I, Gael Tabet, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
**The Green Line: An Investigation of Human Interactions Within Conflicted Public Spaces and Transit**

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The Green Line

An Investigation of Human Interactions Within Conflicted Public Spaces and Transit
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in the Department of Architecture of the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning by

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Committee Chairs: Dr. Aarati Kanekar, PH.D. Prof. Michael McInturf, M.ARCH; Prof. Aaron Betsky, M.ARCH; Prof. Vincent Sansalone, M.ARCH.
At the intersection of East and West lays a conflicted social disjuncture presented physically in the disparate sectors of Beirut, Lebanon, and revealed in the city’s divergent infrastructure. The crowded roadways saturated with pedestrians, taxicabs, minibuses, and other commuters literally and metaphorically block, rather than facilitate, physical and cultural advancement in the city. As an interconnected network of exchange, infrastructure can bypass cultural norms of independent neighborhoods and transgress social boundaries and memories to become an agent of trade beyond goods—a platform for circulating gathered crowds and their varying ideologies throughout the city. Ethnologist Marc Augé analyzes this phenomenon in his book, *In the Metro* as he discusses the intricacies of the Paris subway system. Specifically, this network of passages allows for a rediscovery of the city as a totality within a ‘neutral’ public space, as the term is described by sociologist Samir Khalaf and planner Oussama Kabbani. As such, beyond the touristic advantages, the divided domestic population of Beirut could benefit from the quotidian encounters and renewed perceptions afforded by mass public transit on an urban scale. The connecting hubs then become the local meeting points, the moments of interaction with the unknown, the thresholds between two lives. Through such a proposal, the discourse on public transportation and the impact of infrastructure on a city hopes to move beyond pure utility, and into sociocultural reconnection empowered by architecture.


"The Lebanese are forced to live in a situation of danger... and I wish public transportation would be a part of the relief for people."  
From ‘Beirut, Under the Bridge’
To my parents who constantly remind me to strive for success and independence, but to never forget the love of family. To my sisters, their families, my grandmother, and the rest of my family, who have loved, supported, and put up with me through the long journey to this point. And to Georges, whose guidance and loving encouragement through this process was invaluable.

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**Introduction**


**The Non-Society and its Societies**


**Beirut: Hegemony in Iconography**

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1. All images/diagrams of this section are the author’s.

**Conclusion**

Beirut is the largest city in Lebanon—its capital. But in many cases, rather than acting as an exemplary model of unity and leadership for the rest of the country, it articulates a segregated people living in disparate quarters, divided by religious and political tensions materialized by the infrastructure upon which the theaetrics of daily life, and of intrusive events, play out. However, the explosive sociopolitical sphere seems to contradict another Lebanese social paradigm—one that evokes a sense of community and social exchange as described by the international attention Beirut has recently received as one of the top vacation and party destinations of the world. Consequently, one wonders how a city so renowned for its social liberalism can simultaneously be so rigidly socially fragmented.
My investigation will focus on these issues of fragmentation and segregation, the boundaries they create, and the resulting interactions of opposing factions in public space. This public space will be viewed as both a theatrical stage and as its audience. More specifically, I will be proposing a public transportation network and analyzing its sociocultural impact on the divided city of Beirut.

The dissection of the city into a Christian east and a Muslim west (figure 1.2), resulting from civil conflict, has created physical and mental boundaries between groups of varying backgrounds. During the Civil War between 1975 and 1990, the opposing factions divided along one principle, north-south transportational artery. It came to be known as 'The Green Line' for its overgrowth of weeds and shrubbery resulting from its long inoccupation (figure 1.1). Now, parks, valleys, rivers, roads, highways, and, less tangibly, memories form the demarcation lines between these groups. My proposition of an integrated public transportation network, however, suggests that these boundaries can be passed without being immediately broken. Infrastructure, rather than acting as a dividing line, would now facilitate movement through opposing neighborhoods in a controlled environment as a shared resource. While socialization would not be mandated, it would be promoted on a city scale by overlapping occupied territories, and on an architectural scale by the use of interactive spaces and renewed visual perspectives. The public space of transit would thus simultaneously become a stage upon which mundane, explosive, political, and social events are played out, and the platform from which they are observed.

In order for a holistic argument to be made, I must start by providing a basic cultural, social, and physical portrayal of Lebanon, generally, and of Beirut, specifically. A detailed definition of 'society,' as outlined by sociologist Ian Robertson, will help to demonstrate the diversity and contradictions of this ancient region, and will aim to clarify certain theoretical arguments made in further sections. Samir and Roseanne Khalaf’s *Arab Society and Culture; An Essential Reader* offers the fundamental explanations of daily experiences in the multiple sectors of the city through their own eyes and those of other sociologist, anthropologists, and theorists. Urban designers Esther Charlesworth and Jon Calame support the Khalafs’ approach to Beirut while highlighting its hostile past and the urban consequences of war. Emphasis will be placed on the boundaries, more mental than physical, that have emerged through conflict.

While some of Beirut’s physical boundaries, outlined mainly by roads and bridges, did arise from the civil war, the most significant indicators of difference were the political images and iconographies that still visually distinguish one group, and its specified area, from another. Billboards, flags, and signs carrying logos and photographs of the region’s religious and political heroes overwhelm intruders. This political propaganda outlines the sector’s ideologies while ensuring the political group’s omnipresence in the daily lives of its followers. Michael F. Davie
thoroughly examined these modes of imagery—graffiti, building billboards, flags, etc.—as the ‘markers of ideological territories’ in Beirut.

Once a better understanding of the intricacies of Beirut has been established, my focus will shift specifically to the impact of infrastructure and public transportation on cities. The contradictory roles that infrastructure plays in divided cities parallels the contradictions of its population. This will first be analyzed through the writings of Beirut planner, Oussama Kabbani. The traditional uses of transportation infrastructure maintain their relevance, but, Kabbani argues that, in addition to providing basic amenities, roads, bridges, and plazas also function as public spaces upon which the evolutions of the city manifest themselves. This became evident during the long-term conflicts that turned public spaces into war-zones. Understanding the complex relationship between a city and its public space will be important in fully grasping the impact of a new system, and to what it would have to respond.

Given the recent history of conflictual public spaces in Beirut, one wonders what a neutral public space would mean in this city—a space void of iconographic and sectarian hegemony. In ‘Neutrality in Networks,’ Samir Khalaf aids in outlining the fine line that divides a neutral space from an explosive one. In essence, this public arena must be diverse, intimate, and mixed, all the while unifying, distancing, and not combining its users. This set of requirements seems to align well with the contradictions of the city and its infrastructure. The argument highlights that differences would be neutralized through a network spread throughout the city, providing shared ownership of space for a mixed, though not combined, set of users.

Marc Augé discusses similar points of boundaries, diversity, and individuality through a personal and ethnographic analysis of the Paris metro system in his book, *In the Metro*. Augé suggests that, in order to truly know Paris, one must understand its subterranean cultural network. The author makes a significant argument for the system’s social impact in a city of multiplicity: in its very nature, the metro is a collection of intersecting individual journeys that inform one another while still acting independently. This principle explains the fundamental need for a wide-spread, functioning network of public transportation in Beirut on a purely societal level. Comparing Khalaf’s definition of ‘neutral space’ and Augé’s description of the metro leads to a necessary re-envisioning of the city.

Finally, focusing the lens of this argument on specific nodes of the larger network, my architectural analyses draw from the research I have laid out in order to create thresholds between the multiple sectors of greater Beirut. The stops also become thresholds between and individual’s multiple lives—work, home, and play. My designs aim at creating much needed public spaces focused on neutrality rather than hegemony—spaces that could slowly move Beirut back toward an exemplary, coexisting society.
AND ITS SOCIETIES

(02) the non-society
To some, a group of people living within a common territory and sharing a government would be considered a ‘society.’ However, according to sociologist Ian Robertson, two main components are missing from this definition of society. First, the residents of the territory, beyond sharing the space, must interact. In other words, they must exchange goods and ideas among each other through shared public spaces, communication, and other social means. Secondly, to a certain extent, “they must... have a common culture and a shared sense of membership in and commitment to the same group.”

Within a country, or even within a city, though, this definition does not always hold true.

In many instances, a country, though technically considered a specified, shared territory, can cultivate multiple societies, each an autonomous entity with its own identity. These independent entities can, on some occasions, share a common interest in their national causes, and believe that their national commitment supersedes their local expectations. In these cases, a nation-state demonstrates a hierarchical stratification of societies, with the overarching, shared societal values overruling the individual fancies of sub-societies. Such is typically the case of the United States, for instance. However, other examples portray an inverse relationship in which the sub-societies view themselves and their ideologies as superior to that of the shared nation and attempt to force these views on others. Consequently, the country, though ruled by a singular government, cannot consider itself a unified society.

The disjunction among societies of the same country need not be dispersed throughout its lands. A singular city can represent a multitude of ethnic backgrounds, religious sects, and political alliances that divide themselves, creating enclaves within the larger city context. Though these enclaves may or may not interact at some level, they apportion the city into a multitude of territories that, once again, negate one of Robertson’s foundational elements of a society. In countries and cities where these individual societies are not equal, where one or several are the targets of discrimination and repression, or where none share one common goal or cultural vision, civil conflict generally arises.

DIVIDED CITIES

The phenomenon of spatial demarcation of individual societies within a larger context is described in Esther Charlesworth’s and Jon Calame’s book, *Divided Cities*. It states, “Since all cities reflect local demographics in spatial terms, each can be located somewhere on a continuum between perfect spatial integration and complete separation.” The term ‘demographics’ used in this case describes religious, ethnic, political, and socioeconomic identities. These identities will either accept to coexist with individuals of diverse backgrounds within a unified society, or they will reject any influences from other agents. In rejecting unity, they could prefer to cluster themselves into groups of similar religions or ethnicities as a form of control and self-preservation, thus creating their own societies with shared goals and forms of exchange. In some cases, certain social groups may accept to intermingle while others reject association, thus positioning the city in the middle of the integration spectrum—between ‘perfectly integrated and completely separated’.

Lewis Mumford describes the city as a ‘symbol of relatedness’ so long as the physical environment remains mixed and ordered. He explains:

What men cannot imagine as a vague formless society, they can live through and experience as citizens in a city. Their unified plans and buildings become a symbol of their social relatedness; and when the

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physical environment itself becomes disordered and incoherent, the social functions that it harbors become more difficult to express.\(^3\)

This definition is increasingly true in divided cities, such as Beirut, that have endured physical conflict. While their constructed environments may have been socially separate before conflict, order still reigned. With the destruction of the built environment, though, physical and societal disorder took hold, extending conflict and division. Consequently, the reconstruction process must carefully create a ‘unified plan and buildings’ in order to regenerate a sense of social relatedness among the multiplicity of factions.

For a cohesive plan to be created, however, one must understand the original contexts he is unifying. But how does one begin to describe an entire city? Is it possible to provide an accurate portrayal of the complex, intricate lives of individuals woven together through space and time to create the dense urban fabric within which social and cultural roles are played? This task becomes increasingly difficult when the inhabitants of this city themselves cannot agree on their own history, when this past is turbulent and fraught with confusing betrayals, and when the disagreements and betrayals lead to a city fragmented by multiple ideologies and political forces. The years following the destruction of Beirut overwhelmed potential planners with questions and difficulties such as these. In what follows, I will relay a depiction of Beirut as I have experienced it, and as I have read of it in its post-war era:

**BEIRUT**

Beirut is constantly in motion. Its cars, its people, its constructions, its politics, its lands and their boundaries continually reform its urban space, shining a light on the multitude of objects and activities that build a city— and destroy it. “To speak of the city,” Robert Beauregard once stated, “is to articulate who we are, how we want to live, and what our society does or should look like.”\(^4\) When Beirutis speak of their city, their words instinctively carry contradictions. ‘You will never find a more beautiful city with more prideful citizens than this war-ravaged capital of inter-religious, inter-cultural hatred,’ could effortlessly roll off the tongue of any of its citizens. And it’s true. Beirutis love their city as much as they hate to love it. It has inflicted years of pain and anger epitomized by fifteen years of civil war, followed by twenty years of continued political uncertainty. Yet despite these crimes, its people continuously seem to forgive their beloved city like a battered spouse tends to forgive her abuser. They beam with

\(^3\) Mumford, Lewis. The Culture of Cities. pp 481.

pride when they encounter a foreigner on one of the many beaches or when they walk past him on the Corniche, hearing his foreign tongue (and often understanding it). The hospitality this said foreigner will then experience will be difficult to match in any further travels he embarks upon. The kindness of the people will be so overwhelming, in fact, that outsiders might start to wonder how this culture of generosity could have ever raised arms against one another.

As for its beauty, a popular saying can be helpful here: ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder.’ If a visitor were to wander through the narrow, dizzying streets of Achrafieh—or Hamra, or Chiyah, or Haret Hreik—lined with billboards and political iconographies disproportionately sized to the dilapidated, bullet-riddled buildings behind them, he might not agree with Beirut’s claim to ‘the most beautiful city in the world.’ To some, even walking in the newly rebuilt Central Business District, with its wide avenues lined with orderly trees along even sidewalks in front of neo-Ottoman, neo-French mandate, and neo-Modernist buildings may inspire an uncomfortable sense of ghostly mysticism hidden behind the impersonal facades. Yet Beirut has an undeniable charm. Perhaps it’s the Mediterranean climate and a constant awareness of the proximity of the Mediterranean Sea that forces citizens and visitors alike to fall in love with the city; or perhaps its beautifully coiffed and dressed populace, always ready to socialize and enjoy life, conceal the rest of the city’s flagrant scars.

One such scar, the pervasive presence of armed military on major street corners, has become an ignored fact of life for the normal Beirut. The militia has become urban furniture—part of the infrastructure. However, the pure fact of their constant occupation serves as a reminder of the city’s recent past, and as one of the many markers of the existence of opposing neighborhoods. While alternative indices of transgression into ‘other’ territory (the territory of an ‘other’ society) can easily be overlooked by visitors, and often are, major military artillery is usually hard for them to ignore. However, such blatant reminders of difference are not present at every territorial intersection, nor do they always need to be. As will further be discussed later, the boundaries within Beirut take multiple forms, and their intensities vary dependent on where their adjacent territories fall along the ‘spatial integration spectrum.’

ON THE EDGE OF SOCIETY

Throughout history, civilizations gathered and grew within the protection of city walls. For instance, a Greek ‘polis,’ the ancient identification of a city-state, idealized economic prosperity, worldly knowledge, and, in some cases, equality of mankind, in gross generalization. These ideals were represented physically in the architecture of the built environment, providing large, mixed public spaces for the exchange of goods and philosophies. The walls that surrounded the socially unified population prevented attacks from distant rulers and controlled the flux and flow of its citizens. In such cases,
walls were a necessity for purposes of security, which the society accepted, and usually appreciated.

The evolution of the city—the effects of industrialization and of ‘glo-balization’—has not fundamentally changed the purpose of the ‘polis’. In essence, it still idealizes economic prosperity, now more than ever, it still encourages education and knowledge, and, in some cases, it even calls for the equality of mankind. However, the physical representations of these ideals, ‘what [the] society should look like,’ has changed along with their fundamental demographic compositions increasing in size and complexity. Ease of travel between cities, and even between countries, has changed the distribution of populations. And now, the ‘polis’ has become the ‘metropolis,’ accommodating an increasingly diverse population. But, as Esther Charlesworth explains in her book, City Edge:

The essential role that cities have of mixing diverse social, ethnic, and economic groups that, in the end, collapse together all different kinds of peoples, has the potential to produce antagonism and chaos and, in many cases does so.  

And thus, a new type of intra-city barrier is erected to protect the city from itself.

The walls that used to represent security and communality now take on a much different role. With the onset of digital technology, high, tapered stone walls are mostly ineffective in preventing opposing armies from invading. Where physical barriers currently exist, they represent a fear from within, not from without. Fear of attack no longer points to far-away nations, but to one’s own neighbor. In the case of Belfast, for instance, a fence dividing Protestants from Catholics represents a political effort to calm the perpetual physical violence between the two religious groups sharing the same city. It acts as a visual manifestation of the dividing intra-city violence. Although the wall was intended to be a short-term solution to escalating violence, the residents of both sectors have demonstrated a long-term interest in the project; they suggest extending its limits. Lebbeus Woods describes this phenomena stating, “No one intends to create divided cities as a long-term solution to sectarian violence; rather, such cities emerge from the seeming intractability of the conflicts and their causes.”

Thus, finding no other plausible solution to reduce inter-religious violence, Belfast has decided to spatially divide itself into parts.

However, walls and other physical partitions, such as security checkpoint, fences, or even infrastructural or natural separations, can encourage more boundaries—invisible ones that are often more culturally ingrained. Physical and social boundaries create a sense of the feared unknown. The barriers temporarily dampen physical violence, but encourage fear and paranoia. Social differences are reinforced, rather than being confronted


6 Woods, Lebbeus. “Foreword” to Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia. pp VII.

7 Calame, Jon, and Esther R. Charlesworth. Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem,
and solved. Being prevented from exchange, social, visual, physical or otherwise, produces an anxiety of what one does not understand, particularly in an adjacent society. Subsequently, “the ignorance of the unknown ‘other’ behind urban partitions becomes a core ingredient for future conflict.” In other words, barriers nourish ignorance, which escalate to eventually create deeper social rifts within in the population. Societal fractures in an urban space, beyond causing fragmented territories, propagate apprehension that, over an extended period, incites conflict. In a domino effect, social disagreements create physical boundaries that perpetuate social divisions that will further be physically manifested through violence or additional barriers—a vicious cycle. (Figure 2.2)

The difficulty in solving this issue of the unknown ‘other’ in Beirut, though, is the boundaries’ invisibility. There are no ‘walls,’ in their physical sense, to demarcate one region from another. In fact, foreigners—and untrained citizens—traveling through the various neighborhoods of Beirut may never realize that they are entering new ground. This could stem from two phenomena: First, the Mediterranean city has not always been divided. In actuality, its positioning at the intersection of the ‘East’ and the ‘West,’ and along a historically significant trade port, classified it as a highly diverse society prior to the civil war. (Figure 2.4) Peoples of varying backgrounds and religions coexisted in relatively mixed neighborhoods. Thus, the identity of the built environment grew to simultaneously represent all inhabitants. Although the destruction of the civil war, and more recently, the war of 2006, did have an effect on the urban atmosphere of certain regions, most of the highly residential zones still maintain similar identities. And in certain cases, mixed neighborhoods still exist. Consequently, one seemingly requires training in the art of distinguishing a mixed neighborhood from a separatist one based on its urban elements.

Second, as was previously discussed, brute force is not the common form of boundary formation in Beirut. The most common, arguably, is an incorporeal force: memory. The memories of the atrocities of war, inflicted

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Mostar, and Nicosia. pp 5.

by ‘the other’ in a time of total distrust, continue to found allegations of animosity and hatred, which, inevitably, perpetuate divisions. As Calame and Charlesworth witnessed,

A Christian bus driver in Beirut noted that divisions continue due to lingering distrust: ‘We would like to communicate with them [Muslims] and I’m sure they’d like to do the same, but we’re both scared’ (Nohra 2002). Ethnic partition in Beirut left an enduring legacy of distrust and instability that is fading slowly.9

More importantly, what previous generations personally remember carries on to new generations of all creeds through blatant family discussions and expectations of sectarian alliances. Communication Design doctoral candidate Joanna Choukeir perfectly illustrates this point in her presentation of anonymous conversations with young Lebanese across the country. Through these, she brings to light the lack of communication among Lebanese youth of differing creeds. Choukeir highlights the impacts family and social environments have on their associative decisions.10 Evidently, the unifying factor among Lebanese is the divisive character of their recent memories.

Samir Khalaf explained, “[Lebanese] are all in a sense homogenized by fear, grief, and trauma.”11 This is compounded by the overabundance of political factions that maintain religious affiliations and sustain segregative pacts under guise of fairness to avoid future grief.12 More accurately, these politicians exploit the memories of their partisans in order to maintain power and prestige. Iconographies of religiously backed political leaders, martyrs, and orphans deliberately staged throughout the city attest to this fact as they form the visual geographies of Beirut. The building-sized billboards coupled with the party’s flag or emblem compose the ‘markers of ideological territories’ that serve as regional stamps of ownership.13 For this reason, an observer untrained in the subliminal messaging of said images could easily dismiss their, sometimes subtle, differences and political innuendo that serve as reminders of difference to the city’s regular inhabitant.

12 This refers to the unwritten ‘National Pact’ that religiously divided the country’s leadership, giving each of the three major sects, Christian, Sunni, and Shi’ite, a specified governmental role. This was slightly modified following the Civil War without being eradicated. (Krayem, Hassan. The Lebanese Civil War And The Taif Agreement.)
(03) hegemony and iconography
During the Lebanese Civil War, heavy artillery was not the only mode of attack on the capital city of Beirut. Just as international history portrays, enemies also wage graphic wars for the continued support of its followers and the continued hatred of their common enemy. The Nazi regime thrived on this technique of propaganda prior to, and at the start of World War II. The United Stated followed suit with its campaigns for the purchase of bonds, the conservation of gasoline, and the enlisting of soldiers for the defeat of the ‘enemy’ through ‘good citizenship’. The content of the graphics in such campaigns often conjured emotions of fear of the other, and pride in the advances of one’s own cause. Commonly, propagandists encourage such thoughts, “by agitating emotions, by exploiting insecurities, by capitalizing
on the ambiguity of language, and by bending the rules of logic.”¹ The case of Beirut was, and continues to be, no different. However, in the constant presence of the ‘enemy’, the placement of graphics within spatial bounds gains significant importance.

As is the case of many wars past, the battles of Lebanon were founded on partisan desires for greater power. The principle site of these hostilities logically became Beirut, particularly its downtown, as it served as the political and commercial capital of the country. Historically, the demographic constitution of Beirut was limited to Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians who coexisted relatively peacefully. However, with the arrival of Sunni Palestinian refugees as well as Orthodox and Catholic Armenian refugees, the composition of the general city was radically reconfigured. Simultaneously, Lebanese Shi‘ites, who had been prevented from inhabiting the city proper, migrated closer to Beirut from the south just as Maronite Christians began escaping the agricultural mountains for improved job opportunities in the capital. This is made more consequential by the miniscule geographic scale of the entire country, measuring “roughly seven-tenths the size of Connecticut.”² The sudden expansion of needs by the infantile state (only independent since 1943), coupled with international pressures for political alignment with the Arab League against Lebanon’s new neighbor, Israel, created palpable tensions of changing power structure among the various groups. These tensions erupted on April 13, 1975 with violence that resulted in the deaths of 4 Lebanese Christians and 27 Palestinian Sunnis, also leaving 20 wounded.³ The days, months, and years to follow saw the continued rise and fall of physical violence and political allegiances. In this battle for more political ground, the accumulation of physical territory became a measuring tool of success.

**IMAGE AS A BOUNDARY-FORMER**

The perpetual fear of retaliation, as was previously discussed, led the city to become physically, as well as socially and politically divided. Christians moved to the eastern sector of Beirut while Muslims moved to the west. Fear of the opposition and solidarity with one’s own affiliations prompted the overwhelming sweep of inhabitants to their prospective regions. Inhabitation, though, was not sufficient proof of strength. So, iconography took over the city. Buildings, walls, columns, telephone poles, balconies, storefronts, and abandoned cars became canvases on which to plaster the photographs of martyrs or political leaders, the flags of specific parties, or graffiti tags of the religious symbols of the dominant group in the area. These were not simply demonstrations of support. They served as reminders of solidarity for the people, as morale boosters for the combatants, and as frontier lines for the opposition. Most importantly, they outlined in

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uncertain terms the ideological distinctions between one territory and another—thus, their physical boundaries. Michael F. Davie explains:

“The experienced eye, that of the Beiruti, was sensible to all the subtleties of the iconographic plastering that, beyond the political message, defined a particular ideological space. It was possible to identify, based on the exterior signs exhibited, the territories controlled by each political group and to follow the evolution of their boundaries with time.”

Although Davie wrote this description immediately following the end of the conflict to portray the situation of iconographic ownership during the war, the same statement still holds true more than 20 years after the formal cease-fire (figures 3.4 and 3.5).

The end of the war in the 1990’s did not see the end of what Davie called, “iconographic markers of territory.” Despite an attempted ban on the pollution of public space by posters, make-shift billboards, and graffiti, parties and their supporters continue to pledge allegiance to their own causes before those of the nation-state. Thus, images become the architectural façades of buildings that advertise political and religious affiliations. Additionally, the weakened state of the federal government limits its ability to enforce implemented laws. The government’s inability to fight corruption and address the fundamental needs of its people further encourages sectarianism as the leaders of individual groups promise advancement and change. The icons,

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now freely displayed in all districts, including Shi’ite neighborhoods and Palestinian camps, simultaneously provide a reminder of the national government’s failures and the sectarian regimes’ successes. As Lara Deeb points out in her depiction of the Al-Dahiyya (or Dahiyeh) neighborhood, a southern suburb of Beirut infamous for its firm control by the Shi’ite Hizbollah party, “A person would sometimes point to a poster of a martyr while describing her solidarity with the Resistance, or to a portrait of a religious figure while explaining ‘how far the community had come.’” The posters symbolize the freedom to inhabit this neighborhood within the corporate boundaries of the city and to proclaim their religious beliefs freely within a supportive society, under the protection of a powerful, recognized political party in-tune with their followers’ piety.

While to some the plastering of icons on every piece of ‘owned’ property defines freedom, to others, or rather to the ‘other,’ it depicts attempts of iconographic hegemony. Deeb argues, “Depending on one’s political leanings, portraits of sayyids and shaykhs might be read as frightening evidence of an insistence on an Islamic state, or as a distressing reminder of the failures of the secular left, or as elements in an internal iconographic war among Shi’i political parties.” In all cases, it serves as a reminder of difference, and by extension, of a history of difference toward the goal of totalitarian control. The fear of this control, and of its constant reiteration, maintains the lines of social division and the boundaries of exchange.

Although the prevalence of imagery and hegemonic iconography is arguably most evident in Shi’ite regions, they remain the most emblematic signifiers of ideological territory throughout greater Beirut, and Lebanon as a whole. Importantly, only one region is spared the visual bombardment of sectarian representations: the privately owned and maintained Central Business District. Following the complete destruction of the downtown area during the war, solidere, a private company founded by the Sunni Prime Minister of the time, Rafic Hariri, bought all of the land entitlements of the sector and its immediate surroundings from the previous shop and small business owners in order to begin the reconstruction process. The endeavor spurred much controversy, first in the privatization of the entire downtown of Beirut, and then in the process of analysis, classification, and erasure of most of the existing, though significantly damaged, buildings in favor of new, high-end commercial and residential edifices. Even after the completion of much of the reconstruction process, it continues to raise questions of identity and history in architecture generally, and in Beirut specifically.

Despite its many shortcomings, the privatization of the CBD proved crucial to its success. As an entity separate from government (although heavily aided by its owner’s political position), SOLIDERE could dictate its own laws within the boundaries of its property. One of the most impactful rules was the ban on the mounting of any sectarian iconographies on their buildings or along their streets. Aside from the major international investment the reconstruction fostered, the lack of blatant partisan identity in what used to be the

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7 Ibid.
heart of division and violence subtly promoted coexistence through omission. I would argue that, while the CBD greatly benefits from the expansive, clean streets providing much needed public space and attracting members of all sects, its greatest asset is what it lacks: the discomfort produced by the overwhelming displays of difference.

One could argue, however, that SOLIDERE replaced political imagery with historical representation in its architectural style. Despite suffering major destruction, much of the rebuilding process focused on reconstructing the image of the past. The Lebanese people struggled to accept their post-war state and the events of the previous fifteen years, so SOLIDERE chose to erase those years and to focus the identity of the reborn public space on the idealized image of the older past (figures 3.6 and 3.7). Essentially, in trying to ignore political affiliation, the new downtown eliminated both photographic and architectural iconographies of war.

The reconstruction of the downtown district, while significant in the symbolic resurgence of a common public space, suggests an attempt at the re-centralization of what became a multi-nodal city during conflict. Iconographies delineated zones within which commercial and social activities occurred. Commercial districts that had previously been centralized in the CBD were now brought into individual neighborhoods creating new centers of trade. Samir Khalaf explains that, “in the process of its decomposition Beirut became, as it were, a place of many places.” So, while I would argue that numerous intentions and results of the CBD were positive, they ignore one crucial element to the re-socialization of the city and its country: a networked connection to the multiplicity of centers that were created by hegemonic sectarianism. This strategy cracks open the widows through which the regular citizen can learn about and interacts with his neighbors in their own environments (iconography included), not a reconstructed one.

(04) public space:

THE ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE
In the Borderlands

you are the battleground

where enemies are kin to each other;

you are at home, a stranger,

the border disputes have been settled

the volley of shots have shattered the truce

you are wounded, lost in action

dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means

the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off

your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart

pound you pinch you roll you out

smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands

you must live sin fronteras

be a crossroads.

1 Gloria Anzaldúa, excerpt from “To live in the Borderlands means you . . . .”, Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition, pp 361.

(04) Public Space: The Role of Infrastructure | Duality and Contradiction

Beirut is a crossroads. On the global scale, it links the Western world—Europe, the Americas, and Northern Africa—to the Middle and Far East. Set along the Mediterranean, the coastal city has acted as an exchange route for much of its history. As such, its ports to the outside world work as unclogged arteries to and from the heart of the capital city, bringing knowledge, goods, and investments to the region. On a local level, however, the meeting point of east and west represents a much more complex intersection.
THE EVOLUTION OF TRANSPORTATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the most fundamental sense, infrastructure facilitates the transportation of goods, amenities, and people quickly and safely from one point to another. This began with migration and hunting routes based on topography and ease of navigation. As civilizations settled and evolved, trans-cultural networks aimed at economic prosperity developed. These trade routes linked multiple points across the globe through land and sea. In addition to the monetary benefits for the traders and their port cities, the roads also allowed for the cross-cultural exchange of ideas and the advancement of knowledge. Essentially, infrastructure facilitated the evolution of the global society toward modernity; toward the open and international exchange of goods and ideas through the advancement of technologies.

With the onset of industrialization, the modern world evolved even faster. Steamboats, trains, and cars accelerated the pace of life, and its physical organization. New towns now developed along train routes that spread through even the most remote regions on the map; eventually the car allowed for total mobility and the development of any rural region, at any distance from the central business district, as long as a connecting road was accessible. Thus, the main role of infrastructure became to simultaneously segregate and link the multiple settled points scattered along the terrain—segregating by distancing one from the city, and linking by providing access to it. A new network of highways, bus stops, taxi stands, train stations, and, in the metropolitan regions, subway systems became the foundational elements for the transportation of goods and human resources throughout industrialized countries.

The globalization of the city and its infrastructure also created social paradigm shift in the understanding of public space. Where the Greek polis (previously described) relished in its public civility, spatially proven by the large, open agora, "a marketplace of ideas as well as goods," the modern city privatizes public space. Prof. Benjamin R. Barber argues that the magnification of scale and the cultural pluralism of the city relative to the homogenous, limited society of the polis have exchanged civic

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intimacy—where people know each other personally—with liberating anonymity—where “private liberty... is the highest good.” In the context of Beirut, ‘private liberty’ better describes a sect or group’s freedom to act independently of the whole than it does an individual. This is spatially denoted by the internalization of limited public spaces within segregated neighborhoods. Infrastructure, in its dual functions of separation and connection, specifically in the context of large highways and avenues, becomes the only shared, public space among differing groups.

**CONTRADICTIONS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

While discussing the common, public spaces between two factions, Lebanese architect and planner Oussama Kabbani explains, “These spaces embody two contradictory attributes. On the one hand, they are a separator or a buffer between rival communities, while at the same time, they are their meeting place.” This meeting place, though, can also be considered a clashing place. In downtown Beirut, for instance, the ‘buffer zone,’ the Central Business District, became the war zone as Kabbani explains:

> It is not a coincidence... that the Central District, the historic core of Beirut, was... transformed into [its] prime battlefield. This district, that used to be the common space for all Lebanese before the war, became a buffer space between them during the war.

Where a buffer between opposing factions must exist, so must hostile tensions that inextricably manifest themselves within that buffer zone. Essentially, the same mechanisms that aim to placate opposing groups become the stages upon which their tensions play out. In certain instances, such as in Belfast, the ‘buffer zones’ become walls to physically repress social tensions. However, as I have already explained, such a proposal cannot be sustained as a long-term solution.

In addition to their physical and spatial characteristics, Beirut’s roadways also ironically serve as similes for the state of their city’s politics and populace. Dominated by individual drivers of individual cars, the overcrowded roads are regularly impassable for hours on end. The frustrations of their users are compounded by the poor maintenance of the asphalt, often resulting in potholes that one must swerve to avoid or risk injury. This is made more difficult by the narrow, one-way streets, the directions of which are often ignored by the stubborn, tensioned drivers who need to attain their individual destinations (figure 4.4). The same indifference to regulations are also applied to traffic lights, making the streets a much more dangerous space for pedestrians. Parallel to the situations on the roads, the political conditions of the city are riddled with individual politicians promoting sectarianism and blocking any potential advancement toward a common destination of coexistence. They are further encouraged by the easy corruption of laws toward personal potency. This greater
general interest in individual desires rather than the greater good of the people creates a hostile and dangerous environment for the normal Beirutite, and Lebanese in general. These similarities seem difficult to dismiss in the search for the spatial and social implications of the re-socialization of Beirut.

**CASE STUDIES IN THE POLITICS OF ROADS**

Architectural proposals for superimposed connective roads for Israelis and Palestinians living within Palestinian territory also made evident the larger political issues of the two groups. As a proposal for attenuating violence in the region, a plan was propositioned to provide access points for both Palestinians and Israelis, linking them to various regions throughout the territories. However, these access points and their connecting infrastructure would not be shared. Rather, a vertical separation of space was suggested (figure 4.5). This would allow for secured permeability through areas independently occupied by each group. In this case, though, the issue became: who is allotted the top portion, and who is on the bottom? This simple question of separation posed a crippling issue to the proposal. While the Israelis requested that they hold sovereignty over the bridge and that the Palestinian road run along a seven-meter ditch, the Palestinians refused, preferring an inverse relationship. Obviously, the issue of disagreement was not whether the construction or the design of the bridge was better than that of the road. Rather, both parties understood the political implications of stratified infrastructure: the physically elevated group has metaphoric, visual, and sometimes even physical control over the group below. Thus, the infrastructural proposal intended to solve issues,
created new ones instead.

The Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) imposed the exact same strategy for a similar purpose in the Southern Dahiyeh suburb of the city. Previously a frequent confrontation zone, the road that originally divided the Sunni Palestinian camps from the Shi’ite Muslims of Dahiyeh often became impassable. As an added disadvantage, the same road was one of the few primary routes to the country’s only international airport. The end of general conflict attenuated the situation along the road, but it remained a hot-spot for political demonstrations. This meant two things: first, whenever a protest did occur, travel to and from the airport became difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, and second, one of the first impressions a tourist would have of Beirut upon arrival would be that of degenerate Palestinian camps and embattled grounds. Rather than search for a political solution to the protesters and their demands in order resolve both of these major problems, political leaders decided to, quite literally, build a bridge over them. While the bridge does resolve the immediate problem of mobility between the two regions to a major point of interest, it also creates a fissure between the neighborhoods and between the users of the bridge and their city context while serving as a new form of enclosure for the Palestinian camps. In addition to the limitation of access to the interiors of these residential quarters, visual permeability is restricted as the bridge passes on the fringes of both neighborhoods. In this case, as in many cases in Beirut, the infrastructure’s primary goal is that of division rather than connection.

So, the questions arise: what happens if the priorities of these infrastructural arteries were reorganized to set connection as their primary interests, and division second? How might this re-organize (or create) the city’s public spaces? And what would such an infrastructure look like? Now, rather than acting as roadblocks limiting access to and understanding of others, infrastructure can act as a threshold between people, between groups, between regions, between cultures, and between societies. This requires a citywide approach rather than a neighborhood or single-site approach; reconnecting Beirut through an integrated network of neutral public space.
AND NEUTRALITY

(05) networks
Given the societal and geographic situations made evident in current political environments dominated by unrest and discontinuity, neutrally connective public spaces are left to be desired.\(^1\) According to Lebanese sociologist, Dr. Samir Khalaf, public space, particularly in divided cities, should allow for “diversity and unity, intimacy and distance, and, hence, to allow groups to mix but not combine.”\(^2\) These characteristics were later used by Oussama Kabbani to define ‘neutral space.’\(^3\) As such, they

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1. Kabbani, Oussama R. “Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of the Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut.” Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City. pp 244.
3. Kabbani, Oussama R. “Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of the Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut.” Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City. pp 244.
provide members of each social group the freedom to demonstrate their individualities, assert their cultural identities, and share a singular area with those of ‘other’ societies. Neither sector is required to give up their beliefs in this situation, but differences between them are neutralized through equal ownership of space.  

PEACE-MAKING PUBLIC SPACE

The Civil War caused damage to public spaces far beyond the physical. In its current state, greater Beirut’s open areas shared by all denominations are limited to a handful of sites scattered throughout the city. Some of these are uncomfortable for mixed users based on their locations at the heart of an opposing neighborhood. In another instance, Horsh el-Sanawbar (Pine Forest), a vast, 74 acre park at the intersection of Beirut proper and greater Beirut along the original green line, has been kept partially inaccessible to the public from fear of the destruction of its newly replanted flora and fauna in the event of confrontation among the three opposing factions that surround it (figure 5.3). During the war, the barricading of contentious public space for the sake of civil control was justifiable. With protection of nature and people as the primary objective, such boundaries could not be argued. However, in a post-war environment, the crucial roles of these sites as peace-makers, rather than peace-keepers, takes priority.

4 Kabbani, Oussama R. “Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of the Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut.” Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City. pp 244.

Networks and Neutrality

The distinguishing difference between a peace-making and a peace-keeping space lies in its tolerance for exchange among its users. First, it is important to note that ‘peace-making’ does not suggest ‘peacefulness,’ but rather, describes a process through which peace is established. For a space to incite peace among its constituents, it must allow for a series of evolutions to take place which start by providing the basic opportunities for exchange among them. This is a fundamental part of the design of the public arena. Jane Jacobs explains this concept in her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities:

The tolerance, the room for great differences among neighbors—differences that often go far deeper than differences in color—which are possible and normal in intensely urban life... are possible and normal only when streets of great cities have built-in equipment allowing strangers to dwell in peace together on civilized but essentially dignified and reserved terms.  

Jacobs suggests that, if differences among citizens are to be neutralized, the public life of infrastructure must accommodate shared, civilized dwelling of public space. In her text, she argues that this public zone predominantly consists of sidewalks. However, in a city such as Beirut where dwellers of sidewalks (if sidewalks are used at all) are not often initially mixed, a network of connections simulating the job of a proper sidewalk while creating a mixed set of users must be introduced.

The importance of a ‘network’ in situations such as that of Beirut can be deduced purely by the etymology of the word. The first syllable, ‘net,’ defines an interconnected set of individual members—already lacking in Beirut. The second, ‘work,’ suggests that these individual members, beyond being interconnected, make an energized effort toward a common goal. The reason for such an effort is simple: since they are all connected in some way, if one fails, all fail, and the network collapses. Therefore, the ‘work’ done must aim at the same objective of not failing. Interestingly, ‘network’ defines both physical and social concepts. Just as a network of columns relies on each structural piece to carry the loads of the entire building, so does a social network rely on the participation of each of its infinitely growing number of members for the advancement of all. Most importantly, this asserts that each singular member of the system is equally important to the success of its entirety. And as Kabbani argues, the sense of equality is fundamental to the neutrality of the system.

Transportational infrastructure has already been presented as one public system shared by all parts of the city. However, the state of Beirut’s roadways and bridges has also been described as all-but-connective in its aims. Rather than acting as a network of connectivity, each individual member acts independently, causing the failure of the entire structure. Its divisive character also prevents instances of common dwelling as Jane Jacobs described it. This effectively gives rise to the need for a new organizational program of effective ‘roadways’ and their adjacent ‘sidewalks’ toward the goal of peace-making and tolerance. By creating a new interconnected network—a set of shared solutions to the daily, common problems of living in a city—infrastructure can become a mutual amenity. Additionally, if this resource provides an outlet for intimacy among its mixed users without combining, or impinging on personal space, it could fulfill the requirements set out by Samir Khalaf.

From within this framework of a neutral, public space of transportational infrastructure stems the proposal for an integrated public transit system for Beirut. While a metro serves the primary needs of displacement to its daily users, it also affords circumstances far more favorable than streets and roads for inter-societal encounters. The current

6 Kabbani, Oussama R. "Public Space as Infrastructure: The Case of the Postwar Reconstruction of Beirut." Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City. pp 244.
roadways are clogged by individuals driving independently in their own enclosed quarters. Conversely, the large, shared cars of the train enclose a mixed set of users through space and time. In parallel, the platforms and stationary points of gathering act just as a sidewalk would: providing places of dwelling, exchange, and spectacle.
RE\EN\VISIONING BEIRUT

(06) tres\passing boundaries

BEIRUT
French ethnologist, Marc Augé, eloquently describes the phenomenon of the subway in his book, In the Metro:

“Our trips today cross over those of yesterday, a slice of life of which the subway map... reveals only a piece, the aspect simultaneously the most spatial and the most regular, but about which we know well that everything was or seemed to be in order, no hermetic barrier separating... the life of the individual from that of others, our private life from our public life; our story from that of others. For our story is itself plural.”

Augé’s complex ethnographic analysis of the Paris public transit system exposes the social context of a public infrastructural network that simultaneously asserts one’s individuality while positioning him in a

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1 Augé, Marc. *In the Metro*. pp 9.
pluralistic society. He continues, “nothing is so individual, so irremediably subjective, as a single trip in the subway... and yet nothing is so social as one such trip.” These observations reveal evidence of the actualization of two of Samir Khalaf’s foundational elements of neutral public space: allowing intimacy and distance, and providing a space of both diversity and unity. They also affirm the institution’s elimination of certain pre-existing boundaries between individuals. However, the removal of these barriers does not suggest a relinquishing of control. Though an individual’s daily realities momentarily become more discernible, she retains the rights to her individuality; her identity remains her own all the while defining part of the identity of the mass.

Applying Augé’s analysis, one can begin re-envisioning Beirut’s sociopolitical structures theoretically and spatially. With the physical restructuring of mental boundaries, individual societies within the city may begin re-imagining themselves as part of a unified organization, notwithstanding their independent identities. Through the railway network, the physical and social limits of their districts can be passed without being trespassed. In other words, the distinctive characters of each group can be maintained while becoming visibly accessible, thus demystifying their ‘otherness.’ As Augé attests, the metro creates the spatial capacities for these exposing interactions to occur. Through the exploitation of the public system’s access to all of the institutions that form a city, all aspects of an individual’s life—their religion, their politics, their musical and literary interests, their individual personalities and hobbies, even their jobs and personal relationships—are put on display toward the goal of greater social understanding.

**RE-ENVISIONING THROUGH NEW VISIONS**

When a city or country has been physically divided by war, the viewpoints as well as the physical space of the other become mentally disjunctive and tangibly unattainable. Even when material barriers are eliminated, the mental barriers imposed on space create a fear of entry into unrecognized territory. In this issue, the metro can serve as a protected means of re-assimilation.

By traveling through the previously unknown spaces of the opposing faction, one can eliminate the conjured images of differences in the lives of two individuals of opposing affiliations. In this way, the politics of the regions become secondary to the actual lives of those living within them. The process of re-acquaintance can thus begin. However, a visual re-framing of the city’s neighborhoods is needed to allow for the re-visualization of Beirut as an entity. For this reason, the metro must travel through the urbanized spaces—not simply along the boundaries of its quarters, and not only below them. An above ground and ground level

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2 Augé, Marc. *In the Metro*. pp 35.
network that passes through the varying intensities of dwelling spaces, transitioning from private balconies to active commercial zones, provides insight into the many forms of living and the multitude of identities that shape a community. In this sense the metro becomes a show—where the travelers and the inhabitants watch and are watched.  

**PASSING BARRIERS**

In addition to allowing visual access, the metro crosses the mental barriers that were erected during the war. Within the protected zones of the train and its corresponding nodes, the fears of the mixed set of users can be attenuated through the moving nature of the train on specified tracks and the controlled nature of the stations. Augé goes further to explain that the very essence of the term ‘public transport’ assumes a contractual space of coexistence: “The theme of insecurity in the metro would not be so wide-spread, nor the reactions to any provocation or aggressive behavior so spirited, were not the idea of contractual consensus essential to the definition of this institution.” In sum, the metro, in its inherent physical and social features assumes equality, and thus neutrality, within its bounds.

The role of the metro train and its tracks are thus clearly defined as both the secure, moving platform from which to view the city, and the stage of a mixed set of users observed from the city as it enters and leaves. What, then, is the significance of the stations in-between these lines? They are the beginnings and the ends of transit without being a destination, they are the intersections where lines cross, and most importantly, they are the physical manifestations of a social construct. One could therefore argue that metro stops are a collection of circulation thresholds mixing movements in multiple directions, forming a grander threshold between the many destinations and lives of people. Such a definition carries significant spatial implications in the designs of the ‘correspondences’ as transitional constructions. Within Beirut, expressly, their transitional responsibilities lay more significantly in social evolutions augmented by architectural form.

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3 Augé, Marc. *In the Metro*. pp 55.

4 Augé, Marc. *In the Metro*. pp 44.
(07) a new GREEN LINE
What once was a unified city can be reborn—it can once again be a meeting place, a space for exchange, and a threshold to coexistence—following its self-destruction. The dividing character of the original ‘Green Line’ of Beirut can be redefined into its more common global definition in terms of a connective path within public transit. One exists in Washington D.C., in Dubai, in Montreal, and it defines, in name and in color, parts of countless other transit systems connecting multiple nodes of their respective cities. The same goal is set for the design of a new ‘Green Line’ for Beirut. This line does not describe a straight demarcation of boundaries; rather it is a loop with no beginning and no end. Every node through which it passes is of equal importance to the city. Every region it enters is respected as a part of the totality of parts that make the whole of Beirut.
Within the greater goal of connection, the design is subdivided into three types of interactions that aim at reconnecting the inhabitants with their contexts on multiple levels. The first of these is interaction with the city.

The city and its users can interact in a multitude of ways. First, this can be done from a distance by providing a platform from which to watch the city from afar. However, this only allows a picturesque portrayal of the environment, an overview, without entering it or understanding its internal complexities. Another possible interaction with the city would be at an elevated level from the street, with the dense fabric of buildings. This proposition creates an interchanging stage: the users of the station would look into the normal lives of the inhabitants of the surrounding buildings while the inhabitants could watch the transient lives of the travelers. As such, train riders gain access and knowledge of the daily lives of residents of all parts of the city within their contexts, including those which they had previously avoided. Thirdly, the station could re-enforce the status of the pedestrian by providing an enclosed street view of its surroundings. Finally, the commuter could be removed from the context of the city by travelling underground. In this way, one is constantly aware of the proximity of the city, without visual access to it. Throughout the network of stations, all of these interactions with the city will be considered.
The Concept | Interacting with History

One of the major aspects of dealing with a post-civil war culture, particularly in Beirut, is the people’s averisons to recent history. Rather than dealing with the open scars, a sort of social amnesia, retracting to pre-war eras, is preferred. Therefore, a second experiential factor should be addressed: interaction and confrontation with the multiple layers of history that found the city.

The post-war reconstruction process, while aggressive, did allow for excavations of the downtown district to occur, uncovering archeological relics dating at least from the Bronze Age in 3000 BC. Some of these historical areas were preserved while others were simply built over in a historicizing manner. However, these discoveries also brought attention to the Lebanese’s spatial connections to history.

Again, several possibilities exist for interactions with the historical relics. One of these is interaction from a distance, allowing a general understanding of the site and its objects without approaching them. Another, at closer distance, still separates the person from the relic, but provides a closer analysis of individual parts. A third provides direct access to history, permitting each user to personally interact with history and analyze it in his or her own manner. These strategies can be applied to all sorts of histories—centuries-old, recent, and future.
THE CONCEPT | Interacting with ‘Others’

The social interactions between people is perhaps the most significant experience the transportation system provides. Considering the subconscious tensions between peoples of different backgrounds in Beirut, the daily confrontations of these tensions and their truths is the principle aim of this project.

Exchanges among people happens on multiple levels. From a distance, the station and the platforms act as a theater, putting everyone’s actions on display to be watched. Thus, users are constantly aware of others and their actions, whether they be similar to theirs or different from them. Within circulation spaces, interaction occur on a closer level, sometimes forcing eye contact and closer proximity to others than might typically be experienced, especially in times of high traffic. Finally, along benches and within train cars, constant interaction occurs—physically, visually, and audibly. Thus, the train system becomes a vault of information about the ‘others.’
As a network, rather than a singular site, this proposal provides a new organizational layer to the disjunctive, bewildering density of the city. Thus, the railway lines provide a datum above and below the Beirut, while the correspondence points become monumental thresholds between one part of the metropolis and another—between an individual’s personal life, and his professional or social encounters; between Beirut’s multiple layers of history—providing new points of relativity. This new network creates a recognizable, reachable node within the neighborhood of the ‘other,’ while still providing its daily commuter functions.

Additionally, the general network works on multiple transit levels. While the rapid transit system provides mobility to dispersed points throughout Greater Beirut, each stop becomes a hub for local networks of buses and taxis. The integration of each of these elements into individual sites creates programmatic requirements of connection and separation.
The typical programmatic requirements of each stop as a transportation hub are simple, and primarily functional. Three principle moments of control, transfer, and waiting pragmatize the structure. However, their designs and importances are altered based on their categorization as threshold spaces, theater spaces, or service spaces. While the thresholds play important parts as socially connective moments, the theaters connect the users to the city and their contexts.
The crucial sites of the city through which the ‘green line’ would run are chosen based on several factors related to the three types of interactions previously described:

- The demographic diversity of the line is of primary significance. Therefore, eight sites are chosen on both sides of the ‘demarcation line’ of the civil war, mixing Christians and Muslims on a singular track. Within the eastern and western segments, the specific sites are also placed at pivotal demographic intersections of religions, ethnicities, or economic statuses.

- Rediscovery of the ‘other’ is strongly linked to a rediscovery of the other’s urban space and daily encounters. Therefore, the stops reframe the many urban fabrics of Beirut for eased visual access to them and tensed interactions with them.

- Given the historical events from which this project stems, site-specific connections with history are also taken into consideration while selecting sites.

- Finally, a ‘neutral’ site that is not identified as belonging to a particular group becomes a critical issue in the selection of several sites. For this reason, many of the stops are located along perceived boundaries and within the ‘unclaimed’ territories of roundabouts.
The intersection of Christian and Muslim neighborhoods along the original ‘green line,’ and the intersection of a large green space (Pine Forest) and the built urban fabric, deals primarily with the citizen’s encounters with the city. During the Civil War, the 65 acre forest was burned in the fighting. Consequently, the park was closed to the public in fear that more damage would be done to it as the municipality replanted it. Following the end of the war, 66% of the site remained closed in an attempt to preserve the newly planted landscape. As a result, the largest public space of the city was left mostly inaccessible to the general public.

The tense relationship this created between the built environment and the fenced green space is addressed in my proposal for the roundabout at their intersection. This proposal provides a layered access to the park, without ever entering it. A series of ramps leading from the city toward the Horsh gather at a communal platform, then are redistributed into multiple viewing platforms that hover above the garden, allowing the trees to grow between them. Ramps of different widths provide different levels of privacy for the users. So, an individual could choose to journey through the narrow platforms alone, while a group of people could prefer to experience the park together from a distance. The train platform is then cantilevered from the gathering platform back toward the city, reiterating the interdependence of city and environment.
The Central Business District of Beirut is the historic heart of the city. It is said that Beirut has been destroyed and rebuilt seven times, with the CBD at its core. One such reconstruction occurred most recently after the Civil War that focused much of the fighting in the area. Consequently, the site chronicles many layers of the city’s weighty history. Although much of the CBD has been rebuilt in a historicizing manner following the French-Mandate plan, one contentious historical site has been left untouched.

Martyr’s Square has long been the site of public gathering spaces. They have taken the forms of gardens, parks, memorials, and even transportation hubs. Now, though, the square sits desolate, concealing the stories long-past below it, and showcasing only a bullet-riddled statue—a symbol of war and survival. Significantly however, the aura of the site as a public gathering space remains and reignites when it transforms into the center for demonstrations and protests demanding political and social reform.

My underground proposal for this site emphasizes the weight of its history in the looming boulders above the platforms that encapsulate history while allowing light and life to penetrate through the layers, thus creating a dialogue between the two forms of the present. As one enters into the stairs leading from the street level to the platform, he confronts ever level of the city’s history on a personal level, visualizing the foundations of Beirut. However, the primary encounters occur at the platforms, in the presence of the ‘others’ under the weights of history enlightened by a reconnection to the present.
Finally, the third site I focus on was chosen primarily based on its location at the meeting point of multiple ethnic, religious, and economic situations. This round-about lays in-between an upper-class Shi‘ite neighborhood, a lower-class Shi‘ite neighborhood, and a Sunni Palestinian camp. Consequently, its architectural proposal must respond to a multiplicity of ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds.

As the neutral space among the three factions, this node must allow for each group to maintain its identity while co-existing with others, and for each to enjoy a sense of shared ownership of public real estate. To these ends, the architectural proposal presents each side with its equal share of space that bridges the neighborhoods to the center of the round-about, elevated over the street. These first bridges function as elongated green spaces, providing a suspended landscape that overlooks the city on each side of the site. A second series of bridges extract the users from the landscape to a series of transfer bridges that lead to the metro waiting platform above. A bus and taxi terminal resides on the street level within the round-about.

Such a response elongates the process of movement through the site, allowing greater opportunities for unexpected encounters. This process also creates important nodes of intersection at the points of entry to the site and of transfer to the other levels.
THE THRESHOLD | Between Societies
FINAL REGARDS

(08) conclusion
To be clear, the objective of this project is not to solve the deep-rooted sociopolitical issues of Beirut, or of Lebanon. Social interaction within transportation cannot replace the need for unbiased education, political reform, and economic stability in the country. The hope, however, is that this can serve as a first step toward an open-minded populace to accept change. As Samir Khalaf put it:

> Just as enmity has been socially constructed and culturally sanctioned, it can also be unlearned. Under the spur of enlightened planning, and other schemes of spatial re-arrangements, individuals can be resocialized to perceive differences not as dreaded symptoms of distrust, fear, exclusion or seclusion, but as manifestations of cultural diversity and enrichment.¹

Architects and city planners have the tools to provide these spatial re-arrangements and to create opportunities for resocialization. However, change will not occur overnight; time is a crucial factor of evolution. My point in this project, though, is that change is possible, and more importantly, that architects have a role to play in providing certain designed encounters that create new opportunities for social reform.

“Our trips today cross over those of yesterday, a slice of life of which the subway map... reveals only a piece, the aspect simultaneously the most spatial and the most regular, but about which we know well that everything was or seemed to be in order, no hermetic barrier separating... the life of the individual from that of others, our private life from our public life; our story from that of others. For our story is itself plural.”

Marc Augé. In the Metro
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