 89), a supermodern reality results in an absence of historical synthesis; historical curiosities designed to address memory are not integrated with anything for they merely bear witness to coexisting, but unconnected individualities. From the citizens' point of view, there is often a demand for public visibility and 'give voice' to the past, especially a violent past. As such, the right to represent the past in an integrated manner, can be considered a right to the city (Till 2012, 8) since the state's ability to accurately design and represent the cityscape in an inclusive, rather than an exclusive manner, largely defines its legitimacy amongst its citizens (Meyer in Young 2010, 176).

1.3: Citizenship: The Pursuit of Urban Identity

Mees Hehenkamp

The controversy within memory politics and the way it challenges states' legitimacy through sites of memory and, consequently, the right to the city, is a narrative intertwined with citizenship because memory, according to Olick and Robbins (1998, 133), plays a large role in the construction of individual identities. Citizenship symbolizes the relationship between the nation-state and its citizens (Lagassé 2000; Simpson & Weiner 1989; Koopmans 2005 in Banks 2014, 129) and is further explained by Koopmans (2005 in Banks 2014, 129) as '... the set of rights, duties, and identities linking citizens to the nation-state'. Citizenship can be seen as a process of reciprocity between the state and its citizens, since they are obliged to honour certain obligations like paying taxes and in return the state provides protection and basic utilities.

Moreover, Marshall (1964) states that citizenship is an evolutionary concept that symbolizes the ongoing process of realizing the utopian notion of equality within society (Banks 2014, 130). Therefore, the interaction between both the nation-state and its citizens is essential, because both derive their legitimacy from the recognition of the other. As such, Benedict Anderson (2006, 7) argues how the nation represents the community with all its inequalities and exploitations as "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (ibid.). Without this comradeship, the other can be viewed as illegitimate, which affects the responsibilities of both state and society.

To understand the complexity of memory politics and the effects it has on citizenship, and per extension, urban identity, Osler and Starkey's (2005) conceptualisation of citizenship will be followed due to the comprehensive inclusion of social sentiment. According to the authors' bottom-up conceptualisation of citizenship, it is made up of three essential and intertwined dimensions which are identified as status, practice, and feeling (2005, 10-16). Regulated through law, citizens obtain status through rights if recognized.

Moreover, the interaction between state and citizens refer to a performative nature of citizenship, which is described as the dimension of practice. Practice does not merely refer to the legality of citizenship, but rather to the way status is perceived in daily reality (Osler & Starkey 2005, 14-16). The concept is linked to the basic conception of entitlement to human rights and democracy from which individuals continue to exercise their agency in pursuit of equality as a practiced norm instead of equality being merely constitutional (ibid., 14-16). In this understanding, we follow Marshall's (1964 in Banks 2014, 130) idea that citizenship is an

evolutionary process and therefore the practice dimension can directly affect one's feeling of status. However, Banks (2014, 11-14) argues that in order to deeper understand this 'feeling', one should understand that citizenship is subject to contestation and thereby leads to different expressions of feeling of belonging to the nation as a community of either inclusive comradeship or a distorted society of exclusion.

Therefore, either inclusive or exclusive, one's citizenship is perceived as homogeneous in relation to the state. In understanding Anderson's (2006, 7) idea that the nation is considered '... a deep, horizontal comradeship' we see that this refers to the idea of homogeneous citizenship. However, we argue that, instead of considering citizenship as homogeneous, the meaning of citizenship is subject to contestation due to Holston and Appadurai's (1996, 189) idea that there is a fundamental difference between the citizenship ascribed to members of a nation-state and how citizenship manifests itself within the nation-state. Holston and Appadurai explain this idea by drawing a distinction between individuals living in a large city and those outside of it. An example they illustrate is that "... London today is a global city in many ways do not fit with the politics of the United Kingdom...." and "... Los Angeles may sustain many aspects of a multicultural society and economy at odds with mainstream ideologies of American identity" (Ibid.). In other words, large cities form a stage where the feeling of citizenship challenges the homogeneous perception of citizenship. Moreover, it is argued that homogeneity in this regard is not merely challenged by the city versus the nation, but rather, that citizenship, as a homogeneous pursuit of equality (Marshall 1964 in Banks 2014, 130), is also challenged by a growing pursuit of individual authenticity (Holston and Appadurai 1996, 194).

"As Taylor demonstrates, the argument from authenticity leads to a politics of difference rather than to a politics of universalism or equalization of rights (1992, 3-73). It results in a claim upon others to recognize special qualities and to accord them rights on that account which will ensure their survival and well-being. Although this kind of demand would seem contradictory and incompatible with citizenship as an ideology of equality, there is nevertheless a growing sense that it is changing the meaning of equality itself." (Holston and Appadurai 1996, 194-95).

This individual pursuit of authenticity results in a type of identity politics which has a major impact on the erosion of formal citizenship. For if we accept that identity is not merely the answer to the question; 'Who or what are you?' (Demmers 2012, 20). It also symbolizes the social relationship with its environment through the process 'being' and 'becoming'

(Jenkins 2014, 18-19). In understanding this fundamental conceptualisation of identity as a process of being and becoming, we argue that, in accordance with Holston and Appadurai (1996, 195), the pursuit of individual authenticity is a major determinant in the construction of urban citizenship as the notion of an 'individual' pursuit can be practiced through groups of people struggling for similar identities. Therefore, referring to Osler and Starkey (2005, 11-14), we argue that the dimension of feeling ascribed to one's citizenship, represents the subjective nature of the pursuit of one's identity. This becomes apparent when we analyse this dimension through the means of memory theory.

We have established how memory plays a crucial role in the formation of both individual and collective identity. One can understand how one's status as citizen can be considered contested when the state's ability to represent collective memory is perceived as inconsistent with individual and communal feelings. This inconsistency with the collective feeling of a society is usually argued through the way citizenship and statehood is practiced. Since individual feelings of status are subject to perception and interpretation, so is the practice of identity. This becomes more apparent when individuals aim to exercise their agency regarding their narrative of the representation of memory. These dialectics of space, citizenship and identity refers to a notion of spatial citizenship (Perdue & Sbicca 2014, 310-311). As we established in the previous section, a space, such as a city, should have a created space that has 'something to say' about its citizens through means of memory (Szpocinski 2016, 248). Moreover, we noted how Till (2012, 8) argues that there is often a public demand by citizens to give voice to the past in the context of the city as a means of representation of the individual or collective memory. Their sense of 'self' leads to a contestation between citizen and state in their competition for hegemony of discourse and interpretative patterns (Meyer in Young 2010, 174-176). In our analysis, we contend that the competition for the interpretation and representation of memory through the construction of identity between state and its citizens are undeniably intertwined. As such, the politics of memory can be considered a cause of citizenship being contested. We aim to illustrate this framework through the context of Beirut. In order to do so, let us first explore the series of events that transpired in Beirut.

Chapter Two: Beirut's Dance: Contextualizing Urban Beirut

Mees Hehenkamp & Bob Rehorst

Caroline Nagel's (2002, 717) description Beirut's transformation in the introduction tells the story of a city which underwent drastic changes over the course of a relatively short period of time. Beirut was once a playground for the elite of the Arab world, until the civil war started. Before its collapse, Beirut was known as a hub for intelligentsia, journalists, and elites with a liberal attitude not normally found in most Arab cities. However, under this mirage of the cosmopolitan surface raged decades of intercommunal hostilities amongst its society regarding the views on Lebanon being an independent state (ibid., 719).



Figure I: Hajj, J. La Ligne Verte. 2017. Online Image, 624×374 pixels. Festival de Géopolitique de Grenoble. Source: <https://www.festivalgeopolitique.com/jimmy-hajj-> (accessed on November 15, 2018).

1.1: Urban Separation; The Division of Beirut

According to John Nagle (2017, 152), Beirut's divided society can be traced to the mandate implemented by the French in the 1920s, when a constitutional division was enforced which ensured a Christian majority over Muslim sects. This already fragile establishment was distorted when the neighbouring Palestinians started using Beirut's Palestinian refugee camp as a base of operations in the early 1960s. Many Muslims supported the PLO's cause and many Christians formed armed militias in order to protect themselves for, in their view, the coming change in political governance. With Christian militias armed, long-standing resentment between them and the Muslims and Druze escalated throughout the country (Harik 1999 in Nagel 2002, 720).

Not long thereafter, nearby foreign powers such as Syria, Iran and Israel, aiming to exercise their own political agendas, joined this conflict by arming factions and deploying intervening forces throughout the 1970s. As a result, for fifteen years, ranging from 1975 to 1990, the country was torn between areas ruled separately by warlords, and there was a growing divisiveness between the populations, many of which were once neighbours (Nagel 2002, 720-21). According to Nagel, the most potent symbol for this social polarisation was the *Green Line*, a no-man's land of damaged and destroyed buildings which divided East and West Beirut. A 'no-man's land' demarcated a sectarian separation where the Christian East and the Muslim West was enforced with the Green Line itself as 'Ground Zero' where most of the destruction had taken place (Ragab 2011, 109). The emergence of the 'Green Line' is an illustration of how political violence city shapes urban space within a city, a process that can be identified as *urbicide* (Fregonese 2009, 311).

In other words, understanding urbicide and its resulting redefining characteristics of territoriality, one can understand how such violent



Figure II: Chalandon, C. 2017: a "ligne verte" no man's land dividing the Christian and Muslim quarters of Beirut during the war. 489x683 pixels

divisiveness had a large impact on contemporary identity formation in Beirut. What often happens in such violent divisions is that identity, once being a fluid and dynamic continuous construction, becomes solidified in times of conflict amongst groups. This ‘thingification’ of identity through conflict has come to be known as the *Reification of Identity* (Demmers 2012, 29; Brubaker 2004, 37). It is significant how this played a part in the increasing polarisation of Beirut society (Khalaf 1994, in Nagel 2002, 721).

1.2: Peace and Reconstruction

According to Nagel (Nagel 2002, 721), the civil war ended more from war-exhaustion than from a decisive victor after the signing of the Ta'if Peace accord. The accord, named after the Saudi resort, where it was signed in October 1989, ushered in a period of reasonable stability. It was signed by the remaining survivors of Lebanese Parliament, 58 out of 70, that were elected in 1972 (Leenders 2012, 1-2). The agreement was adopted and consisted multiple constitutional reforms that were officially implemented in September 1990. It had the ambition to reconcile its society and furthermore to legitimize the state and its institutions. However, in contrast to these aims, it reconfirmed the former power sharing structures among the religious communities originating from the constitution of 1926 (Karam 2012, 36). As such, it did not break the cycle of sectarianism being entangled with state structures.

In line with the Ta'if accord, Sami Hermez (2017, 4-5) explains the additional implemented policy of 'No Victor, No Vanquished' which ensured amnesty for all factions related to the war. This policy carried with it the implication that no party could eliminate the other, but also that none were ever sanctioned or punished. This idea that no winners or losers emerge from the conflict could imply that no reconciliation can be reached, and Hermez predicts that this feeling of unresolved past political violence carries a danger of being reignited in the future (ibid., 6).

The damage created by the civil war was estimated between fifteen and nineteen billion U.S. Dollar (Mango 2003, 40). However, foreign investors were largely uninterested in involvement due to the lingering instability of the country, and the IMF and World Bank insisted on political reform before helping, which the Lebanese government failed to consent to (Mango 2003, 40; Ragab 2011, 109). Therefore, Beirut's reconstruction could impossibly be financed by the government. In order to circumvent this issue, the reconstruction of Beirut was to be executed by one company, namely, *la Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth* (Henceforth referred to as Solidere) (Mango 2003, 47-48). Solidere was founded on May 5th, 1994, following the visions of former prime-minister Rafiq Hariri, under the authority of the Council of Reconstruction and Development (CDR). To ensure Solidere was legally possible, multiple new legislations were issued, the most important of which is 'Law 117/91' which grants the possibility for Solidere to buy reconstruct 180 acres in exchange for shares in the company (Mango 2003, 49-55; Nagel 2002, 722; Ragab 2011, 109-10).

With the sole-right to reconstruct downtown Beirut, Solidere's aim was to return the city's cosmopolitan identity, that is, pre-war Beirut (Nagel 2002, 722-23). Moreover, Solidere, quite enthusiastically, aims to reconstruct the authentic public spaces in Beirut and, in supermodern tradition, prominently display ancient monuments from, for instance, the Phoenician and Levantine eras (ibid.). Solidere, as a real-estate company, is a unique case not only due to their remarkable interest and investment in the archaeology of the city but also because of their decisiveness in the matter. Caroline Sandes (2009, 102) concluded in that "...the political and social issues surrounding the archaeology and the conservation, Solidere's and the government's roles, and the whole urban context of Beirut, are extremely complicated, very sensitive and a situation that is in a perpetual state of flux. In that sense it represents the socio-political situation throughout much of the Middle East today."

Besides this rather subjective representation of history, Solidere also launched a large-scale campaign of 'cleaning up' the city (Makdisi 1997, 667). Makdisi explains how certain remaining buildings from the war are destroyed to make way for a modern process of rebuilding (ibid. 667-69). One can consider this process as Solidere laying claim to Lefebvre's right to the city (Harvey 2008, 1-2). However, as we have established in the theoretical framework, such top-down driven urban planning has certain consequences on the urban population. Namely, as Szpocisnki (2016, 248-249) claims, urban space requires a sense of ascribed identity through memory that has 'should have something to say' about its citizens. In other words, from the citizen's point of view, the ability by the state, or in this case Solidere, to accurately design and represent the cityscape in an inclusive, rather than an exclusive manner largely defines its legitimacy amongst citizens (Meyer in Young 2010, 176). Moreover, Solidere's focus on the ancient heritage was aimed in order to legitimize their authority as well as a tool for being identified with preserving Lebanese culture (Nagel 2002, 723-24). However, the critique on Solidere's focus on the *ancient* lies in the idea that Solidere aims to deny or bury the country's more recent violent past.

"The construction and reconstruction effort has aspired ... to reinterpret Lebanon's tumultuous past and to create a new collective memory for the nation"
(Tarek Saad Ragab 2011, 107).

This reinterpretation of Lebanon's past by Solidere holds a central ideology where Solidere saw its mission as providing "... a therapeutic role by founding the city on a sort of salvation-like amnesia that would protect it from the old ghosts which caused its destruction" (Haugbolle 2010, 86 in Nagle 2017, 158). It appears as if both the state and the private sector,

most prominently Solidere, fail to address openly the memories which vivid amongst Beirut citizens (Nagel 2002, 723). The contestation of memory shows a process of the private sector, in accordance with the state, and its citizens both competing for the hegemony of discourse and interpretative patterns (Meyer in Young 2010, 176). As such, the legitimacy of the state and Solidere is largely defined by its ability to address the past in a manner that is compliant with the citizen's call for collective memory representation. Furthermore, since memory can be considered a cause of citizenship being contested, one can understand how Solidere, in its efforts to reinterpret and reconstruct a new collective memory, challenges, and perhaps undermines, the legitimacy of Beirut citizens' identity in the process of Beirut's urban reconstruction.

1.3: Modern Beirut: Resilient and Contested

Efforts of memory reconstruction are undeniably intertwined with memory contestation since the struggle for Beirut’s legacy of the past is a necessary part of peacebuilding. This means that, for instance, the city centre represents a “...battlefield in the long-running struggle over national identity and sectarian inequality in Lebanon” (Nagel 2002, 719). Throughout this struggle, Solidere was accused by activists and protestors of robbing the people of downtown Beirut by increasing the commercial aspects of this district, which in turn, side-lined the working-class markets that characterized the city centre before the civil war (Daily Star 2015 in Nagle 2017, 165). “We want to reclaim Downtown Beirut for the people ... the markets are coming back” was chanted by social movement activists (ibid.). The wider opposition of Solidere appears to manifest itself predominantly in grassroots activist movements aiming to preserve, narrate and display parts of Beirut’s heritage which Solidere appears to overlook. One major example of the wider opposition of Solidere ‘new collective memory’ is the narrative surrounding the Barakat building (ibid. 161-63). This building, once a militia sniper stronghold which is positioned directly on the former green line, is a monument produced by the civil war.



Figure III: Spatari, M. 2019. *Violated Architecture. The stratified architecture of the Barakat Building, first war memory museum in Beirut, Lebanon.* Photograph, 1000×652 pixels. MichelleSpatari.com. Source: <https://www.michelespatari.com/violated-architecture/> (accessed Juni 13, 2019).

Initially, the structure was expropriated and scheduled for demolition by Solidere (Nagle 2018, 382). In 2003, activists have initiated a conservation campaign for this bullet riddled structure to be earmarked for becoming Lebanon’s first war museum (ibid.; Larkin 2010, 424).

More importantly, for Mona Hallak (in Larkin 2010, 424), the leading activist behind this campaign, The Barakat Building is not only a place for reconciliation, but also a space for memory as to not be subject to amnesia. Here we see how Solidere's narrative of 'a salvation-like amnesia' is not a commonly shared perception. Because when we understand memory as something that is constructed by and through a group that serves as a system for recalling, recognizing and ensuring the continuity of collective memory (Vromen 1975, 511), the question remains to whom this memory belongs and who constructs it? The issue in Lebanon, however, is that:

“Until today ... we do not have an official narrative of the civil war. Our school students still go and just learn that there was a war between 1975-1990, that's all. We don't do well at that subject” (Lisa* tour guide at Beït Beirut, tour attended by Author, February 27th, 2019).

As a result of this lack of historical hegemony, the country is still very divided on the narrative of what exactly occurred where, when and by whom. According to an assistant of the governor of Beirut, nobody addresses the memory in order to maintain the peace (interview with Alfred*, March 18th, 2019). Moreover, it is often said that: “...we are frightened of our history because we are not united in our understanding of it” (Fricke 2005, 170). Consequently, memory narratives in Beirut are passed down within the circles of one's family. Memory, as a collective property is, following Halbwachs' (1950, 51) second claim, never a resurrection of a 'pure' past.

The campaign for the Barakat Building's preservation is not the only one of its kind. The campaign, known as the Civil Campaign to Protect the Dalieh of Raouche (CCPDR), is representative of the conservation of public space which is targeted by Solidere (Nagle 2017, 163; Nagle 2018, 1383). The main goal of this campaign is the protection of the iconic public beachfront of the Dalieh of Raouche area along the western shores of Beirut (Nagle 2018, 1383). According to Nagle, the CCPDR consequently positions itself as a right to the city movement (2017, 165). These two campaigns narrate an opposing sentiment against the practices and goals of Solidere. As a result, a dual narrative emerges between Solidere and its opposition regarding the reconstruction of post-war urban Beirut.

However, “Acts of war generate acts of narration, and every narration needs to be named” (Hermez 2017, 22). As such, the current literature mainly focuses on the narrative of the criticizing side of Solidere. In the sense that “... every narration needs to be named” one should take note of positivist view as well. Some scholars claim that in a post-war city such as

Beirut, lasting peace is largely dependent on modern capitalism economic development in order to generate a rapid restoration of free market institutions (Keen 2005; Hughes 2015, 912 in Nagle 2017, 150). In this regard, one can understand how a private company such as Solidere, in the context of post-war Beirut, was ‘necessary’ in order to restore economic stability and prosperity in the city.

“Destruction was the opportunity for creation. Societies had to be rebuilt, and there were lots of reasons to try to build them such that they would have the promise of a better future. Plans for reconstruction, in short, revealed dreams of a better society” (Barnett 2011, 122).

Still, the main problem lies in the politics of difference and the interpretation of what a ‘better society’ means. As Hermez (2017, 22) states, there is still a large sentiment of unresolved past political violence which is still not being addressed in contemporary Beirut. Beirut’s society seems to prefer more ambiguous modes of remembrance according to Craig Larkin (2010, 425),



Figure IV: Hehenkamp, Mees, *Martyrs Statue*, Photograph Taken by Author, 1741×3648 pixels.

such as the bullet-riddled Martyrs Memorial statue in the city’s central Martyrs Square (See figure IV).

“...The disfigured sculpture, originally a memorial to those killed in the struggle for Independence from Ottoman rule, now has become an unintentional national emblem, capturing both the shared suffering of conflict and yet the resilience and endurance endemic to the Lebanese spirit. As one student explains, its significance lies in its inclusive ambiguity, which enables ‘everyone to imagine their own story’ and allows for multiple interpretations of the war...” (Larkin 2010, 425).

Solidere’s attempt to construct a ‘new collective memory’ (Tarek Saad Ragab 2011, 107) is a practice which can be identified as political memory-work (Sprenkels 2011, 18). “Political memory work thus consists of selective and sometimes manipulative use of history to build contemporary claims by activating political identities

consonant with the historical frame referred to” (ibid.). Understanding the example of Martyrs Square, one can see how such memory-work is subject to contestation due to ambiguous imaginations of personal memory. We argue that, as a result, the dual narrative between Solidere and the opposing factions illustrate a contemporary ongoing controversy in the reconstruction process of post-war Beirut. In a broader sense, it would appear from the literature that a societal division has developed regarding the issue of memory in Beirut. On the one hand, there are those that prefer Solidere’s policy of amnesia, the active forgetting of that which had happened during the war in order to reconstruct and re-establish the pre-war Beirut to its former glory. On the other, there are those that oppose Solidere’s practices of memory and amnesia and, either actively or passively, engage in memory-work towards generating an integrated ‘war memory’ within the city. What follows are two empirical chapters illustrating this dual narrative surrounding the reconstruction. In chapter three, Bob will explain through the eyes of Solidere and its proponents the line of argumentation surrounding the current practices of reconstruction and the rationale following the mentioned critique. In chapter four, Mees will narrate the stories of all the Davids in this heinous battle against Goliath regarding the practices surrounding the reconstruction process of Beirut.

Chapter Three: A discourse analysis on Solidere and its proponents' narrative of Beirut's post-war reconstruction process.

Bob Rehorst

In order to deeper understand Solidere and the narrative surrounding its support, it is important to take a closer look at what happened after the establishment of the company. When the reconstruction process was being implemented, there is one thing that everybody in Beirut can agree upon: nor the government, nor the municipality possessed the capacity to take on the entire reconstruction process. The exact demarcation of Solidere's BCD was determined in Decree 5714-2001, which illustrated the demarcation seen in Figure five below.

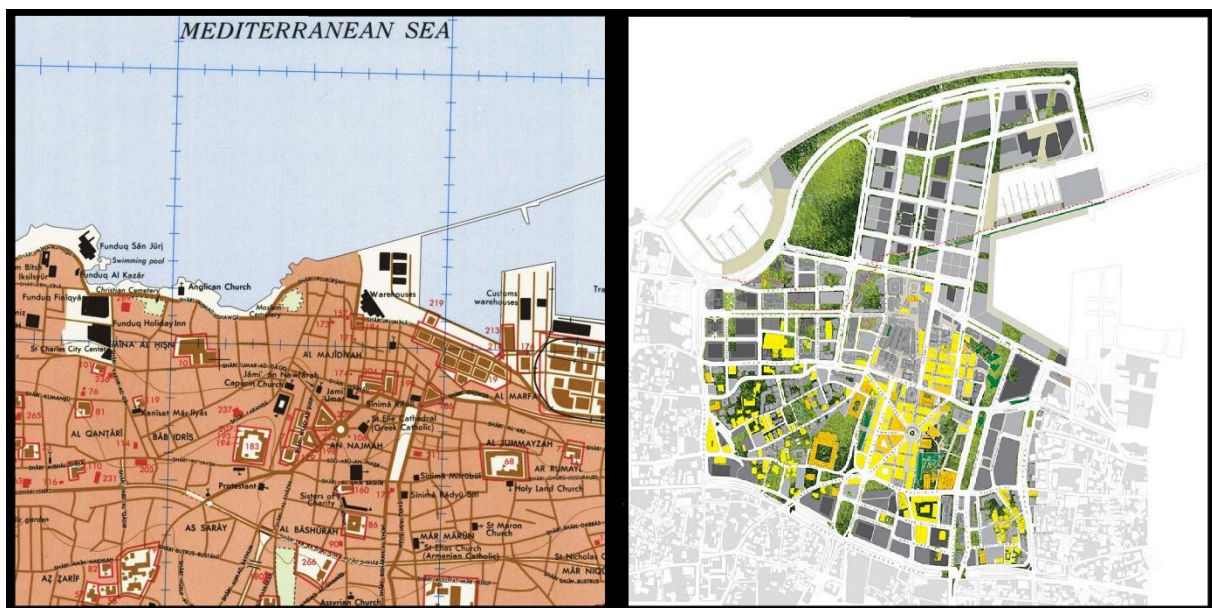


Figure V: *On the Left:* Extract from: Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic/Topographic Center, Washington, D.C., *Lebanon City Graphic*, 1978, 1363×1363 pixels. United Nations Library.

On the Right: Charbel Maskineh and Nicola Santini, “Beirut Central District”: *Reconstruction as Development*, September 22nd, 2014. Online article, 1000×749 pixels. Area News Agency. Source: <https://www.area-arch.it/en/beirut-central-district-reconstruction-as-development/> (accessed June 6, 2019).

According to the decree, the demarcations on the Eastern, Southern and Western edges of the masterplan are marked by street names. The Northern limit, however, ambiguously states as a boundary: ‘the sea’, which allows for a more flexible interpretation of the limits. Evidence of which is shown in the creation of an entire new northern district of reclaimed land which

goes by the name 'Beirut's New Waterfront District' (Ministry of Public Works & Transportation General Directorate of Urbanism, 2001). It would appear that for Solidere, a pattern emerges of 'walking the line' in the ambiguity of written legalities. Moreover, figure V also illustrates a change in urban planning as the new masterplan offers a structured form of urban planning in a city where there is hardly any master planning to be found.

During the first stages of the reconstruction in the early 1990s, there were two major challenges that Solidere faced. Firstly, the already large-scale destroyed city forced Solidere to destroy crumbled buildings which unearthed much of the city's heritage in archaeology. Finding such archaeology amid a large-scale reconstruction process being imminent, resulted in heated controversy surrounding said project. The second the original property owners and the increasing influx of squatters within the buildings of the demarcated lines of BCD. The former is elaborated upon in section 3.1 where archaeological discourses are explained as an illustration of the struggle over properly representing the past; as a struggle for the right to the city. In section 3.2, the 'challenge of property' is narrated through the legally ambiguous practices of Solidere as a challenge to Osler and Starkey's (2005) conceptualisation of citizenship. Then, I will move on to the challenges that Solidere faces in contemporary Beirut, where section 3.3 and 3.4 will discuss Historical BCD and the Souks as memory-places. These examples will be narrated in order to explore how variation in Beirut's memory-narratives are ascribed differently to memory-places and result in divisions in urban identities. Section 3.5 is an argument often posed by Solidere describing its progress. I will show how historic BCD is an example of the essence of modernity, that is the past interwoven with the present (Augé 2008, 89). Finally, as a conclusion in section 3.6, I will argue how the tendency to scapegoat Solidere, as explained throughout this chapter, can be considered a form of displaced aggression.

3.1: Solidere and the initial challenge of archaeology:

The rapid bulldozer approach of Solidere to remove the ruins and make way for the reconstruction process in the historic core of the city, resulted in a much-heated debate regarding the fate of the ancient archaeology that lied below. Beirut, being a city-state since the Phoenician and Levantine eras. The debate was on how to handle such far-reaching historical artefacts whilst under pressure to rapidly rebuild. Solidere's unique character is, as a result, not merely that of a real-estate developer on an unprecedented magnitude, but also that of an entity taking responsibility over the dynamic aspects of the project such as the issue of Beirut's heritage and collective memory. In finding such archaeology, the heated controversy lied within the question 'what should and can be preserved?' In an interview with Laure Salloum, a senior archaeologist working for the DGA, I asked this question. Her response entailed that it is the responsibility of archaeologist to aim, and even fight, to preserve everything that is found (Interview with Laure Salloum, March 13th, 2019).

However, one should recognize the magnitude of the archaeological excavations within BCD and understand that, in order to find, document, preserve and excavate all the archaeology found, choices need to be made. Shortly after the civil war had ended, there was a certain time pressure, calling for rapid reconstruction. As such, in accordance with what Karen Till (2012, 6) calls a wounded city, the struggle for the right to the city was reignited as reconstruction was imminent. In Solidere's approach towards claiming their right to the city, they included memory-work in their development plans. In doing so, Solidere hired Dutch archaeologist Hans Curvers for consultancy on the excavations. Hans Curvers would manage the excavations, evaluate the findings, and give an estimate of the time delay necessary to conduct archaeological excavations before developments could commence. His challenge was to make difficult decisions in preservation and archaeological incorporation within the new urban landscape, abiding by Solidere's masterplan for BCD:

“... links between ‘traditional BCD’ and reclaimed land; preservation of the historic core of the city between the Serail and Bourj Square; a new financial district mixed with entertainment and shopping facilities on the reclaimed land; reconstruction of the old souks; extension of the residential area to re-create the old distinctive ‘Levantine cityscape.’” (Solidere 1993 in Khalaf 2013).

Habib Battah, a Lebanese American journalist and activist, expressed his scepticism towards the decision-making process surrounding Beirut's archaeological heritage and named

Hans Curvers. Battah claimed in an interview “...there is a minimum of 200 excavations, which is an achievement. So, what we have is six or seven sites left. Seven out of 200, that is not an achievement, that is a crime...” (Interview with Habib Battah, February 21st, 2019). Even though this claim is perhaps not far from the truth, Battah’s interpretation of sheer numbers is one of ignorance according to Hans Curvers (Interview with Hans Curvers, May 16th, 2019). Practically, Curvers explains how his team had to walk a thin line between satisfactory working within accepted time boundaries and completing the archaeology for actual reconstruction to commence, which resulted in them ‘preserving what is worth preserving’ (ibid.) The product of this shared effort of Solidere, the DGA, and academia including Curvers’s team coming from numerous origins is the Beirut Heritage Trail (BHT):

“The Beirut Heritage Trail, a project by Solidere in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture - Directorate General of Antiquities and the Municipality of Beirut, links archaeological sites, historic public spaces and heritage buildings over a 2.5 km walking circuit in the historic core of the Beirut city centre. Celebrating the multi-layers of Beirut’s rich heritage, the Beirut Heritage Trail reveals the story of 5,000 years of history and takes the visitor through a historic journey of the key sites and monuments. Having restored 300 buildings within the city centre, the Beirut Heritage Trail uses historic maps, photographs and drawings to tell the story of Beirut’s past and present in Arabic, English and French.” (Solidere, Accessed on May 29th, 2019)

Thus, the largest fault within the critique on the archaeological decision-making process, is either one of unrealistic expectations or one of ignorance. The former being the DGA demanding complete and comprehensive archaeological preservation within an unrealistic timeframe. The latter, Battah’s critique on sheer numbers, is derived from a lack of understanding of the details surrounding the field of archaeology. Nevertheless, we see a manifestation of the struggle for the right to the city as we understand it as the right to represent the past (Till 2012, 8) since a sense of identity is partially constructed through the representation of memory, of which archaeology is logically a major component.

The question that remains now is if Solidere can be blamed for the decisions made, or is it simply an entity making the best out of a bad situation? The next topics to be discussed will highlight this question within the context of the aforementioned challenge of squatters and original property owners in downtown, as well as other more contemporary challenges.

3.2: Solidere and the Challenge of Property:

“Located at the historical and geographical core of the city, the vibrant financial, commercial and administrative hub of the country, the Beirut Central District came under fire from all sides throughout most of the sixteen years of fighting. At the end of the war, that area of the city was afflicted with overwhelming destruction, total devastation of the infrastructure, the presence of squatters in several areas, and extreme fragmentation and entanglement of property rights involving owners, tenants and leaseholders (Solidere Information Booklet in Makdisi 1997, 675).

The issue of squatters and property owners is, as mentioned previously, the second major challenge for the implementation of Solidere’s master plan for reconstruction. The identification that Solidere favours, in this regard, is one of a ‘healing agency’ for the recovery of Beirut’s afflictions in its post-war state (Makdisi 1997, 675). Evidently, there are two parts of this story, namely, the story of the illegal squatters and the story of the legal property owners. In my field research, Solidere had little comment on the challenge of the illegal squatters and therefore, it is not my place to include it in a discourse analysis chapter. However, their narrative will be elaborated upon in chapter four.

After the demolition of about 80% of the damaged buildings in BCD, and the issue that arose with the unearthing of much archaeology, Solidere faced a new challenge. The previous property owners and former tenants were expropriated and their property rights, land deeds and claims were given to Solidere. This resulted in a controversial debate surrounding BCD’s reconstruction. The first challenge that surrounds this debate is that of the constitutional right to ownership. Article 15 of the Lebanese constitution states:

“Rights of ownership shall be protected by law. No one's property may be expropriated except for reasons of public utility, in the cases established by law and after fair compensation has been paid beforehand.” (Lebanese Constitution, 1926)

Due to the implementation of the government decree, which allows Solidere the sole-right to reconstruct BCD, the company is legally backed in their expropriation practices ‘for reasons of public utility’. However, the ambiguity that can be considered to have initiated the controversy is the notion that a ‘fair compensation’ should have been paid beforehand. Considering this controversy, I was left with two questions: (1) Why would Solidere expropriate the properties

instead of a system of collaboration between the owners and the company? And (2) how was this ‘fair compensation’ determined and executed? Collaboration with the property owners proved to be a major initial challenge because properties in Lebanon are still divided in accordance with the old Ottoman system of 2,400 shares (ashum), of which each family member receives an allotted portion. Properties cannot be sold or modified without the consent of all family members (Egar & Tabar 2016, 8). With some properties being hundreds of years old, some buildings can have over one hundred family members holding shares in the property. Moreover, given the large number of Lebanese missing since the civil war, the result is an impossible discussion without much effective result over competing claims on the property’s destination. To solve this issue, mr. Jamal Itani, the current mayor of Beirut, claimed in an interview that there was but one solution: “...so we decided... because there are many owners for every plot. The only solution is to create such a company. And this company will take over all the plots in return for shares with the company. So Solidere brought in everybody as a partner” (Interview with Jamal Itani, March 19th, 2019).

Itani was previously appointed by the late PM as head of the CDR and later became the General Manager of Solidere, showing that he has been part of the reconstruction process from the very beginning. In this interview he partially answered the second posed question regarding the determination and implementation of the ‘fair compensation’. The property owners were given shares in the company in return for their plots. I interviewed mr. Itani in his office in the Municipality where I inquired about this compensation and the perception of it. His answer to the question whether the compensation was a fair one was as follows:

“Frankly, if the share value and the situation in Lebanon now, was good, the share value came up at one time to 40\$, then yes it’s fair. But now the share value of 6\$ then yes, it’s not fair of course. But you cannot compare it like this. You must think of Lebanon, of Beirut. You cannot think of Jamal Itani as an owner of shares, not just yourself. That was Hariri’s strategy and I think if he hadn’t done that, we wouldn’t be sitting here today.” (Interview with Jamal Itani, March 19th, 2019)

The idea behind the compensation structure was one of a collective frame of mind, all participants collaborating for the greater good, or, in constitutional terms, for public utility. Solidere’s narrative surrounding this matter, usually has the tendency to blame the economic situation of Lebanon for its decline in share value. In the next section, we will re-visit contemporary Beirut and the challenge that surrounds the return of the people to BCD. The

economy might be to blame but there is more to be considered in order to understand BCD as it is.

The challenge of property symbolizes what normally would be the state's responsibility to protect its citizens' formal status (Osler and Starkey 2005, 10-16) in relation to the constitutional right of ownership. However, due to fact that Solidere was legally given the right to BCD by government decree, a dual narrative emerges because their authority is not recognized by a large group of citizens due to Solidere's tendency to navigate legal ambiguities. In chapter four, the consequence of this lack of recognition by the citizens will be elaborated upon. To summarize this paragraph, we have established that there was, in fact, a major challenge surrounding the existing people within BCD *before* the reconstruction, namely the original property owners. However, understanding the issue of Ottoman inheritance, legal ambiguity and the country being at an economic low-point, one should consider whether Solidere can be blamed for such controversies surrounding the reconstruction process. Next, we will consider the challenges surrounding the people in BCD *after* the reconstruction.

3.3: Solidere and the challenge of the people

“It’s a ghost town man!”

“*Centre Vile* is the centre of absolutely nothing!”

“Nobody goes to downtown, there is nothing for us there”

These sentiments were often expressed by the Lebanese upon addressing the area of contemporary BCD. These sentiments also coincide with my personal first impression of Downtown Beirut during my initial visit there. The first thing I noticed upon entering the BCD area was the idea that I had to cross a major highway in order to enter the area.



Figure VI: Charbel Maskineh and Nicola Santini, “Beirut Central District”: Reconstruction as Development, September 22nd, 2014. Online article, 1000×749 pixels. Area News Agency. Source: <https://www.area-arch.it/en/beirut-central-district-reconstruction-as-development/> (accessed June 6, 2019).

I arrived at BCD coming from the East, meaning I had to cross Martyrs' Square and past the enormous Mohamad Al-Amin Mosque on the other side of the road. One can see in the figure VI how BCD has been isolated from the city by broader roads than the rest of the city. Upon crossing the El-Shouhada road which separated Martyrs' Square from the mosque and the rest of BCD, I entered the historic quarter of Beirut. Passing the Dunkin' Donuts on the roadside, I entered a small street which appeared empty. A restaurant on the corner of the tiny street was, in fact, entirely deserted with the placemats on the dining tables covered in dust.

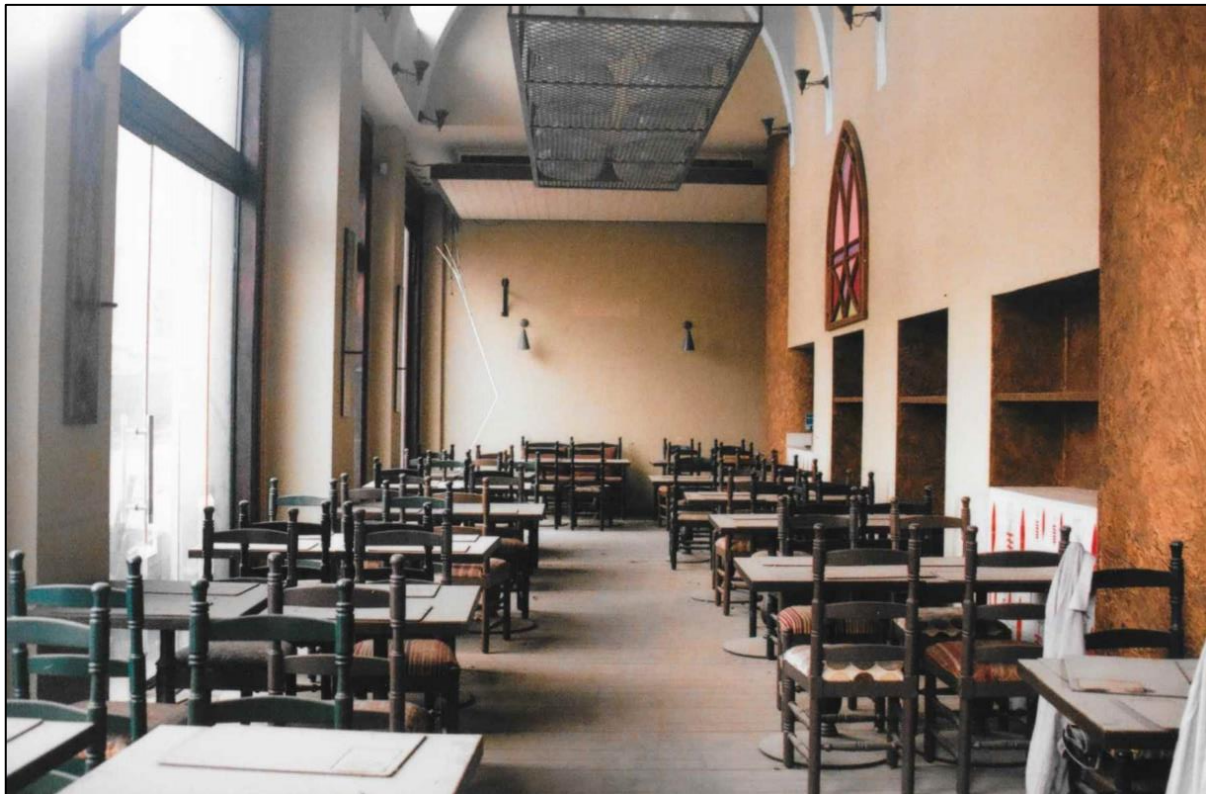


Figure VII: Rehorst, Bob, *Deserted Restaurant on the edge of the Historic Quarter of BCD*, Photograph Taken by Author, 1769 × 1164 pixels.

Facing this restaurant, one could find an enormous archaeological site facing the Mosque and the Saint Georges Maronite Cathedral. This archaeological site reveals excavations from Ottoman, Byzantine, Roman and Phoenico-Persian times and is known as 'The Garden of Forgiveness'. The area was classified as *non aedificandi* (not to be built) in the Master Plan of Solidere. The garden was envisioned as a place for contemplation and calm reflection (Information Panel: Garden of Forgiveness, Solidere, Beirut Heritage Trail, Beirut, May 27th, 2019).



Figure VIII: Information Panel: Garden of Forgiveness, Solidere, Beirut Heritage Trail, Beirut, May 27th, 2019; Panel: Garden of Forgiveness



Figure IX: Rehorst, Bob, *Garden of Forgiveness*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184 × 3456 pixels.

Deserted restaurants, empty streets and a nearly abandoned archaeological site leaves one to beg the question, what happened here? The entire historic quarter of BCD appears deserted, or perhaps never even inhabited, “where are all the people?” I ask myself.

In an interview with Jamal Itani, we discussed the issue of the evident absence of people in BCD. His recollection of the city centre just after reconstruction was completed, was vastly different from the current situation. Upon discussing his recollection of the historic quarter of BCD, he said:

“...and that area had all the cultural shops, the café’s and the restaurants. And it used to be packed. So, I can’t say we failed. It was at a certain point in time when Rafiq Hariri was still there. As a president of CDR, I would go and have lunch in downtown, but I could barely find a chair to sit on. So, it’s not related that Solidere has failed to attract the people, but it’s related to the situation...”
(Interview with Jamal Itani, March 19th, 2019).

The political situation that Itani is referring to, is a loose description of the sequence of events that occurred after the assassination of former PM Rafiq Hariri February 14th, 2005. Hariri was killed in a bomb attack on his motorcade in Beirut, killing him and nine other people (The Guardian, February 14th, 2005). Two days later, tens of thousands of supporters carried his coffin from his residence to his final resting place in central Beirut, right next to the Al-Amin Mosque on Martyrs square. Hariri, being killed in the heart of the city that he is largely accredited with rebuilding, has since acquired the widespread status of a ‘mythical martyr’ (Vloeberghs 2012, 86). The brutal manner in which he was assassinated combined with the strategic location of his tomb. That is, next to the square that has already been established as a place where martyrs are remembered, is but an explanation of how he is still commonly referred to; *ar-ra’is ash-shahid* (the martyr president) (Ibid.). Initially, in the first couple of months after his death, people from all religious and political backgrounds would visit his tomb as a period of mourning was the common practice.

However, not long thereafter the political situation in the country polarized under the force of having to choose between a division of the ‘March 8’ and ‘March 14’ movements. March 8, identifying themselves as a pro-Syrian party gained support in their rhetoric of thanking Syria for their help in ending the Lebanese Civil War. However, due to the contested circumstances behind Hariri’s death and the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, a large anti-Syrian faction of March 14 gained support and accused Syria being behind the attack. With the March 14 alliance being dominant in the government, in early 2006 the March 8 alliance

launched a protest on Martyrs' Square which lasted for two years. This protest group, commonly referred to as the 'sit-in', was made up out of the FPM and the Shi'a parties of Hezbollah and Amal.

Having just fought off the Israeli invasion in 2006, Hezbollah had gained more and more support in their increasing political goals and became a key political actor in Lebanon (UCDP, 2019). More often than not, the March protests are referred to not by the accepted term, but as the 'Hezbollah sit-in'. With this protest happening right after the Israeli war in early 2006, one can understand how security measures were tight during this time in Beirut's more recent history. Within the old historic quarter of Beirut, which is adjacent to Martyrs' Square, the Lebanese parliament building resides as well, which is located on Nijhmeh Square. Having parliament so close to the protest area of Martyrs' Square, security measures had to be taken. The result of which was described in an interview I conducted with an architect from Solidere:

“... and then we had the Israeli war, followed by the Hezbollah sit-in. Which meant that suddenly most of that BCD area was barricaded, you know, you had to go through an army checkpoint, then you go to parliament police checkpoints, then you had to go through Hezbollah checkpoints to get to a shop... or for a coffee. So, you know, to hell with that.” (Interview with Julia*, Solidere, March 5th 2019).

Julia describes a situation in which the recently reconstructed and rather popular historic quarter of Beirut had a triad of checkpoints barring its access. It is rather understandable that she expresses a sentiment in which she simply cannot be bothered to go through all that trouble just to access a shopping area, especially since shopping can be done in other parts of Beirut as well. This lasted for two years, which makes it also understandable that shops and restaurants received increasingly less clientele and eventually resulted in bankruptcy and forced closures. Those that survived were to suffer another fate a few years later.

In 2015, during a power vacuum in Lebanon, Beirut's citizens faced the issue that is now referred to as the 'garbage crisis'. As the city's major landfill was shut down, the streets flooded with garbage during the hottest time of the year. The solutions provided by the acting government were minimal, which resulted in another protest taking place in Martyrs' Square spearheaded by the 'You Stink' movement. Beirut's citizens took to the streets protesting the government's failure in addressing the issue. Once again, security measures were taken, and the historic quarter of BCD was shut down and controlled through various checkpoints.

Such checkpoints time after time creates a sense of inaccessibility in the hearts and

minds of the city's inhabitants. Why would one bother to commence going to downtown if it is almost certain to be shut down once again? Instead, most citizens prefer going to one of the many other commercial hubs in Beirut such as Achrafieh or Gemayze in the East, Hamra in the West and Badaro in the south. In historic BCD, what is left today is the memory of a once vibrant cosmopolitan city centre that has suffered a series of unfortunate events which has left the reconstructed city deserted. Haunted by the ghosts of its tumultuous past, BCD is empty. This is an unfortunate but absolute fact, which all involved parties can agree upon.

“I can say that with comfort... we failed to re-attract the downtown area.” –
Interview with Jamal Itani, March 19th, 2019.

As a final note, the fact that all of the protests and movements were situated in Martyrs Square, one can understand how such a place can be described as a *lieu de mémoire*. As we understand from Nora (1989, 19), such a site holds a timeless character of ascribed meaning being constantly recycled and reinvented by those who deem it 'theirs'. In this case, it was originally the Ottoman's who created it and the French ascribing a meaning of political resistance to it. Later it became a memorial to the civil war and now it is still a key location for political resistance. However, in post-war Beirut, it has been ascribed to the March 8 movement, the 'You Stink' movement, and has become a symbol of inclusive ambiguity (Larkin 2010, 425). However, Larkin's optimistic description of ambiguity symbolizes the politics of difference (Hermez 2017, 22) as result of the widely accepted practice not to address the past. When we understand that memory is a central medium through identities are constructed (Olick & Robbins 1998, 133), we can understand how such varying memory ascription results in the divisions of urban identities among Beirut's citizens. The goal of unifying Beirut's citizens, that is, the 'challenge of the people' is one that so far has failed in the historic downtown area. However, Solidere, in their narrative, is a victim of the eventful political past just as much as any other. Yet, as mentioned in the contextual introduction, the literature surrounding it rather easily scapegoats the company. In the next paragraph, I will go into more detail about the other significant site in BCD which has been developed by Solidere as an answer to the 'challenge of the people', namely, the Beirut Souks.

3.4: Beirut Souks: A Case Study

It's a warm afternoon in mid-March, and Mr. Omar, being of Lebanese upbringing, is almost leaving Beirut for Montreal after spending the winter here like he does every year. After his lunch he enters the Beirut Souks through the reconstructed section of the historical the Souk Ayyas. Going up the escalator from Al Lenbi street next to the Starbucks, there is a small square between the long gray and glass hallways with some aspects of traditional stone architecture embedded in the post-modern design that are now the Beirut Souks. Wearing a black suit with a white shirt, Mr. Omar enters the Souk, the sound of the Al-Antabli fountain gushes in the air and he walks up to a juice-shop named like the fountain. With a smile, he is greeted by his old friend, Achmad Al-Antabli, who shakes his hand and gladly takes his order.



Figure X: Rehorst, Bob, *Al-Antabli Fountain*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184 × 3456 pixels.

Mr. Omar:	<i>Marhaba</i>	(Hello)
Achmad:	<i>Ya hala</i>	(Welcome)
Mr. Omar:	<i>Kifak habibi</i>	(How are you dear?)
Achmad:	<i>Lhamdellah meshe l hal</i>	(all is good, thank god)
Mr. Omar:	Habibi bade aazbak wa7de lemonada allah yerda aaleik (may I “trouble you” with one lemonade may god be satisfied with you)	
Achmad:	<i>Tabaan yalla</i>	(Ofcourse, just a minute)

As they shake hands, Mr. Omar introduces me to Achmad. While Mr. Omar orders a minted lemonade for me as well, Achmad proudly tells me how this Souk Ayyas is now named Souk al-Antabli. "...you see, in the old Souks, this fountain was our counter, and we used to cool our drinks in the water, my shop is history and people like it." I take a sip of my drink and ask him how it is possible that he is only one of two shops in the entire downtown area that returned after the destruction of the civil war. "...for us it was very easy to come back. We came back welcomed because Hariri wanted us to come back, some others were invited to come back as well, but I think they didn't agree with Solidere." He finishes by explaining: "... you see, Solidere tries to revive this place after the coma, it takes time.



Figure XI: Rehorst, Bob, *Mr. Al Antabli on the left, in front of Al-Antabli Juice Bar*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184 × 3456 pixels.

Originally the Souks were an essential economic nerve of the city, as well as part of the collective memory of Beirut which resurfaced at the end of the civil war (Haddad, 2004, 151). The Souks were spared most of the devastation of the war but were demolished between 1982 and 1992 to make way for the reconstruction plans which aimed for a new urban vision to project a new city, cleansed of all its previous impurities (ibid., 151-152). Now Solidere describes the completed souks as:

“Beirut Souks crystallize Solidere’s vision of Beirut city centre as a complete, synergic. This signature shopping, hospitality, entertainment and cultural meeting place enhances the economic vitality and social vibrancy of the central district.” (Solidere.com, Beirut Souks, accessed on June 6th, 2019).

The idea of reconstructing the Souks, according to an interview with Dr. Elie Haddad, Dean of Architecture at the Lebanese American University, was a conscious choice in order to undo the city once and for all of the old economic mode, replacing it with a modern economic model to be easier accessible to an international audience (Interview with Dr. Elie Haddad, February 5th, 2019). Yet, in order to address this sense of collective memory and nostalgia, Solidere aimed to invite the old shopkeepers from the historic Souks back to open their stores once again in the modern Souks. However, as Mr. Antabli already mentioned, within the Souks he is the only one of the old shopkeepers who had returned. The reason to the question of why he is the only one, is difficult to receive a homogeneous answer to. Some argue that too much time had passed during the war and people moved on to different locations and occupations, and some say it is out of grudge towards Hariri. Most commonly, the answer includes also a notion of lacking financial resources since the idea was for the shopkeepers to contribute to restoring their plot within the Souks. Now, the Beirut Souks are considered to resemble more a shopping mall rather than the traditional Arabic souks like the one found in Tripoli. This comparison, as illustrated in figure XII below, is one that is often drawn to describe the bustling business of Beirut’s Souks in the pre-war context.



Figure XII: *On the Left: Rehorst, Bob, Tripoli Souks, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184 × 3456 pixels.*

On the Right: Rehorst, Bob, Beirut Souks, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184 × 3456 pixels.

Here we see an example of how a sense of nostalgia is present in the minds of Beirut’s citizens. The Souks were formerly known as the commercial centre of Beirut, accessible to all its inhabitants. However, the current Souks are widely perceived to be elitist and unaffordable. For this reason, in accordance with the aforementioned series of unfortunate events, many

ceased to visit the Beirut Souks. Understanding the context provided in this chapter, one must ask the question if the failure of re-attracting the BCD area is a failure that can be purely ascribed to Solidere, or is there a deeper embedded reason within Beirut's society?

In the previous section, I have established how Martyr's Square is an example of how *lieu de mémoire*, where the politics of difference embedded through varying memory ascriptions construct multiple urban identities. Following Olick and Robbins (1998, 133), we know that memory is a primary medium through which identities are constructed. Considering the fact that the varying collective memories carry traumatic events in Beirut, the difference in urban identities through such memory results in Beirut's citizens actively avoiding the 'other'. One of my participants claimed "...people do not want to mingle" (Interview with Chadi, February 19th, 2019), which exemplifies a possible deeper reason behind the failure of re-attracting Beirutis to the Souks, and per extension, BCD. Moreover, as already hinted towards throughout this section, there is a sense of nostalgic remembrance ascribed to the Beirut Souks. This pursuit of a 'vanished world of yesterday' (Hirsch & Spitzer 2002, 258) explains the commonly drawn comparison between the Beirut Souks and Tripoli's Souks where Beirut's citizens yearn for a past that no longer exists in the present. However, when we understand the destruction of the civil war, one should be sensitive to the fact that Solidere aimed to reconstruct Beirut following the ideology of modernity (Augé 2008, 89), that is, the past interwoven with the present. In the next section, I aim to illustrate the progress that Solidere has made in this regard, not just as a real-estate developer, but also as a prominent actor in the post-war reconstruction.

3.5: Historical BCD: A Modern Example

BCD was an area that was left in a nearly completely destroyed state after the civil war. Having experienced such destruction, according to Karel Till (2012, 6), the struggle for Beirut's right to the city was reignited after the war. In the post-war context, Lebanon's fragile state resulted in Solidere taking control over the imminent reconstruction process. The goal was to follow the essence of modernity as an ideology, that is, to interweave the past in the present (Augé 2008, 89) as an ambition for utopian urbanism (Pinder 2002, 231). In accordance with Pinder's critique, the influence of a big corporation such as Solidere raised controversies surrounding its claim to the right to the city. Nevertheless, reconstruction was necessary and Solidere was the only entity capable of executing it. Within historic BCD, Solidere made much progress in regard to reconstructing the old architectural landscape as illustrated in the figures below.



Figure XIII: Ayman Trawi, *Maarad Street (before and after)*, scanned photographs, 6240×2304 pixels in 'La Mémoire de Beyrouth' (68-69) December 8th, 2008, edited by Banque de la Méditerranée.

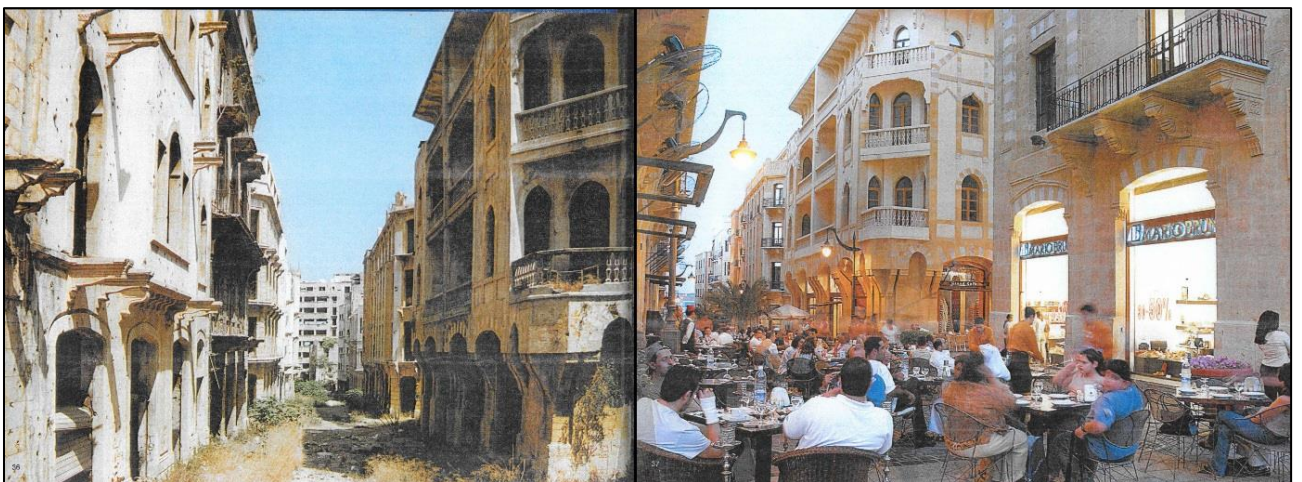


Figure XIV: Ayman Trawi, *Abdel Malak Street (before and after)*, scanned photographs, 6240×2304 pixels in 'La Mémoire de Beyrouth' (36-37) December 8th, 2008, edited by Banque de la Méditerranée



Figure XV: Ayman Trawi, *Moutran Street (before and after)*, scanned photographs, 6240×2304 pixels in ‘La Mémoire de Beyrouth’ (100-101) December 8th, 2008, edited by Banque de la Méditerranée.



Figure XVI: Ayman Trawi, *Nijmeh Square (before and after)*, scanned photographs, 6240×2304 pixels in ‘La Mémoire de Beyrouth’ (74-75) December 8th, 2008, edited by Banque de la Méditerranée.

These images show how a destroyed city, full of rubble and overgrown with shrubbery has been turned in a clean historic centre. Although there are obvious differences regarding the perception of the product of Beirut’s reconstruction, it can be said that Solidere’s BCD has “...set an example for a structured and orderly mode of urbanism for the rest of Beirut, and even Lebanon” (Interview with Almira Solh, former Head of Urban Planning at Solidere, March 24th, 2019). This example is illustrated in the sense that when one walks through any other neighbourhood in Beirut, one would find electricity cables dangling from building to building, bad plumbing, lack of walking space and terrible traffic. However, in BCD, such infrastructure has all been developed underground and there is plenty of space to walk. Moreover, the architecture has been restored to its pre-war state with some modern touches. In Solidere’s

narrative, regarding the reconstruction itself, here we see a perfect example of the past interwoven with the present. While the ‘challenge of the people’ is yet to be overcome, the reconstructed historic BCD is a great improvement. Almira Solh, former head of urban planning at Solidere states: “...the progress speaks for itself” (Interview with Almira Solh, March 24th, 2019).

3.6: Scapegoating Solidere; Displaced Aggression

This chapter has shown Solidere's narrative and how they have been subject to scapegoating in relation to the controversies surrounding the reconstruction process. To fully comprehend these controversies, one should consider the above-mentioned discourses regarding Solidere and its opposition.

Firstly, as has been explained in section 3.1, the 'challenge of archaeology', for Solidere, meant that difficult decisions were necessary in order to make progress. The fact that it was a private entity making the decisions and creating BHT, it can be considered that Solidere claimed the right to the city in executing their right to represent the past (Till 2012, 8). Such memory-work evoked much contestation because the collective memory belonged to all citizens of Beirut, as it is a prominent medium through which identities are constructed (Olick and Robbins 1998, 133). However, difficult decisions had to be made in order to rid the city of its devastation. If not for their effective decision-making process, according to Solidere it is very likely that archaeologists would still be squabbling over the preservation of the immense number of artefacts to be found.

Secondly, the 'challenge of the property' is one where Solidere was faced with another difficult situation regarding the property owners within the BCD area. The notion that a private entity, by government decree, challenges constitutional right of ownership as a representation of inhabitants' formal status (Osler and Starkey 2005, 10) as citizens, is received as a challenge to citizenship. However legally ambiguous, Solidere does operate within legal boundaries but the validity of the legal boundaries will be thrown into question in chapter four. Moreover, chapter four will elaborate on the entirety of Osler and Starkey's (2005) conceptualisation of citizenship within the context of Beirut's citizens. As mentioned, Solidere operated within the national context of instable economy, the issue of Ottoman inheritance and within a legal and pressurized timeframe. If not for Solidere, "... we would not be where we are today" (Interview with Jamal Itani, March 19th, 2019).

Thirdly, the 'challenge of the people' can be considered a result of a series of unfortunate events that transpired after reconstruction had already taken place. By this I mean the fact that BCD is more often than not plagued by empty streets cannot solely be blamed on Solidere due to the political instability and course of events that happened in Beirut after the assassination of former PM Hariri. The failure to re-attract historic BCD and the Beirut Souks can moreover be explained through the analysis of Beirut's competition for collective memory.

We have established how the politics of varying collective memories can lead to difference of identities ascribed to the city through multiple sites of memory. The urban landscape, as such, represents an ambiguous identity and its variety of memory ascription can be explained through the deeply embedded trauma's in Beirut society as well as nostalgia. The former is illustrated through the narrative that Beirut's inhabitants appear to actively avoid public space because they choose not to mingle with 'the other', that is, those who carry different memory narratives regarding the civil war. The latter is an analysis of the constant comparison drawn between Beirut today, and how it was before the war. However, the ambition of modernity by Solidere for Beirut called for an interweaving of the past into the present. Nostalgia, as we know from Hirsch and Spitzer (2002, 257-258), is an active practice of remembering which includes yearning for the past in the present. Yet, according to Halbwach's (1950, 51) second claim, such collective remembrance does not provide a realistic perception of the past. The result of which is that there is a tendency amongst citizens to glorify the memory of Beirut and, consequently, having unrealistic expectations for Solidere in their reconstruction efforts.

To conclude, in the fifth section, the actual progress of Solidere is illustrated to show how far the reconstruction efforts have come and how the end-result is narrated by Solidere as abiding by the ideology of modernity (Augé 2008). Moreover, what I have established throughout this chapter is the main arguments that are directed towards Solidere when it comes to criticising the reconstruction efforts of BCD. However, in understanding the deeply embedded discourses over representing memory, the right to the city and the divisions in citizenship and urban identities, it becomes apparent that Solidere is not entirely to blame. In Solidere's narrative, they are as much a victim of the tumultuous past and political sequence of events as the rest of the city. It is not Solidere who can be blamed for the failure to re-attract the downtown area and reuniting Beirut's citizens. The series of arguments and persistent aggression towards Solidere by its opposition can therefore be considered to be displaced.

Chapter Four: Through the Eyes of the People: ‘The Struggle over Beirut’s Interior’

Mees Hehenkamp.

“Solidere, for me, is worse than the civil war”

- Rosa, archaeologist (Interview, February 15th, 2019).

“It’s a jungle man, but a nice jungle to be in ... it is only when you’re no longer the strongest animal in that jungle that it stops being fun... that’s why I’m getting out.”

- Mason, tour guide (Interview, February 14th, 2019).

“We can see the sea but cannot reach it. Furthermore, it is also calling us to leave.”

- Potato Nose, artist (Interview, March 15th, 2019).

These three statements make one wonder if there isn’t more to the story told in chapter three. Because after a horrific, bloody civil war one would presume that literally everything would be an improvement thereafter. However, one should explore why, almost 30 years later, such a sizeable part of Beirut’s population is not the least bit satisfied with the reconstruction process made? This kind of sentiment regarding what has been achieved is widely shared and is therefore not something that can be dismissed as merely a lack of understanding or unrealistic expectations, as is implied in chapter three.

In order to comprehend the assertion that more is lost after the civil war, the chapter is structured into six sections with each its own line of argumentation and thereafter analysed through the theoretical lens as formulated in chapter one. The first two sections will take note of more personal accounts regarding the controversies illustrated in chapter three. More specifically, individual narratives will be elaborated upon regarding the controversies of archaeology and expropriation. Section three is an elaboration of the difference between promises made just after the war in relation to the reality as of today. Thereafter, in the fourth section I aim to show how, as a result, the arguments posed in the previous sections lead to a sense of alienation amongst the inhabitants of Beirut. In section five, the reaction of Beirut’s citizens towards these feelings of alienation will be illustrated. Finally, I will conclude how Solidere and the government failed to include its citizens in the new city.

4.1: Solidere; Beirut's Heritage: The Lost Legacy

The signing of the Ta'if Peace Accord which ushered in a period of reasonable stability. However, due to the fact that it was signed by the remaining members of the former parliament (Leenders 2012 1-2), one could question the legitimacy of the authorities behind this accord. Nonetheless, the accord was implemented in conjunction with the adopted amnesty law in 1991 (Chrabieh 2015, 204), earlier referred to as the policy of 'No Victor, No Vanquished' (Hermez 2017, 4-5). What would later be known as the 'policy of amnesia' has been in force ever since. As a result, every entity with any form of authority or decision-making ability implemented this policy in its execution of affairs. Hence, the in 1994 established company Solidere, is still assigned with the task of managing the reconstruction process of Beirut's Central District (BCD). The question that then arises: What are the social consequences when a real estate company implements this policy of amnesia in its guidelines for reconstructing BCD? Which brings us to 1994, the establishment of the company Solidere and one of its first hurdles, the challenge of archaeology.

In order to be able to commence the construction of BCD, the demarcated area first needed to be mapped by archaeologists. As more plots became available, the entire BCD area turned out to be an archaeological goldmine. The explanation that so little has been preserved, as is narrated in chapter three, is not refuted in general by the people I spoke to. Most concur that not everything can be preserved, especially because it is situated in BCD. The exception being the archaeologists themselves. However, what has not been discussed is which sites are worth preserving and in what manner they are maintained afterwards.

There are a lot of factors weighing in to determine if something is worth preserving or if it is not. But there is one in particular that was mentioned numerous times and that is the answer to the following question, 'is it in your personal interest?' Personal being an individual as well as an entity, like the private real estate company Solidere. In the case of BCD, it cannot be a surprise that the answer to that question is nine out of ten times 'no'. Would Solidere follow the conviction of Laure Salloum, the senior archaeologist working for the DGA that was mentioned in chapter three, there would be no BCD. However, the number six or seven out of two hundred archaeological sites preserved is where most people continue to stumble over. How can it be that so few archaeological sites are worth preserving? This is where the controversy surrounding the preservation of archaeological sites stems from. It is widely believed that Solidere in anyway has influenced or manipulated the archaeological data retrieved from these sites to ensure that it wouldn't be labelled as relevant to Beirut's history.

It must be noted that most of these stories come from archaeologists who worked for Solidere somewhere during the reconstruction process and, as such, have experience with these kinds of practices.

Mirjam*, an activist as well as professor archaeology, is someone who was involved in the archaeological excavations within BCD. During our conversation, she shared her personal experience on the job in relation to the pressure imposed by Solidere. While standing next to the Garden of Forgiveness, she points towards a building adjacent to the garden and states "...it was to be supposed to be a non-constructible area on the map. In fact, there were a lot of places that should be classified as such" (Interview with Mirjam*, March 29th, 2019). What happens, according to Miriam, is that the reports of the archaeologists get ignored or altered by Solidere. Rumours of bribes circulate amongst the archaeological circles as well. Mirjam is not alone in her observations as Rosa, the archaeologist who sees 'Solidere as worse than the civil war', can confirm Mirjam's statements since she is a victim of these malpractices herself. When asked to alter her findings on paper, Rosa refused. She tells me that during the excavations she unearthed archaeological findings that compelled Solidere to preserve the site. Her report got dismissed. However, Solidere decided to validate her report and hired a specialist from abroad in the hope that Rosa made a wrong judgement. "The specialist came and made the evaluation and told them it is forbidden to build an '*anonymous construction*¹' here. I give them a solution. Please construct the '*anonymous construction,*' but go up..." (Interview with Rosa*, February 15th, 2019). This report was dismissed as well. Apparently, the solution that was left was replacing the entire archaeological team and confiscating all the data. Thus, in the end, Rosa lost her job because she did not want to abide and still is afraid for possible repercussions. This is why I cannot disclose more of her story.

Rosa's personal account is an example of how Solidere, in their practice of laying claim to Beirut's urban identity through memory-work, challenges a citizen's identification with the city. More specifically, we see how a challenge to an individual's memory-narrative is, per extension, a challenge to the three dimensions of Osler & Starkey's conceptualisation of citizenship (2005). Not only, due to the perceived threat to her security is her formal status (Ibid. 10) challenged, but she is also limited in her practice. Understanding that practice is linked to the basic conception of entitlement to human rights from which individuals such as Rosa can exercise their agency (ibid., 14-16), it is understandable how Rosa is limited in this regard due to Solidere's perceived threat. Moreover, Rosa's narrative illustrates how a

¹ Hidden information in order to ensure the protection of the informant's identity.

challenge to one's agency as the practice of citizenship directly affects her feeling as well. More specifically, the fact that Rosa was directly involved in exercising memory-work in the context of unearthing Beirut's heritage as a component of its urban identity, we see how memory-work plays a crucial role in forming one's identity (Olick & Robbins 1998, 133).

Lastly, the above-mentioned narratives provide a certain insight in how Solidere manages things when they don't get their way. To further expand on the pernicious practices of Solidere in overcoming challenges, I will explore the second challenge, that of squatters and property owners.

4.2: Solidere; Kicking Down Doors

“Then the Solidere project was announced. For me and many like me, this project was what we call an urbicide. It’s the death of a city. Because Solidere was a project that actually addressed the physicality of the city and not the social aspect of it. The people were sent out and the buildings remodelled. There was no attention to what a city is made of. It is not made of buildings. It is made out of people.” – Lisa*, tour guide at Beït Beirut (tour attended by Author, February 27th, 2019).

When Solidere received the green light to commence the reconstruction, one of the first hurdles was removing all the squatters and acquire all the properties in the demarcated area identified as BCD, as explained in chapter three. What has been left out, are all the stories of those who refused to leave or sell their property and as a result were expelled by force. The following narratives are another illustration of how one’s citizenship is forcefully limited by challenging individual’s agency (Osler & Starkey 2005, 10-16).

A frequently used terminology to describe the proceedings when one was not willing to cooperate were the words: ‘being raped’ due to the perceived sentiment of entering once private property without consent in destructive manner. As an illustration, there is a story of an old couple who both passed away a couple of years ago. Their experience with expropriation made a deep impression on a close friend of theirs Mirjam*, an activist as well as professor archaeology. After the war, the old couple returned to their home which was in remarkable good condition in comparison to the rest of BCD. Nevertheless, reconstruction of the property would cost them 200.000 U.S. Dollars. Because their home was inside BCD, they have to abide by the high standards set by Solidere. Furthermore, according to my participants, if someone wants to reconstruct his own property in BCD, it is mandatory that it gets done within five years to avert false promises. Unfortunately, the couple did not possess enough savings.

However, this expropriation case proceeded rather peacefully, without the use of physical force or psychological pressure. However, several cases are known where violence and intimidation practices weren’t shunned by Solidere’s employees. As Nour*, an activist as well as politician and boycotter of BCD, could vividly recollect. His family owned a building on the edge of BCD. The expropriation, normally, would address properties that are vacant, but this one wasn’t, it was still in business. Nour’s father rented out rooms to companies and tenants. This slowed the process of repossessing the building as it made Nour’s family legally as well as financially able to stand their ground. Hence, Solidere started to apply an unconventional as

well as unethical approach to resolve their problem. Their method is best explained through Nour's personal account:

“It was a process of terrorizing. They would pass with cars at night. They would have dogs. They would have... I remember. I was young, maybe fourteen or fifteen years old. There were times when we visited our own property and it came that close to a fist fight” (Interview with Nour*, February 18th, 2019)

Not only would Solidere use coercive methods to scare everyone off, it would also, without Nour's family knowing, offer money to the tenants and companies for moving out. In these circumstances, it is not hard to imagine that one by one all the tenants moved out. Eventually, after several years of resisting Solidere's persistent attitude, the court made an end to the suffering of Nour's family. It ruled in favour of Solidere. Sadly, they are not the only poignant reminder of these kind of practices. There was one family of squatters who weren't that privileged in the sense that they can recall their experience. What happened is that the family refused to leave and with the purpose of instilling fear, Solidere bulldozed the adjacent buildings with the hope that they would leave. Grievously, a horrible mistake was made and on 16th February 1996, the building, where the family was residing, collapsed. There were no survivors. (Battah 2014, 8; Makdisi 1997, 700).

In the opposition's narrative on BCD, stories such as this one would often be told. The accidental death of a family is widely regarded as a traumatic experience. Beirut's obsession with narrating traumatic memories can be considered a response to the absence of recognizable *milieu de mémoire* being BCD. Therefore, the active practice of narrating traumatic memory through transference (Bonder 2009, 63) is the only manner which memory is ascribed to sites. Nora (1989, 12) argues how, in response to the absence of *milieux de mémoire*, sites are actively created such as memorials and archives. However, we argue that in Beirut, there are no such formally created sites, the collective memory is being kept alive through subjective enculturation of stories. The result of which is that BCD becomes alienated from its citizens partially because of the ascribed traumatic memory to this area. Moreover, this sense of alienation is further reinforced by the absence of identification with BCD by its citizens, which will be elaborated upon in the next sections.

4.3: Hitherto Beirut's 'Achievements'

Thus far Solidere is off to a bad start as a result of the assertion of misconduct regarding Beirut's heritage, add to that expropriation of so many, which all in all led to the decrease of Solidere's popularity. Nonetheless, a lot of people had their hopes up and considered the establishment of Solidere as a "necessary evil" (Interview with Mason*, February 14th, 2019). The majority of Beirut's inhabitants just wanted to turn the page and rebuild their 'Paris of the Mediterranean' (Nagle 2002, 717). Solidere symbolized this kind of transition to a brighter future; something



Figure XVII: Top Left: Solidere, *Solidere Annual Report 1994: The New Promenade*, Architectural design, 3548×2549 pixels, Source: UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, Beirut.

Top Right: The National, *Beirut's Corniche*, Photograph, 520×305 Pixels in The National: Lifestyle, Source: <https://www.thenational.ae/lifestyle/travel/buzzing-beirut-why-the-capital-city-constantly-surprises-travellers-1.862431> (accessed 12 June, 2019).

Bottom Left: Solidere, *Solidere Annual Report 1994: The New Corniche*, Architectural design, 3486×2564 Pixels, From: UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, Beirut.

Bottom Right: Saade, Rahib., *Beirut Seafront*, Photograph, 864×1080 pixels in Lebanon in a Picture, Source:

that everybody longed for. Solidere understood this and made the promise to resurrect BCD. With beguiling architectural designs, Solidere visualized its vision to win over the hearts and minds of the Beirut citizens. I came across these imposing plans in Solidere's Annual Report of 1994, when visiting the UMAM centre which is a private archive centre for research and

documentation. Interestingly enough, the Annual Reports from 1994 until 2001 are not accessible on Solidere's own webpage. It becomes clear why Solidere isn't openly divulging these reports when a comparison is made between those published designs from 1994 and reality. Figure XVII shows four pictures illustrating the Corniche in Beirut, which is the seaside promenade in BCD. The two pictures on the left are Solidere's architectural designs which were published in 1994. The design visualizes easy access to the sea through a promenade that descends towards the beach. In reality, the only thing that one can recognize is the promenade that functions not only as a sidewalk, but also as a beachless embankment.



Figure XVIII: On the Left: Solidere, *Solidere Annual Report 1994: The Normandy Park*, Architectural design, 3494×2482 pixels, Source: UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, Beirut.

On the Right: Rehorst, Bob, *Normandy Park*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184×3456 pixels.

Another unfulfilled pledge is shown in figure XVIII. On the left you see the Normandy Park which should be located on the landfill. On the right you can see me walking through the unfortunate reality of the park now.

Lastly, figure XX shows Martyrs' Square, from left to right, from before the civil war, contemporary and what has been promised by Solidere. It is not hard to see that Martyrs' Square was once a vibrant place, full of life. Now it is the place where you park your car and nothing more. According to Elie Haddad, dean of the School of Architecture and Design at the Lebanese American University, it is the "most telling evidence of an attempt to assassinate public life

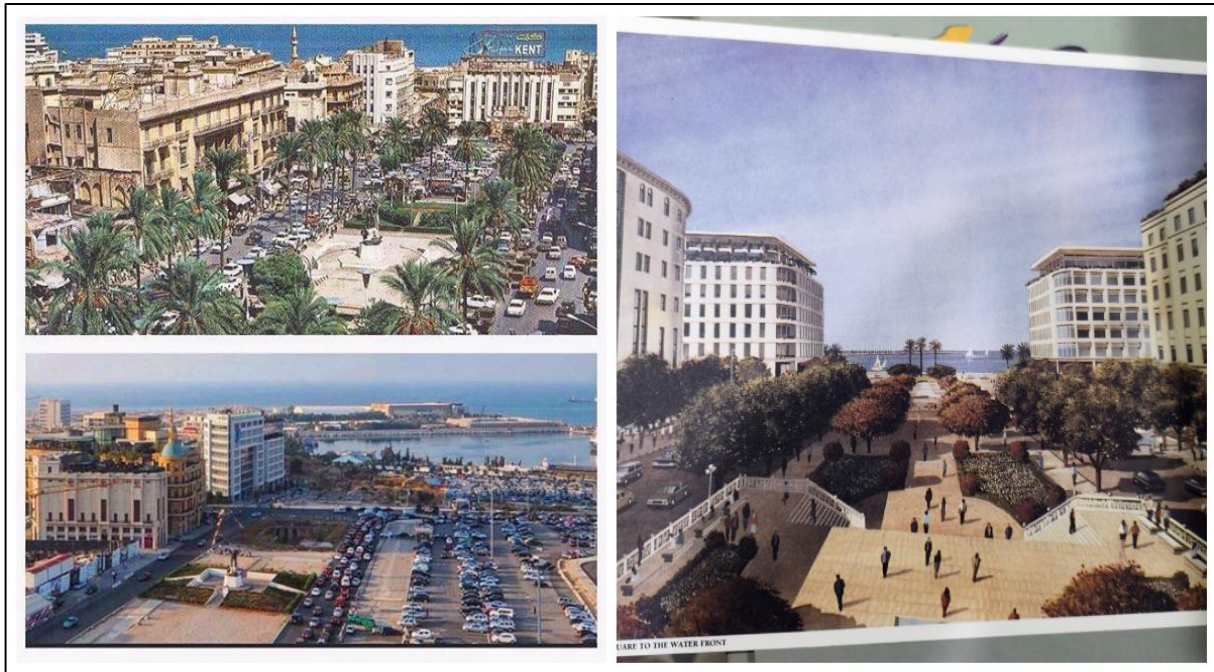


Figure XIX: Left side: Old Beirut Lebanon, *Beirut Martyrs Square 1967 - 2015*, Photograph, 640×640 pixels in Lebanon in a Picture, Source: <https://www.lebanoninapicture.com/pictures/beirut-martyrs-square-1967-2015> (accessed 11 June, 2019)

Right Side: Solidere, *Solidere Annual Report 1994: From The Martyrs' Square To The Waterfront*, Architectural Design, 3586×2647 pixels, Source: UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, Beirut.

through eliminating its central space” (Interview with Dr. Elie Haddad, February 5th, 2019). Solidere’s promises in relation to the contemporary reality shows a disregard of the development of public space throughout BCD. The photographs described in section 3.5 are the exact narrative that Solidere favours when describing their ‘success’. However, the illustrations in this section have aimed to show the reality outside of historic BCD. Though modernity may have been the ideology behind the original designs, BCD has resulted in the space of supermodernity (Augé 2008, 89). Because of the disregard of public space by Solidere, the wider BCD area does not address citizens as a community, but rather as consumerist individuals, which is the unfortunate reality of its supermodern identity (ibid.). Consequently, the majority of BCD shows the opposite of “...a perfect example of the past interwoven with the present” as is argued in section 3.5.

4.4: Beirut: ‘a City of Spectacles’

Picture that, a large four-story square hotel on the seafront of northern Beirut. An outstanding combination of early modernism combined with a feeling of Arab forms and French influence serves as the biggest hotel of its time and the first in the region to accommodate its guests to the standards of most European grand hotels. A private marina, large swimming pools just on the edge of historic and vibrant Beirut.



Figure XX: Rehorst, Bob, *Saint Georges Hotel*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184×3456 pixels.

“Once we were the number one hotel in the Middle East” says Montana* as we sit on wooden chairs next to an empty pool. The hotel garden is large, yet it is filled with overgrown grass, broken children’s slides and rusty climbing racks. There is nobody here except us and the guards. The guard brings us a Turkish coffee and Montana points at a high sea wall built in front of the Hotel’s view on the Mediterranean. “The wall built by Solidere; it really makes me angry... It was supposed to be a 3-metre-high wave breaker but now its 8 metres! You see, Solidere is choking Saint Georges”. As we talk in the shade of the hotel that has its façade covered by a large banner shouting ‘Stop Solidere’ to all that walk past, Montana rants on about how the hotel has become a victim. Saint Georges was named after the hero who slew a dragon terrorizing Beirut’s shores. Now it faces a new enemy, a corporate monster devouring public space and private property to fill its pockets. Saint Georges is alone in a David and Goliath battle to stop Solidere’s plan to privatise the entire shoreline.

This narrative of the Saint Georges Hotel, positioned on the north-western edge of BCD, is a survival story of the expropriation process by Solidere. As one of the most influential property owners, the owner of Saint Georges was able to resist and maintain his property despite Solidere's efforts. Solidere, in their aim to create a high-end shoreline complementing the new BCD, found Saint Georges to be an obstruction. However, as a solution, Solidere constructed a new Marina in the place of the historic Zaytunay Bay. Going by the same name, Figure XXII,

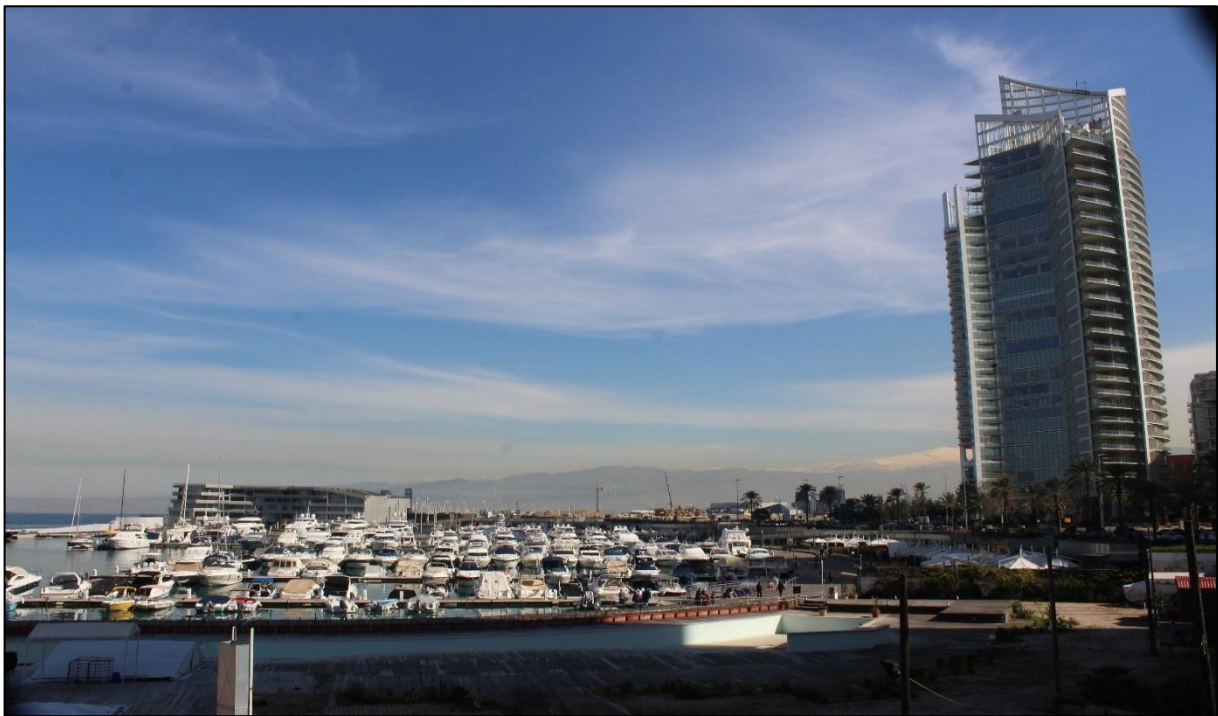


Figure XXI: Rehorst, Bob, *Zaytunay Bay seen from Saint Georges Hotel Garden*, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184×3456 pixels.

a photograph of modern Zaytunay Bay, shows how the former Saint Georges Bay has been turned into a high-end Marina owned by Solidere with a private yacht club on the north-eastern end of it. According to a public relations officer employed by Solidere:

“... it is important to have a marina is you want to become a lifestyle destination. The marina was built to complement BCD, which is all part of Solidere's Diamond Experience” (Interview with Jason*, February 19th, 2019).

Here we see how, underneath all the narratives of ‘reviving the city’ and ‘returning to the “Paris of the Mediterranean”’, Solidere is turning BCD into a high-end supermodern city. While they include certain modes of historic fragments in their urban design, the actual emphasis lies with luxury retail and high-end restaurants in order to attract the international elite. The result is, in the supermodern tradition, a city of spectacles (Elsheshtawy 2008, 166) that focusses more on capitalist consumerism rather than the inclusion of its citizens. In fact, as

the average Lebanese makes no more than 1,000\$ dollars per month, the luxury nature of it all shows that it was not built for the Lebanese. Adding to this, a lack of memory representation within this 'glamorous' urban landscape, illustrates a mode of alienation for the locals towards the BCD area as they are no longer able to identify with their own city-centre.

As initially mentioned in the beginning of chapter three "*Centre Vile* is the centre of absolutely nothing". This statement is enhanced by the fact that BCD is rarely visited by the Lebanese and has turned into a ghost town. Therefore, the downfall of BCD is not merely a series of unfortunate political events, but at the core lies a sense of alienation from the city. In short, BCD has nothing to say about the Lebanese. Such a supermodern city, according to Debord, demands passive acceptance from its citizens (Elsheshtawy 2008, 968-970).

What one must understand now is that the government's priority, and per extension Solidere, "...isn't the prosperity of its citizens, but that of their own" (Interview with Habib Battah. February 21st, 2019). Hence, a majority of Beirutis share the opinion that their politicians are lining their own pockets by privatising all sorts of amenities, instead of being concerned with public necessities. Below surface, as briefly mentioned in chapter three, is the fact that Solidere knows very well how to navigate the legal ambiguities. Moreover, according to Mourad*, member of the research group at Byblos Bank in Beirut, there is a clear correlation pattern between the former PM Rafiq Hariri as well as the current PM Saad Hariri, and the fluctuations in the stock prices of Solidere.

"And now the government was formed ... you see an uptake in Solidere prices. But you saw much more of that when his father was in or out of office."
(Interview with Mourad*, March 22nd, 2019)

Through privatisation, politicians are dividing monopolies among themselves with the aim of personal enrichment. It seems that "for every problem, there is a new opportunity for privatisation" (Interview with Mason*, February 2nd, 2019). The same sequence of events transpired with the appointment of who would manage the reconstruction of BCD. Thus, the reconstruction of BCD did not have the aim of ensuring the prosperity of the majority, but that of a few. So, who do you target if the aim is to make as much profit as possible? The rich elite. In order to attract these kind of customers Solidere opted for a modern BCD, if not intentionally establishing a supermodern BCD. A supermodern reality, according to Augé (2008, 89), results in an absence of historical synthesis. Thus, from a citizen's point of view, there is often a demand for public recognition of the past, especially a violent past (ibid.). The manifestation of this demand will be illustrated in the next section.

4.5: Grassroots interventions: Addressing Heritage and Memory

Supermodern Beirut, according to Debord, demands passive acceptance from its citizens (Elsheshtawy 2008, 969-970). However, Beirut's citizens are known for their resilience and endurance of spirit (Larkin 2010, 425) and have reacted through grassroots interventions. One of these grassroots interventions in reaction to the privatisation enactments is CCPDR. It is one of the last remaining public spaces along the coastline of Beirut. It is a rocky and sandy terrain that slowly descends into the sea. The Dalieh of Raouche has always been a meeting place for families and friends to hang out and relax. In 2013 the place was fenced off by the owner that happens to be one of the sons of Rafiq Hariri. In response, the grassroots movement of CCPDR emerged. Their aim is the preservation and enhancement of the role of Dalieh as an open-access shared space for the public. Through social media and filing a lawsuit they made the public aware of the situation. "We knew it was protected by law, but it was privately owned" (Interview with Habib Battah, February 21st, 2019).

In the first stages of the campaign, there was a letter correspondence with the contracted architect Rem Koolhaas. In the letter, the activists argued why the Dalieh of Raouche is such an extraordinary landmark and for that reason must be preserved the way it is used. Rem Koolhaas responded by expressing his appreciation for their concern and tried to reassure the activists by claiming that every argument mentioned were already taken into account in the design. Moreover, according to Koolhaas there was a misunderstanding, because it was as a matter of fact already the plan to enhance the site for public accessibility. However, the design got leaked, and it became evident that the plan was to construct a high-end restaurant in combination with a lounge bar. Although, the permits for construction were already issued, the campaign succeeded in their goal just in time. It was proven in court, even though some court cases are still pending, that various of the legal degrees which made it possible to build there were implemented during the civil war and can be deemed unlawful. For now, the project is postponed, but the future of Dalieh of Raouche remains uncertain.



Figure XXII: Rehorst, Bob, Photograph Taken by Author, 5184×3456 pixels.

Secondly, the Beït Beirut building that was introduced in chapter two, is a typical case where the Beirut citizens differ in vision from a government entity in relation to the civil war memory. Moreover, the preservation of such a war-scarred building as a *lieu de memoire*, is an example of how a grassroots movement expressed their need for recognition of the war memory. This is in contrast to the official policy of amnesia, and results in a collision between interpretations on various levels of society.

Lastly, there is the unconventional approach of Potato Nose, an artist but moreover an activist that despises the amnesia solution of his own politicians. According to him, reconciliation with one's past is necessary and is precisely about recollection. Thereby, slowly start the process of edifying the divided prejudices towards the 'other'.

“The psychological process that I went through with a therapist, I copied it and applied it to the city. It started with running away from the problems, this is why I had to go to him... It is the escape part and then the confrontation part when you highlight the issues you were afraid to face.” (Interview with Potato Nose, March 15th, 2019)

His goal is to address the visible scars of the war in Beirut with a creative approach. Instead of leaving certain buildings to remain abandoned and nearly forgotten as subconscious part of the

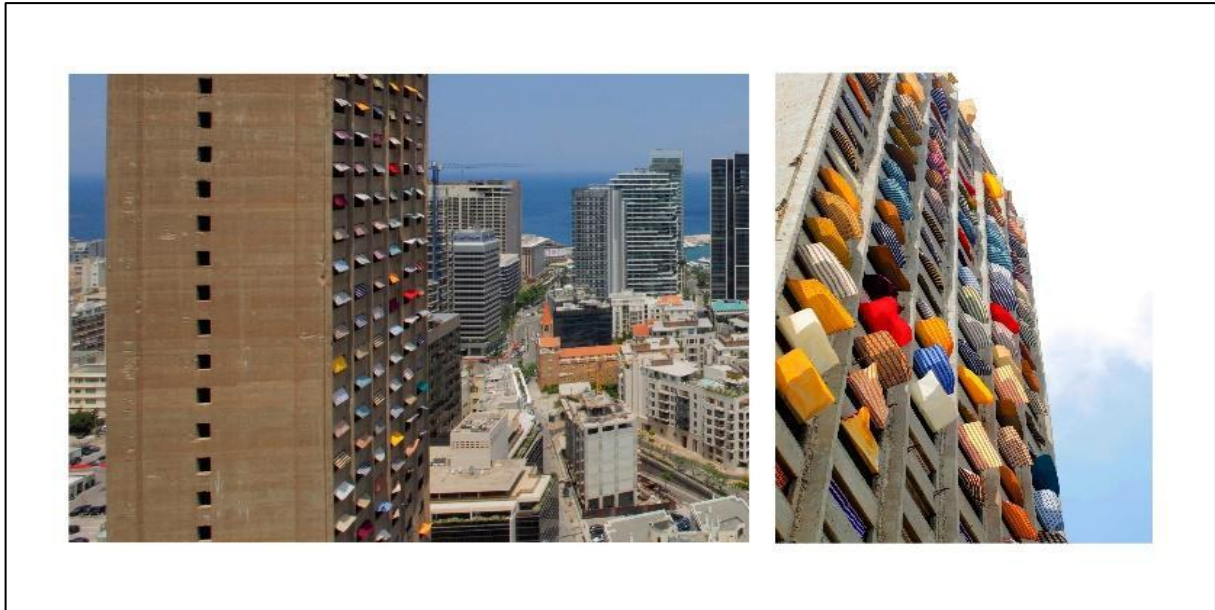


Figure XXIII: Potato Nose, *Dancing in the Wind*, Photograph 833×469, Source: Potato Nose, (Received on March 15th, 2019).

urban landscape, he tries to reignite the attention towards Beirut’s lost legacy. An example of which is the infamous *Burj el Murr*, an unfinished office tower on the edge of BCD, which served as a sniper stronghold throughout the civil war due to its birds-nest characteristic. This project is visible in figure XXIV and was named “dancing in the wind.”

His work entailed to install curtains at every window, from the fourth floor up. Once this was finished, he unveiled all curtains simultaneously, transforming the eye-sore war-scar into a beautiful monument. “...people loved it” (Ibid). According to him, the reason why the people loved it, is because people identified with it. Almost every balcony of Beirut has these colourful curtains. It created a feeling of unity or belonging according to Potato Nose. This final example is an illustration of an individual addressing the war memory within the urban landscape on a public level. However, Potato Nose’s reclaim of this urban war remnant did not go without contestation since Solidere owns the building. Upon addressing this issue, Potato recalled his clash with Solidere:

“They hate me, they forced me to remove it ... although it was illegal it survived for three weeks. So, that is an accomplishment, I think...” (Interview with Potato Nose, March 15th, 2019).

Nevertheless, the influx of positive reactions can be considered proof of Beirut’s society calling for recognition and representation of memory. Potato Nose is an embodiment of the

resilience present in the Lebanese spirit (Larkin 2010, 425). As we know by now, referring to Osler and Starkey (2005, 11-14), we have argued how the dimension of feeling in citizenship, represents the subjective nature of the pursuit of one's identity (Holston & Appadurai 1996, 195). Potato Nose actively reclaims not only his identity but ascribes meaning to Beirut's urban identity through memory-work. For if we accept that identity is not merely the answer to the question; 'Who or what are you?' (Demmers 2012, 20). It also symbolizes the social relationship with its environment through the process 'being' and 'becoming'. Yet, the contestation surrounding Potato Nose's project has left him scarred because of the reluctance to accept his attempt for addressing the past in pursuit of reconciliation.

“This leaves me two choices ... maybe escape again and leave the country, or, keep insisting and do more projects. I'm still not sure what I'll do...” (Interview with Potato Nose, March 15th, 2019).

As final note, this is an illustration of the controversy surrounding addressing memory in Beirut. Potato Nose's conviction of the necessity to address the more recent violent past, is in direct contestation with Solidere's pursuit of the amnesia policy. Nevertheless, because of the large influx of positive reactions Potato Nose received, Solidere in their efforts to remove his project, appears to have missed an opportunity to gain favour amongst Beirut's citizens.

4.6: To Summarize: A Missed Opportunity

The reconstruction of BCD was the opportunity to unite its citizens, if they were to be included in the decision-making process regarding the reconstruction of their own city. Instead, due to the political reluctance to break the obsolete former power sharing structures based upon Lebanon's sectarian society and the problem of self-enrichment, it further reinforced the constantly present tense atmosphere, best described as the "war of nerves." (Interview with Sarah*, March 19nd, 2019). These tensions are clearly illustrated by Jihad el Bekaii, the director of engineering of the Beirut municipality, that "...the reconstruction process is a complex conflict. One should be very sensitive, delicate and choose your words carefully" (Interview with Jihad el Bekaii, March 20th, 2019). As a matter of fact, his boss Ziad Chbib, the Governor of Beirut as well as his advisor Alfred*, both were quite critical towards these policies upon mentioning. According to them, it concerns a political solution that is not implemented to serve the people, but, sad as it is, the high officials themselves. Since memory can be very harmful to those who have no clear conscience, "...the reconstruction process is a modern one. No memory is integrated, because of political reasons for keeping the peace" (Interview with Alfred*, March 18th, 2019). Consequently, some respondents argue that the divisions lines in society are augmented, because the unresolved grievances are not only piling up, but moreover causing new ones through enculturation.

"These people want to kill you. This is what we learn, and if you grow up this way, you stay this way." (Interview with Bartender*, February 21st, 2019)

It was an opportunity where, on a societal level, horizontal comradeship, in accordance with Benedict Anderson understanding of it, could be created. (2006, 7) As such, there was a window for the state to illustrate its ability to generate a collective memory where the majority can identify with. However, the chosen path of privatising the reconstruction of BCD to a quasi-private real estate company, which pursued certain goals that did not coincide with those of the citizens, has resulted in a new line of division within society. As such, the diminishment of one's legal right to the city while Solidere's right to the city got empowered, made way for new grievances to arise. As been established by narrating all the expropriation stories that are deemed as an infringement of one's status, and as a consequence, resulted in a shared feeling of exclusion and alienation from the city.

The misconduct surrounding Beirut's heritage had the same effect, because as already been established is that memory, according to Halbwach's (1950,51) second claim is naturally

subjective, and moreover a central medium through which identities are constructed (Olick and Robbins 1998, 133). The real estate company was not only in control of reconstructing BCD, but unsettling enough, was at the helm of what should be preserved of Beirut's Heritage and thus directly influencing the construction of urban identities.

At last, the most outspoken grievance is the result of modernity being over-embellished, and as a result is transformed in a supermodern city of spectacles or in the metaphorical description of Jason; "Solidere's Diamond Experience". (Interview with Jason*, February 19th, 2019). Even with the presented opportunities to integrate memory in a more identifiably modern manner, Solidere failed to gain support because of their reluctance to address memory. As illustrated by the example of Potato Nose, the call for memory representation is present, but it would appear as if Solidere is not ready to answer. Consequently, in the slightly altered words of Szpocisnki (2016, 248), BCD as a site of memory has yet to say something about the majority of Beirut's citizens.

Conclusion

Mees hehenkamp & Bob Rehorst

Based on the combined theory established throughout chapter one, we set out to answer our main question: “How does the controversy of post-war reconstruction between Solidere and its opposition manifest itself in the context of memory politics and urban citizenship?” In addressing this question, we operated through the theoretical framework where we aimed to reconstruct and understand rivalling narratives and practices in relation to the reconstruction process of post-war Beirut. The rivalling parties we’ve discussed are on the one hand Solidere and those who favour narrating BCD as an example of modernity where memory-work is properly integrated in the reconstruction process. On the other, there is a large opposing group which manifests itself primarily in activists, boycotters and aggrieved citizens who argue for a description of BCD as a supermodern capitalist product with little regard for the citizen’s call for memory-representation. What follows is a recapitulation of the established theory, followed by this theory being interwoven with the empirical data. This structure is chosen due to the dynamic application of theory with the end-goal of arguing that our research shows how memory-narratives become polarized as a dual narrative in post-war Beirut.

The theory shows that collective memory and its representation carries great weight in the development of an urban society. More specifically, according to Halbwachs’ (1950) four claims, we understand collective memory as a communal practice being continuously reconstructed in society. However, as argued, collective memory is open to contestation due to its subjective nature as well as its nostalgic elements. As a result, In the case of Beirut, contestation of memory is a dimension of the reconstruction process as a result of the lack of hegemony regarding historical narrative. In other words, the absence of consensus regarding the factual narrative of the civil war results in a division emerging amongst Beirut’s inhabitants. Subsequently, due to the memory being contested, we can understand how this is a practice embedded within Lefebvre’s (1968) description of the struggle for the right to the city.

Harvey’s (1973, 314) call for genuinely humanizing urbanism can be considered as more of an ideology rather than a reality. The reality, due to the increasing influence of capitalist elites (Pinder 2002, 231) and the supermodern perception of citizens as passive consumers (Augé 2008; Elsheshtawy 2008, 968-970), citizens rarely have any decision-making capability (Brenner et al. 2009, 2). The practice of such a capitalist-fuelled approach focussing on

exoticizing the city for profits can result in a city of spectacles (Elsheshtawy, 2008, 166). Such a non-place (ibid. 2008, 985) allows citizens to feel alienated from their city (ibid., 2008, 166) which is a direct challenge to the Osler and Starkey's (2005) conceptualisation of citizenship. Therefore, one can understand how the competition for the interpretation and representation of memory through the construction of identity between state and its citizens are undeniably intertwined. As such, the politics of memory can be considered a cause of citizenship being contested. In what manner this contestation of citizenship manifests itself has been explored throughout our ethnographic research in post-war urban Beirut. The result of this research is described as three major controversies surrounding the narratives and practices over the reconstruction process in chapters three and four.

In these chapters, the controversies that emerge from the stories show that the major distinction appears to be embedded in the perception and opinions regarding the urban reconstruction. At the forefront of these controversies lies the idea that most grievances are directed at Solidere due to a certain manner of displaced aggression. As a result, whether the actual cause of the controversies illustrated lies with Solidere, the state, the DGA, or any other party, for the aggrieved, the difference does not matter. This is because of, on the one hand, the perceived blurred lines between what is public and what is private, and on the other, a narrative of continuous disappointment regarding the state's inability to abide by its responsibilities regarding the social contract between the state and its citizens.

The first controversy that originated is, as mentioned, the 'challenge of archaeology'. It has become evident that, at the core of this issue, lies a duality within the expectations of preservation as well as the practices surrounding it. More specifically, an archaeological stalemate takes root where one party aims to 'preserve all' and the other, more realistically, understands the limitations of both time and resources and argues in favour of a system of prioritization. However, through the personal accounts provided in chapter four, one can understand how such prioritization that is spearheaded by Solidere can be contested and labelled as malpractice. It should be noted that these personal accounts are not documented but they should be considered regardless. This is because it is a sentiment that is widely shared, not only amongst the archaeologists, but also amongst the inhabitants of Beirut as a whole. The reason the controversy of archaeology is thusly heated and relevant in the discussions, is because of the idea that a corporate entity lays claim to a city's heritage. One must be sensitive to the notion that Beirut in its post-war state was struggling to reformulate its urban identity. Normally, understanding what Lefebvre claims, a city is "...constituted by its inhabitants through the ongoing acts of making places." As such, it is the result of a long-term political struggle in

which collective claims were posed by groups of mobilized citizens (Lefebvre 1996 (1968); in Till 2012,6; Purcell 2014, 146). However, in the case of Beirut, the political struggle over collective claims, namely the civil war, was abruptly halted the moment Solidere was given sole-right to reconstruct BCD. One must understand how the inhabitants could feel a sense of pointlessness when one survives a gruesome and bloody fifteen-year civil war over urban territory, only to have it expropriated and given to a private company. This illustrates how any claim made regarding urban space in Beirut by one party, will be contested by all other parties. In the case of the ‘challenge of archaeology’, one can understand how a corporate entity spearheading the excavations and, as such, determining what constitutes Beirut’s ancient heritage, will always be challenged.

Secondly, in conjunction with these archaeological excavations, the ‘challenge of property’ is another factor that contributes to the societal divisions that emerged throughout the reconstruction process. Initially, the practice of expropriation, in Osler and Starkey’s conceptualization of citizenship (2005, 10-16), can be considered a lack of recognition of citizen’s rights, which in turn, is a removal of one’s fundamental characteristic as a citizen, namely, one’s formal status. Moreover, we have established that one’s formal status is undoubtedly entangled with the manner in which the citizen is able to claim one’s rights and feel a sense of belonging to the urban society. Considering the property owners of the BCD area that were expropriated, it is understandable how they are an example of how laying claim to urban space alienates its citizens from the state by breaking the imagined social contract between the two. More specifically, the competition for hegemony of discourse and interpretative patterns (Meyer in Young 2010, 174-176) between citizens and Solidere. This is illustrated where Solidere navigates legal ambiguities and the expropriated citizens seeking legitimacy through constitutional rights to protect the denial of their autonomy. This struggle over the legalities of space and citizenship created a narrative where legal and illegal are factually blurred and resulted in a new dual memory narrative. Moreover, the demand for recognition of one’s individual memory narrative regarding the grievances of expropriation can be considered as a pursuit for individual authenticity. This pursuit of individual authenticity, according to Holston and Appadurai, “...leads to a politics of difference rather than a politics of universalism or equalization of rights” (1992, 3-73). In other words, the demand for recognition of one’s individual narrative, be it Solidere or the aggrieved citizens, contributes as a factor to the societal divisions that emerged throughout the reconstruction process.

Finally, the last controversy to illustrate the new mode of polarization is the perception of the completed BCD. In perceiving the urban context of BCD, we would argue in accordance

with Harvey that the idea of genuinely humanizing urbanism as the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process of urban reconstruction appears to be more of an ideology rather than a practicality (1973, 314) in the case of Beirut. This can be argued because Solidere focussed mostly on the physical appearance of the city instead of including social sentiment. This argument, as illustrated in chapter four, is an example of how the pursuit of modernity by Solidere has failed in the sense that it neglects the inclusion of memory representation in accordance with the citizens demand to ‘give voice to the past’. The combination of modernity and utopian urbanism describes how in a modern city, everything is combined, and everything holds together (Augé 2008, 61). However, the pursuit of an ideal combination of the old and the new, the past interwoven with the present (ibid., 89), the case of BCD resulted in a more supermodern space. The widely accepted description of BCD being a ‘ghost-town’ or as a real-estate area commonly referred to as ‘Solidere’ can be considered an illustration of the creation of a non-place. The non-place, being the space of supermodernity, only addresses the consumerist nature of individuals and it otherwise as a transitory space which discourages any form of attachment through the identification of the urban as a social space. Considering the dialectics of Beirut’s controversial memory-narrative, the failure to include such memory work in a reconstructed post-war urban context results in a generally perceived opinion that BCD has ‘nothing to say’ about Beirut’s urban identity.

The juxtaposition of narratives and the ensuing controversies combined, answer the question: “how does the controversy of post-war reconstruction between Solidere and its opposition manifest itself in the context of memory politics and urban citizenship?” To conclude, the culmination of these controversies results from the deeply embedded discourse over memory narrative rooted in a sectarian society. Thus, consensus is something that is hard to find in Beirut, if not, Lebanon. Therefore, a new mode of identity polarisation emerges through an absence of memory representation within the urban context of Beirut. Through the controversies that have been illustrated in this thesis, namely, the series of unfortunate events that transpired in post-war Lebanon, one can see how such polarisation is enhanced through the narrative surrounding these events. These respective memory narratives describing these events become polarized as a dual narrative and prohibit the development of a deep horizontal comradeship for the collective urban identity of Beirut. Beirut’s post-war reconstruction was meant to reunite its citizens, but instead, due to a political economy of capitalist preferences, profits were prioritized over the needs of the majority. Moreover, in order to keep the peace in Beirut’s society, it unfortunately failed to address the more recent tumultuous past by fuelling the amnesia policy instead of incorporating memory-work. As such, the reconstruction process

became a supermodern one where the more recent past was not integrated. Thusly, the absence of consensus regarding collective memory resulted in the conscious choice not to include the citizens call for memory representation and has led to a new line of division amongst urban identities. Therefore, this polarization of memory narrative results in Beirut's citizens being once again deeply divided, this time as a result of the controversies surrounding the post-war reconstruction process implemented by the private entity Solidere.

As a final note, our conclusion answers the question of what narratives are present in contemporary Beirut. However, due to the relatively brief time-period of ethnographic fieldwork, it should be noted that an all-encompassing claim cannot be derived from our findings alone. While we have combined our findings with that of established literature, more research is required to fully comprehend the complexities that are embedded within Beirut's reconstruction process. Further research should continue to explore more tangible consequences of this polarization as well as possible solutions. Finally, the most prominent discussion point in the validity of this research is, coincidentally, also the core reason for the variation in narratives. Namely, the absence of historical consensus regarding Beirut's more recent past. In our opinion, consensus over history and memory is of paramount importance for the unification of Beirut's society and should be a priority.

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Appendix A: Informant list

In some cases, the participant's name is ascribed with the symbol '*', representing the use of a pseudonym. The reason for our use of pseudonyms is to protect the identity of our participants as some information provided is of a rather sensitive nature. As final note, the informant list is organized chronologically by date.

Name:	Occupation:	Date interviewed:
Montana*	Manager at Saint George Hotel	February 4 th , 2019
Elie Haddad	Dean of Architecture and Design at LAU	February 5 th , 2019
Mason*	Tour guide	February 14 th , 2019
Rosa*	Archaeologist	February 15 th , 2019
Nour*	Activist / Solidere Boycotter	February 18 th , 2019
Jason*	Public Relations Officer at Solidere	February 19 th , 2019
Chadi*	Historian	February 19 th , 2019
Sarah*	Employee of Solidere	February 19 th , 2019
Habib Battah	Activist to protect public space	February 21 st , 2019
Lisa*	Beit Beirut activist	February 27 th , 2019
Julia*	Head of Architecture department at Solidere	March 5 th , 2019

Laure Salloum	Director General of Antiquities and archaeologist for Baalbek and Hermel	March 13 th , 2019
Potato Nose*	Artist and activist	March 15 th , 2019
Alfred*	Advisor of the Governor of Beirut	March 18 th , 2019
Ziad Chbib	Governor of Beirut	March 18 th , 2019
Robert*	Architect	March 19 th , 2019
Jamal Itani	Major of Beirut	March 19 th , 2019
Jihad el Bekaii	Director of engineering of the Beirut municipality	March 20 th , 2019
Mourad*	Member of the Research Group at Byblos Bank	March 22 nd , 2019
Almira Solh	Former Head of Urban Planning at Solidere	March 24 th , 2019
Omar*	Customer at Al Antabli Juice Bar	March 25 th , 2019
Mirjam*	Activist/ professor archeology	March 29 th , 2019
Hans Curvers	Archeologist contracted by Solidere	May 16 th , 2019