The Acceleration of Chaos

تسارع الفوضى

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

1   N.N.Taleb, *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder* (Penguin Books 2014,)

2   J. Rotman, *Omarm de chaos* (de Geus, 2021), p.44

3   A. Camus, *The plaque* (1947)

4   J.L. Garnett, A. Kouzmin, *Communicating throughout Katrina: Competing and complementary conceptual lenses on crisis communication.* (Public Administration Review, 2007) P.175

This research explores the complexity of rebuilding society in the aftermath of ruinous chaos. It is conducted in the phases after chaos strikes, when communities are at risk of experiencing a gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development. It specifically takes into account a by-effect of chaos, a receptiveness to change, and how it can be an opportunity to rebuild with a sustainable standard.

This research does not focus on designing for chaos in the form of, for example, emergency housing, but rather on designing elements, focussing on clarity and transparency, that enable a community to rebuild and use chaos to their advantage.

Background

The nature of chaos and human response to chaos are essential when grasping the growing tensions, we experience worldwide.
Chaos, a period of instability, is an inevitable by-effect of complex systems. When chaos manifests – a war breaks out, a tsunami hits, or an earthquake breaks down a city – unpredictable irregularities can cause a massive aftermath. Paradoxically, there is a certainty in these irregularities; a certainty of chaos exists.[1]

One important by-effect of chaos itself is that it creates a receptiveness to change within the system it manifested in. It lowers the inertia to change a system.[2]

Human response and experience when chaos strikes are significant. Albert Camus' *The Plague* describes the response of the citizens of Oran after the plaque has landed in their city. It describes the denial, anger, depression, small mindedness, and bureaucratic impotency of looking chaos in the eye; all to avoid chaos.[3] Remarkably, the novel written in 1947 bears many similarities with our own response to COVID-19.

This shows that both chaos and human response to chaos are unpredictable, yet can be anticipated, and therefore used.

Statement of problem

Looking at the process of urban disasters, the aftermath of chaos can be broken down into four phases, as classified by aid-agencies such as UNHCR:

1. The immediate 'Search and Rescue Phase' can last hours or days after the event, its impact overshadowing all news. A crisis becomes a media event.[4]
2. The second phase is 'Emergency Relief'. This phase focuses on meeting basic needs and keeping victims safe and alive. Generally, the media only covers the first phases of an emergency.

3. The third phase is 'Early Recovery', this can take up to months, highly depending on the situation.
4. The fourth and final phase is 'Medium to Long-Term Recovery', which can last up to years.[5]

However, we often experience a gap between the 'Emergency Relief Phase' and the 'Medium to Long-Term Recovery': the aid-gap. The initial spark dies, and with it, media coverage, funding, and overall help.[6]

This research will focus on this aid-gap, as a result of ruinous chaos, and attempts to answer the question of how we can navigate chaos, counting on its inevitability, and the receptiveness to change it creates.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to explore how communities can rebuild from chaos and making sense of chaos to their advantage. Specifically, this study seeks to understand the role of design in aiding transition from emergency relief to medium to long-term recovery. It will seek input from a development/ relief point of view, but also from a philosophical point of view, by taking the identified aid-gap and making an architectural contribution.

Research questions

The main research question is as follows:

How can architecture enable communities to rebuild and thrive in the aftermath of ruinous chaos, by rapidly implement simple, sustainable design solutions, whilst acknowledging the chaotic situation and leveraging the receptiveness to change?

The sub-questions play into different aspects of the theory, research, and design:

1.Theory method:
What types of ruinous chaos can be expected in communities, and how can these be navigated?

2. Research method:
How can architecture play into the aftermath of ruinous chaos in communities and accelerate their sustainable recovery?

3. Design method:
What design interventions can support communities in their recovery after ruinous chaos, specifically during the aid-gap, and how can these work in different environments?

5   M. Crutchfield, OCHA ReliefWeb. *Phases of Disaster Recovery: Emergency Response for the Long Term* (2013).

6   UNHCR, '*Internal information note on the roundtable on the gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development*', (Geneva,1999).

Figure 1: Armenia Street, Lebanon. Personal photograph from case study.

Master research

Renée Meijer

LITERATURE REVIEW

7.   S. Kaufmann,
At home in the Universe:
The Search for the laws
of Self-Organization
and Complexity (Oxford
University press,1995).

8.   D. Loorbach, N.
Frantzeskaki, F. Avelino,
Sustainability Transitions
Research: Transforming
Science and Practice for
Societal Change (Annual
Review of Environment and
Resources, 2017).

9.   J. Rotman, Omarm
de chaos (de Geus, 2021)

10.   S. Kaufmann,
At home in the Universe:
The Search for the laws
of Self-Organization
and Complexity (Oxford
University press,1995).

11.   D. Loorbach, N.
Frantzeskaki, F. Avelino,
Sustainability Transitions
Research: Transforming
Science and Practice for
Societal Change (Annual
Review of Environment and
Resources, 2017).

12.   Fink, S. Crisis
Management: Planning for
the Inevitable (1986).

The literature review contains a general overview and introduction of the main concepts and ideas. It is split up into three sections: Overview of topics, theoretical framework, and findings from previous studies.

Overview of Topic
The general overview and introduction of the main concepts and ideas form the basis of the research study will be given. These topics are: Complex systems, chaos, inertia to change, Sustainability transition/SDG's and finally, aid-gap.

Complex systems
Our world is built out of complex systems that are interlocked with each other, such as our financial or social-economical systems. Complex systems are highly interconnected and non-linear. This means that any changes to one part of the system can have unpredictable effects on other parts of the system. The nature of a complex system is that it constantly searches for a dynamic balance while adjusting to its environment. Therefore, complex systems are highly adaptive, meaning that they are constantly changing and evolving in response to their environment. It can develop towards a certain attractor which can lead to a period of instability: chaos.[7] This is not a problem for the system, it can reorganize and will create a new structure in search of a new dynamic balance, figure 2[8],

a new complexity, or it will break down.[9]

Two things are important to note; chaos is a definite element of complex systems, this is not a problem for the system, but an opportunity.[10]
Complex systems often exhibit emergent behaviour, meaning that outcomes produced by the system can be unexpected and difficult to predict from the individual components of the system.

Knowing the origin of complex systems is relevant to this research since it can lay at the base of ruinous chaos. A small change in a complex system's environment can cause a cascade of changes that produce a chaotic outcome, meaning that small changes can cause large and unpredictable outcomes.[11]

Chaos
After destructive chaos manifests, it develops through different phases and priorities. Steven Fink's ''Crisis management'', writer of the first book on crisis management introducing pro-active strategies, lies at the base of crisis life cycle research and will be used as a guide within the defining of these phases.[12]

A characteristic triad of humans is to avoid or limit change and more so, chaos. To create the illusion of control, a risk-evading
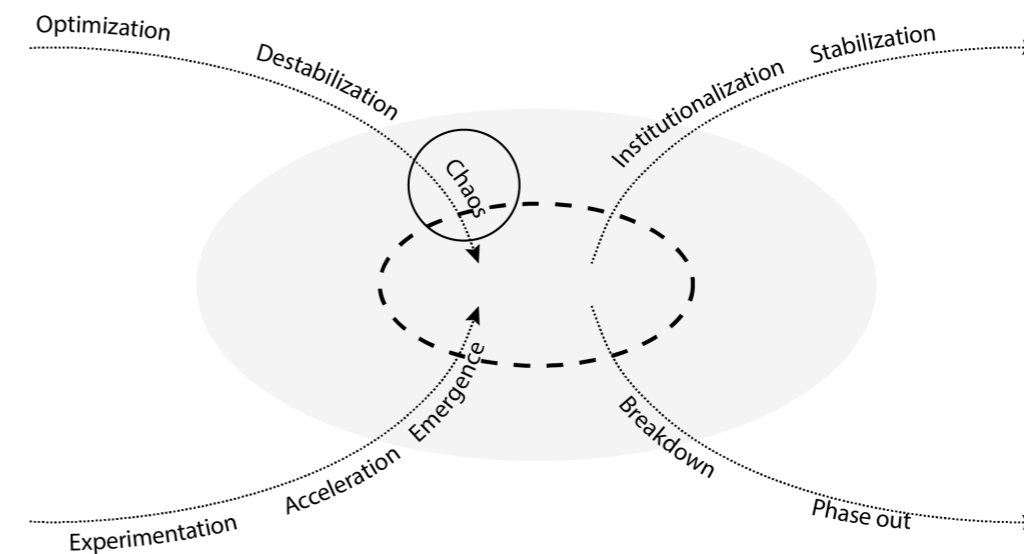

Figure 2: Transition model, D. Loorbach, N. Frantzeskaki, F. Avelino,

society has been created in which individuals tend to focus on controlling events that have a potential small impact and overlook larger events that are rarer but can have an enormous impact. The Rumsfeld Matrix, a tool used to classify different kinds of knowledge and uncertainty, categorises this with two categories of particular relevance in this research: unknow-knowns, and unknown-unknowns.
- Unknow-knowns are blind spots. The information is there but is not acknowledged. Examples are the Corona virus[13], and earthquakes.
- Unknow-unknowns are defined as black swans.[14] Black swans are events that are impossible to predict but can be logically explained in hindsight.[15] Examples of black swans are 9/11, the 2008 banking crisis and the nuclear disaster in Fukushima.[16]

Inertia to change
The relation between chaos and complex systems shows the following: chaotic events can cause a system to become more receptive to change, due to the systems becoming more vulnerable and unstable and therefore receptive to interventions: a low inertia. A low inertia causes a system to be less resistant and more sensitive to change. This means that smart interventions at the right time can have a major impact[17].In the book ''The essence of chaos'', Edward Lorenz, known as the originator of modern chaos theory[18,] describes this as the following:

"The phenomenon that a small alteration in the state of a dynamical system will cause subsequent states to differ greatly from the states that would have followed without the alteration." [19-]

13   J. Rotmans,
Omarm de chaos (de Geus,
2021)

14   N. Taleb, The Black
Swan: The Impact of the
Highly Improbable (Penguin
Books, 2007).

15   J. Rotman, Omarm
de chaos (de Geus, 2021)

16   N. Taleb, The Black
Swan: The Impact of the
Highly Improbable (Penguin
Books, 2007).

17   J. Rotman, Omarm
de chaos (de Geus, 2021),
p.44

18   E. N. Lorenz, F.
Lorenzelli, The Essence
of Chaos (University Of
Washington Press 1995)

19.   E. N. Lorenz, F. Lorenzelli, The Essence of Chaos (University Of Washington Press 1995)

20.   Friedman, Thomas L. (2005). The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

21.   J. Rotman, Omarm de chaos (de Geus, 2021)

The Essence of Chaos

Approaching this within the context of this research can result in an opportunity to rebuild with a sustainable standard. A low inertia to change can therefore be seen as an opportunity created by chaos.

Sustainability transition/ SDG's

Why is it important to rebuild with a new sustainable standard and to have sustainable development goals (SDGs)? It is widely accepted the world is currently in an age of transition, with increasing global interconnectedness, technological advances, and environmental shifts resulting in a period of instability and unpredictability.[20] It is necessary for the world to go through multiple transitions in order to come to a new, sustainable

equity.[21] This equity can be explained using doughnut economics, as illustrated in figure 3. The doughnut model is an economic framework that proposes that economic growth should be measured in terms of social and environmental well-being. The challenge and tension we face today can be divided in two rings. The inner ring is a place of deprivation and poverty, where people lack resources to meet the basic needs in life. The outer ring indicates the planetary boundaries. Going beyond the outer ring will cause an ecological overshoot, with humanity putting more pressure on the planet than it can take. The goal is to bring communities within the space of the two rings, inside of the doughnut. Important to note is the interconnectivity of the complex systems in our world. With raising tension, visible

Figure 3: Doughnut economics, K. Raworth.

within doughnut economics, chaos will increase, fuelled by multiple drivers, such as climate related conflicts.[22] In other words, our complex systems need to come to a new dynamic balance. This challenge becomes more complex when focusing on already fragile areas, but therefore more important.

As described earlier, chaos will always be a certainty, but by using the recovery phase as an opportunity to accelerate the sustainability transition, we can limit the ecological pressure, which in its turn will decrease the risk of climate related chaos in the future.[23]

Aid-gap

Within this research, a specific period following destructive chaos sets the boundaries in which the architectural intervention will be conducted, namely, the aid-gap. The aid-gap occurs between the initial humanitarian assistance and the development process and can take up to years.[24] Within the aid-gap, a community is vulnerable and at risk of landing in the inner circle of the doughnut economics (figure 3). It can trigger violence, displacement, and overall deprivation.[25] The goal of the architectural intervention is to bridge the aid-gap when it occurs.

The aid-gap does not consist of a singular problem but can, for

example, exists on an institutional and financial level, with lack of funding, synergy between parties, or (raw)materials.[26]
Moreover, once a community is hit by ruinous chaos, it does not necessarily become more resilient after overcoming this chaos, but rather more fragile.[27] To understand this, it is again important to look at the interconnectivity of our world. After destructive chaos manifests, a community can become financially and economically weak on top of the psychological and physical blast. Citizens that have the means to escape the situation will do so, which can lead to a brain drain. Due to the interconnectivity of an economy, a flywheel effect can occur, and a community can spiral further down into deprivation, a bad-to-worse transition.[28]

Overview of the research questions

The main research question is as follows:

How can architecture enable communities to rebuild and thrive in the aftermath of ruinous chaos, by rapidly implement simple, sustainable design solutions, whilst acknowledging the chaotic situation and leveraging the receptiveness to change?

The idea of approaching this problem is to design a structure that enables a community not

22.   K, Raworth, Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist (Penguin Random House, 2018).

23.   K, Raworth, Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist (Penguin Random House, 2018).

24.   UNHCR, 'Internal information note on the roundtable on the gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development', (Geneva,1999).

25.   J. Crisp, Mind the gap! UNHCR, humanitarian assistance and the development process (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, 2001).

26.   J. Crisp, Mind the gap! UNHCR, humanitarian assistance and the development process (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, 2001).

27.   D, Gorevan, Downward Spiral: the economic impact of Covid-19 on refugees and displaced people (Norwegian refugee council).

28.   D, Gorevan, Downward Spiral: the economic impact of Covid-19 on refugees and displaced people (Norwegian refugee council).
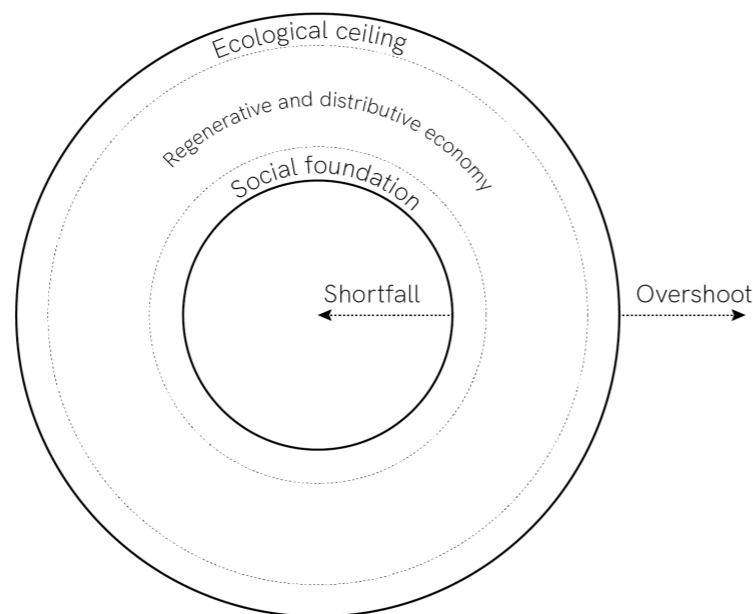
Complex systems

Loorbach, D., Frantzeskaki, N. & Avelino, F. (2017). Sustainability Transitions Research: Transforming Science and Practice for Societal Change.

S. Kaufmann (1995), At home in the Universe: The Search for the laws of Self-Organization and Complexity

J. Rotman (2021), Omarm de chaos

Crisis life cycle

Fink, S. (1986). Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable

Risk

Aid-Gap

UNHCR, The gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development

J. Ensor

Opportunity

Low Inertia

J. Rotman (2021), Omarm de chaos

E. N. Lorenz, F. Lorenzelli (1995), The Essence of Chaos

(Ruinous) Chaos

E. N. Lorenz, F. Lorenzelli (1995), The Essence of Chaos

U. Beck (1992), Risk Society: towards a New Modernity

N. Taleb (2007), The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable

J. Rotman (2021), Omarm de chaos

Sustainability Transition

Loorbach, D., Frantzeskaki, N. & Avelino, F. (2017). Sustainability Transitions Research: Transforming Science and Practice for Societal Change.

J. Rotman (2021), Omarm de chaos

K, Raworth, Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist

Navigating disorder

N.N. Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder

Theory

Method

Case study

R.K. Yin, Case study research and applications : Design and methods

Research labs: *Beirut Urban Lab, Arab Center for Architecture, Beirut Arab University, Public Works*

NGO's: *Beirut Heritage Initiative, Beb we Shebbek, Offre Joie*

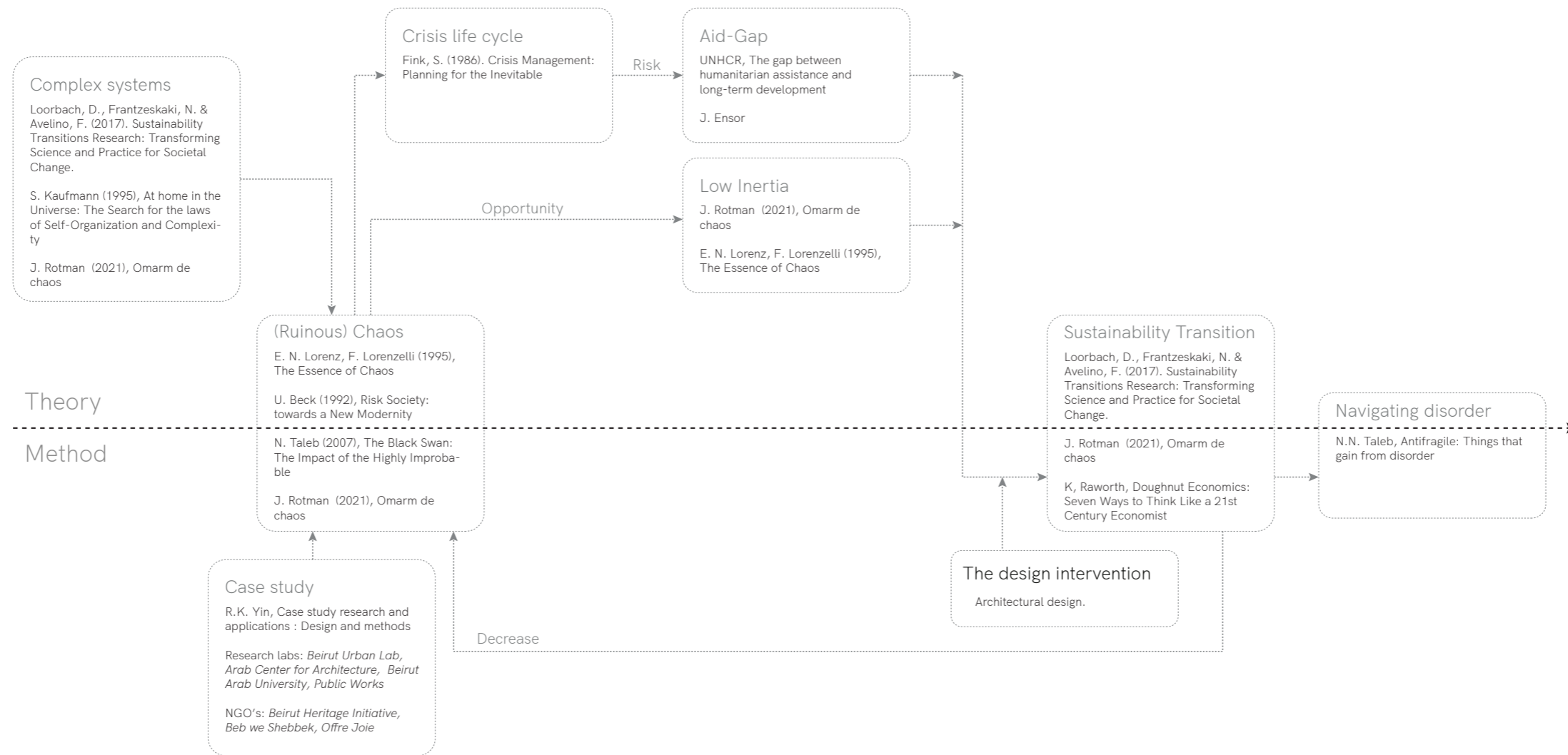**The design intervention**

Architectural design.

Decrease

Figure 4: Diagram of the theoretical framework.

29.   N.N. Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,)

merely to be resilient but to make sense of chaos.[29] This results in the following hypothesis:

A certainty of destruction exists, in the aftermath, in the dynamics of chaos. Well designed, adaptive structures can accelerate the process to rebuild a community within an aid-gap and set a new sustainable standard, making the community stronger than before the chaos manifested.

Related to the larger picture of the research topic, the purpose of this research and the subsequent architectural intervention, is a model of dealing with chaos, embracing it, and using its by-effects to accelerate the sustainability transition the world is currently experiencing.

The main research question will be answered by approaching the sub-questions within different frameworks:

The first sub-question is approached from a theoretical framework: *What types of ruinous chaos can be expected in communities, and how can these be navigated?*

The concepts as stated above, such as inertia to change, will be used to conclude this question.

The second sub-question, *"how can architecture play into the aftermath of ruinous chaos in communities and accelerate their*

sustainable recovery?", will be approached from a research perspective, by conducting fieldwork in Beirut, Lebanon.

The final sub-question is approached by the design method:

What design interventions can support communities in their recovery after ruinous chaos, specifically during the aid-gap, and how can these work in different environments?

This will be done by designing an architectural intervention within the context of the case study in the final stages of this research.

Relevant theories and frameworks

This research draws on multiple frameworks as guidelines, namely UNHCR guidelines, antifragility, and "shortest path network".

Firstly, concerning classifications of humanitarian response and long-term development, differentiating emergency situations from humanitarian development, following the guidelines of the United Nations or UNHCR on disaster relief and recovery.

Secondly, the role of "resilience" within sustainable development, as approached by Nasim Taleb, a Lebanese philosopher and risks analyst, will be part of this research framework. Antifragile,

as Taleb calls it, explains how certain constructs gain from chaos.

Lastly, the Shortest Path Network Theory will be connected to the research. It explains the benefits of creating shorter lines between entities, in the context of this research, in order to reduce obstacles such as corruption. This theory is relevant within community-based approaches when responding to destructive chaos because shorter connections between people reduce the complexity of communications and increase the likelihood of honest and transparent transactions.

Theoretical Framework

The different concepts as introduced above, can be found in figure 4, a diagram of the theoretical framework, which additionally shows the interconnectivity of the different concepts. Within the scope of this research, visible in figure 4, an overlap between theory and method exists.

The concept of chaos is both explored on a theoretic level as well as used as a method; chaos can be seen as the catalyst of this research, since the research and the subsequent design will only be implemented after chaos manifests. Furthermore, one of the by-effects of chaos; a receptiveness to change, is used to approach the problem

systematically.

This approach also accounts for sustainability transition or SDG's. Following guidelines in terms of sustainable transition is part of the theoretical framework. In combination with the effect on climate related chaos, it becomes a method to approach the initial research question.

Lastly, gaining from chaos is based on a theoretical concept: antifragility, first written about by Nassim Taleb, mentioned above. Within this research however, this theory also functions as the design method and as a system characteristic. This will be further explored in methods and methodology.

Findings from Previous Research

This research is based on several theories stemming from different disciplines. This is relevant because the research attempts to connect different scopes to attend to their interconnectivity, instead of approaching them as isolated topics.

One of the main theories, often executed by BHP Foundation, is radical transparency[30], open contracting[31] and natural resource governance[32]. These are theories, originating from business models, that will be used as a starting point to be translated to the architectural discipline.

30.   Open Contracting Partnership: open, fair & efficient public contracting. (open-contracting.org, 2023).

31.   Leveraging Transparency to Reduce Corruption Initiative. (brookings.edu, z.d.)

32.   BHP Foundation: Natural resource governance.(bhp-foundation.org, z.d.)

Figure 5: Armenia street. Personal photograph from case study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

33.   R. K. Yin, Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods. (SAGE Publications, 2017)

The research methodology provides a framework on how the data in this research is collected, analysed and interpretate, in order to validate the results. The following chapter contains: Design of study, data collection, data analyses, relevant design strategies.

Design of Study
In response to chaos, human perspective and experience is essential, as well as social-spatial practices. Therefore, the applied framework, fit for this research, is grounded in praxeology and phenomenology epistemes. Praxeology stems from sociology and focuses on human actions, particularly related to decision-making and purposeful behaviour. Phenomenology stems from philosophy and focuses on the subjective experience of humans.

This study will employ a descriptive, mixed methods research design with a single-case study to collect and analyse data, to later be applied to an architectural design. A qualitative approach will be used to conduct the social and spatial analysis, substantiated using *Case Study Research and Applications*[33].

The case study will focus on collecting data from various disciplines to approach the research question from wide angle. Disciplines involved are as followed: governance, historic, local, architectural/urban, international and economic perspective.

It is relevant to approach the design of this study from a multidisciplinary perspective, due to the highly complex scenario the study appoints. Therefore, multiple sources of evidence or information will better the data collection. Findings that occur during the case study are tested within these different disciplines in order to determine the level of plausibility and impermeability.

Data Collection
Data will be collected from several interviews, done in person or online. The interviews will include in-depth qualitative questions. Participants will be asked to confirm the current status of the aid-gap and the inertia to change, as well as their experience, looking from both their discipline as well as on a personal level, through different phases of the aftermath of the port blast in Beirut on the 4th of August. Regarding their understanding, they will be asked to describe what elements were crucial during the different phases of the aftermath and what elements were or are still lacking.

They will be asked to review the first conclusions and designs resulting from the ongoing stages of this research.
During the case study, data will be collected in the form of direct field observation, participant observations, site capturing, observational site-mapping and site analyses. The case study is open to physical artefacts when relevant.

The field study also aims to identify design interventions that had a positive effect on the recovery of Beirut and its citizens, as a form of project comparison. The goals are to later translate this to a generative approach within the design.

Data Analysis
The data collected from the interviews will be analysed using descriptive statistics. This will be done using NVivo, codifying per theme. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data and to determine the level of agreement among the participants about the main research questions, as well as the plausibility of the first conclusions and design options.

The results of this analysis will be used to provide insights into key elements that are lacking during a period with a considerable aid-gap.

Relevant design strategies
Regenerative design
Navigating chaos is the main goal of this research and the design that will follow, in order to set a new standard in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, the structure designed to be implemented is one that strives for an antifragile nature, a new standard for future shocks. This way, the new structure will not only be more resilient to shocks in the future, but will learn from disorder.[34]

"By grasping the mechanisms of antifragility, we can build a systematic and broad guide to non-predictive decision making under uncertainty (...) - anywhere the unknown preponderates, any situation in which there is randomness, unpredictability, opacity, or incomplete understanding of things."[35]
- N. Taleb

In nature antifragility emerges as diversity and buffer-capacity. Both elements create resistance to shocks and extreme situations.[36]
The theory is straightforward; It is much harder to predict a certain risk, than it is to assess if something is fragile.[37]
According to chaos-theory, systems are vulnerable during periods of chaos, and therefore sensitive to interventions. A smart intervention at the right time can have a big impact.[38] There is a low inertia to change, hence it is agile[39].
When seeking order, only the appearance of it is created; a degree of control is only obtained when randomness is embraced.[40]

The design method would be the implementation of an

34.   N.N.Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,), p.4

35.   N.N.Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,), p.4

36.   J. Rotman, Omarm de chaos (de Geus, 2021), p.45

37.   N.N.Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,). p.4

38.   J. Rotman, Omarm de chaos (de Geus, 2021), p.44

39.   E. N. Lorenz, F. Lorenzelli, The Essence of Chaos (University Of Washington Press 1995)

40. N.N.Taleb, Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,). p.7

41. D. Crowley, T. Marat-Mendes, R.Falanga, T.Henfrey, & G. Penha-Lopes, Towards a necessary regenerative urban planning: Insights from community-led initiatives for ecocity transformation. (CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios, 2021).

42. D. Crowley, T. Marat-Mendes, R.Falanga, T.Henfrey, & G. Penha-Lopes, Towards a necessary regenerative urban planning: Insights from community-led initiatives for ecocity transformation. (CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios, 2021).

architectural intervention in a period that only occurs when chaos has struck:
    1. The community needs to recover.
    2. The existing system is likely to have a low inertia to change causing the implemented intervention to ignite.

By breaking down the philosophical approach to the problem, regenerative design can be utilized as a design strategy.

Regenerative design moves beyond sustainable design in order to create regenerative communities, cities, economies and cultures. In short, rather than simply 'doing less damage to the environment', a regenerative approach emphasizes a holistic system approach that seeks to reverse the degradation of the Earth's natural systems, while also designing human systems that can coexist and evolve with them.[41] The economical perspective on regenerative design is connected to doughnut economics by Kate Raworth, as mentioned earlier in this research, figure 3. Within this approach, a balance is sought between keeping communities out of deprivation while avoiding a climate overshoot.
In terms of approach, regenerative design can be considered as antifragile since it moves beyond just maintaining a situation and strives for revitalization.[42] Therefore

improving climate and social structures to grow beyond just resilience.

The communal perspective of regenerative design strives for a bottom-up approach due to governments so far being unable to enact necessary changes. This portrays social justice, as well as local and inclusive representation.[43]

Sustainable Recovery & Reconstruction Framework
Within this research a degree of flexibility is asked of the design in order to respond in multiple contexts. However, for any development to be successful, it needs to correspond accordingly to the situation. Therefore, this research uses the 'Sustainable Recovery and Reconstruction Framework'', initiated by the Green Building Council, the World Bank and UN Habitat. This is used as a script that informs the design.

The framework provides a roadmap to create resilient and sustainable communities and to build back stronger. It provides guidelines on the psychical reconstruction of buildings, but also focuses on infrastructure and on social, economic and environmental factors to contribute to long-term sustainability, such as reducing energy and water use, but also increasing safety. The appendix shows the response on this

framework within the context of this research. The framework identifies three types of chaos: war conflict, climate related and man-made. This research adopts this distinction.

43. D. Crowley, T. Marat-Mendes, R.Falanga, T.Henfrey, & G. Penha-Lopes, Towards a necessary regenerative urban planning: Insights from community-led initiatives for ecocity transformation. (CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios, 2021).

Figure 5: Armenia street. Personal photograph from case study.

Master research

CASE STUDY RESULTS

44.   N.N.Taleb, Anti-fragile: Things that gain from disorder (Penguin Books 2014,). p.34

45   Beirut urban lab: is lebanon becoming another republic for ngos

46   M, Fawaz & S, Mneimneh, Beiruts blasted neighborhoods between recovery efforts and real estate interests (the public source,2020)

47   Personal, field observations, November - December 2022

The main goal of this case study is to find ways to move towards development and away from humanitarian aid, as development strategies can provide a more sustainable and more so, self-sustaining way of living. This chapter will give an introduction and description of the case and will present the findings from the data analyses. It will summarize the findings and continue with a design outline.

Introduction of Case

The historical symbol of Beirut is a phoenix. According to legends, the city has been destroyed 7 times in its 5000-year history. Just like the rebirth of a phoenix, the city has returned 7 times. In recent history, the civil war can be seen as the 8th destruction of Beirut, the city returned again, in better shape. Beirut becomes more than the phoenix, she becomes hydra, where one head is chopped off, two grow back.[44] This is the principle of antifragility, as mentioned before, in combination with regenerative design.

The port explosion on August 4th, 2020, can be named as the 9th destruction of the city. Due to the blast of 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate[45]; 200 deaths, more than 6,000 wounded, and around 300,000 displaced followed. The downtown districts, Monot, Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze, Geitawi and Karantina, were severely damaged and partly

inhabitable[46], figure 8. Currently, Beirut is an exhausted city, not rising as the phoenix, but dealing with deprivation, a heavy psychological aftermath among its citizens and many primary systems failing, such as clean water supply, financial stability, access to energy and waste management.[47]

This case study, conducted between December 2022 and January 2023, focuses on the aftermath of the explosion on the 4th of August, and the aid-gap that Beirut is currently experiencing. Through site observations, capturing, interviews and mapping the main goal of the case study is to identify key elements which are crucial to overcome an aid-gap, and which can be translated to a generative approach within the design, figure 7.

In line with the research questions as written below, the case study focuses on what elements or actions where effective, reflecting on the aftermath of the blast.

How can architecture enable communities to rebuild and thrive in the aftermath of ruinous chaos, by rapidly implement simple, sustainable design solutions, whilst acknowledging the chaotic situation and leveraging the receptiveness to change?

What types of ruinous chaos can be expected in communities, and how can these be navigated?

How can architecture play into the aftermath of ruinous chaos in communities and accelerate their sustainable recovery?

What design interventions can support communities in their recovery after ruinous chaos, specifically during the aid-gap, and how can these work in different environments?

The case study maps risks and opportunities within the context of Beirut. Looking at the aftermath of the blast in Beirut is a relevant case study within the context of this research because this research focuses on the first years following a destructive event. It does not focus on the first response and therefore the timeline of the blast in Beirut, 2.5 years after, coincides with the timeline of this research. Furthermore, the case of Beirut shows a combination of complexities, see description of case, challenging this research.

Description of Case

The case consists of a brief history of Beirut, a description of the urban context, the data collection methods and the limitations and challenges of the case.

Brief history of Lebanon and Beirut

To build up an understanding of

the complexities, this research will start by setting the historical narrative of Beirut:
Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, is known for having an endless ability to transform and reinvent itself, a consequence of trade, internal conflict, and migration. The city has housed many civilizations and religions, dating all the way back to the Phoenician civilization. Walking through the city, many of these cultures are still visible, such as remaining architecture from the Ottoman period or the French colonisation, and even Roman structures can be found underground.[48] A more recent transformation is the commercial resurrection of the city centre after the destructive civil war (1975-1990), known as Solidere.[49]

Beirut can be seen as ``the world's largest laboratory for post-war reconstruction".[50] It has been subjected to globalization forces such as privatization and consumerism, making a clear break from traditional architecture and culture[51], with current regulations unable to protect any heritage from the last 200 years.[52]

Besides internal conflict, Lebanon has suffered deterioration caused by the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, spilling over into the neighbouring countries.
The influx of Syrian refugees to the already fragile and vulnerable Lebanon has had

48   Interview with Yasmine Dagher, Beirut Heritage Initiative, 29th of November 2022

49   C. Larkin, Remaking Beirut: Contesting Memory, Space, and the Urban Imaginary of Lebanese Youth. (City & Community, 2012)

50   E. Charles-worth, Architects without Frontiers: War, Reconstruction and Design Responsibility. (Oxford and Burlington: Architectural Press Elsevier, 2006.)

51   C. Larkin, Remaking Beirut: Contesting Memory, Space, and the Urban Imaginary of Lebanese Youth. (City & Community, 2012)

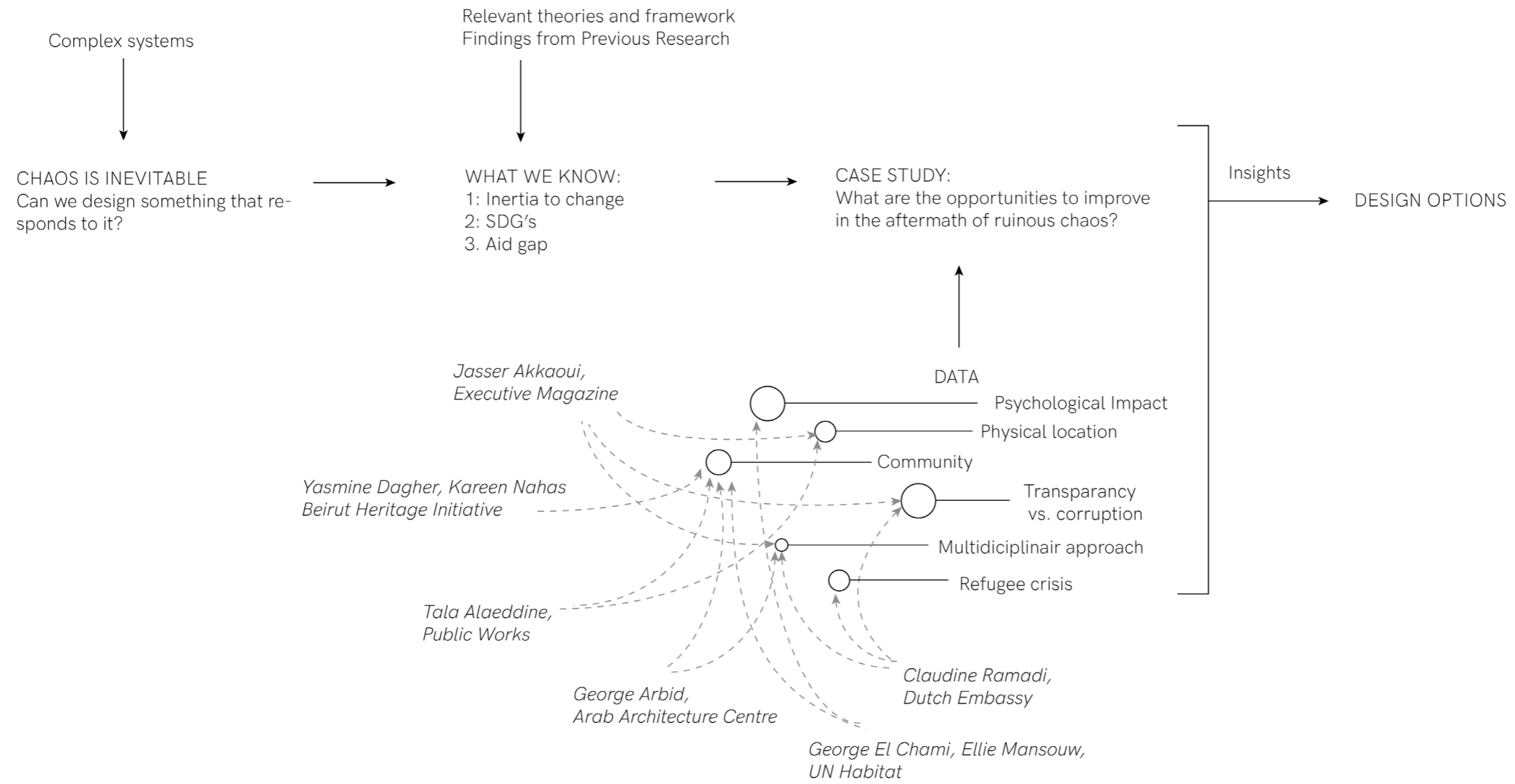52   Interview with Yasmine Dagher, Beirut Heritage Initiative, 29th of November 2022

Complex systems

Relevant theories and framework
Findings from Previous Research

CHAOS IS INEVITABLE
Can we design something that re-
sponds to it?

WHAT WE KNOW:
1: Inertia to change
2: SDG's
3. Aid gap

CASE STUDY:
What are the opportunities to improve
in the aftermath of ruinous chaos?

Insights

DESIGN OPTIONS

DATA

Jasser Akkaoui,
Executive Magazine

Psychological Impact

Physical location

Community

Yasmine Dagher, Kareen Nahas
Beirut Heritage Initiative

Transparancy
vs. corruption

Multidiciplinair approach

Refugee crisis

Tala Alaeddine,
Public Works

Claudine Ramadi,
Dutch Embassy

George Arbid,
Arab Architecture Centre

George El Chami, Ellie Mansouw,
UN Habitat

Figure 7: Case study input

Master research

Renée Meijer

53.   P. Arcos González, Z. Cherri, & R. Castro Delgado, The Lebanese-Syrian crisis: impact of influx of Syrian refugees to an already weak state. (Risk Management and Healthcare Policy, 2016)

54.   J. Swift, 2006 Lebanon War, Description & Facts. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022).

55.   M. Harb, M. Fawaz, Is Lebanon Becoming Another Republic of the NGOs? (Beirut Urban Lab,2020)

56.   D, Gorevan, Downward Spiral: the economic impact of Covid-19 on refugees and displaced people (Norwegian refugee council).

57.   C. Ammoun, Not resilience, subsidence! (L'Orient today, 2022)
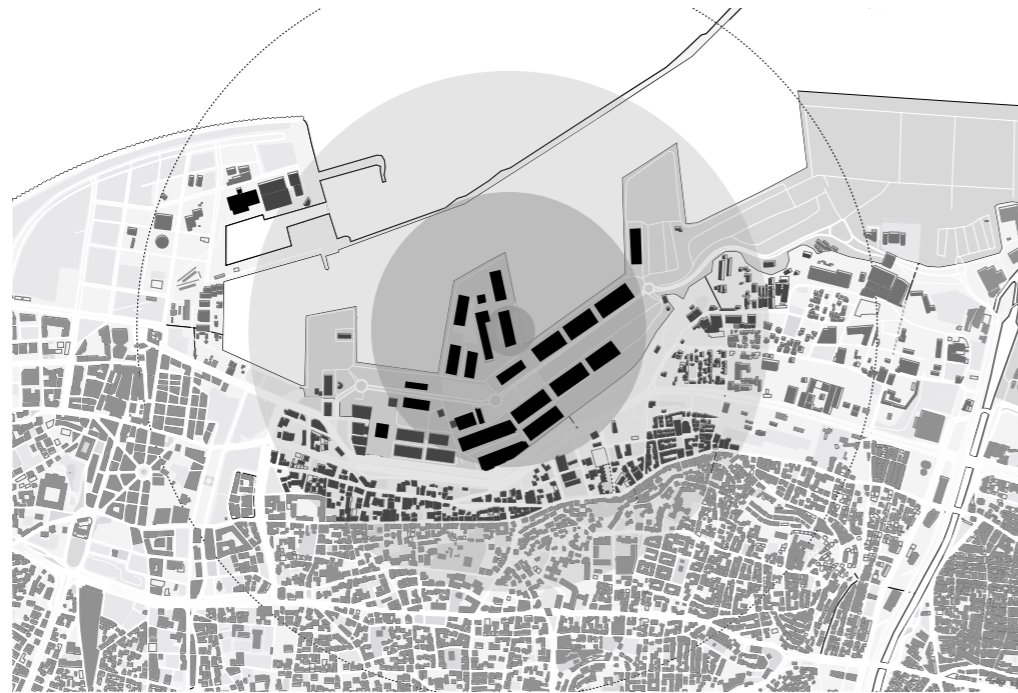
Figure 8: Damaged area and ground zero, Beirut Lebanon. reliefweb.int

a negative impact on civilians across multiple levels, such as a sudden growth in population, a weakening economy, exhausting social services, complicating the political landscape, reduced security, and a deterioration in the conditions of the refugees themselves[53].
Furthermore, Lebanon has a long-standing conflict with neighbouring country Israel. Resulting in, among other events, the Lebanon-Israel war in 2006, a conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, severely damaging Beirut.[54]

Aftermath of the blast
Due to this existing chaos, such as the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, many NGOs, activists, and syndicates were already located within Beirut during the

explosion on the 4th of August, 384 registered. In this case, the state is often side-lined due to high levels of corruption.[55]
As described in the theoretical framework, a second spiral down can occur during an aid-gap. This effect is currently also visible in Beirut. A brain drain has occurred together with a deep monetary crisis. Lebanon was already experiencing chaos, caused by different drivers, the blast of 2020 in Beirut's harbour area and COVID-19 caused further compounding.[56] Beirut's image is currently showing many of the complexities stated earlier[57]. Genuine attempts are made to recover Beirut, but two elements are missing: clear synergy and communication between different stakeholders, and financial security.[58]

Urban Context
This case study focuses mainly on the neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the port: Gemmayzeh, Rmeil and Mar Mikhael, figure 9.
These sectors where one of the first to be build outside of the old city walls of Beirut when the city started expending after the 1800's. In other words, these sectors are 'extra-muros'.[59] This expansion of the city was not done in a haphazard way, but followed the typology of the rural lands of Lebanon and is a replica of what new inhabitants new from their villages, where the buildings in combination with the landscape both followed this typology. This is still visible in the streets, concerning the placement of trees. The buildings followed the linear expansion of the city, following along the axis of Armenia street[60]. Due to these buildings being build as individual structures, and due to the lack of public space in the neighbourhood historically, its urban fabric is characterized by shared spaces between buildings. Public space is redefined in this neighbourhood as alleyways, lanes, and staircases where people meet and talk.[61]

Lebanon recognizes 18 different religious groups, which are reflected in the 50/50 division of the parliament between Christians and Muslims. This division is also visible in the urban context, even more so

after the civil war, figure 10. With the majority of the Muslims living in the west of Beirut, and the majority of Christians living in the focus area of this research, the east of Beirut.[62] Figure 10 shows the green line, or demarcation line. This unofficial boundary divided Beirut into east and west and was an overgrown no-man's land with bombed-out buildings during the civil war.
The area has undergone an economic transformation. Moving from skills and crafts to an entertainment district with restaurants, bars and art galleries, changing the character of the neighbourhood.
Currently these neighbourhoods experience gentrification in combination with pressure coming from real-estate developers where heritage buildings are torn down to make place for skyscrapers.[63]
A result of this is that many residents are finding themselves under threat of being evicted, placing them in a vulnerable position[64].

Data collection methods
Data is collected during the course of this case study through site observations, site capturing, interviews and mapping, between December 2022 and January 2023.
Before, during and after the case study, there have been done eight interviews. Five of which are recorded, transcribed, and coded. The others where

58.   M. Harb, M. Fawaz, Is Lebanon Becoming Another Republic of the NGOs? (Beirut Urban Lab,2020)

59.   Interview with Elie Mansour, UN-habitat Lebanon, 6th of April 2023

60.   Interview with Elie Mansour, UN-habitat Lebanon, 6th of April 2023

61.   Public works, Another city series: Housing Narratives: Roum & Mar Mkhayel. (Heinrich boll Stigtung, 2019)

62.   Andrews, J. (2016). The World in Conflict. Economist Books.

63.   Interview with Elie Mansour, UN-habitat Lebanon, 6th of April 2023

64.   Public works, Another city series: Housing Narratives: Roum & Mar Mkhayel. (Heinrich boll Stigtung, 2019)

Figure 9: Focus area of this
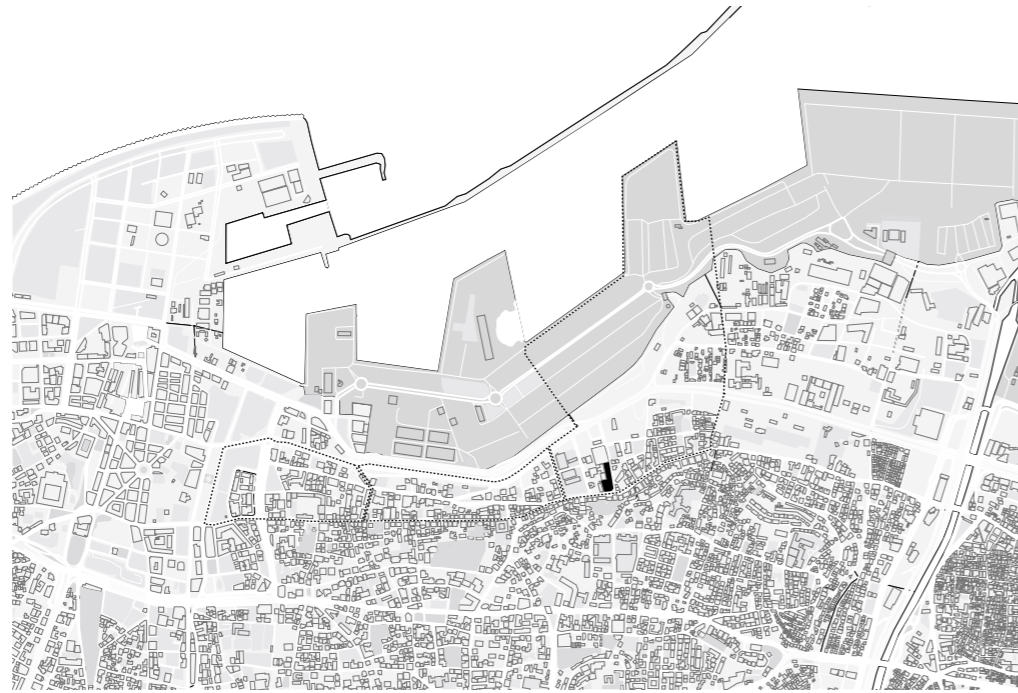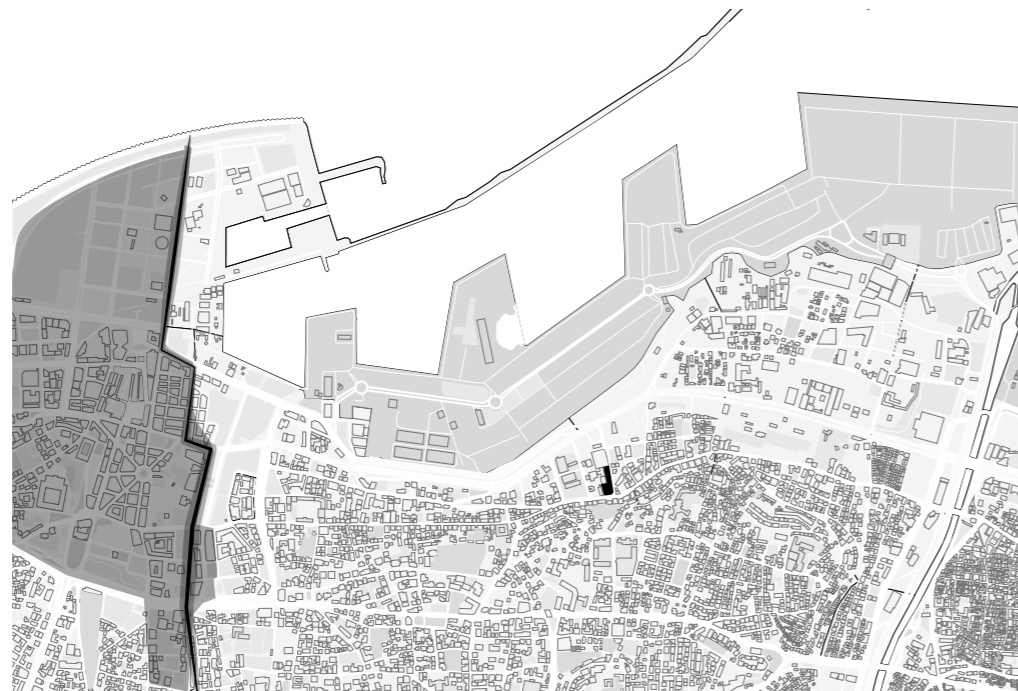research, neighbourhoods
surrounding area's.

Figure 10: The green line,
or line of demarcation.
lebanesearabicinstitute.com

not recorded due to privacy
considerations or other
restriction for recording.
To analyse the data and findings
correctly, the method of thematic
coding is applied. NVido is used
to codify the interviews per
theme. This will show the level
of agreement among sources,
concerning the main research
questions and first design
options.

Unrecorded interviews are
used as sources throughout
this research based on notes.
Informal conversations are
added to the personal log and
sometimes field observation.
Figure 13 shows the nodes that
were implemented to codify
the recorded interviews. All
transcripts of the recordings can
be found in the appendix of this
research.

The nodes focus on dissecting
the interviews in strategies,
obstacles, and prerequisites in
order to provide an outline for
the design (strategy). The nodes
follow the research questions in
the sense of: 1. Indicating what
methods where successful in
navigating destructive chaos;
2. Indicating what strategies in
terms of design thinking tactics
are effective; 3. Indicating what
elements are lacking in the
current situation.

Challenges or limitations
In the past years, Lebanon
has dealt with many foreign

academics coming in from an
opinionated standpoint without
grasping the complexities of
the situation. This has led to a
challenging resistance towards
foreign academics. A key element
during the execution of this case
study was to listen, observe, be
respectful and be aware of the
sensitivities.

The case study is limited in this
research due to it being based on
a single context. A multiple-case
study, or even a double-case
study would validate the findings
more.

Findings from data analyses
Field observations
The field observations are all
personal observations done
through (informal) interviews,
mapping, and photography,
between November and
December 2022. The
observations describe seven
different topics, considering
various points such as the
economic situation, psychological
state, and stakeholder
involvement.

Not resilient, but exhausted
Knowing some of Beirut's history,
a better understanding of just
how big the impact of the blast
was, can be made. Beirut was
already in a fragile state, creating
greater destruction.
This leads to the first important
observation: For many citizens,
the blast was the final straw after
years of dealing with a declining

situation. A ''tomorrow will be better'' attitude arose in many conversations, which vanished after the explosion, partially because it closely followed the situation around COVID and the economic crisis. Many Lebanese already emigrated to other countries in search of a more stable footing.

Brain-drain

This leads to the second observation: Due to the explosion happening on building chaos, many Lebanese who where able to leave, left the country shortly after, on top of the already prominent level of emigration. This has resulted into a brain-drain, earlier mentioned within the theoretical framework. This has profound consequences for various sectors such as adequate healthcare and can slowly result in the country no longer having the economic resources for those who remain. A flywheel-effect.

Psychological impact

The psychological impact is a factor that is difficult to pin down within scientific research, but essential when grasping the complexities of the case study. Many described this as a collective ''near-death'' experience of the city. The trauma that comes with this has been understated within the research so far but can be considered as one of the more important field observations. It is to be taken into consideration

when formulating the narrative of the design and the design approach.

Generational trauma

Within this observation, there is a notable difference between the attitude and the way of dealing with this trauma across different generations. Looking at the response of younger generations, it was very fierce and strong. Within interviews there is a notable hardening within this generation when talking about this topic. They are looking for someone to be held accountable and for fundamental changes ensuring that such an explosion, originating in human failure, can not happen again. Resulting in many protests during the aftermath of the explosion. When looking at older generations – who lived through the Civil War – it is notable that they are not as ready to kick down walls. It is as if they do not expect improvement anymore after a lifetime of turmoil. This might be explained by looking at their entire lifetime-line and how this is a relatively smaller event compared to the impact on a timeline of someone from a younger generation.

NGO territory

Noticable failures during the aftermath of the blast were conflicts between NGOs. During the first days, the army took control of the damaged areas and divided it in smaller areas. This

Figure 11: Urban fabric in the focus area. A typical element are the many staircases and alleyways.
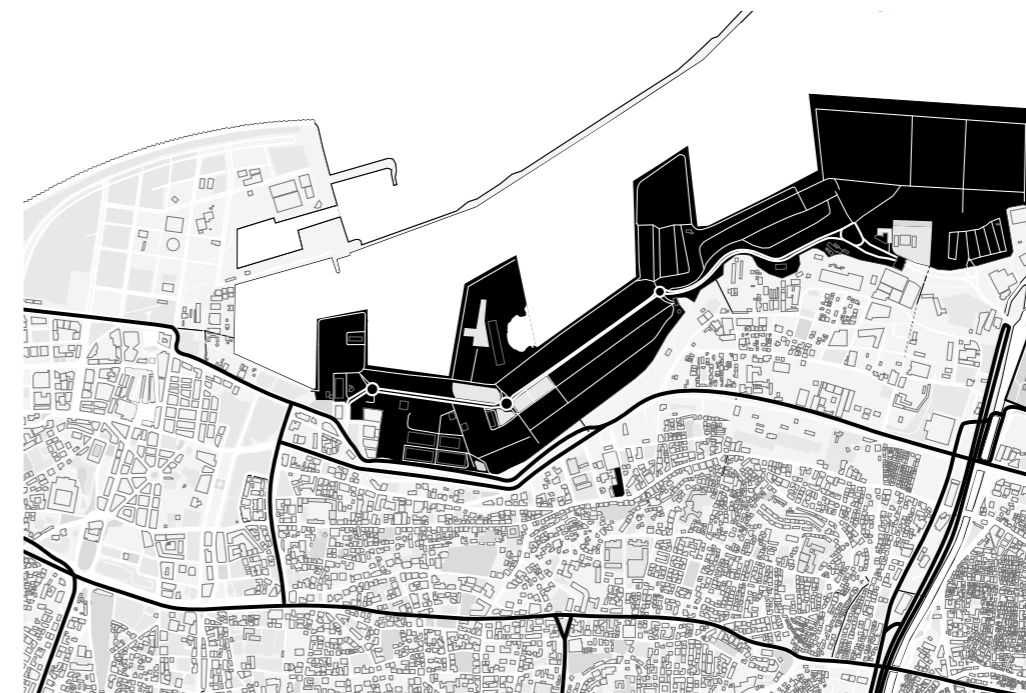
Figure 12: Boundaries around the city formed by highways and the harbour.

division was kept in place during later phases and appointed to different NGOs. NGOs became territorial, which made any form of collaboration impossible. Some NGOs only offered specific services such as restoring glass, leaving citizens with no access to other basic needs, such as stabilization of structure, just with a shiny new window.

Community

Within most interviews and during field observations, the importance of the needs of the community were pointed out. During the first few months after the explosion, many people were evicted from their damaged homes, as landowners saw an opportunity to sell their land at a steep price to developers who would plan new high-rise. This resulted in one of the few acts from the government, a two-year protection law for all buildings that were damaged during the blast, making it impossible for owners to demolish or sell. However, the law only protected the buildings, not its residents. The displacement led to a shift in demographics and character. Though the current attitude among the people of Beirut is very much community focussed, it is difficult to execute anything due to the corrupt government. Furthermore, it is wildly echoed that most residents don't want anything to change, but rather crave a stable environment of what they have always known.

This attitude challenges the concept of this research in terms of using chaos to set a new sustainable standard and needs to be taken into consideration during the design phases.

Urban context

The urban context exhibits a unique type of public space, specifically portrayed as alleyways or staircases. This is a result of the assortment of buildings and their placement on building plots, as well as the variation in height, which is evident in Figure 11. Common urban public spaces such as parks or squares are completely lacking.

The expansion of the city is clearly visible in the boundaries surrounding the focus area of this research, figure 12. When moving toward the harbour, the plot sizes become bigger and the residential/commercial area transforms into an industrial area. The case study is used by neighbourhoods to phase the waterfront, but was later cut off by the highway and harbour area, causing the contrast in typologies between the main city axe and plots adjacent to the highway.

Thematic coding - Interviews

The following interviews were conducted during this research:

1. James Ensor
        Chief Executive Officer, BHP Foundation. Former director (public policy and international programs) at Oxfam.

2. Yasmine Dagher
        Architect and project manager at Beirut Heritage Initiative.

3. Yasser Akkaoui
        Managing director at executive magazine and instructor at the American University of Beirut.

4. George Arbid
        Founding member and president of the Arab centre for Architecture, Beirut.

5. Tala Alaeddine
        Research department coordinator at Public Works, Beirut.

6. George El Chami
        Junior Engineer at United Nations Human Settlement Programme, Lebanon.

7. Claudine Ramadi
        Senior Policy Officer and Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon. Former consultant / Field and Technical Lead at Oxfam.

8. Elie Mansour
        Head of the Urban Planning and Design unit at UN-Habitat, Lebanon.

As visible above, the interviewee's have a high variation of backgrounds and functions to continue the established interdisciplinary approach within this research.
Interviews 2-5 & 7 are analysed by using thematic coding, using the thematic nodes as mentioned earlier: Strategies, Prerequisites, obstacles and other, figure 13.

Below, a summary of each theme is provided, along with relevant quotes from the interviews to illustrate the findings.

NODES	DESCRIPTION
Obstacles	Limitations and obstacles preventing development and/or implementation of sustainable design solutions.
Other	Relevant information not fitting in any of the appointed categories.
Prerequisites	Prerequisites and conditions for functional and sustainable design.
Strategies	Mentions of strategies, either theoretical or in practice, that support the successful implementation of sustainable design solutions.

Figure 13: Nodes used for thematic coding.

Obstacles

Obstacles – limitations and obstacles preventing development and/or implementation of sustainable design solutions – considers the following topics: Failure of the system, Accountability & lack of knowledge distribution, General observations and Specific observations within the context of Lebanon.

Failure of the system

One of the major obstacles within the context of Lebanon is not surprising. Lebanon deals with an uncooperative and corrupt government, negitavely influencing many levels of society, since it functions at a macro level and effecting all levels underneath:

So basically, what I'm trying to say is this macro level affects everything under it, right? However, we work at the levels under because we cannot work at the macro level, we do not have a government that allows us to work with them at this level. - Claudine Ramadi, 36:12

Yasser Akkaoui considers this to be the source of the explosion, as he sees this as a systematic failure of the system:

The explosion of Beirut port wasn't just a mistake, it's a... it's a... it's a failure in the system itself (...) But all this thinking didn't happen because the system... and again what we call the system. All these little components, none of them was doing his or her job, you know? - Yasser Akkaoui, 04:52

The structure of a country lays at the base of all entities, with no proper system in place, elements such as data collection are currently missing. Therefore, a foundation for informed decision making is missing:

We don't have a ministry for housing. We don't have any data related to how... there is no official data. - Tala Alaeddine, 50:35

However, a major obstacle beside the non-functioning government is the fragmentation of organizations, whether it is the government or humanitarian organizations, especially within the focus area of this research – the aid-gap. Available resources often do not reach their intended goal:

It's too much and unfortunately this is the reason why you can't really bridge that gap. It's because of that ineffective coordination and that fragmentation. - Claudine Ramadi, 38:00

Accountability & lack of knowledge distribution

Secondly, another obstacle that arises from the interviews is accountability coming from certain stakeholders. Stakeholders that are only available for a short period, such as NGOs working project based, are unable to do any future follow-up or posy-project care. The Following quote targets NGOs and (external)donors:

I've worked so much on the field with so many different NGO projects and I've always seen the weakness. NGOs aren't there to stay for long. You know, if they lose their funding and they don't find any other funding, they may need to close offices, lay-off staff. Staff are only there because their project-based NGOs cannot do post project accountability which is a big weakness. (....) You know this is a big weakness of the system. It's that the donors giving the money are not holding these countries and governments and institutions accountable beyond the last day for funding. Basically, yeah, and I think if this is something that could be addressed the way a donor approaches things. - Claudine Ramadi, 48:50

In line with the lack of accountability coming from NGOs and donors, a second obstacle arises within these organizations, which is distribution of knowledge to the community, which is often missing, causing many to miss potential opportunities. This was addressed by different sources during the fieldwork:

They are always the NGOs, the donors, the agencies that work on this. But it's never the general public. The general public has no idea what we do in terms of development. (...) And there are so many opportunities for them, and they never know about them because they don't know that these exist. They don't know that there are entities that do this, and so many of them have ideas and the Lebanese are entrepreneurial by nature... - Claudine Ramadi, 1:13:44

They actually know that there are some funds. So, what is the purpose of disposal? What are we going to do with it? So here funds are coming. And people don't know about the funds. - Tala Alaeddine, 54:08

Again, confronting the role of NGOs in the aftermath of the blast, and the problems that arise with short term accountability, are the effects of 'quick money' and the territorial attitude of mainly NGOs. Due to unsatisfactory consultation with local entities, the vulnerable communities are at risk of threats such as eviction, resulting in an opposite situation than intended:

It was a bit closed between some NGOs. And what actually happened is that they divided the city, or they divided a neighbourhood and each NGO took a part of the neighbourhood for its own. 'I want to rehabilitate this and you and other NGOs cannot come here.' So, if one NGO got some funding for repairing the windows, the family living in the house just got the windows repaired and they didn't get any other need fulfilled. And this

happened a lot. And the other NGOs cannot come a see and say 'I want to help here', because another NGO did the work. This happened a lot. And this... So when you see now that a lot of buildings were rehabilitated, there are some needs in the buildings or in the apartments or for the residents that were unfulfilled.

(...)Another thing is that a lot of the work that they did - or the renovation that they did at the end, because it was meant to directly help - they didn't create any form or idea of the future... thinking of what is going to happen later.

(...) So, they provided the aid maybe, or they provided the rehabilitation, but they didn't know that when they did that, when they renovated the buildings, for example, the owner is going to evict the tenants because now he can rent the apartment for more, with higher rent. So, in this case, all the people that are renting in the area who have been living there for like 40 or 30 years, that they are now under threat of... they were basically under the threat of eviction because of the aid that's happened. And in this way, the NGOs or the humanitarian aid that was provided by the NGOs basically led in the end to the residents leaving this area. - Tala Alaeddine, 14:23

General
The following quote is in line with the theory of this research and takes a global perspective. It talks about the shifting of funding on a global scale due to new emergencies arising:

There is a lot of initiatives that were born following the blast. Most of them are not active right now. Because the funding... to be honest, funding has been very, very low. It's been more than a year now since there is no funding at all actually, because also of the Ukraine war. All of the international organisations are concentrated there, which is very normal. - Yasmine Dagher, 17:13

Context of Lebanon
A final obstacle is important to mention, specific for the context of Lebanon. As a default, decision making, in terms of development, is highly individually focussed among the community, but also in terms of how design or development is approached. This is visible in the urban context of Beirut and has been an issue in Beirut's history:

So, we think more in terms of individual parcels, individual projects, and that would be your exercise here, which is to see what the mechanism is that would allow to think at an urban scale, putting into consideration all that is in the interest of your idea. - George Arbid, 14:55

Yeah, but the problem here in Lebanon is that the architects or the urban planners that we have are very... They don't think out of the box. Not on the design level, and not on a multidisciplinary level. So they only think about the plot. Either the design - if they are like architects - or the revenue, if they are real estate developers, because we have a lot of developers. - Tala Alaeddine, 31:15

Prerequisites
The prerequisites and conditions for functional and sustainable design contain the following topics: Community engagement & establishing ownership, Inclusiveness and Social interaction.

Community engagement & establishing ownership
One of the most important conditions for any development to be successful and sustainable is community participation and engagement. Several sources named the importance of community informed design for the community to create ownership over the intervention:

You know what kind of resources you have in terms of human resources? And how can you use these human resources and engage them in what you're doing, so that they see the value of it so that they feel ownership and they want to maintain it? - Claudine Ramadi, 42:44

Furthermore, community engagement will create a sustainable intervention, because it creates a feeling of ownership:

A very important thing is to look at the needs of the people. When we want to look at the needs of the people, a participation process is very important for any design project - or any sort of creating that model - if we want it to be sustainable, because they are the people that will maintain the sustainability. - Tala Alaeddine, 31:15

Inclusiveness
Inclusiveness is key to making a successful intervention or contribution. As mentioned in the following quote, approaching any project bottom up equals inclusiveness, due to it creating a sense of ownership:

Inclusiveness is key. - Yasser Akkaoui, 24:38

...it's because inclusiveness is an integral part for its success. Everything that's bottom up, it means inclusiveness. Everything that is top to bottom, risks of being extractive by design. And once it's extracted, that means people will avoid implementing it, we will try to outsmart its implementation, but if they own it, it's theirs. And it's inclusive and everybody will be part of it. - Yasser Akkaoui, 19:31

In line with the above quote, the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, in the sense of involving multiple different stakeholders, will improve the design's inclusiveness and success:

Yeah, I mean, it has to be a bottom up approach. It cannot be a top down approach. So unless what I hope, the UN can put down the problem and say... (well, this is

the problem you mentioned; The three million children without, let's say, reading glasses or shoes. You know, and let the private sector intervene in trying to solve this problem and driving investment and use this iterative approach.) And just to agree with James Ensor, only the private sector is able to introduce innovation and technology. The UN doesn't know innovation and doesn't know technology. - Yasser Akkaoui, 18:42

Social interaction

A final prerequisite in the context of the focus area of this case study is engaging in the unique urban fabric of this part of the city, to extend its specific type of social interaction:

We did a lot of community meetings after the explosion. And I want to talk about an experience now a bit. They always said, we don't want to see our neighbourhood change more, that it changed during the explosion. So, we don't want to see... They don't want to come back here and find a building that was destroyed and instead find a certain high-rise that came in its place. So, we have Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze in this area. Buildings with shops, with the ground floor where people can meet. We have a lot of spaces in between the buildings and the alley ways where people meet. We sit together, they sit together. So now if, for example, a new building is built, there's the entrance, people come with their cars to an

underground parking and they go up to their apartments and no one can see each other. So, it's very... there's no social interaction anymore. So, this is when I say, a change in how the neighbourhood is. This is one aspect of that change. - Tala Alaeddine, 31:15

Strategies

Strategies, either theoretical or in practice, that support the successful implementation of sustainable design solutions, consider the following topics: Localization/Decentralization, Interconnectivity & Interdisciplinary Approach, Collaboration and Design.

Localization/Decentralization

Decentralization was one of the first tested theories which was well received among the various sources. It can be used as a way of problem solving and to shorten or mitigate the distance between different stakeholders:

I agree with you on decentralization or having a more micro approach to problem solving on a municipal level. You will have more care, more willingness to do good, and more willingness to prevent harm. - Yasser Akkaoui, 36:20

So, the more decentralized and the more micro the solutions are, it definitely mitigates the distance between the stakeholders. If we're using what we call the ethical thinking, you become more candour and less utilitarian, this is one. And two, when you integrate

the private sector just for you to create a web of interests. - Yasser Akkaoui, 40:28

Well, one thing we always overlook is the local government. So, if you want to decentralise in Lebanon, a good way is to strengthen local government - Claudine Ramadi, 42:44

Interconnectivity & Interdisciplinary Approach

In line with the above statements, a second strategy follows which focuses on multiple parties connecting in a direct manner, or approaching challenges in an interdisciplinary way, such as combining design and financial strategies together:

It's a way to let the people come back, pay this affordable rent or these affordable fees and they can work in this area too. A lot of models can be implemented in this way. They can be financial models and designs. So they combine design and financial. - Tala Alaeddine, 24:01

Who are the components of this, right? Who are the problems of this? We have the system, which is proof that it doesn't solve, you know. The world is not a better place since the creation of the UN, with all the respect for the UN. But funny enough the private sector can be a source of solving these problems.

(...) You're slow, and it takes forever in the end to do things, and that's the price. Until you invite the private sector to come and to identify from the 1,000,000 and

one problems that you identify that need a solution, that you qualified and quantified. If you're able to allow the private sector to come in and say, 'OK, we want to solve that problem and let the private sector get involved...' One, to drive a person and two, it could create value – shareholder value and community and societal value and environmental value, if you set the standards right.

(...) And the double effect – or the new things that are happening also in the private sector – by embarking this, they are becoming more human, they are becoming more responsible and they are becoming more accountable. So, this is also an inflection point that will favour the ethical corporations and will isolate the unethical corporations. - Yasser Akkaoui,14:41

These connections, as mentioned above can increase the sharing of knowledge between different parties to tackle asymmetric information and better the system:

It's is very similar to a movement that started after the 2008 crisis. It's called 'The Integrated Reporting'. Which basically tackles the asymmetric information between all the stakeholders. Integrated reporting is about exactly what you said it is: the frequency and depth of reporting or having access to information, in a responsible matter. In a way that it is accountable and responsible,

right? And this is what we call the integrated report.

(...) Because the smaller the distance, and the smaller the asymmetric information, the better the system works. - Yasser Akkaoui, 30:59

Furthermore, it enables the sharing of knowledge and data on a local scale or international scale:

But basically, these are challenges that also should be thought about and we are trying to see, on the local level, how we can learn from other experiences and other countries. And for example, we are finding this in Latin-America, for example. They have a lot of organization experience. So, it's very important. - Tala Alaeddine, 31:15

Collaboration
Another strategy that is found to be effective, especially within the focus area of this research, the aid-gap, is collaboration between different parties to keep projects running by, for example, joining funds:

And then now, to be honest, us, we're collaborating with anyone. We're still in... in... in constant communication with anyone. Right now, we're working on a renovation project, which is in collaboration with another NGO. But again, we're doing this type of matching funds. Because they have a bit of funds, we have a bit of funds. Alone we won't be able to renovate something, but together

we are able. - Yasmine Dagher, 18:17

As written above, this can be in the form of funding, but also in the form of other benefits such as education and skills:

BBHR, what they did is a sort of on-site training. Because the building was abandoned, there is not this need to bring back the inhabitant's home, you know. So, they have the possibility to take their time and actually do appropriate training to people that want to develop their heritage skills. The Germans were actually very interested in this type of idea. Where you help people develop a skill. And so, this renovation... So, they did a lot of small renovations like this. This was funded by the German. - Yasmine Dagher, 29:25

Design
Claudine Ramadi responded positively on the idea of creating a flexible building that can respond to the changing context:

But if I were to look at Lebanon from humanitarian to development.. I like the structure. It's pretty cool. I like the idea because you can change it, that's what's nice. It's like you can always bring in something new. Depending on the changes in the context, depending on what's going on. - Claudine Ramadi, 1:17:23

Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of creating a space to showcase ideas and products, for and from the general public:

But a huge portion of the population was pushed below the poverty line and they're not looking for humanitarian aid, they're looking for development to get back on their feet. Giving that kind of space is really important. Where you can see what options you have. Where anyone can come and showcase. Where any NGO with a new programme can come and showcase it. Where they can do outreach, that's also always difficult.. - Claudine Ramadi, 1:03:56

George Arbid responded positively on designing a building that houses all important stakeholders, such as the Arab architecture centre, and creating accountability between stakeholders within a design, due to it cultivating interest:

It's very good, because this is accountability and this is also the best way to have people appropriate the project. It is in front of them, they can see, they can follow up. And it's not somewhere in the dark, because either they get suspicious or there is disinterest, and you cultivate interest. - George Arbid, 20:54

Other
This code contains relevant information not fitting in any of the appointed categories, and discusses the following: Collective trauma between generations, Humanitarian development, Role of NGOs and government, History,

The economic crisis, and Decentralization examples.

Collective trauma between generations
The blast left a psychological mark on the citizens of Beirut. It is important to consider this when implementing any design. It is considered a trauma where most people do not want to be confronted with constantly:

Right now this is not relevant to them. They don't want a reminder about it. They don't want to see it. If you tell me there's something about the Beirut blast, I don't want to be there. There's a trauma for me. - Claudine Ramadi, 1:03:56

As mentioned in the field observations, there is a difference between the response to the blast between older and younger generations. This difference can be partially attributed to general attitude, but it has a foundation in a disparity in the position towards religion among older and younger generations:

I was thinking, maybe because the older generations also, you know, saw the war and it's a smaller 'thing' on a bigger timeline, let's say. - Renée

That's true. So, that's one reason. Another is also that the younger generation is freed a little bit from affiliations. Whether they are political or religious, and so on. Therefore, they don't... The younger generation doesn't feel that it needs to justify anything.

They're simply angry with everyone. Rightly so, whereas the older generation is more – still more, fortunately, but still more – connected to beliefs that their community or their part, their party, their whatever, holds the truth. And it's always the fault of the other. This is why the slogan of the revolution of the younger people is 'All of them is all of them'. You don't need to justify anything, it's all of you, all of them. All the generations, all of the parties, all of the leaders, all of them, right? This is it's... it's an important change in the... in the mindset. - George Arbid, 43:03

Yeah, the sense of community... Actually, it exists in most Arab countries, but people don't know about it because most of the people think like... Especially in Lebanon, you have a lot of different religions and it's the reason that we had the civil war, you know, like the different type of religions and political parties and all of that. But a lot of people, they just don't care about this anymore. It's literally a system that follows our parents' and our grandparents' generation, but our generation does not care about this and we're all trying to get along and to be friendly. - Yasmine Dagher, 1:02:41

Humanitarian development
A noticeable narrative within this research is that it focuses on moving towards development strategies and away from humanitarian help, to create a sustainable way of living, due to a community becoming self-reliant. The Dutch Embassy has a similar approach and is therefore relevant to consider:

We kind of mix the humanitarian with development. So basically, the humanitarian development Nexus. That's what we try to use. - Claudine Ramadi, 00:04

Role of NGOs and government
The role of both NGOs and the government has been mentioned before. The quotation below highlights the first response of both and how this reflected on the community. The government implemented a new temporary law which protected heritage but neglected residents. Many NGOs neglected proper consultation of locals causing new problems:

So, let me start by saying that a lot of NGOs are starting to work there, and the government basically did nothing. Other than this one law. The title of the law was to protect the neighbourhoods. However, they never mentioned the residents of the affected areas. So to want to protect the areas, but neglect the residents. (...) There's only one sentence where they mentioned that we want to halt the evictions of the people for one year, and this didn't even happen. And after that, all the responses were based on funds that were given to NGOs from either Lebanese diaspora or from international funders and the NGOs wanted (...) the money. So,

what they did is that they directly, like, chose what they want to do without any... They didn't ask, basically. (...) So, we started to see people coming and giving refrigerators to the people. But this is not our basic need. We need something else now. We need, for example, the rehabilitation of our common spaces in the buildings to be able to live in these buildings. We want to see our neighbour's house rehabilitated because we cannot live in this building if our neighbour is not living there. For example, this was not happening. They wanted the money, so they acted like it quickly. - Tala Alaeddine, 13:15

This first response lacked a connection to the city and community and therefore surpassed both in many cases.

History repeats
In extend to the above quote, the way of aid-giving surpassed the needs of the community. Furthermore, another risk occurred after the blast, the eviction of many residents. A similar event happened after the civil war leading to the rebuilding of the downtown centre which neglected heritage and local residents:

So, after the war... I guess when you talk to the Arab Architecture Center, they told you that after the war in Beirut, how the center of Beirut was rebuilt. This happened, so the people that were living there were basically

evicted, and they moved to other cities, away from Beirut. So, we were afraid that this will happen again. And this was happening. (...) because people wanted their neighbourhood to stay as it was. They didn't want to change how it looks. I mean, from the shops there, or the livelihood, or the people coming there, etc. So, after the explosion Airbnb's that were starting to come to the neighbourhood – it was an area were a lot of real estate developments started before the blast. But after the blast these intentions grew because of what is happening. - Tala Alaeddine, 17:02

The other side of the economic crisis
Lebanon is currently in a big monetary crisis with the local currency deteriorating since 2019. As mentioned below it had a positive effect during the aftermath of the blast. Most NGOs and donations worked with foreign capital which has a much higher value in Lebanon, fresh dollars as they are called. This resulted in lower costs for reconstruction efforts:

Yeah, that's one of the positive effects of the Lebanese, of the current crisis, you know, the economic crisis. If you pay in dollars, you can even have a discount. Yeah, it's horrible, but because our funding comes from Europe and you ask and everything, so it's mainly like euros and dollars and... To give you an

example, in August we finished the renovation of one house where the initial price was... We thought two years ago that it would be around $700,000 or $800,000 to renovate the house. (...) one of the guys, the one that gave us the offer for 400 was like 'if you pay everything in U.S. dollars, then count to $320,000.' Like... there's an $80,000 discount. - Yasmine Dagher, 24:16

Decentralization in other cases

Ukraine was mentioned before in the context of the world's attention shifting from Beirut to the current war. As it turns out, lessons can be learned from the strong resistance displayed by Ukraine, due to decentralization efforts:

This is key for resilience, right? Ukraine in 2014, 2015 has worked on serious decentralization efforts, which contributed to the resilience of Ukrainians villages, to overcome the attacks. - Yasser Akkaoui, 32:38

Let's organize!

A final quote from Yasser Akkaoui focuses on the strategy of design thinking, within our own background. An invitation for future engagement:

Ideally, what I would love to have is, for example, a bunch of TU Delft students, who would come, you know, and participate in design thinking sessions, that will allow us – allow us, say a village – to identify the best renewable energy solution to adopt, and

design this and let the private sector join. - Yasser Akkaoui, 45:48

Further citations, including all transcripts can be found in the appendix of this research.

To ensure the research progresses accurately, the design developed throughout the study is reevaluated using a new source. This assessment aims to verify the plausibility of the design during its development and ensure its validity based on unbiased insights. The concept of the design, explained in 'Design outline', was presented to Elie Mansour, Head of the design unit at UN-Habitat, Lebanon. This is an unrecorded interview which took place in the later design phases on the 6th of April 2023. The concept was positively received, validating its plausibility. Feedback mostly concerned material use and understanding of the neighbourhood's urban fabric.

Summary of Findings

Results from both the theoretical framework and the fieldwork show that combining certain approaches, stemming from different disciplines, and translating this to a literal, tangible design within an architectural context, an interdisciplinary and most importantly, a plausible scenario comes into being. The following statements give a short summery

of the most important findings of the site observations and thematic coding:

- Lebanon is currently showing many signs of an exhausted system, with basic structures lacking or failing.

- In the aftermath of the blast, Beirut experienced a lowered inertia to change due to the destabilization of the system causing, for example, threads to the local community or increasing pressure on the affected neighbourhoods by developers.

- Community informed development is the most important for any idea to be successful or sustainable, any development has to be inclusive, therefore a bottom-up approach seems most evident.

- Together with a bottom-up approach, decentralization seems a plausible scenario to move towards sustainable development.

- In line with decentralization, a third strategy focuses on accountability by bridging the distance between different stakeholders; accountability towards each other grows. This type of strategy can also ensure a fast feedback loop, essential in dynamic situations.
- When following the strategy above, asymmetric information between stakeholders will

decrease, and provide better data and knowledge sharing. Most importantly, toward the community.

- NGOs and the local government performance seems to be of high potential, but only in an environment that sets the right framework. With inproper communication and organization it can lead to the opposite effect, an increase of risks of potential new problems.

- Currently, the collaboration between different stakeholders, such as funders and NGOs are most effective during the aid-gap in order to keep projects running.

-The combination of NGOs (representing the community), the private sector (bringing the facilities that are needed), and the local government (which can create the right outlines and climate), can be extremely powerful.

- In order to create a sustainable, social, economical and environmental environment, it is important to switch from humanitarian aid towards development, as soon as possible. When switching to development, post project care is a crucial element, which is currently lacking in many cases and crucial when developing towards a sustainable environment.

65.   BHP Foundation.
What we do. (bhp.com, z.d.)

66.   BHP Foundation.
What we do. (bhp.com, z.d.)

- The Urban fabric of the focus area of this research unfolds in a typical way and is important to bear in mind with any development, due to the community being sensitive to changes in this fabric because of the type of social interaction it provides.

- The psychological impact on the community and the country is significant and needs to be approached in a proper manner when implementing any idea.

The results of the case study create an understanding of the situation in Lebanon in a social, environmental, and economic way, and gives input on what strategies have potential within the scope of this research.

Design outline

Community can be considered as the biggest key factor and highest priority during the aftermath of the port blast in Beirut, which came up several times during the field research. The next question that arises is the following: *How can a community be enabled to structurally move forward and hold those responsible accountable, within a corrupt and fragile environment such as Beirut?*

Looking at the interdisciplinary approach, the answer to this question can come from the economical perspective. BHP Foundation, a charitable foundation funded by BHP

that works on the world's most critical sustainable development challenges[65], has worked on projects within a corrupt environment by using different tactics. An example of this, also used by entities such as Oxfam, is 'radical transparency', which approaches a development by giving open access to information to everyone involved, including the local community.[66]

An example of this, as told by James Ensor, Chief Executive Officer at BHP Foundation, and former director at Oxfam, was conducted during the development of schools in Laos and Cambodia.
During the development of these schools there where three main stakeholders with individual responsibilities: The local community, who oversaw building the schools; Oxfam, responsible for sufficient funding; and the local government, responsible for presenting teachers and schools supplies. The contract was than magnified and displayed on a central wall in the village, with the local community walking past it every day. This transparency enabled the community to hold the other stakeholders accountable for their responsibilities and promises, resulting in a clear and reliable process, reducing corruption.[67]

There are more ways to force accountability into a system, such as the 'shortest path principle',

reducing asymmetric information flows as mentioned in the summary of findings.
By combining the findings from both the research and the case study, a comprehensive sketch (Figure 14) emerges, which has been evaluated through several interviews.
The idea behind this drawing is to concentrate all stakeholders into one public building accessible to all. Collaboration between different entities, such as NGOs, bussiness and government, can be much more effective and sustainable than a single entity working on its own. The private sector can work faster and has a shorter feedback loop which gives it a faster and more accurate response to a situation. Trusted NGOs or entities such as the UN provide the reliability needed.[68]

A central connecting space, linking all entities together, is a display for local data and progress to tackle asymmetric information and force accountability into the system. It also functions as a stage and exhibition space for the local community to strengthen the local entrepreneurial and cultural climate. It creates an opportunity for NGOs and other organizations such as local syndicates or the local municipality to connect to the needs of the community and to showcase the opportunities their organizations run and distribute information to the public.

This idea of centralizing all stakeholders within one building is also based on one of the initiatives, functioning right after the blast. A base camp was set up where volunteers could be directed, in order to mobilize workforces, first aid kits would be available, as well as offering mental support. The base camp worked well within the context of Beirut.[69] The new building draws from these learnings but aims to transcend its function of humanitarian aid towards development. It is born out of the Beirut explosion but not defined by it. It focuses on empowering sustainable development. This is done by developing the building in separate phases that respond accordingly to its environment, the need of the community and phase of recovery. Reversed modularity, where the building moves from a highly modular construction towards a more permanent construction.
Starting with a highly modular construction is necessary to ensure a prompt response on a broader scale. This approach leads towards the development of a permanent building that focuses on long-term, sustainable projects and post-project care, specifically tailored to the project's location.

Yeah, I think this kind of space can give that motivation that people need when you see what other people are doing. - Claudine Ramadi, 1:13:10

67.   James Ensor,
BHP Foundation.
Interview November 2022

68.   James Ensor,
BHP Foundation.
Interview November 2022
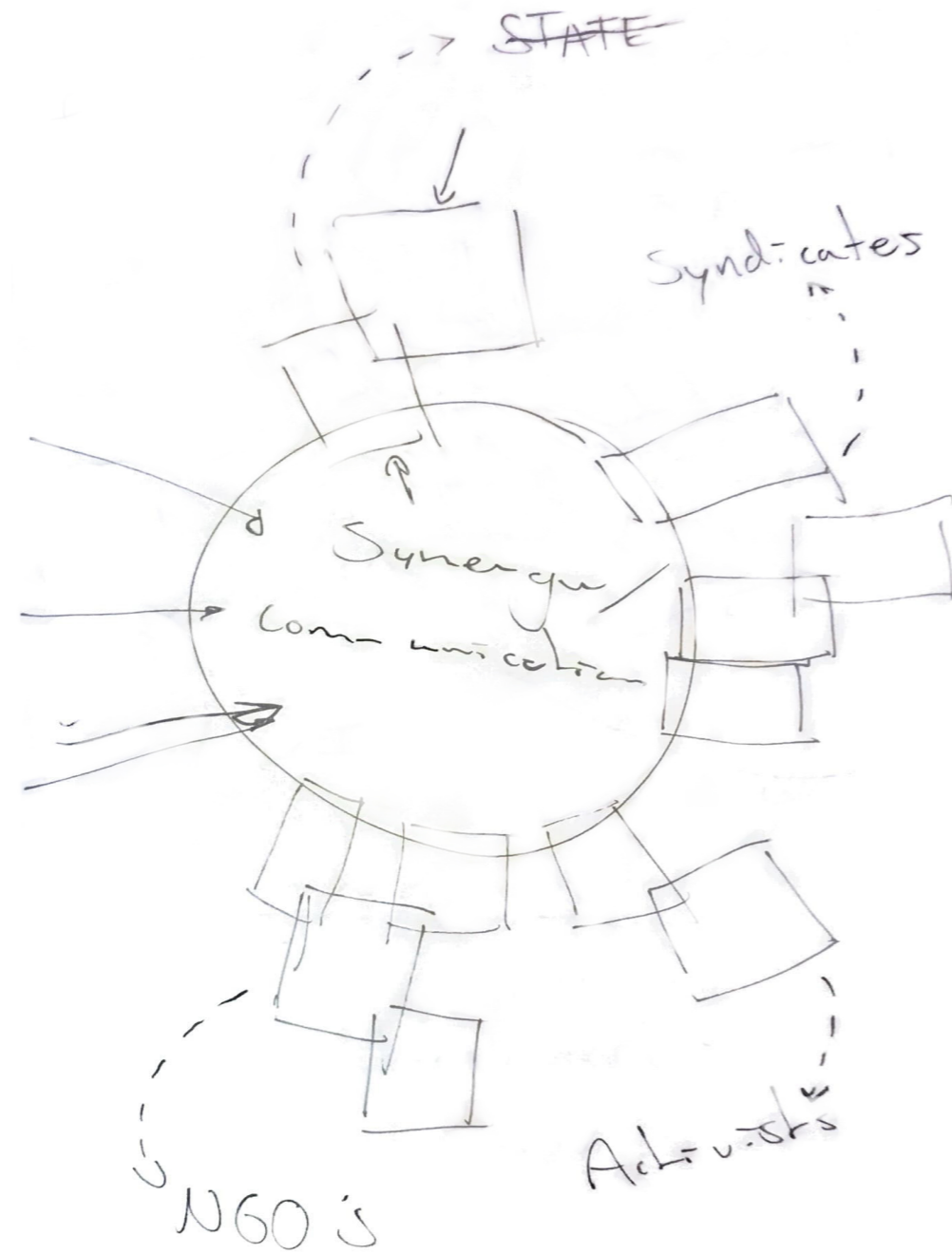
A note that is important is to add is a discussion on the reasonable impact of an architectural intervention. This project is not trying to address the whole extend of problems in Beirut, nor is it to be expected that a single building can overcome a completely corrupt system. The goal of the building is that it pulls enough momentum together for the program to work: The building functions as a connector between stakeholders, an initiator for local projects, and a stage for the community.

Figure 15: Yasmine's childhood home. One of the badly damaged buildings. A traditional bourgeoisie home with a central hall typology. This image was taken during a tour with the Beirut Heritage Initiative, Live Love Beirut and UN Habitat. Personal photograph, November 2022.

Master research

Renée Meijer

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to investigate the following research question: *How can architecture enable communities to rebuild and thrive in the aftermath of ruinous chaos, by rapidly implementing simple, sustainable design solutions, whilst acknowledging the chaotic situation and leveraging the receptiveness to change?*

The following sub-questions were investigated that address different aspects of the main research question in depth: Sub-question 1 describes the types of expected chaos, and how this can be navigated. Sub-question 2 describes the potential impact of design in post-disaster situations and the role of architecture in promoting sustainable rebuilding and community resilience. Sub question 3 describes specific elements when creating structure in the aftermath of chaos.

1.   What types of ruinous chaos can be expected in communities, and how can these be navigated?

This research has adopted a differentiation in types of chaos according to the sustainable reconstruction and recovery framework, set up by the World Green Building Council, the European bank, and UN Habitat. It indicates three types of drivers, namely, War conflict, Climate related and Man-made. The explosion in Beirut is considered a man-made cause. No matter the cause, the sustainable reconstruction and recovery framework can be used as a guide to navigate the disaster. However, every type of chaos, depending on the context needs a different response and asks different solutions. Therefore, the framework can only be considered as a guide.

In terms of what chaos we can expect, results from the theoretical framework can be applied. An event such as the Beirut blast can be explained logically in hindsight but is in fact impossible to predict. There are indications of what chaos can be expected via proper risk-management. However, it is much simpler to indicate if something is fragile than to map a potential risk.

Looking at climate related events, these can be mitigated to some extent by reducing the global pressure on the climate. This can be achieved by avoiding a climate overshoot, as suggested by doughnut economics. Additionally, implementing proper risk management and decentralization tactics can have a positive effect in the aftermath of such chaotic events.

2.   How can architecture play into the aftermath of ruinous chaos in communities and accelerate their sustainable recovery?

The research proposes that architecture can play a significant role in providing sustainable design solutions in the aftermath of chaos and furthermore, accelerate the rebuilding of a community according to the needs of the community.
This requires a number of boundary conditions: first, the active engagement of all relevant stakeholders in a bottom-up design process. This inclusion of all relevant actors, tapping into their assets (skills, knowledge, resources), is absolutely essential to any successful and sustainable design solution in this fragile period of time. In this way, durable structures can be created that are more likely to be embraced and maintained by the community, thereby making them sustainable for following development phases. Architecture, as an internationally recognized trade and tradition, can accommodate such structures by offering the necessary technical knowledge and process design. A crucial aspect of this design is a high degree of flexibility in both the process and the building itself, enabling it to respond to the dynamic environment that emerges after a destructive event.

3. What design interventions can support communities in their recovery after ruinous chaos, specifically during the aid-gap, and how can these work in different environments?

The findings of this research suggest that close and open collaboration between all relevant stakeholders is essential when attempting to bridge an aid-gap, such as Beirut is currently experiencing. A foundation of trust, accountability, dealing with asymmetric information and providing knowledge and data sharing are essential in a collaboration, as proposed above.
Any development should take the local urban fabric and characteristics into account, as changes can easily be made in the aftermath of a destructive event, which can negatively impact the community or reach the opposite effect of what is intended.

The findings from this research, including the theoretical framework and fieldwork in Beirut, indicate that an interdisciplinary approach will have a plausible and positive effect on sustainable development. Key approaches can be identified that stimulate and facilitate sustainable recovery and development. These approaches include decentralization, bottom-up approach, accountability and improving synergy between stakeholders by decreasing asymmetric knowledge and data sharing.

Several indicators are found to be highly important in the successful implementation of design interventions:

Community ownership over the development

It can be concluded from this research that community informed development is essential for the success and sustainability of any idea, as it is important for the community to feel ownership over these interventions. This asks for post-project care.

Time is of the essence.

To create a sustainable, self-supporting climate, whether social, entrepreneurial, or economic, it is important to move away from humanitarian aid towards development as soon as the situation allows.

Addressing the psychological impact

After any destructive event, a receptiveness to change exists, creating a momentum to move towards sustainable development, however it also makes a community vulnerable for negative changes. Therefore, focussing on urban fabric or characteristics of a community as well as the psychological impact need to be addressed as critical factors for any intervention to be successful or sustainable.

To conclude, architecture can enable communities to thrive

in the aftermath of ruinous chaos, especially during an aid-gap, by adopting: 1.) A radical transdisciplinary approach with active engagement of all relevant stakeholders, and 2.) A strong community informed design strategy that takes into account all of the specific place-based community conditions.

Figure 16: Solar panels being sold on the streets of Tripoli. An alternative to expensive generators.
vy,
November 2022.

Figure 17: A call for the protection of heritage. Most heritage building roofs were blown off. The raining season would cause further damage to the structures. Therefore, one of the first actions was to cover heritage buildings. Private photograph, December 2022.

Master research

Renée Meijer

DISCUSSION

60.   D. Loorbach, N. Frantzeskaki, F. Avelino, Sustainability Transitions Research: Transforming Science and Practice for Societal Change (Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 2017).

This study aimed to explore how simple, sustainable design solutions can be rapidly implemented to enable communities to rebuild and thrive in the aftermath of chaos through both literature review and case study.

Meaning
The findings shed a light on three major components that are of the essence for architecture to play a fruitful and effective role in a post-chaos situation.

First of all: the aid-gap is currently considerably under-researched, especially within the field of architecture. Most of the resources were drawn from a humanitarian context. The lack of attention, continuous diversion by newer disasters happening elsewhere, and great uncertainty characterizing the aid-gap are among possible explanations for the lack of understanding. At the same time, the certainty of chaos is an incentive for an in-depth investigation of this aid-gap.

Two: the strategies within the field of architecture that do exist, are often about resilience rather than post-destruction reconstruction, let alone a reframing of the system, as mentioned in the transition model by Loorbach et al.[60]
The inertia to change is both an opportunity as well as a serious threat to a societal system.
In many cases, as in Beirut, it proves to be a destabilization factor.

Thirdly, any design process must be rooted in an interdisciplinary and place-based approach. Only then can a design properly respond to the complex reality of the aid-gap.
Moreover, that way the field of architecture profits from insights from both adjacent as well as quite different fields of knowledge, such as mathematical laws (e.g. the shortest path network). This necessary broadening of knowledge provides both transparency, accountability and includes stakeholders that might not have been considered as beneficial actors. Engaging stakeholders on different levels (government, NGOs, market and knowledge institutions). Note that the NGOs in this matter must be properly represented by community members.

Limitations and shortcomings
Within this research process, two major shortcomings can be identified.
Due to limitations in time and resources, a single-case study was adopted. In future research, I strongly recommend a multiple-case study design to add validation to the findings.
As mentioned in the research, it is the preferred scenario to create a design solution in a bottom-up approach. This would mean that this research process would extend with an actual community-based design. In this case, however, the design is only developed within a small circle of experts.

Relevance and recommendations further research
These findings are relevant not only for architects but also for urban planners, policymakers and other stakeholders involved in post-disaster reconstruction and development.

The design outline as proposed within this research and during the case study to various sources can be concluded as a plausible scenario and development within the context of Beirut. However, further research is needed to indicate its efficiency in other contexts.

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APPENDIX

DESIGN CONCEPT

The Acceleration of Chaos

The building is born out of the Beirut explosion but is not defined by it. It focusses on empowering sustainable development and therefore moves away from humanitarian aid.

The building is located on Armenia street, one of the busiest axes connecting the East of the city to the West. It is a visible spot in the city, surrounded by both heritage buildings as well as homogeneous skyscrapers.

The composition of different masses throughout the design is a reflection of the city's urban fabric, and a reference to the buildings programme, a coalescence of different entities, working towards the same goal: empowering sustainable development.

As the city recovers and grows, the building does so with it. The project is build in three phases, all with their own focus and priorities. Every phase is distinguished by a material, moving from engineered bamboo, to rammed earth, to polymer glass concrete. A following phase does not remove the one that came before, but rather continues on it, layering one material on to the other. Resulting in a building that reflects the progress the programme, and the city have made.

The ground floor consists of a public programme within the dome, linking al entities together, and the offices. It is a display for local data and progress as well as a stage and exhibition space for the local community to strengthen the local entrepreneurial and cultural climate. It creates an opportunity for NGOs and other organizations such as local syndicates or the local municipality to connect to the needs of the community and to showcase the opportunities their organizations run and distribute information to the public. The interiors of the plan are highly flexible with only a fixed sanitary core. This allows the plan to always bring in something new and respond accordingly to its environment, the need of the community and phase of recovery.

The composition on the plot creates many small spaces between the building mass which response to the neighbourhoods particular public space, which is mainly formed by alleyways, staircases and leftover spaces between buildings. A big staircase leads to the lifted public roof-garden on level 1, introducing a new type of public space to the neighbourhood, and connecting to future aspirations of creating a trail of urban green spaces along Armenia street.
This level also allows direct access to the dependence-offices

for employees or appointments. Offering a view on the offices from the public garden increases a sense of transparency between involved stakeholders and the community, the most important stakeholder.

The building's shape is defined by the function it houses, activating way-finding within the building. For example, the round shapes are always publicly accessible.

Besides dependence-offices and public space to showcase, the building houses mental health support and educational spaces. The later can be used by all that bring important subjects to the table, such as reconnecting to Beiruti heritage. The plot itself

houses a single heritage building, stemming from the 1930's This building will be renovated as part of the educational program and offers knowledge by practice on how to preserve heritage, and will be transformed into a cafe as an extension of the public meeting ground, a place for informal meetings.

To move away from the communities trauma, it will not contain any obvious elements relating to the blast. However, part of the building will be build from a material born out of the reuse of the collected broken glass in the shape of polymer glass concrete. It will give this part of the building a subtle reference to the past.

Image taken from the maquette made for the final design project. Private photograph,
July 2023.

PERSONAL LOG:
FIELD WORK

Day 1/21, 26 Nov:
Arrived last night in Hamra, a busy area south of downtown Beirut. The first day is mainly focussed on fixing some basic needs such as a SIM card and exchanging money on the black marked.

Day 2/21, 27 Nov:
Today I decided to explore the city in the most observant way possible: by foot. I walked an hour across the city, gradually approaching the harbor.
Along the way, I witnessed the increasing extent of the damage. I met up with Josee Arabajian (Kim for short) in the Gemmayze neighbourhood. She explained a lot about the aftermath of the explosion and her personal experience during the blast. This was the first moment I started to understand the scope of what had happened. Kim called it a 'collective near-death experience'. She confirmed that many renovation projects had come to a halt and how corruption, even within NGOs was a huge issue.
Later that evening I picked up Tobias from the airport.

Day 3/21, 28 Nov:
After getting Tobias settled with a SIM card and some cash, we explored the city together. It was interesting to see his initial reactions and observations. One thing we noticed was that certain buildings had only one floor that had been renovated, or in some cases, just a single apartment.

Day 4/21, 29 Nov:
I met with Yasmine Dagher and Kareen Nahas from the Beirut Heritage initiative. They explained how an emergency law ensured that damaged properties could not be sold or demolished for the next two years. This law was just extended with another two years. One of their first priorities was to cover all heritage buildings in order to avoid further damage before rain season would come.

During the evening we met up with Sary and Karl, who showed us around Beirut's infamous nightlife, and shared their experiences of the blast and its aftermath.

Day 5/21, 30 Nov:
I learned a valuable lesson that day: not all alcohol in Beirut is of good quality. Combined with some poor food choices, the day passed in a blur of nausea and tiredness.
It was also a day of exploring the city on foot and observing our surroundings. We came across numerous heritage buildings in a state of destruction. After conversing with Yasmine, I gained a better understanding of why some buildings collapsed while others remained standing. Additionally, I developed the ability to identify the time period in which a building was constructed.

Day 6/21, 1 Dec:
I was invited to join the Beirut heritage initiative and Live Love Beirut on their excursion through the neighbourhood. They were showing their project to visiting architects from Italy, who supported their work with, among other things, a fibre mesh material that was put in the walls of the heritage buildings to increase their endurance and strength.

I also met George, who works at UN habitat and explained a little on their work methods. I will later set up a meeting with George.

Priorities of Live Love Beirut:
Keeping the people that lived in the building on the night of the blast in their homes.

Priorities of the UN:
Buildings were put into different categories in terms of damage. Homes of poorer people were renovated first and abandoned heritage was the lowest priority.

Day 7/21, 2 Dec:
Today we decided to get out of the city for a bit and explore the North, to see more of the country. Our first stop was the Jetta grotto, one of the biggest underground grotto structures in the world, with an underground river. Next stop, Batroun, we made use of the public transport system which means standing next to the highway at any random point and waiting for a

small white van. We made some new friends. We have gotten used to making new friend everyday now. Pierre told us more of the history of Beirut, and many told their personal story of the day of the blast, including footage of them being blown away, some with tears in their eyes. I'm noticing these kind of stories affected me more and more, since I'm learning more everyday about the country and their people.

Day 8/21, 3 Dec:
We took the bus up to Tripoli from Batroun this morning. It drove backwards on the highway for a while, but I'm noticing this is becoming very normal to me, very fast. We visited an abandoned Niemeyer site on Tripoli's world fair with some amazing structures on the verge of collapsing. Lets say, I found my next project! After exploring the city and visiting the souk we took the bus to Byblos, the oldest harbour city that has a history of triad with the Egyptians. Finally, when we got back to Beirut, Kim and her friends took us to the ballroom Blitz, a famous club designed by architects.

Day 9/21, 4 Dec:
It was a relaxed day. We went to Hamra to exchange some money at the black market and watched the sunset at the pigeon rocks. This part of the city has a different demographic, which is, for example, visible in the type of

shops.

Day 10/21, 5 Dec:
Today is Tobias' last day in Beirut. After enjoying some free time, it was time to get back to the research. I had a meeting in the morning with Yasser Akkaoui, the director of executive magazine. It was very insightful on a management and economical level. I am also noticing that I am getting better at interviewing since I'm starting to get a grip on the complexities of the country.

Day 11/21, 6 Dec:
My first day alone. I studied at my favourite coffee bar to review some of the meetings so far. After my computer died and the power was cut, I decided to join Barrsam, one of the baristas, on a walk across town. He showed me many businesses around the

Figure 18: An art protest towards the economic crisis, were banks no longer give out money from existing accounts against a fair currency change, ''melting'' the money that gets taken out of the bank.

city, such as art galleries. I got to experience the city through his eyes and perspective. After dinner, I took off to get some sleep for my early meeting the next morning.

Day 12/21, 7 Dec:
I had a meeting with George Arbid, director of the Arab architecture centre. The interview took place during their documentary about architectural archives. As I was recording George, George was filming me. He explained much of the history of Beirut in relation to architecture. As I presented my first ideas on the concept for the design, he became very enthusiastic, and encouraged me to continue. After the interview I went home, accompanied by a proper migraine.

Day 13/21, 8 Dec:
Unfortunately, my migraine did

not pass, making me dreading to go to my next meeting with Tala Alaeddine, architect and researcher at Public works. This, however, was an immensely insightful meeting. Placing many of the information I gathered in the proper context of Beirut. After some rest I went to an art show opening near the apartment. The art presented here showed the anger of the younger generation towards the country and failing government. The dollar bills displayed here, were scattered on the ground and are a protest towards the economic crisis.

Day 14/21, 9 Dec:
Today I moved to a new apartment and studied most of the day. I met with Joran and Roberto online, who gave me some feedback on the process so far. It was time to start picking a plot and do some more mapping. After grabbing a bite to eat with my new friend Jad, I picked up my mom from the airport. We had a lovely diner, but the night ended with a little Syrian boy attacking us on the streets. He threatened to throw rocks at us and followed us for many blocks.

Day 15/21, 10 Dec:
I did not sleep well after the incident last night. We spoke with some local friends and many told us the child was probably on drugs, which makes it an even more horrible story. I find it difficult to deal with the

Syrian refugee kids since it is a heartbreaking sight.

Day 16/21, 11 Dec:
Mom came to Lebanon with her own research regarding the textile industry. I got to tag along to one of her meetings, with Ahmed Amer. A successful local designer. This conversation ended up adjusting my original programme for the building and adding an exhibition space. I came to learn how important it is to give space for art as a form of processing trauma.

Day 17/21, 12 Dec:
Mom and I went on a trip with Jad, who took us on a sightseeing route to Byblos. This was my second visit, but it was incredible to see and hear about the history of this place, thanks to Jad providing local insights and stories.

Day 18/21, 13 Dec:
Today I met up with George El Chami, from UN Habitat. My mom came along, since she is very interested in my research. I learned a lot in this meeting. It was a difficult conversation, but very insightful. George taught me to be more considerate of some of the sensitivities. I thought I was aware of these, but George explained what it is really like to live in Lebanon, and how I could never understand. He is right.

Day 19/21, 14 Dec:
I had a morning meeting with
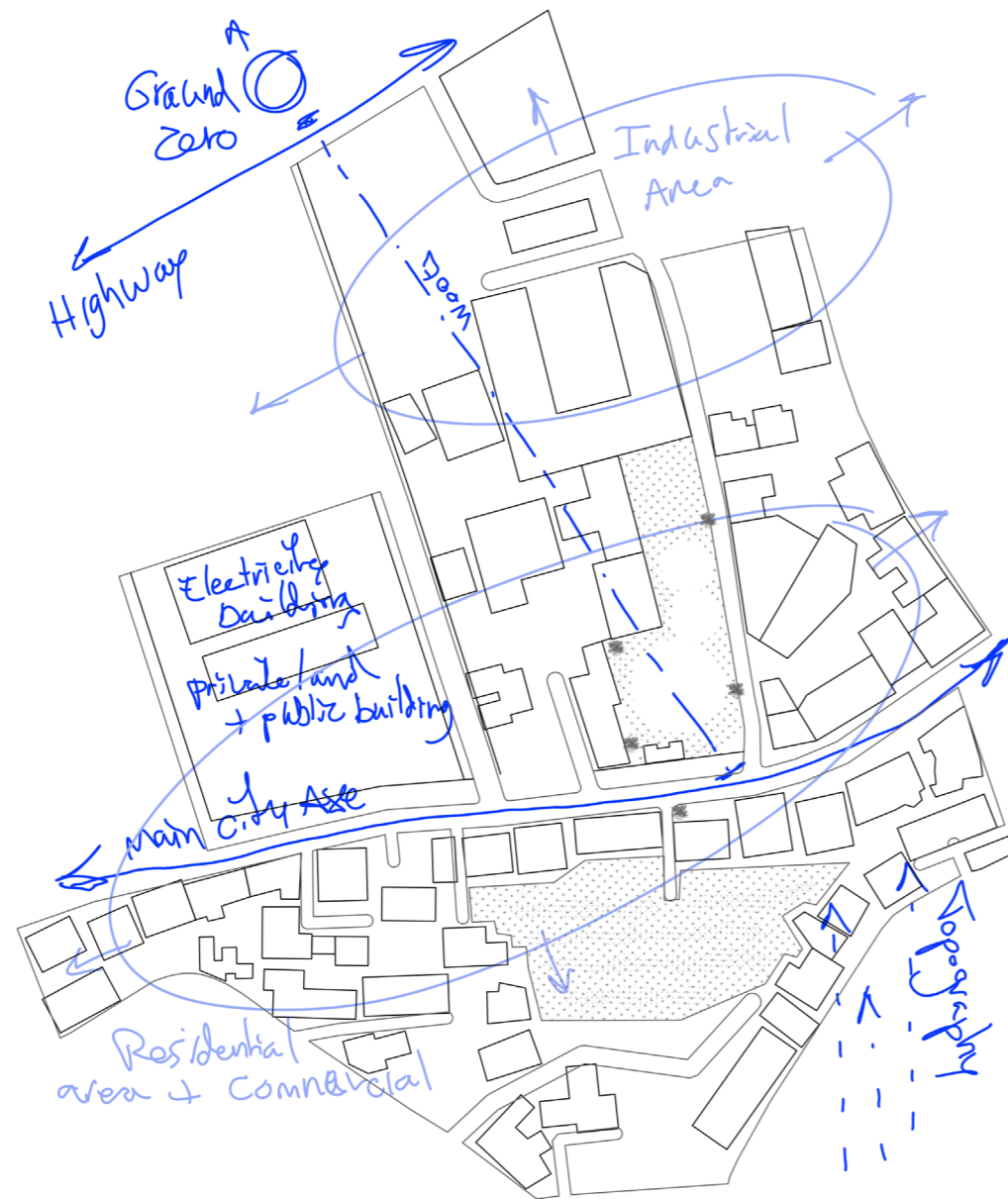
Claudine Ramadi, from the Dutch embassy. She gave me helpful insights from a governing point of view, but also on situations such as the Syrian refugees: Explaining the difficult relationship the Lebanese have with Syria and what the current circumstances are in the refugee camps.

Again, this is an example were architecture can definitely have a positive impact. I also presented my concept to Claudine who had some insightful pointers but was overall very positive about it.

Day 20/21, 15 Dec:

Today I went back to Yasmine's childhood home to meet up with Kareen, and to show my mom her work. Kareen explained what the technical aspects are behind restoring these original mural paintings. And she told us that they tried to reuse as much of the original plaster as possible. She explained more about traditional ways of building in Beirut. At that moment, some of Kareen's assistants were putting plated gold on the ceiling.

Day 21/21, 16 Dec:
This day mostly consisted of gift shopping and stopping by my favourite lunch spot to get some saj. Right before I had to leave for the airport, I met up with Oliver Marsden, a war photographer and journalist. I new Oliver through a mutual friend and reached out to learn about his experience as a journalist in moments of extreme chaos. He had just returned from Ukraine, so we mainly spoke about that. However, he was one of the first photographers to capture the blast of Beirut, which led to some interesting insights on what the aftermath looked like.
After our beer, I took a cap to the airport to catch my flight back to Amsterdam.

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Figure 20: Construction site of damaged building on Armenia Street. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 22: A heritage building close to the green line, with bullet holes penetrating the facade. The building is damaged by the blast. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 21: Yasmine and Kareen at the Neighbourhood cafe during our interview. Personal photograph from case study.

The photography log showcases a chronological collection of captures taken throughout the city of Beirut during the course of the fieldwork. Additionally, the log includes pictures of all the interviews that took place in Lebanon, providing insight into the settings in which these interviews occurred.

Figure 23: A building near the city centre. Buildings tent to be more damaged the further away from the facade, due to pressure building up inside the buildings after the shockwave, exploding them from the inside out. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 25: A destructed gas station on Armenia Street. Close to the plot of this research. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 24: A protest towards a new development, Mar Mikael. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 26: Cars crushed by steel, behind the gas station, as shown in the previous photograph. After 2,5 years these have not yet been removed. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 27: A damaged building in Gemmayzeh. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 28: A completely collapsed building. The building collapsed due to it having an extra floor build on top of the original construction. A resident died at this spot. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 29:A UNHCR
sheet being used as solar
protection in front of a
newly renovated building.
Personal photograph from
case study.

Figure 31: Me, taking a
break from the city.
Personal photograph from
case study.

Figure 30: Right behind
the electricity building
on the left, the distroyed
silo, which was standing
right next to the explosion
site, can be seen. Personal
photograph from case
study.

Figure 32: Tobias working
remotely in Gemmayzeh.
Personal photograph from
case study.

Master research

Renée Meijer

Figure 33: Yasmine's childhood home during the tour. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 34: Heritage buildings right across from the plot of this research, covered with sheets to avoid further damage by rainfall. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 35: A collapsed building-site, which had not been touched in months. Most likely due to lack of funding. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: Solar panels being sold on the street in Tripoli. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 38: George Arbid with his film crew at the Arab Architecture Centre. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 37: Yasser Akkaoui, in his office at executive magazine, during our interview. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 39: Another student looking through the history books at the Arab Architecture Centre. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 40: Tala Alaeddine at Public Works, standing in front of a map of the city. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 41: A call for action to protect heritage. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 42: Jad working with one of the many street cats on his lap. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: My mother. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: A call for action on a wall in Gemmayzeh. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: Interview with George El Chami from UN Habitat. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: A UNHCR being used to cover an old Mercedes. Personal photograph from case study.

Figure 36: Claudine Ramadi at the Dutch Embassy. Personal photograph from case study.

RESPONSE
RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

The sustainable recovery and reconstruction framework is used as a guide to make a translation to design. The following text contains the response to this framework.

Sustainable Mobility
Mobility
Pedestrian infrastructure
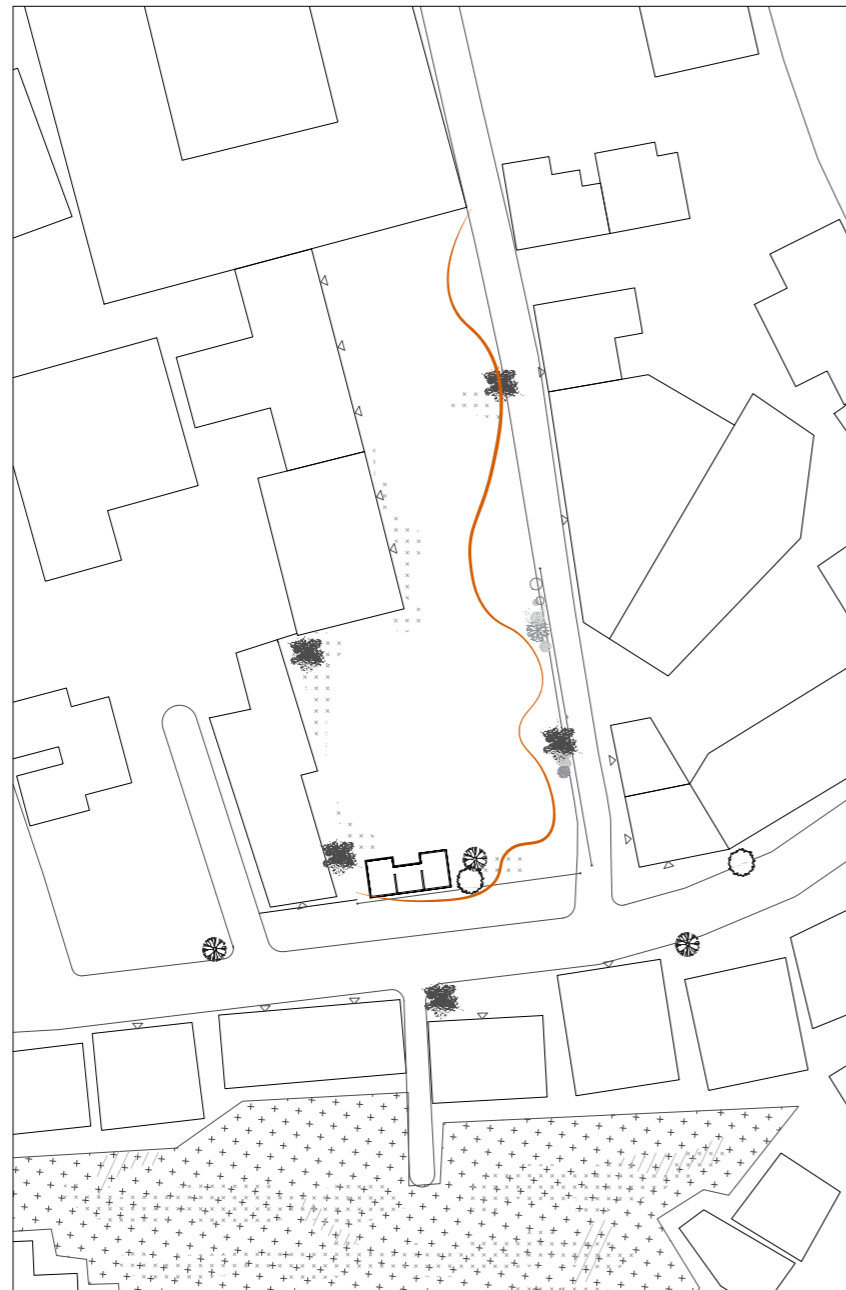
Resource Utilization
Water
Energy
Materials

Water
Ensure proper utilisation and protection of available water resources
- protecting natural water resources
- maximising water reuse
- managing water operations to rescue the depletion of available freshwater in the long term.

The Building:
- Private (fresh)water tank
- Reuse of grey water
- Storage and use of rainwater
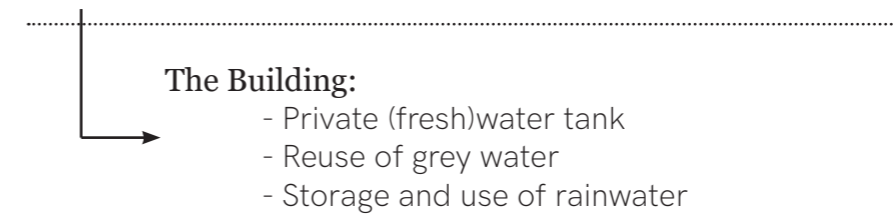
Energy
Use reconstruction to build a sustainable energy infrastructure for buildings and cities
as a whole.
- Ensure proper utilisation of available energy resources, which includes optimising energy demand and performance through passive and active methods.
- Maximise the reliance on renewable energy sources in meeting the demands, while ensuring optimum performance when commissioning and monitoring energy systems to reduce overall emissions, operating costs, and reliance on fossil fuels.

The Building:
- Private Energy source (renewable)
- Direct public energy distribution
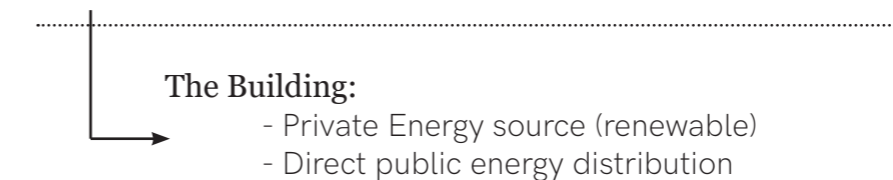
Material
- Ensure efficient utilisation of local materials and a reduction in the demand for virgin materials.
- Assess an optimised whole life cycle approach towards the handling of existing materials, especially pertaining to reconstruction, by exploring strategies that utilise debris, reduce waste and divert waste from landfills

Figure 37: Sustainable reconstruction and recovery framework. worldgbc.org

EFFICIENT RESOURCE UTILISATION

ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

HERITAGE

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

HEALTH & WELLBEING

INTEGRATIVE SOCIAL & ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

SUSTAINABLE RECONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

MATERIALS
ENERGY
WATER
LAND
ECOLOGY
CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION
MOBILITY
ARCHEOLOGY
HERITAGE
PEDESTRIAN INFRA-STRUCTURE
POLLUTION
COMFORT
SAFETY
SOCIAL & MENTAL WELLBEING
EDUCATION
ECONOMIC RESILIENCE
SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Master research

Renée Meijer

The Building:
- Local material
- Modular construction
- Sustainable material

Social and Economic Resilience
Social resilience
Economic resilience
Education

Social resilience
- Assess and improve the social resilience of post-conflict and post-disaster cities, and suggest ways to benefit from the social resilience of the city during the reconstruction process.
- Map community stakeholders and their priorities concerning the city's development and housing, and assess their ability to support the urban reconstruction process.
- Enable cities and communities to take advantage of strong social resilience, leverage their newly developed social capital towards accomplishing further sustainable urban priorities

The Building:
- Connect all stakeholders involved
- Establish open source knowledge
- Introduce radical transparency
- Shortest path network
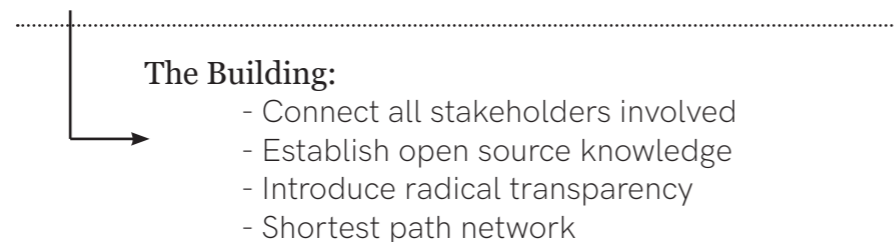
Economic resilience
- Provide guidelines for an economically efficient and successful implementation of sustainable urban reconstruction practises in post-crisis cities. This is to be done by considering phasing according to the community's priorities and emphasising transparency.

The building:
- Introduce radical Transparency
- Create a stage for community
- Connect municipality, market and community
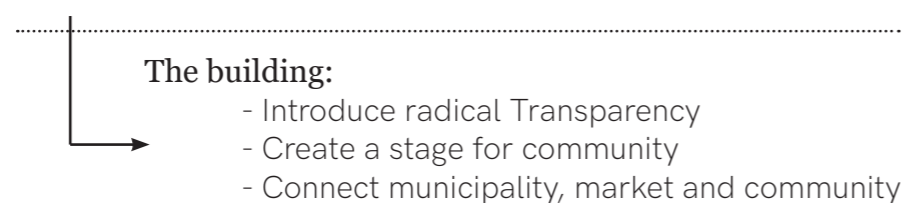
Education
- Propose strategic training and education initiatives post-crisis with the aim towards sustainable urban reconstruction. The initiatives may comprise both school education for children and adults, and public awareness campaigns.

The Building:
- Learning environment: classrooms
- meeting rooms (formal & informal)
- Information distribution
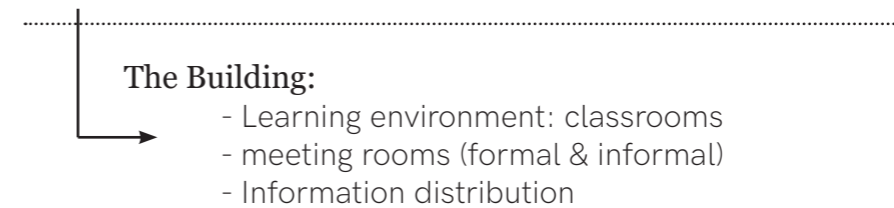
Environmental & climate resilience
Land
Ecology
Climate change mitigation
Climate change adaption

Land
- Create ecological resilience, engineering resilience, and promote community health and well-being.
- Provide spaces that meet the needs of residents and accommodate their daily activities while minimising the negative environmental impact of reconstruction.

The Building:
- Public space as part of the design

Ecology
Conduct an accurate and detailed assessment of ecological health of the area, and set an agenda of remedial work needed and baseline conditions for planning and design.

The Building:
- Public accessible green
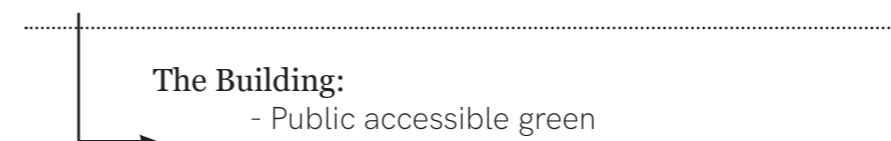
Climate change mitigation
- Integrate climate change mitigation strategies into sustainable reconstruction processes, taking into consideration the life cycle of the project.

- Provide multi-level monitoring and assessment tools for reduction of GHGs and ozone depletion.
- Avoid reconstruction activities that may potentially contribute to climate change and to simultaneously identify the best reconstruction practises in this regard.

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The building:
- Modular construction
- Flexible construction, the building should respond to the users needs.
- Teaching programs for sustainable reconstruction and material use.
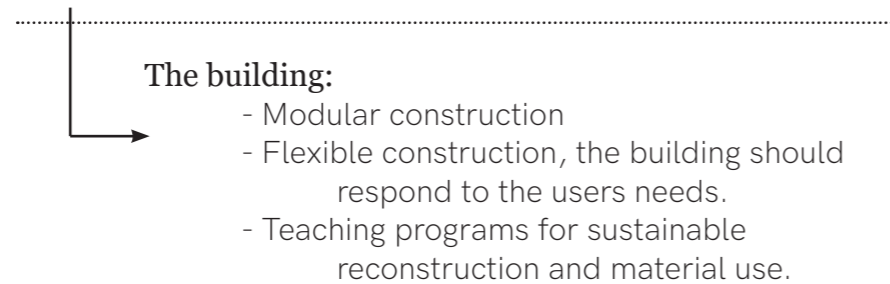
Climate change adaption

- Prevent or reduce the impact of climate change on the natural and built environment, and human systems, by planning and implementing legal, physical, socio-economic (including mental health and wellbeing) interventions.

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The building:
- Net-zero building, with private renewable energy source
- Local and sustainable material use
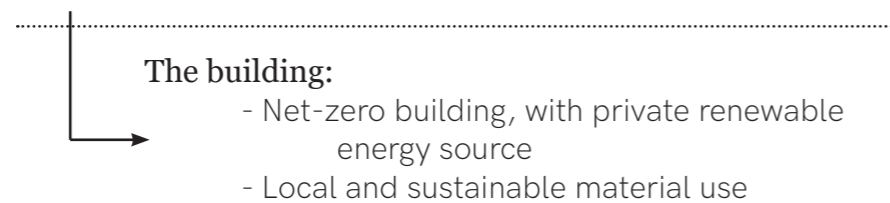
Health & Wellbeing
Social- & mental wellbeing
Safety
Comfort
Pollution

Social- & mental wellbeing

- Offer spaces, services, and activities were the promotion and development of human vitality and wellbeing is materialised. As social and mental wellbeing are outcomes of good urban planning and design, there are several general and context-specific principles that can be considered and applied towards urban reconstruction efforts in post-crisis cities and neighbourhoods for this purpose.

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The building:
- Provide (Mental) health services
- Provide a stage for local community to express
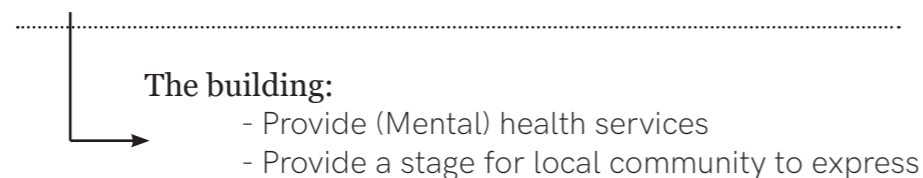
forms of art/expression
- Support and encourage local initiatives.

Safety
- Provide integrated safety and disaster risk mitigation/prevention planning and management measures over the life cycle of the reconstruction process of cities whilst maintaining the wellbeing of all stakeholders. •Explore effective measures which prioritise safety for all stakeholders at all development levels, in the context of a health pandemic.

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The building:
- Education and information on safe reconstruction
- Distribute information on risks
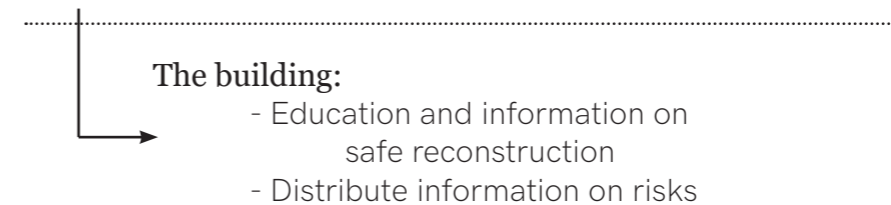
Comfort
Encourage occupant wellbeing by ensuring thermal, visual, auditory, and olfactory comfort. Encourage beneficial lifestyle practises which include good nutrition, hydration, and social connectivity.

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The building:
- *Education services on health and wellbeing*
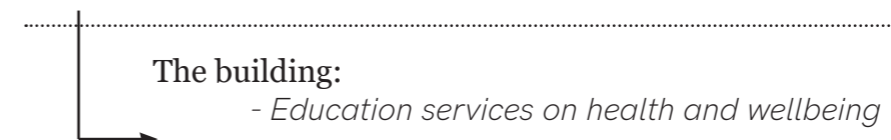
Pollution
Approach pollution mitigation and prevention through a comprehensive, integrative, and multidisciplinary design approach, and elaborate on the preservation of air, water and soil quality to minimise health risks.
For optimum protection against harm which also encapsulates human wellbeing, the theme provides mitigation strategies for other sources of pollution such as noise and light.

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The building:
- Green energy source around the plot
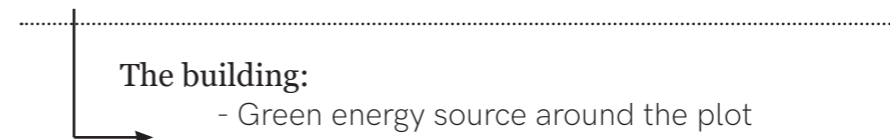
Heritage
Archeology
Heritage

Archeology
- Maximise the unique opportunity of accessing archaeology prior to re-construction, and carrying out archaeological investigations and exca-vations without jeopardising the reconstruction process.
- Integrate existing archaeology, as well as potential archaeological findings, in any reconstruction scenario or master plan by applying UN-ESCO principles which protect existing archaeology from disorganised urban development.
- Prevent reconstruction works from damaging archaeological findings

The building:
- Central information point for reconstruction
- Avoid potential harming of archaeological
  findings.
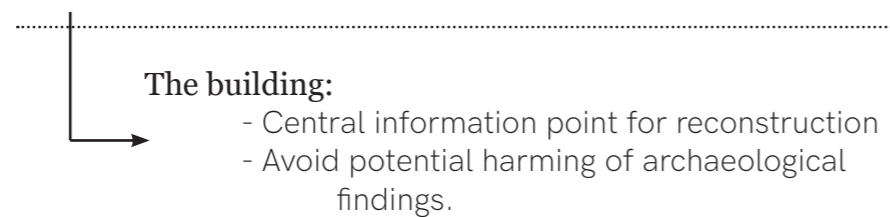
Heritage
Provide a comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative data which informs the recommendations and processes for the protection, inte-gration, and celebration of built heritage and its cultural significance in reconstruction plans.
Design a development framework that balances built heritage conser-vation, community reconstruction needs, and socioeconomic growth.

The building:
- Educate and connect
- Proper reconstruction of the 1930's
  building on plot
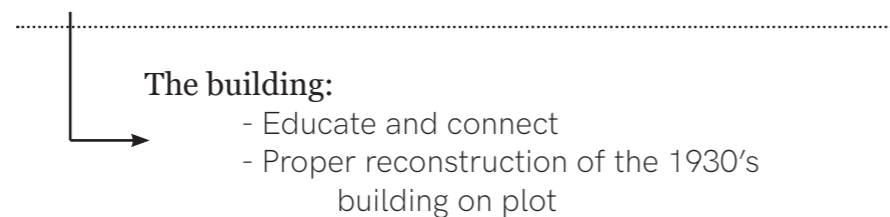
REFLECTION REPORT

May 2023

What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic, your master track and your master programme?

The graduation topic can be seen as a slightly grim approach to the studio topic, 'City of the future'. Due to raising tensions worldwide, it is important not only to develop resilient design to withstand chaos, but also to design for situations after the manifestation of chaos, counting on the increasing pressure of our economical system, where existing models do not suffice in current challenges.

This way of thinking challenges the current approach within the master architecture track, where many studios are focussed only on resilient design that can withstand certain types of destructive chaos.

To elaborate on this; our world is encountering rising tension in many different ways, such as increasing climate pressure, a growing lack of resources and political tension. With these rising tensions, a growing amount of destructive chaos, whether man-made, climate related or war related, can be expected. It is important to search for structures within the discipline of architecture that answer, in a sustainable but effective way, to this destructive chaos.

Did my approach work?

As most projects, my graduation started out focussing on research and slowly developing towards design. A third element, originally part of the research, developed into an independent factor during the entirety of the year; the case study.

The research sketched an image from a highly abstract level that approached the subject with a multidisciplinary point of view. The subsequent case study, made the connection to the ground, in terms of culture, heritage, context and community. The design balanced between the two, starting from a general approach and developing towards a specific intervention.

I feel the highly abstract starting point functioned as an inspirational aspect towards the design and therefore functioned well. The case study has been more effective that I could have hoped for, and has had a immense impact on the design. Several sources were committed to my research and design up until the final phases of the design. The warm and welcoming culture of Lebanon has no small part in this.

The approach of the design became effective once it was divided in different phases with a developing character throughout these phases. By combining the design with a generic script, a fruitful interaction developed between theory and practice.

However, I had to step away from some pre-assumptions during the course of the year, such as trying to design a building that would work in various contexts without adjusting it, so my approach had to adjust throughout the research in order to become well founded. It is important to note that though the approach seemed to be effective, the research still appoints a brought scope of deeply rooted problems that can simply not be fixed with one architectural intervention. It can however be a step towards an accountable system.

How did the design influence the research and vice versa?

As mentioned above, the research was a source of inspiration throughout the development of the design. However, once I started looking at the Sustainable Recovery and Reconstruction Framework, the research started to translate towards a program for a building. The design forced the research to step away from a completely general approach in order to make a successful intervention.

The understanding of how and why became clear during the case study. The impact, scale, community and trauma would otherwise have stayed abstract. In terms of how: I believe that the key element during the case study – but also within the research, that enabled an understanding of the project – was the multidisciplinary approach. By looking at various fields to clarify different approaches on the main topics, such as accountability, transparency, sustainability and recovery, the design and research became much more substantiated. By addressing similar fields within the research and case study, the conclusions could be validated and the overall work got added value.

Reflection on feedback given by mentors, and interaction of research and design.

One of the most important parts of the feedback I received was about presenting the topic. It is not only a complex topic, but an emotional and often personal topic as well. It was made clear in the beginning of the year that I needed to approach it in a humble and open way – 'I am here to listen and learn' – rather than 'this is how I think it needs to be done'. There were a few times when I did not succeed in portraying this attitude, resulting in emotional and negative feedback moments, something that highly effected my confidence in the project, but had valuable lessons. A key element in the period before a presentation or interview was to prepare and to be in a calm head-space myself, in my case this meant I had to have enough energy. When tired, I tent to lose some of the nuances that were needed in the conversations.

Another important piece of

feedback was about the generic versus specific approach, and how these could be a parallel influence to each other. This resulted in the script versus design, closely intertwining the research with the design. During this phase, the design was heavily influenced by the research and vice-versa. As a base for the script, I used the 'Sustainable Reconstruction and Recovery Framework', which made sure all topics were represented in the development of the design. It then led to an understanding of the highly changing needs and resources in the aftermath of a destructive event, resulting in the building being divided in different phases of development. In this way, I was able to categorise all the different elements relevant to the design, which were overwhelming for a long time. This feeling of being overwhelmed blocked me in ways to properly communicate my ideas.

Translation of feedback into work.

Resulting from the 'listen and learn' approach during the research, climate adjusted/passive design became a focus point. By adopting traditional building methods from Lebanon, the building becomes a bridge between the traditional heritage and homogeneous skyscrapers. A modern building that functions as part of the climate it is located in.

How have I learned from my own work?

This is not a simple question to answer. But the answer really focusses on another question: What kind of architect do I want to be?
At the beginning of the year, I had a pretty clear idea of what I would want to be and how I needed to get there. The project however has made me question this. I no longer wish to work in a prestigious firm, but rather spend my time on subjects that are more pressing. The topic that I chose, chaos, will become more pressing as climate change continues. I feel this is the direction I would like to keep following for a while. On a more practical note, I have learned to network and connect to a new environment. A skill that will no doubt be helpful in the future and has given me wonderful and inspiring connections throughout the course of this project. I was amazed about how experts are willing to share their time with you if you approach them with passion and drive. These talks with experts have made this year most impact full, and as mentioned above will influence the type of architect I want to be.

What was most challenging during the course of the project?

I had gotten used to working in teams during the course of my master but also during my time working in a firm. One of the most challenging

aspects therefore was not as much the duration of the project, but the fact that I was working alone. Also, within the studio the topics differed too much to really level with peers. I started to convey more in close friends or family to share my process.
With all design projects, there is a moment when one is stuck in the so called 'valley of death', and with no one around to brainstorm or challenge, it was sometimes difficult to challenge myself.
Another unexpected challenge was coming back from the fieldwork. Towards the end of the case study, I started to notice that the stories I heard and saw in Beirut became more and more heavy to hear.
It took me a while after I got back to be on my normal level of energy. I also lacked motivation for a while during this period due to being overwhelmed by the whole experience. Again, I started to convey in close friends and family to get a hold on my feeling of being overwhelmed. Especially my mother who joined me in Beirut for the final week could relate due to her personal (work) experience and the fact that she could understand what I was talking about since she had seen it for herself. What really got me into motion again was the pressure of a deadline. Unfortunately, one of my less desirable character trades.

What was a surprising turn?

One of the most fruitful

aspects of the project was the multidisciplinary approach. It is interwoven throughout the research, as well as the design and case study. What I did not expect was how theories from different fields could connect and be translated into architecture, or the other way around. I have realized there is probably no better way to approach complex problems such as this. They really cannot exist in separate boxes, since it is simply not true. The usage of a multidisciplinary approach gave me the freedom to connect to the project from a broad scope, making it more realistic in my opinion. It was something I was missing in some parts of my study in Delft and I am glad to have explored it. It also confirms my choice for this studio, which I am very happy about.

How do you asses the value of your way of working?

The case study research is in my opinion the most valuable part of the research, due to the rich sources but also correct interpretation using thematic coding. I feel this part also aligns better with my personal interests and is therefore better executed. The theoretical framework was quite vague for a period which had to do with me not yet getting a proper grip on the whole research. After the case study, the research also became of better quality.

How do you assess the academic and social value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The interviews and check-in with experts from the TU Delft and outside of it have contributed highly to the academic and social value of the project. It has been subjected to feedback from several highly placed individuals that are connected to, amongst other institutions, UN Habitat, BHP Foundation and the Dutch government. Therefore, the project is a product of several highly informed views on the research questions, making it a well-informed academic piece. The social value also mainly lays in these expert's reviews and interviews as well as the projects goal; finding solutions to effectively deal with the aftermath of destructive chaos.
None the less, a project like this is always connected to the writer's personal frame of reference and is therefore closely connected to my personal fascinations.
The ethical aspects, such as handling a, to me, new environment and all its complexities, were of great value in this project due to the complex relations between different actors. Integrity and respect for individuals were key during the process. Lebanon has many complex relationships and challenges that are hard to grasp for a foreigner. An example is the Syrian refugee crisis, were Lebanon is currently home to many refugees. However, it is not too long ago, during the civil war, that Syria took part in the fighting and terrible situations that result from it. These conflicting positions create a defensive and averted attitude among many Lebanese. There is nothing for me to solve or even have an opinion on when I encountered this ethical problem. I simply listened and asked in order to understand this, and other complexities.

How do you assess the value of transferability of your projects results?

Due to the wide range of sources within different fields I feel the conclusions resulting from these sources are transferable to different projects. An example of this would be the script. A generic approach that is intertwined with the design but can be used as a generic base for other projects. However, due to the research only having a single cases-study, it was not possible to see if similar conclusions could be drawn from a different context. Therefore, the research is limited. Apart form the conclusions drawn in this research, certain elements are very well transferable. Such as the documentation and transcription which can be used in other projects since these are well documented in the appendix. In this way, the research can be valuable to other projects. Due to the process being documented along with the findings, it is easy for other academic researchers to assess the value of the information given for themselves.

What's next?

The coming few weeks will fully be focussed on the finalization of the design and production of visuals, maps, plans etc. After a hopefully successful P4, the period towards P5 will focus on building a model and preparing a presentation.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Interview with Yasmine Dagher

29th November 2022, Beirut Heritage Initiative

Neighbourhood Cafe
Gouraud str.
Beirut, Lebanon

00:00:02 Renée
In terms of the government, with the new regulation in terms of heritage, how is this proceeding?

00:00:06 Yasmine
So, obviously there or now regulations regarding heritage. Our heritage law dates back from the 1930's, so during the French mandate, the active heritage law, the one that is in application right now dates back from the 1930's and mainly states that everything that was build before the 18th century, so 1700, is considered as heritage. So that's even before the Ottomans reign in Beirut. And we do have parts of sites that dates back from the roman empire, but they are not visible to the eye because they are under the ground.

00:00:51 Renée
So, more the structure?

00:00:52 Yasmine
Yeah, you can actually see them in the city centre, what we call Solidere right now, where they excavated a few parts. You can see them from above, but they are not in a museum where you can go. Every time there is a new construction in these neighbourhoods, everything that surrounds the city centre, when they do excavations, they find elements from the roman empire. So, this is the time of heritage that is actually preserved. Archaeology, if you want. You have archaeology and everything that dates back before the 1700. In some cities, outside, one of the cities, Deir el-Qamar, it's in the south. They have their own regulation where for example everything is preserved and if you want to build a new building it should have the same typology or characteristic as the rest of the neighbourhood. So, all of the buildings are built out of stone, you build out of stone.

00:01:55 Renée
yeah, you are not building out of wood.

00:01:58 Yasmine
But in Beirut it is actually very difficult to preserve heritage and our ministry of culture was founded in 1992, so thirty years ago, before that there was no ministry of culture.

00:02:15 Renée
Yeah.

00:02:22 Yasmine
So, when they founded the ministry of culture, first thing was preserving heritage, because

it was right after the civil war. I don't know if you know a bit what Beirut looks like but mainly the civil war devided Beirut even more than what it was. (Yasmine drawing a schematic map of Beirut)

00:02:49 Yasmine
So, you have Beirut, and here you have the Beirut River (up north). All of this was added on the sea, which is the port. And our city centre is here (south of the harbour) which is the oldest part. And during the ottoman period... so this was the city and in the 1860's it started expanding towards the east and then north because the coast goes back (land inwards). So, this was the road that led north towards Tripoli, and this one south. And the train used to run here (next to the main axis). So, these where the two main axis. So, this is the old city which started to develop around these two directions. So, the oldest neighbourhoods started going like in a radial way. They started expanding this way, and here you still have the suburbs which is under construction now like when people want to build. It's mainly in those neighbourhoods in the suburbs.
So, during the Roman era it was the same, so this was the old city, also these two streets date back actually from the Roman Empire. So also, you find a lot of ruins here. So, when people want to build a new building

around those neighbourhoods, they automatically find ruins. Yeah, when they fix the street for example, they found a lot of ruins. Yeah, and what happens is that the director General of antiquities, they need to come. They need to bring archaeologists and then put it again in a sort of like... It's not in the in the museum or anything, it's in a sort of storage place unfortunately.

00:04:47 Renée
Aah, yeah.

00:04:50 Yasmine
The Ministry of Culture was founded in '92 and those regions, were the most affected by the Civil War because Beirut was mainly divided into two, around this (the green line) and there was West-Beirut and East-Beirut. And this was a line of demarcation here, so mainly all of this, all of the action was happening here, which means that all of the neighbourhood and the city centre was deeply affected by the civil war. And what happened following the Civil War is that the whole city centre was bought by a company called Solidere and they kind of destroyed everything and rebuild it with the same facades, but the interior, everything was different and their response: so was to OK fine. You did Solidere. It's too late, but let's preserve everything that's around. Let's preserve whatever still has value.

00:05:48 Renée

00:05:52 Yasmine
1994 official year at started. So, Ministry of Culture was founded in '92.

00:05:53 Renée
OK yeah yeah.

00:05:56 Yasmine
In '95 in response... One of the things was in response to Solidere. Another one was because they saw how affected the Beirut houses were by the Civil War, they started thinking of a sort of heritage law to preserve. But there was the Ministry of Culture that was accompanied by architects, urbanist heritage experts. So, they did this sort of task force, if you want. And they mapped the first neighbourhoods that are surrounding the city centre. So, it's just a few neighbourhoods, it's not even the whole city, and they had a mapping of more than 1000 buildings, 1059 buildings, something like that.
And they said OK, so we have... So just in the first neighbourhood, so in the oldest neighbourhoods we have, this many buildings, let's start working on a law. And so, they drafted it. But then they never... There was a new minister, and he just stopped this project.

00:06:58 Renée
Yeah yeah, yeah.

00:07:01 Yasmine
And then in 98 they did this sort of same study. But then they said: OK, So not this building. It's not nice. Let's remove it this building. They like the....

00:07:09 Renée
Its much more money driven maybe?

00:07:12 Yasmine
Yeah, because in in '94 the vision was mainly on a neighbourhood value. Like it's not one building you're preserving, it's the whole street.

00:07:22 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:07:23 Yasmine
But in '98 they were like; no, let's preserve the most the nicest buildings like palaces and everything. But then the small house: Let's remove it. And then it was mostly like, nothing happened during the 2000s like nothing much. Until 2014 where they decided that they had to revive this whole study. And so they did, like the Ministry of Culture, did a new mapping but on the whole of Beirut, and tried to include also modern heritage because the Heritage that was included in this was mostly traditional.

00:07:54 Renée
Yeah yeah.

00:07:55 Yasmin

And they worked in parallel with a law that would be a tool for heritage owners. So, it encourage them to preserve their building rather than destroying because our, again, our urban laws says that you can build the most in those neighbourhoods and build the least in the suburbs. Which is not logic because you should preserve, so build less in those neighbourhoods of course, and build more outside. And so the heritage, the heritage law that is currently like, we're still waiting for it to be voted. It was voted by the ministries, but not by the Parliament yet. And UNESCO, since the blast retook the whole study and is trying to improve it for it to pass. So, it's mainly says that you have something called TDR, transfer of development rights. Mainly you can build... So, I have my lands, and I have my house on this lands.

00:08:54 Yasmine
And I could actually build a tower that's much. On the rest of your land, if I keep the house. So the transfer of the development rights says that I could all of this that I could possibly build, I can actually sell it, it's... you're selling nothing but you can actually sell it to someone that is building high rise outside of the heritage neighbourhood. So rather than actually destroying and building a tower and then selling apartment

by apartment or selling something that does not currently exist but on paper it could exist. You're keeping your house and you're doing profit on it.

00:09:37 Yasmine
Exactly, and TDR is active in multiple cities I think in India there is a lot of cities where they have to do this. And if I'm not mistaken and Chicago as well. There's a lot of cities that already are implementing this type of regulations and it's not something that we came up with. It's something that the people that came up with the TDR for Beirut actually saw it in application and other cities.

00:10:07 Yasmine
Yeah, so the owner does not like lose any like he can make profit out of something that like rather than destroying. He makes profit and then investors that are building high rises or whatever. They could also add like 20% of their full... Yeah, so it's a win-win for everyone and you, you're right. Like you put regulations like I could transfer from here to only this part, or this part. I can't transfer in the same

neighbourhood so that there is like the cohesion in the same neighbourhood as the whole neighbourhood is preserved as heritage and then if there is a so you have a lot of big empty plots in Beirut.

00:10:55 Yasmine
Like all around the Beirut River or even like here, around the port because the port is shifting so you have... the point used to be here and then it started. Then it was here and then it's here and now it's shifting up north. So, you have a lot of empty lands that could have a potential. Yeah, so this is just the legal outline.

00:11:41 Yasmine
So, we have a president, and we have the ministries, and we have members of Parliament yeah, OK. And we also have for each big region, we have what we call office, which is a governor of the region. Yeah, there's a governor for Beirut. And he was elected actually a few months before the blast. And, uh, he is very keen on preserving heritage. So, the first thing that he did

like following the blast, the first press conference that he said was like; I'm not going to let people destroy their houses even if there is like structural damage. We're going to try to encourage people to renovate. If you need to present permits because for every any type of construction or renovation. Like you're building a new tower, or you need to renovate a house or whatever you need to apply for permits. So, kind of like, you make it easier for people to renovate their houses without permits if they were affected by the blast in constructive ways. So, a lot of people were able to renovate 10 days after the blast. And at the same time the Ministry of Culture as well as the members of parliament, and the governor of Beirut put in place a law, that's called law 194. That would prevent any owner of selling or destroying its heritage building. So, what they were scared of is that the whole Solidere thing would replicate.

00:13:17 Yasmine
In this neighbourhood. Because people started selling to Solidere after the war, because most of their buildings were destroyed, they didn't have the means to renovate because also you know like, all of your neighbours like.. My grandfather used to have a small shop in Solidere. And all of

his neighbours sold to Solidere, he didn't want, but then he was like, OK, I can't be the only one, so he sold.

00:13:38 Renée
I can't stay here alone.

00:13:40 Yasmine
You know he just, he sold it.

00:13:42 Renée
and makes sense too.

00:13:44 Yasmine
So, we didn't want this type of scenario to replicate here because there were talks: OK, let's destroy and let's build high-rises and everything and everyone was very scared. So, the Law 194, it protected all of this. And actually, we received phone calls… A lot of people received phone calls from people that were asking are you selling your house and we were like no, we're not selling our house.

00:14:09 Renée
Also, we cannot anymore because of this law.

00:14:10 Yasmine
Yeah, but that was passed in October so there was still from August till October a lot of people, yeah. Some people actually sold. And the only reason why you could sell your house like it's still you can do it now, what happened is… So, this law 194 was just active for a period of two years October 2020 to October

2022.

00:14:31 Renée
That's maybe also why pass so fast?

00:14:34 Yasmine
Yes, and now in October they decided to extend it again for two years, awaiting like a sort of heritage law. You know that would be active, but if you have a house and you're selling it to me, and I make a promise that I am actually going to renovate it and preserve it then this could be a possibility. But I would need the approval of the Ministry of Culture of the Municipality of Beirut of the… like a lot of…

00:15:00 Renée
It's a big process.

00:15:01 Yasmine
Yeah, but some cases like this did happen in the past two years. And so, this is the… like if you want the our institutions, public institutions, we're able to help in this way. Other than that, the Ministry of Culture has been trying as much as possible to be here as a support, but they do not have any funding for them to actually provide with grants or funding or anything but everything that's regulations. But if you renovate in the proper way, then they will give you the permit very easily, with no problem. But what they did after the blast is that they founded a task force, that they called

BHR Beirut. But heritage rescue. So, it's architecture restorers. I think they were like maybe 15 architects, restorers and they all were teachers at the Lebanese University, so they also so all of their students were volunteers. And what they did is that they mapped the whole city: Heritage buildings. And they also put the level of damage like they tried to do some sort of message statements like what's the first step to preserve this building et cetera, and then those people from BHR,
the main ones, not the volunteers, we're consultants on all of the renovation projects, so they have to come, and check that the work was done properly. Yeah, not that. Yeah, you know, because a lot of people wanted to keep the facades but then modernise the whole interiors, which is not a possibility. because the whole building, it's an all bearing structure like you can't remove a wall.

00:16:42 Renée
No no no no.

00:16:43 Yasmine
So, a lot of people thought; yeah, OK, you know, since it's half destroyed, let's do something else.

00:16:48 Renée
I've always wanted something like this. Yeah, yeah, let's take the opportunity. Yeah, OK, I see what you mean.

00:16:49 Yasmine
Yeah, exactly so this team was actually here too. If you want cheque that everything was done in the proper way.

00:17:00 Renée
Yeah, OK, and it sounds like in this beginning period the sort of the cooperation went quite fast and smoothly. How is this now?

00:17:13 Yasmine
OK so there is a lot like us, there is a lot of initiatives that were born following the blast. Most of them are not active right now. Because the funding to be honest funding has been very, very low. It's been more than a year now that, there is no funding at all actually, because also of the Ukraine war. All of the international organisations are concentrated there, which is very normal. But, so, there is a lot of NGOs that were active before the blast, but we're not working on Beirut. You know, some of them were working and in the North or South or whatever, but they all came towards Beirut right after the blast happened. So, all of those NGOs that are not working in Beirut, they went back to their own stitches. When everything calmed down.

00:18:11 Renée
Yeah, after the… when the dust has settled, so to say.

00:18:17 Yasmine

And then now, to be honest, us, we're collaborating with anyone. We're still in in in constant communication with anyone. Right now, we're working on a renovation project, which is in collaboration with another NGO. But again, we're doing this type of matching funds. Because they have a bit of funds, we have a bit of funds. Alone we won't be able to renovate something, buy together we are able. So there's still a lot of collaborations, but again I guess, 80% of the NGO's that were here on August 5, 2020 are not working anymore in Beirut. They are back to their thing.

Yeah OK, so this is sort of, one of the problems that arise from my research so far, is that you sort of slowly going to this dip. So, the acceleration is sort of moving out.

00:19:15 Yasmine
Yeah, they are.

00:19:18 Renée
So, in the beginning you have this huge acceleration also in like in terms of media attention and then that brings funding and stuff and then slowly you go into this sort of dip.

00:19:31 Yasmine
But I can tell you like there's still Live Love Beirut, which is still working a little bit. We are working a little bit. Together Beirut, they're working a little

bit. Right? And then who else? That's it. I guess as NGOs that were like following the blast. You have better, Beit el Baraka, but they are mostly so… Actually everyone started working on reconstruction. Beit el Baraka, for example, Is a Lebanese NGO that was founded five years. The reconstruction was never… They're not specialised in this. So, what they did is that they got a team of architects to join their team for them to be able to work on renovations, but their main actions are actually providing food for elderly people, empowering women through jobs etc. And now, like two years after the blast, they're back to those two main things. Yeah, they're not working on reconstruction anymore, but they are still active in Beirut. But just, you know, everyone went back to what they were doing before the blast.

00:20:37 Renée
Yeah. And since you were founded after the Blast…

00:20:41 Yasmine
After the blast, we're still because we still have a lot of, like not a lot of funding, but like a few funds that we could… this place here and there… We're still working, but the second we don't have anything. We're all stopping because, again, it was founded by 6 members that are all, if you want, working pro bono on this. For them, Beirut Heritage Initiative, it's a project, so they're

giving their time for it. But they're all have another job, a main job, you know. So, they are working during the day to their job, and then at night they see everything that's related to the Beirut Heritage initiative. I'm currently the only full-time member. So, we have two sites. What I do is, I go I check and do that. I do daily visits on site. If there is a decision to take, I take it and I'm in charge of the social media and all of that, because I'm the only member. But following the blast we were much more yeah, but we have we have three part timers, one that's in charge of the small finances, one that's an architect, and she actually goes and do everything that's photographic reports for our donors. And even for us. And the third one, she takes videos on site. So, these are part-timers and I'm the only full-timer. But a lot of NGOs had the same case where you had a lot of volunteers following the blast. And then even the volunteers, they went back to their daily lives.

00:22:06 Renée
Yeah, yeah. Of course, which also makes sense.

00:22:07 Yasmine
Yeah, we do understand.

00:22:11 Renée
Yeah, yeah for sure, but it's… I mean one full timer for, I read it's about 500/600 hundred heavily damaged buildings?
00:22:20 Yasmine

600 Approximately heavily damaged, but I did.. because I live in this neighbourhood, so I've known this neighbourhood since I was a kid and when I worked on my masters my final year project was on this neighbourhood. So, following the blast, what we did is that we started having a sort of map with the database and so I'm the one that's always updates this database. And in August, two years after the blast, we did the small reports on how many heritage buildings were affected. How many were renovated? How many were not renovated? And there is still… So, in the first zone, the zone that was the most affected, there are still 40% of heritage buildings that are in need of renovation. But you don't have any funding, you know, but out of the 60% that was renovated, 20% was renovated by the owners, so there is 40% that was done by NGOs and all of that was done with, I think less than $20 million I think like, let's say 300 buildings, less than $20 million, which is nothing. These where heavily damaged, like structural damage we renovated last year. We inaugurated in December 4 heritage buildings that were severely affected. They had collapsed and everything. So, we renovated those under $450,000. Right now we're renovating a house, which is huge and there's six families living in it, but they're not back home yet. Two years after the blast. And this is

$150,000.

00:24:16 Yasmine
Yeah, that's one of the positive effects of the Lebanese… of the current crisis, you know the economic crisis. If you pay in dollars, you can even have a discount. Yeah, it's horrible, but because our funding comes from Europe and you ask and everything, so it's mainly like EUR and dollars and… To give you an example, we finished in August the renovation of 1 house where the initial price was… We thought two years ago that it would be around 7 hundred $800,000 to renovate the house. So, we did the design and all of this, and the budget. And then when we did the bidding process, we always sent to multiple contractors, to see who has the most competitive but it's contractors that are specialised in heritage renovation. So, we had three different offers. One of it was for $450000 The other one for $400000 and the third one for $350000. And where we had estimated 700,000. So, there is huge difference, and even one of the guys, the one that gave us the offer for 400 was like if you pay everything in U.S. dollars, then count to $320,000 like there's an 80,000 discount.

00:25:45 Renée
Yeah, it's insane. Very good. Yeah, in this case it's a very positive thing.

00:25:47 Yasmine
It's insane, but it does happen. Yeah, in this case, yeah, unfortunately.

00:25:53 Renée
So, I've walked around the neighbourhood a little bit so far. I've been here now. 2-3 days. So, my experience so far, I've read quite a lot of course, and I came in and I can say I didn't understand the scale until I walked here and I actually saw it.

00:26:23 Yasmine
Do you see destruction, or do you see that everything is fixed?

00:26:28 Renée
I see still a lot of destruction, yeah.

00:26:30 Yasmine
OK, because there's a lot of journalists that came, so following the blast a few days, a few weeks after the blast and they saw really, the destruction. And then they came in a year after the blast. And then this year as well. And they were like; OK, this city is rebuilt, and we were like, no, there's still a lot to do. It's just that, because a lot of buildings now have those new colours and a lot of people don't see the destruction, actually.

00:26:54 Renée
Yeah, yeah, interesting.
00:26:55 Yasmine

And then I actually am the only one from my group of friends that still in Lebanon. All of my friends are now living in the US or France, or Dubai or anywhere and when they come back, they're like; Nice the cities is rebuilt! But people don't actually see, because you know, you have one building and then surrounding it. All of it still… is renovated and then just have this small building… But there's still a lot of destruction.

00:27:21 Renée
Yeah, yeah for sure. Yeah, I saw I saw this too. Because, at least from the Netherlands it was quite hard to get sort of current pictures of what the status is now. So, you have a lot of footage of like right after or like half year after, but then not how it is actually now. So, it was sort of going in blind but.
I mean I see a lot of destruction. I also didn't expect so much richness in the sense of culture, people… how open people are, how welcome people are… This was for me also unexpected. But really, truly amazing. Yeah, it's amazing. I spoke to some people, and so Kim she's about 28. I talked to her two days ago. And she was saying that all her friends left as well. Her group of friends, 50% is just people from abroad that came here for a month and then are still here five years later. And I was like Oh yeah, I see why, for sure.

00:28:35 Yasmine

My neighbour she came in five years ago for just one mission with UN like she was a volunteer for UN and everything, and she just stayed and she's still here. And she's not planning on leaving and her boyfriend is Lebanese, and he wants to leave and she's like; go, I'm staying here, I love it here.

00:28:52 Renée
Yeah, I can see why. I mean, I've been here 3 days now, and I get that. But I while walking around the neighbourhood I saw, yeah, especially these very old buildings and I'm quite curious about the 1930s architecture, but the more Ottoman buildings with like the big white banners of all the stakeholders. And I saw a lot of the German and French government involved as well.

00:29:25 Yasmine
German, so the funding from the German goes directly to the Ministry of Culture. They are a Dutch archaeological institute, something like that. And there's this building downstairs in the parallel St. It was an abandoned building before the blast, and it's managed by the Ministry of Culture and so the architect's restorer, BBHR, what they did is a sort of on-site training. Because the building was abandoned, there is not this need to bring back the inhabitant's home, you know. So, they have the possibility to take their time and actually do appropriate training

to people that want to develop their heritage skills. The Germans were actually very interested in this type of idea. Where you help people develop a skill. And so, this renovation… So, they did a lot of small renovations like this. This was funded by the German. This type of thing, where this building they did one workshop last year on this structure; the triple arches made out of stone. They had collapsed, so they trained people like how you cut the stone, how do you put it back, et cetera. And then they did one on the plastering of the of the walls. Currently they're doing one. So, it stopped for six months because… so, the German they're giving funding exactly for one task. So they gave for the first task, which was the masonry and then they gave for the other one which was the plaster and then it stopped for eight month because they weren't sure if they were going to help out. Because of the Ukraine war, mainly. But then they said OK, there's still a roof to be build and we can train a lot of people on that. So now they're doing the roof.

00:31:44 Yasmine
But it's actually very good, because even though this building was abandoned before the blast and everything, so there is no inhabitants for it, yeah? The and the terms and conditions that they put for the owners were like; we're going to renovate condition number one is that it's an on site training so people need to come and learn from the sites. OK, the owner was OK with. As long as like everyone has the security helmets and vests and everything you know, no one has a problem with having trainers on sites and then they gave him a condition which was because he has commercial ground floors and residential upper floors. There were like; your commercial ground floor, you're going to try to open some sort of pop-up shop or interactive thing that would encourage people to learn more about the Beiruti houses. So, he needs to do a sort of exhibition space if you want, that's free of charge or whatever. This was the condition for them to renovate the building. And for the upper floors, in case he wants to rent, it shouldn't be a very high rent, it should be very affordable, but that's only for a certain period of years. So, they say, OK, our funding is equal to let's say $200,000. So, for two years you need to be affordable and all of that.
So French, French. No, not a lot. There is a Swiss initiative called

LIF International Organisation for the protection of endangered heritage something like. They helped a lot, and they helped mainly in the emergency phase. So, everything that was propping, sheltering, consolidation all of that.
You have the British Council that gave a lot as well. The French, but they do also education and stuff. So, we got the funding for France. But it was to produce heritage manuals. Yeah, so we did one on the traditional heritage. It's available online you can download it as PDF or we even have… We printed a few and now hopefully by end of December beginning of January, we will publish on the modern heritage, so it's the method of innovation and all of that, and actually I'll get you one now if you want.

00:34:12 Yasmine
The first one, the second one is not out yet.

00:34:17 Yasmine
So, the French funded this project for example. They also funded like… we're taking videos on sites and we're doing a specialised videos on each subject. So, they are funding this. So, our videographers is paid thanks to them. All of the editing, all of

that. But it's mostly educational, and so Maison du France also funded on site trainings.

00:35:02 Yasmine
Yeah, so the the manual, for example it's free of charge, for now. and the online version will always be free of charge. But then Maison du France came last month to Lebanon and they were like, you know, the hard copies because you paid the printing and everything you can actually sell them. And so for now it's still free, but maybe we'll put just a certain small price, like maybe $5 the book or anything, but just something that could help us continue the work.
Who else gave funding? So us, for example, most of our funding comes from private donors. So, expats, Lebanese living here, et cetera. We had funding from LIF for the sheltering and dropping we had funding from Maison du France. We also had funding so for the House that we finished which is down on the parallel St. It was a sort of a deal. So, there is this foundation called Honour Frost Foundation. And

they are specialised in maritime archaeology. And after the blast, they wanted to help in some way, and we told them; what if you renovated the house that had a relationship with the sea? Originally the sea was just here, but then they built the highway, and they built the port on the sea and we found photos of the house being right at the sea. So, it's this house. OK, before and after, so it's a house that's directly facing the point, so it very affected, yeah? So, this is a view of the shoreline in the 1890s. Approximately. OK? Right now, all of the sea there is the highway. So, this small white house is actually the house that we renovated and so this was the shoreline, and this is the house, yeah?

00:37:23 Yasmine
Yeah, there's a lot of content that's available online, like on Facebook and whatever. A lot of people are interested in it. So, the house and right in front of it, you have the highway and then the port, and this is the site, so the explosion happens here. This is one of the closest buildings and the interior it was completely damaged the whole ceiling was gone. The arches on 2 floors were completely destroyed. And it doesn't show here; this is a mapping made out

of drones… But the walls were not even connected to each other anymore. They were separated. So, we proposed to Honour Forst a few buildings that were on this shoreline, and we have talked to the owners, saying that there might be a funder, but they will definitely want something in return.
And so when they chose the blue house we asked the owner if he would be OK giving one floor to the Honour Frost for their exhibition space rent free for 10 years because the funding that they gave was equivalent to 10 years of rents, and he was fine with it. So now they will be using so they are. So this is the house; before and after. And so, they will be using the 1st floor because the owner lives on the 2nd floor. They will be using the 1st floor for a period of 10 years. So, this one rent free, exhibition, offices, etc. He even was encouraged by the fact that it's open to the public, so he has a ground floor and he's thinking like to give it to an art gallery. Or maybe making it accessible to children like a kindergarten or something like that he wants people to be encouraged and liking heritage. He's not even the initial owner of the house, it's not his family that built this house. He bought this house 15 years ago. Yeah, so it's someone that actually wants the heritage value to be preserved.

00:39:33 Yasmine
So, so yeah, this deal with the honour Frost Foundation. We were the first to do some sort of deal like that, and then other NGOs actually found that very, very interesting and they started applying this to other stuff. So, Beit El baraka, the NGO I talked about before, what they did is that they renovated the House on Serso St which is the parallel street but, on the hill, like right upstairs. So, they renovated but they did not renovate the whole building. They renovated, they just closed the windows, and they renovated the ground floor, and they are currently using the ground floor for five years to sell products. In order to get like products that are offered to them, and they have a restaurant and everything. So, all of the benefits from the restaurant goes to helping families that are in need. So, there is a lot of deals that are happening like this. And it's actually a good thing because you know, again, owners they have a house that's multiple floors, but they're only living in one. What do I do with the other floors? And it's only temporary. You know, five years, two years, 10 years it's…

00:41:07 Yasmine
The connexion is still there, but really limited. Again, we are in constant contact with Live Love Beirut, which they don't have any projects right now because they don't have any funding. We are working together on one project. But it's mainly funding that is lacking. And even with the small funds that we have, we're not able to do a full project. So, the house I was talking about the six families, we've been trying to work on this project since March 2021. But it was also severely, severely affected like the Blue House. It's one of the houses that are…

00:41:52 Yasmine
So, severely damaged, etcetera. There where other NGO's that started working before us and this helped us in intervening on the site because, so the structure was consolidated by this other NGO that did not have any more funds to continue the works, and so they did their part and now we're entering to finish the whole thing. But again, we had just part of the funding and then we knew that together LiBeirut was interested in working on this project and they had part of the funding. And it just worked,

because together they had this amount and we had this amount and it actually did the whole budget, and it was very good.

00:42:33 Yasmine
Because we worked together, and because we're always in constant contact. So, the cluster that we renovated last year was with Together LiBeirut. So, it's a cluster of 1, 2, 3 which is just the ground floor, and four buildings that were severely affected. So, this House, and here, it doesn't show as well. But this whole facade had to be dismantled and then rebuilt because it was completely disconnected from the rest of the building. In the second house…

00:43:09 Yasmine
Yeah, because it's the most fragile part. And this, for example, is a whole floor was gone, you know? And the public spaces around it and the businesses. So this was just like $400,000.

00:43:27 Yasmine
So for this project we sheltered this building, and this building thanks to Alif sheltered. And so the owners knew us and the owner of this building also knew us, and he called one day, and he was like, please, could you help me out? Et cetera. I know that my building will cost approximately this much. This is what someone told me. And so we knew how much funding we had, but we didn't have enough to do 1, 2, 3 buildings.

00:43:57 Yasmine
Yeah, and we also realised very quickly that when you renovate just one building, but the rest is destroyed around it, people won't come back to their home because, you know, the small like the small shops where you can buy your fruits and vegetables, the bread and everything. It's still closed. Your neighbours are not there, and people are very like… with their neighbours. So, they're very, very close. And this is how we develop the clustering strategy. And from this point in November last year. November two years ago actually, we started talking to other NGO's.
We were like, this is the whole budget approximately for those buildings? Are you interested in taking one building? Are you interested in taking half a building, etcetera? We started seeing them and Together LiBeirut was like; Yeah we can give for this much and we were like OK, we can put this much and so that's those for building, where we renovated all of the public spaces and one building because this one it shows that this or this might have more damage than this one, but this one the whole like the four facades were completely detached, so it was a whole dismantling and rebuilding thing. Whereas those two because they had concrete in it, they didn't have any structural damages. It was mostly windows, doors, roofs, etc.

00:45:25 Yasmine
So, this is how we came together for it and, to give you…

00:45:45 Yasmine
Yeah, so this was the whole street on august 5 completely… Completely destroyed and… so for example the façade… Like I said, we had to dismantle and rebuild and even the parts that we found on the floor… We tried to, so the arches were completely gone. So we just assembled together, saw the pieces that were missing to put them back together. And so it's a very meticulous task.
So when we rebuilt the wall before plastering, we added the fibre mesh for example so that it consolidates more.

00:46:35 Yasmine
Yeah, or earthquake or whatever? Yeah, and here for example, this is the roof, so there was no roof following the blast. And we started rebuilding it. This is windows. We rebuilt it using the same materials, et cetera. This is 1920's, this building, for example. This is 1920s and this is 1930s. So it's when the Triple arches started being like a sort of bay, yeah? What else? Yeah, here it's the same. So here the 1st floor was built approximately at the same time of this and then the two upper floors were added later on.

00:47:29 Yasmine
So, this is it mainly.

00:47:39 Yasmine
Today is a bit hard. Well, you're here till when?

00:47:44 Renée
16th of December. So, I have quite some time.

00:47:48 Yasmine
Because there is a… So the Italian for example, they didn't fund anything yet, except for public spaces and everything, but they're here this today, tomorrow, and up until Friday. And I'm actually doing a tour with them I think on Thursday. If you're free Thursday, maybe you join us.

00:48:11 Renée
Yeah, that would be great.

00:48:11 Yasmine
If not, another day this week, it's going to be a bit hard. But maybe next week. If you're free, we could do that.

00:48:20 Renée
Yeah, I have quite a lot of time, especially next week.

00:48:26 Yasmine
So, I have your number. A day when it's not raining.

00:48:35 Renée
Yeah, it would be great. I mean, it's nice to see this sort of translation to yeah, the actual…

00:48:40 Yasmine
Next week is actually nice weather so whenever you're free we can do it. Yeah, next week is OK. Whenever you want.

00:48:54 Renée

Perfect. I don't think I have any plans yet.

00:48:58 Yasmine
So, you let me know if you want.

00:49:00 Renée
Yeah, sure, my boyfriend is still here until Tuesday and he's leaving again. My mom was also flying in, but a week later.

00:49:11 Yasmine
Where are you staying?

00:49:13 Renée
We were staying in Hamra but now we have an Airbnb like right down the street. So, because I was like I want to be in this neighbourhood, not that one, and I think I might just stay here for the full time. And then yeah, it might be easy because my mom was also flying. She was very excited. I was telling her about that I was going here everybody was like: Well, can I come? My boyfriend as well I was like oh can we just Join? yeah of course.

00:49:48 Yasmine
OK, so we can do next week, or if you want to join us on Thursday, I'll let you know and I'm actually confirming today. The hours of the of the visits where we're just going to like turn around with them and everything. It's not just with us, there is Live Love Beirut as well for example, they renovated a whole cluster, so they start seeing there and then we're going…

00:50:14 Renée

Oh, actually super interesting! yeah great. And I mean, thanks for taking the time.

00:50:24 Yasmine
You're welcome.

00:50:24 Renée
It's I mean, it's… I have a couple of coordinators and teachers. One of them is John Hanna. He did quite some research on Beirut. He's originally from Egypt, but he worked quite a lot in Beirut even before the blast. He hasn't been here since, but so he's one of my teachers and he was he was giving me a lot of the nuances before I left. Like also saying like please just go there and you know, observe, listen, and ask questions, but don't come in like I know what you guys need to do. You know, because I've heard that a lot of people also, especially foreigners, come in like you know, you should do it this way and then they have no clue about the dynamics or the complexity of everything. Also, on a more governmental scale. So, I heard that that you guys are quite fed up with that, but…

00:51:27 Yasmine
It's not just this that… In the last two years, but since the end of the civil war, actually we've had lots of help and thinking wise, you know. like the World Bank funded I don't know how many studies on like public system of transportation and stuff like that and then nothing actually

happens. So, people are actually fed up with like those big ideas.

00:51:52 Renée
Yeah, going like we're going to do this, and it never happens. I mean that makes complete sense and also. I'm happy that I'm here for a little bit of time. 16th December. Which is nice because two weeks, two weeks, a little longer. And so, I mean for me to understand that as an outsider, it's. I mean, the idea alone is quite really ridiculous for me. It's just like no, I think I know. That makes no sense. But yeah. So, it's very nice to just talk to a lot of different people. And yeah, really learn about these complexities because there's a lot of these things that don't occur in the Netherlands. I mean we have our own problems, but yeah, on a different level or different scale.

00:52:53 Yasmine
Well, you know this is actually… The Italian are the ones that usually come and say we know because they have a similar architecture to ours, in terms of material and everything like our houses are a bit out of local sandstone, but their houses are also built out of local equivalent to sandstone. But we use marble that is imported from Italy and wood which was locally made, but now currently it's imported from Turkey or Estonia, because our forests are not now preserved, so we can use that.

00:53:29 Renée
I read a lot about Byblos, from 5000 years ago, about the Cedar Woods and I went to an exhibition in the Netherlands that is currently on, but all these 4000-year-old pieces and the detail is insane as well as the wood that was still preserved, it's really insane. It was beautiful. But yeah, but Italians can be a bit cocky. I would say, hahaha.

00:54:01 Yasmine
But for now, they only funded public spaces and everything which is, which is good because we lack public spaces. But the projects are still under renovation, so our old train station which was abandoned since the 50s or 60s? It's actually, it's not huge, but it's a very big plot where you have like 3 structures which were the stations, but they could be fixed as a huge garden, public garden, whatever, and it's very nice. And so, they are funding this project, like to revive if you want, the train station. As a public space.

00:54:43 Renée
That's amazing.

00:54:43 Yasmine
That's very good, and because they have a lot of materials, so the fibre mesh, for example, that we're using in structure is imported from Italy. So now so there is this whole group of Italians, it's called ASO Restovo, which is association of restauration. And they're here.

They invited us in 2021 and this year. Every year they choose an Italian city, and they do the sort of seminar on restoration, and they invite the like the restorers of each country. And we were invited as part of Lebanon with other people from Lebanon. And they showcase the materials and the way they renovate and everything. And everyone was just saying like OK, but how does it apply to us? And they've been trying to come to Lebanon since 2020 but because of COVID... So, some of them already came, but not as part of the group you know, like just individuals.

00:55:51 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:55:53 Yasmine
But yeah, this is the first time and we're actually, so, tomorrow we are doing a presentation for them. And then Thursday we're taking them into the city. And on Friday we convinced the only structured restorer, structured engineering specialised in restoration in Lebanon, to do a presentation to show like how we renovate. And there's also a surface design, a painter restorer actually so she renovates all of the old paintings and ceilings and all of that. She's doing a presentation for them as well.

00:56:26 Renée
Oh, it's amazing.

00:56:28 Yasmine

And hopefully, maybe, we hope it will lead to some sort of funding, and in any type of way you know, even if it's a type of donation of material, it helps a lot.

00:56:42 Renée
Nice, that's interesting. Well, it's been great talking to you. It's good to get this perspective from... Of course you're an architect, so you look at it from a more technical perspective.

00:56:59 Yasmine
Yeah, and sometimes I forget that I'm an architect because I do so many things but.

00:57:05 Renée
Yeah, I mean a lot of the job I can imagine is just like talking to people getting people together, yeah?

00:57:12 Yasmine
Yeah, most of us like architects or not. Everyone that started working after the blast that are mainly part of small teams. Small NGO's that are trying to work all of us, we found each other like working on other stuff, communication, documentation, architecture. Yeah, like even people that are not architects now. So like when I say this does not work and they know why it doesn't work, it's just...

00:58:06 Renée
I had a talk about this with one of my teachers last week that it's sort of being an architect is

quite insane. It also touches on so much like economics, business, philosophy, heritage, history, etcetera. It's a combination of a lot of different subjects together. And then, depending on the project, one thing than the other, but yeah, it's. I mean, maybe also why I truly love it.

00:58:16 Yasmine
I've learned so much in the past two years. I would have never imagined that. Like now I can just do anything related to a project which is like the... OK, plan and everything, this I knew how to do, but now a budget and then being a site engineer and being yeah, it's very much just like... Yeah, the communication of the project and all of that, yeah.

00:58:34 Renée
This this we can pick up with experience... Are you optimistic?

00:58:40 Yasmine
Regarding what? This?

00:58:46 Renée
The situation in Lebanon or, restoration of the situation in Lebanon?

00:58:48 Yasmine
Yes and no. I know it is going to take a lot of time, especially that in the past three years there was a lot of people that left the country. The people that could leave are actually the people that have the means to leave and go and start somewhere else. And so, the

people that stayed or the people that… or, wanted to stay like me.

00:59:18 Yasmine
I lived outside of Lebanon before, and I hated it. And I came back running. So, I started my masters there and I actually had job, because the masters that I was doing in Paris, it was only two days per week and the rest of the time I was actually working and I loved it and everything, but I hated living somewhere else now. Paris is a bit difficult, and everything like that. I know a lot of people that did not like it at the beginning. But I was missing Lebanon, not because of my friends or family, but because of the community and the people and the weather. That was what I was missing, you know. All of my friends now most of them they live in Europe and they're like; I'm taking the train this weekend to go to Amsterdam or London or whatever like it's very easy for them, and this is what I was missing. Because of between work and masters, I didn't have the time to visit places. But here, even though I'm super busy and I work every day I still have the time sometimes, like I just take my car and drive somewhere. And in Paris I felt lonely I had friends and my family lives there and everything. But I felt lonely because like you just walk on the street and like you say hi to

someone, but there is no…

01:00:46 Yasmine
Whereas here like I… Even if I'm not going into the shop and I don't want to buy anything if we just lock eyes we say hello to each other, it's just… So, this whole vibe I actually missed it a lot.
(…)

01:02:41 Yasmine
Yeah, the sense of community. Actually, it exists in most Arab countries, but people don't know about it because most of the people think like… Especially in Lebanon, you have a lot of different religion and it's the reason that we had the civil war, you know, like the different type of religions and political parties and all of that. But a lot of people, they just don't care about this anymore. It's literally a system that follows our parents and our grandparent's generation, but our generation does not care about this and we're all trying to get along and to be friendly and to… I have a friend who lives in New York and one of her friends who's American, he came to Lebanon because he was invited to a wedding and knew no one except for the person that was getting married. So, she asked us to go have a drink with him and everything and he and he actually postponed on me and my friend twice because he had plans with

people he just met. Yeah, this is something that I really missed in Europe.
(…)

01:04:37 Yasmine
I remember I came back home for Christmas and so I was here with my friends and family and everything and just like going skiing and spending time like relaxing. And then I came back to Paris, I think it was like it's 3rd or 4th. Like beginning of the month. And then I sent a message to my dad like 10 minutes after landing; I'm getting to my apartment.
I arrived to the apartment and I Look at the apartment. I was like, no. This is not in. I sent a message to my dad; I'm sorry I to disappoint you, I know you don't want this for me, but I am coming back.
My mom and my dad are the only ones from their family that stayed in Lebanon during the Civil War. So, all of their brothers and sisters are in Canada and New York and Paris and all over the place. But they wanted to stay for the same thing that I'm here for. And my dad didn't want this for us. He wanted us to live and to have a better life outside of Lebanon, because here you have like economic crisis and it is a poor country, even though it doesn't show in the capital which is Beirut. But this region is OK, but you have neighbourhoods that are very, very poor. And when you go outside of Beirut, most of the people are not living in like proper

ways. Yeah, so he didn't want this for us and he gave us everything like the education that we wanted and all of that and I was like; I'm going to disappoint you, but I'm coming back. This is where I am.

01:06:18 Yasmine
Yeah, you know I… to be honest, because I grew up in a heritage house, I was the only one, not the only one but one of the few people from my class that was interested in heritage and preserving it etcetera. And my master, my masters was mainly on this: How to preserve the neighbourhood? It was. And it was a bit urban and architectural etcetera. And I graduated three years ago. Six months before COVID, I started applying, but the economic crisis had already hit Lebanon, so it was a bit difficult, and I wasn't finding any job and I was only applying to specific firms that were working in heritage preservation and I would have never imagined that this would have happened, and I actually would have been like in it. And I've learned so much. I thought I knew everything about heritage and restauration, but I knew nothing.

Yeah, this was my 1st work experience as well because you know.
(...)

01:10:04 Yasmine
Yeah, but I do get the sustainability part because it's something that has been, like... not all of the architecture firms, but the good ones are stressing to get this. How to make a project sustainable and how to preserve like not use like the same marble. For us, for example, with the Beirut Heritage Initiative, everything that we found on site, everything that we could reuse, we kept it and reused it, and we did not try to create new stuff and add new things.

01:10:50 Yasmine
I don't know how we did it seriously, I think about in situations where I meet people that are not from Lebanon or where I have to do for example, now for the Italians I'm working on a presentation on the renovation of our house, which was not funded by the Beirut Heritage initiative. Yeah, my own family house. Thank God all of my father's family lives abroad, so they were able to fund the whole renovation and everything.

And because my father is an architect, there's a lot of... because he works always with the same team, there's a lot of people that actually offered some stuff.

01:11:29 Yasmine
Yeah, it was heavily damaged. The whole ceilings were gone there was... the arches did not collapse but the facade was detached from the rest of the building and so we had to... you insert stainless steel rods on the corners of the walls and it's like braces for the teeth. It's the same thing you slowly screw them closer every day for the façade to go back. Yeah. It was a huge thing. And so now I'm doing for the Italian presentation because our house is, if you want highly decorated, which was considered as a bourgeoisie house. 200 years ago and the other houses, most of the houses in the neighbourhood are not the same, are not like our house. And so I'm doing a presentation with the paint restorer, Kareen.

(Kareen walks in)

01:12:41 Kareen
You guys busy. Can I sit?

01:13:20 Yasmine
No, we're done. Yeah sure, yeah. Yeah, so well, even Kareen, like everyone was affected and we don't know how we did it. Like

how everyone just did it.
(...)
It was just obvious, like no one puts rules or guidelines. Everyone started working and all of it was just obvious to everyone: OK, this place, the people will come back. Funding, we will find a way there is a lot of people that actually started projects without even having the funding with the hopes of getting the funding eventually. And a lot of contractors that were like.
You'll pay me later. It's fine, we're doing this for the country.

01:14:14 Yasmine
You know a month ago at beginning of November... so there's all of the European donors; British Council, among others that came here to see it. So the money that they had given, where it went. And so they met with us, and they met with other NGOs and everything. And they actually came to us from ALIF, saying: We're doing a lot of seminars with Ukraine for them to encourage them to start rebuilding the second the war is done and everything, and we would like you Lebanese people to give a seminar on how to start and how to build a community to rebuild. We were like, yeah great but give us more money!
(Talk continues another 14

minutes, more informal. Focussed on paint restoration from Kareen)

Master research

Renée Meijer

Interview with Yasser Akkaoui

5th December 2022,
Executive magazine
headquarters.

Sehnaoui Center, 7th Floor
Alfred Naccache Street,
Beirut Lebanon

00:00:00 Yasser
So if you want to look at the..
So if you want to look at the...
As if it is an excel sheet, right?
On the top, the horizontal, you
have everything that constitutes
a system, which is policy
making, reconnaissance of risk,
so they have to have a certain
maturity that we are recognizing
that risk and are taking it into
consideration.

00:00:28 Yasser
Management involvement and
the role of management: The
practice, the procedures. You
have everything that has to do
with: Do we have what it takes
in terms of maturity, training,
development, communication and
equipment?

00:00:50 Yasser
To respond to these risks, do
we have operational manuals?
You know everything has to be

documented. Do we have an
emergency preparedness and
response, you know?

00:01:13 Yasser
Do we have, what we call... I
don't want to call it grievance
mechanisms, but the mechanisms
that make sure that people
are really... People who lost,
you know, are being covered.
Yeah, you know, whenever you
distribute the humanitarian aid
or any type of government or
national organizations, there
should be a grievance mechanism
that assesses who got hurt more
than the other. Because not
everybody got hurt the same way.

00:01:49 Yasser
Right, who gets it first at those
level? So, all these need to be
formalized. Or there should
be a system that allows you to
decide. Committees that would
be ad hoc committees, standing
committees, et cetera. And then
you have everything that has to do
with the measurements, so you
have to continuously measure so
that you know what to improve.
Whether before a crisis or after
a crisis. And finally, you have
to review. They have to say... to
review and report. So, this report
goes back to the policymaker.

00:02:24 Yasser
Yes, it's a feedback loop. And this
is what guarantees a continuous
improvement and update of your
policy making. That the whole
system will continue, so this is
dynamic. You know, because the
worst thing that could happen is
you have all these manuals, you
have all this, and they are busted.
You know, in the same
environmental risks today..
you know within the agriculture
industry, they are different from
10 years ago. We just talked
about.. had a conversation about
how we used to ski in November.
Now we ski in December/
January.
Yeah yeah, so industries across
the country affected by the
revolutions.. I mean, lot of people
argue that the revolution in Syria,
coincided after four years of
drought. Because people were
unhappy they had drought, you
know? And this was enough..

(Phone ringing)

Hello? Bonjour.. Hi Sarah, good.
(talking in Arabic)

I'm sorry about that.

00:04:01 Yasser
So all this is part of... You know...
Don't think about disasters

happening overnight. Sometimes
you have the right elements that
come together that can create a
disaster you know, it could be an
environmental disaster, it could
be an industrial disaster...
The explosion of Beirut port
wasn't just a mistake, it's a. It's a.
It's a failure in the system itself
you know, had they stored the
ammonium nitrate properly in
that wharf, the explosion would
not have happened. Had they
stored this ammonium nitrate
without having other firecrackers
around it, it shouldn't have
happened, you know. Had they
even thought that ammonium
nitrate could constitute a risk,
they should have stored them
somewhere else. It should not
have happened.

00:04:52 Yasser
There's more than one thing, you
know, that could have avoided
the explosion of the ammonium
nitrate, and they didn't do, you
know?
Had they known that, and this is
for the conspiracy theorists, had
they known that this ammonium
nitrate could have been made to
explode, that could have been
targeted to explode. Yeah, you
know, and this is a military risk.
You should have had stored it
somewhere else. But all this
thinking didn't happen because
the system... and again what we
call the system. All these little

components, none of them was doing his or her job, you know? So, this is your Horizontal. Then you have your vertical, that's where you list all the potentials. Could be 30, 50 a 100 risks, and the policymaker needs a policy for all these risks. One policy for each, whether it's child labour, whether it is unemployment, whether it's environmental risks, whether it is… any type of risk. You expect your policy makers to counter any possible risk. And this also means you have the proper policy, you have the proper recognition of the risk, the proper management involvement, you have the proper equipment and the proper training and the proper tools to use. You have the operational manuals you have the emergency preparedness very well formulated for each one of the risks is different.

00:06:32 Yasser
An explosion is different than earthquake. An earthquake is different than flooding. A flooding is different than.. and then you have of course all the reporting and the measurements, because if it's environment that related, you know, need to always let's say if we live next to a volcano, you need to always measure the volcanic activity you know.

00:06:53 Renée
Yeah yeah.

00:06:55 Yasser

You know, learning. If you are living next to a river, you know if it's a city where you have a river going through it.

00:07:02 Renée
Yeah, you have a chance of flooding, yeah.

00:07:03 Yasser
Not only flooding, you have to see whether they are cutting trees 100 kilometres away and the land is being eroded, which constitutes a different type of risk. So, all this at the same time. The horizontal and the vertical.

00:07:23 Renée
Do you know Nassim Taleb?

00:07:25 Yasser
Nassim Taleb please yes I know him. I don't agree with Nassim Taleb.

00:07:33 Renée
You don't? On what part, or every part?

00:07:40 Yasser
And I was on TV with him once, at the beginning of the revolution. It was by the end of 2019 or early 2020 and I was with him on a TV program. I mean he's an econometrics statistician. You know, let him stick to that when he starts to get opinions in politics… And I'm against… I don't like people who basically aggressively defend themselves. You want to defend yourself? Be a man about it.

00:08:16 Renée
Yeah, be calm yeah.

00:08:17 Yasser
Don't start insulting the other person.

00:08:19 Renée
Yeah, yeah for sure. I agree with that.

00:08:24 Yasser
He did not insult me or anything, on the contrary, he had to agree with me that I made my case. I don't believe that there are no black swans. There are. But Lebanon is not the black swan.

00:08:37 Renée
No OK. Interesting, because I've read his book the Black Swan and I also read Antifragile and especially in Antifragile. He talks about Lebanon as the phoenix, but then, you know, wanting it to sort of transform into Hydra and what he also talks about is how he can, sort of use… yes, OK, this is a very blunt way of putting it, but sort of use chaos, to initiate change, which I do think has some truth in it. For example, if you want to sort of initiate change from just out of the blue from a very stable situation, it's hard to get everybody moving in a direction, and I think if something happens, there's sort of… You know a city can be a bit more receptive to new elements, for example, more sustainable elements. So, I do think this is

interesting, but I'm curious to know what you think about this?

00:09:45 Yasser
I think basically, to trigger a reaction in point of behaviour, you know… You need a system that's functional, that is always able to assess and not only risks but also opportunities and move towards these opportunities. So, a system like Lebanon that's too busy with sustaining our existence and our resilience, this also means we're missing on a lot of opportunities.

00:10:15 Renée
Yeah, which makes sense.

00:10:17 Yasser
And unless it's not coming from a concerted effort from everybody, and these line up towards steps in the same direction I mean, chances are we are going to fail. Because now there are in an atom leap, with free atoms, and everybody is pulling in a different direction. We don't have a vector that is guiding us towards very specific purpose or goals. You know, and this is what that's keeping Lebanon at the same status quo since 1943 or 44. This is because everybody is pulling in a different direction, you know, and this is destructive.

00:11:01 Renée
Yeah, yeah, I mean how…within the executive magazine and your experience, how do you think is happening now? So, we talked about this this gap right this sort

of aid gap. And I talked with, for example, the Beirut Heritage initiative. So I went down the city to see all the heritage buildings and I talked to the UN, to see how they sort of prioritized during the chaos. What you talked about as well, and they both confirmed like: yeah, there is a gap and at the moment the funding is one of the hardest things to get by and the only way to sort of get things moving is to sort of find partners and see OK together. Can we, you know, rebuild this one house. For example, we have this amount of money. We have this amount of money we get together. We can do that. What would be a good step now? What is sort of a missing element at this moment?

00:12:08 Yasser
OK, so there's something wonderful that happened in the last 10-15 years, which is the emergence of, what we call the design thinking. Whereby every corporation you know needs to identify needs to re-purpose and elevated scroll to the human to solving the human centred problem. So, everything we hear about today and this is what young people are invited to do. And I'm sure at TU Delft they are teaching you how to solve problems you know that's what you're doing in Lebanon. You're trying to understand where this problem came from. And how do you solve this problem.

00:12:48 Renée

Yeah, especially like get a grip on the complexity in all these different elements.

00:12:53 Yasser
And once you identify your purpose or the problem you want to solve, you know? It becomes your raison d'être, it's your reason of being. And as long as the problem is valid, doesn't matter how much you try, and how much you fail, but you keep on trying. That's why it's called the fail fast and try again system. So Renée starts trying to solve that problem, she analyses it, she tries to solve. She identifies a way to solve it. If this way doesn't work, she has to find a better way to solve it. So you keep on finding, it's called a tentative approach to problem solving. So you keep on trying solve it. And the thing is, the beauty of this is that investors will keep on giving you money. Because the problem is valid.

00:13:52 Renée
Yeah, sure.

00:13:53 Yasser
You know, when you say I want three million African children, you know, to get access to schooling or to wear eyeglasses or to wear shoes or to have access a million and one rights that they are to deprived from. Even if you want children to have access to clean water in schools. You know, this alone has a purpose. It's good enough for people or investors to keep on giving you money.

And each time you come with a new way of solving it people will come to test it, yeah? But if you have only one way of doing it and you're company or project is based on one way of solving and you fail, yeah.

00:14:39 Renée
The risk is too big basically.

00:14:41 Yasser
And basically it's gone and nobody will give you more money again. Yeah, you know, so always a bigger purpose, that's human centred and say OK, this is what I want to solve. It doesn't have to be one problem, it could be more than one problem. You can start the company and the job of the company is to solve problems, you know.
So this been said, who are the components of this, right? Who are the problems of this? We have the system which is proof that it doesn't solve, you know. The world is not a better place since the creation of the UN, with all the respect for the UN. But funny enough the private sector can be a source of solving these problems.
Right, so This is why I was invited three months ago to the launch of UNICEF's 5 year strategy earlier this year. And I simply told them; Guys that doesn't work like this. The five year plan is too rigged. A five year plan means that one year down the road, you are not going to the review and reassess and change your course. You are

too stubborn, and you are such a big Mama for you to be able to change your reaction and address a situation.

00:16:13 Renée
Yeah, it's slow, yeah?

00:16:15 Yasser
You're slow. and it takes forever in the end to do things, and that that's the price. Until you invite the private sector to come and to identify from the 1,000,000 and one problems that you identify that need a solution, that you qualified and quantified. If you're able to allow the private sector to come in and say, OK, we want to solve that problem... You know, and let the private sector get involved: one, to drive a person. Two, it could create value: shareholder value and community and societal value and environmental value, If you set the standards right.

00:16:57 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:16:58 Yasser
And you will benefit from this iterative approach to problem solving. So you try and you keep on trying. And let many try and solve the same problem. Why should only one try to solve that problem maybe there are other ways to solve the problem.

00:17:13 Renée
Yeah yeah, yeah. I asked my uncle that we talked about, James. You

00:18:42 Yasser
Yeah, I mean it has to be a bottom up approach. It cannot be a top down approach. Yeah, so unless what I hope the UN can put down the problem and say, well, this is the problem you mentioned; The three million children. Without, let's say, reading classes or shoes, you know, and let the private sector

intervene in trying to solve this problem and driving investment and use this iterative approach. And just to agree with your uncle, only the private sector is able to introduce innovation and technology. The UN doesn't know innovation and doesn't know technology.

00:19:31 Yasser
They cannot take this risk. So if you want to solve these problems positively, with fresh new technology that integrates all that the mind can.; it's the project sector that can do it. And this transformation has happened in the last 10 to 15 years. And the double effect or the new things that are happening also the private sector, by embarking this, they are becoming more human, they are becoming more responsible and they're becoming more accountable. So, this is also an inflection point that will favour the ethical corporations and will isolate the unethical corporations. Yeah, so I see there is a transformation taking place. And when the UN or the other systems of the world jumped on this, it will expedite, this Inflexion point, the behaviour. Not only from the corporate corporations was also from the citizens. And maybe we would become more civilized. Because everybody... it's because inclusiveness is an integral part for its success. Everything

that's bottom up, it means inclusiveness. Everything that is top to bottom, risks of being extractive by design. And once it's extracted, that means people will avoid implementing it, we will try to outsmart its implementation, but if they own it, it's theirs. And it's inclusive and everybody will be part of it.
This similar tool for example, I'll give you a very simple example, so you know I stay, and I go to Geneva. I get I stay in a hotel, that's a bit Far from the city centre. For the last 20 something years I go and stay at this same hotel. And there is this box. They put newspapers in them and there is like there's a Piggy Bank. You put 2 Swiss franks in it today. But this is not related to that, so you can open the box and take your newspaper and not pay these two franks. When it's inclusive, it means the box has been there since 1940s. It looks like an Art-deco piece. The box it has been there forever. Nobody even scratched it, you know, and funny enough because I go around jogging at 5:36 AM. Funny enough you see people putting two franks in because everybody understands that if they don't put their two franks in, the next day, they won't have their newspaper. So they put it out of the conviction. And this is, let's say a civilized country. Most probably in the Netherlands you would have the similar behaviours they and they would respect the box.

00:23:00 Yasser
Or unless it's next to a football stadium, yeah?

00:23:06 Yasser
But if it's in a more controlled community it's OK. So again, inclusiveness means that if you put the same lock box here under this building it won't last 24 hours. Somebody will dismantle it and put it in his own home and use it for other purposes. It's again, because here we feel that they have been betrayed by the system itself and every opportunity for you to get back at it, you will, yeah, whether it's kicking the box with his foot, or throwing a stone at it. Or kicking a public bus, you know, or not paying your taxes or avoiding something else? You do it. Because it's not inclusive, it's extractive and it has been sucking our blood for the last, I don't know, 100 years. While in the Netherlands or Switzerland and Norway or Sweden, It's a different type of system, you respect it, it is yours. The box is everybody's box.

00:24:21 Yasser
And if somebody comes and tries to scratch it, you will defend the box, yeah?

00:24:28 Renée
It is a good example

00:24:31 Yasser
I don't know if it's good or bad?

00:24:33 Renée
It's good to sort of highlight the differences in context. Yeah, yeah.

00:24:38 Yasser
Inclusiveness is key. And we're doing against everything against it, in Lebanon, in 2019 already we were doing bad on inclusiveness. I'll give you an example: 48% of Lebanese did not have a bank account. The crisis comes. What do we do? We try to get rid of the small depositors, no? Now 70% of the population is unbanked, doesn't have a bank account. And the remaining are hostages of the banking industry, this means the second you give them an opportunity to withdraw their money, they will withdraw their money and close their bank accounts. Which means a 100% of the Lebanese people or 90% would be without a bank. It devises every economic model you can ever imagine today. Which is inclusiveness. Inclusiveness starts with financial inclusiveness. If you are in the UK or even in the Netherlands. Everybody should have a bank account. And in order to go and withdraw cash from the bank. You need to write on your bicycle. I don't know. Maybe half an hour to get to the ATM. Or 20 minutes

and there's maybe one, two or three, I don't know.

00:25:55 Renée
There are quite a few.

00:25:56 Yasser
You know, but do you go there often, I'm not sure?

00:26:00 Renée
You don't really have cash. Yeah, you don't work with cash. No. For me, I had to...

00:26:07 Yasser
You don't have cash. It also means you need to have a bank account.

00:26:11 Renée
Yeah yeah, yeah.

00:26:12 Yasser
Everybody has a bank account. Even if you're bankrupt, you have a bank account. If you're rich, you have a bank account. If you're not rich, you have a bank account, otherwise you are not part of the economy which means you're not included.

00:26:23 Renée
Yeah exactly. Because it will lock you out of certain services. Yeah, a lot of places don't really accept cash anymore because they sort of started seeing it as a potential risk to carry a lot of cash.

00:26:38 Yasser
I was in New York, and I passed in front of the Levi's store. And they

were having this 70% of the jeans and I said, wow, I'm going to have $30 jeans. I mean Levi's, it's good quality, right? It's good value. I went in and I picked my jeans, and I went to the cash register or to the payment register to pay. And of course, I'm Lebanese, and I have cash. So, I put my hand in my pocket and I give a $100 bill. I see the surprise on her face. She looks at it, she stands in the middle of the store, and she starts screaming: He's got cash. He's got cash. And then she starts dancing: And it's $100 bill, And it's $100 bill. She hasn't seen $100 for maybe months.

00:27:29 Renée
Yeah, yeah, but this actually happens in the Netherlands as well, yeah?

00:27:32 Yasser
Really?

00:27:34 Renée
Yeah, I had to withdraw a lot of cash to, you know, bring cash here and exchange it here because if I do transfer here, you know you get the 1500 rate? And I was just walking around with all these like €50 bills, And I was like, I haven't seen one in ages and it's strange.
I'm not sure how much time do you have actually?

00:27:58 Yasser
Tell me more. Another 15 minutes.
00:28:00 Renée

OK, great! So what I'm thinking about now, which would you know, since all the conversations that I had, and also what I've picked up in this conversation, is in order to, yeah, book results, you need a system to work. So in this case, the system doesn't work, so how do you approach this than? To get people to start taking care of the newspaper box basically. This is also something I spoke to with my uncle and what BHP does is open resource governance and they have tactics which implement radical transparency. So, one example that they did, this was still with Oxfam actually, is they were developing schools, somewhere in Africa, I can't remember the country. But basically, they had different responsibilities: so Oxfam was responsible for funding, then the community was responsible for building the schools, and then the government was responsible for getting the teachers and the school supplies. So, what they did is, they put the contract with everybody's responsibility and when they need to fulfil this responsibility, they printed it on a wall in the middle of this village. Everybody would walk by it every day and could see like, oh, by this date Oxfam needs to have transferred this amount of money, and by this date we need to start building the schools, and by this date it needs to be finished. We need to have five teachers by this date. And this worked very well,

because it sort of enabled the community to then knock on Oxfam's door like; hey, it's on the wall over here, where is the money at. Or for the government as well, like; hey, we need five teachers, It's literally written on the wall, where are the five teachers?
So this sort of really radical implementation of transparency to, really enable the Community itself to sort of bypass the system a little bit, or to sort of help the community to hold the system accountable.
For now, because eventually I need to come up with the design right, and I mean for me, I'm curious what I'm going to land on because you know, I'm trying to grasp all these complexities and the interconnectivity of all these systems that you talk about as well and to sort of see how I could transform this into architecture into a building. And what I am thinking now is to use this sort of radical transparency tool within architecture to sort of really enable a community. How would you say this would work?

00:30:59 Yasser
So what you talking about, It's is very similar to a movement that started after the 2008 crisis, It's called: The integrated reporting. Which basically tackles the asymmetric information between all the stakeholders. Integrated reporting is about exactly what you said is; the frequency and depth of reporting

or having access to information, in a responsible matter. In the way that is accountable and responsible, right? And this is what we call the integrated report. And that's when you need to... That was aggravated by the distance that gets created between central governments and the, for example, Municipal governments, you know? And this is what allows the inefficiency to happen through corruption, money laundering, all the worst thing that can happen. Because the smaller the distance, and the smaller the asymmetric information, the better the system works. Why? Because you are the one that is representing me in the municipal council, I know you, you are my neighbour. This means my....

(Power cuts out)

Ah voila, talking about governments...
...I trust you, and see you on holiday or walking the dog every day. You know, and I'll ask you, you know why...

00:32:38 Renée
How did it go?

00:32:38 Yasser
Why did this happen, you know? And this is key for resilience, right? And Ukraine in 2014, 2015 has worked on serious decentralization efforts, which contributed to the resilience of Ukrainians villages, to overcome

the attacks.

(Phone rings)

Hello? OK, don't worry.. (speaking Arabic) OK, OK..

00:33:20 Yasser
so and there is a report that was published on Friday or either Thursday or Friday about the decentralization and the resilience of Ukrainian villages in the circumstances that are happening now.
And you have to add again the private sector, because a lot of the municipalities in Lebanon, today they don't have electricity, they don't have waste management, they don't have access to clean water they don't have access to basic public services, public transport or anything else.

00:34:09 Renée
Yeah, sure.

00:34:09 Yasser
So, but, I can do it in two ways, either I can go to the Banking board to the end of the system, and ask; Please give us money! And they will give you, what we call technical assistance. You know, which basically, to the public sector, the existing recipient governance, which will mis-use the money. It happens in all the South, or as we call it; Frontier markets, just to be nice to describing my country. But what works, and

it's working now, you know, is a lot of municipalities are coming together and say you know what? We would buy the narrators. We're going to rent land from the church, because here the church has a lot of land, we are going to install solar panels, and then we're going to use the grid of the government to distribute the electricity. With counters, now order for everybody to pay, instead of $0.50, we're going to bring it down to 27 cents. And investors will come in. Investors are basically the expats of that municipality. And they are always putting money in.
Waste: OK guys, let's create the company, that collects the waste, that treats the waste, that can produce compost, that can take and recycle the plastics or send it, or that can do this and basically the waste problem is solved. Even the open dumps they start to treat them so the city is becoming clean.
Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.
So the private sector comes in, and unless it's lucrative, you know, unless people can derive value and profit, it won't work. You know handouts, will never have achieved the desired goals because you can always outsmart them where you can mis-use the money, especially just going through the ministry.

00:36:19 Renée
Yeah yeah, yeah.

00:36:20 Yasser

In Lebanon, again, southern Switzerland, not the Netherlands. This is Lebanon. So again, there are 1,000,000 and one ways around it, but definitely, I agree with you that decentralization or having a more micro approach to problem solving on a municipal level. You will have more care, more willingness to do good, and more willingness to prevent harm. When you are neighbours. But if we are very far away, from each other, you don't know me, we will not cross. I might do more mistakes. And this basically, I don't know whether you read the books of B, Coldwell? He does several behaviour Exercises with the students at Stanford, we're basically cheating as, let's say at 30% you know, and he… I will give you another example; so, the more you are removed from the money, the more you are willing to steal it. I'll give you an example, So what he did is he took a 6 pack of Diet Pepsi or Diet Coke and he put them in a common fridges in the dorms of Stanford and he realized that within 48 hours the six cans of Coke had disappeared. See, he did the same thing and he had put this small plate and in it, the same value, or let's say the $6 you know and $0.25, in a cup in the fridge. Nobody stole it. Why would you steal a can of coke and not steal $0.25?

anonymous.

00:38:38 Yasser
It's not money. It's weird, right? Like, why wouldn't you? If you find a dollar on the table, you wouldn't take it. But if, let's say your friend calls, you tells you please get me a red pen on your way home, you know, and you'll find a red pen on the table. You will take it, and the pen has exactually the same worth.

00:39:03 Yasser
It has the same value as a dollar. Why is it OK to take the pen, and not OK to take the dollar. Similarly, on the financial market and this distance between the investors' money. You know, Renee is a burger flipping woman on route 66. And she has been flipping burgers her whole life and saving money. And then she puts it in the financial market. She doesn't know that the guy, usually it's a guy, that is stealing her money, because girls don't steal right?

00:39:47 Yasser
So, the guy with the tie, with the sleek hair. He doesn't see her. He doesn't see how hard she works, and he never even touch the money. For him, he trades the blinking colours, green and red.

He buys when it's green, he sells when it's red, and he's investing in a fund, that is invested in a fund, that is invested in a fund of a fund.. So the distance between Renee and her sweat and this guy in New York, You know, it's huge for him. So he will take unnecessary risk with your hard earnings.

00:40:28 Yasser
So we're using the same logic. So, the more decentralized, and the more micro the solutions are, definitely mitigates the distance between the stakeholders. If we're using what we call the ethical thinking. You become more candour and less utilitarian, this is one. And two, if you integrate the private sector just for you to create a web of interests.

00:41:09 Yasser
That create value and can grow value over time you can succeed. So I totally agree, if you have something that that is all based on transparency, accountability, integrated reporting in a timely manner that uses innovation and technology and problem solving, that only comes from the private sector basically and the small community. Chances are this is the best way, for example, for

Lebanon too. We have 1016 villages. If each village is able to sit together, scratch its heads, you know, and identify innovative ways to solve the problems, whether related to environment, whether related to electricity, energy or pollution, etc. They can do it better than waiting for our central government.

00:42:16 Yasser
I don't know if I answered all of your questions?

(Phone rings)
00:43:04 Yasser
Hi Tanya. (talking Arabic) Yallah, alright. I'm sorry about that.

00:45:13 Yasser
You're more than welcome.

Yeah, it's been a great talk.

00:45:16 Yasser
You think so?

00:45:17 Renée
Yeah, for me at least it is.

00:45:18 Yasser
I don't know, you are a TU Delft student, I don't know how...

00:45:20 Renée
Yeah. For me it's so nice to... because I've noticed so far in my research, I'm approaching it very much with an economic way of thinking. So, like the economic theories. And I think in this case, that's a good approach. Better than just like the only sort of the architectural way of thinking.

00:45:48 Yasser
Ideally, what I would love to have is for example a bunch of TU Delft students, who would come, you know, and participate in design thinking sessions, that will allow us, allow us, say a village, to identify the best renewable energy solution to adopt, and design this, and let the private sector join. To come up with the best way for water sanitation, for example, solution. How to address waste management, so how to design these things? And you had 1016 villages in Lebanon. I'm sure you would have 1016 different solutions because it depends on how high you are in Lebanon, whether you're a coastal city, whether you are

a Mountain City, whether the seasons are different. It could be a valley where you have agriculture now, so, how do you develop your agriculture? How do you collect water? How do you save water?

00:46:58 Renée
Umm yeah yeah, it's a different approach, each time.

00:47:01 Yasser
This is where it gets interesting: How can 30 villagers cooperate together? How can 100 cooperate together? And how 200 cooperate together, and how do you interlink that? Maybe in 5-10 years' time, you know 1016 villages can, and you create a country, right?

00:47:25 Renée
Mm-hmm yeah, I agree, I agree.

00:47:30 Yasser
For example, in my village we have one school project. It's called Majdaloun, the village. It's a National College. So, it services 34 villages. Does it justify for every village to have a school, no. We can be the education village.

00:47:45 Renée
Yeah, yeah for sure, yeah.

00:47:46 Yasser
Right? Like TU Delft is an education village, right?

00:47:50 Renée
It is.

00:47:50 Yasser
Then the village next to us. Maybe it has valleys. Maybe it can be the agriculture village, that feeds the 34. Maybe the one next to it is the energy village?

00:47:59 Renée
Yeah, that's like waterfall or something for hydraulic pressure, yeah?

00:48:02 Yasser
Exactly! The one next to it is something else. It is the manufacturing village or waste management village? But the 34 together?

00:48:12 Renée
Work as a city or as a country.

00:48:15 Yasser
As a decentralised country. Where everybody has their role. But we cannot live without each other.

00:48:23 Renée
No true and yeah, what you said also, when your each other's neighbours, that you can, you know, hold each other accountable for everybody separate responsibility.

00:48:40 Yasser
I know how you are living! If I see you driving with a Ferrari.

00:48:44 Renée
Yeah, where did you get that?

00:48:51 Yasser

Yeah, we need to talk! I know what you do, you know what I do, why are you driving a Ferrari?

00:48:55 Renée
Did you marry rich or what did you do?

00:48:57 Yasser
I know your wife! I know your parents. How are you driving a Ferrari? Why are you wearing, I don't know $1,000,000 watch. Where did your wife get her 17 carats earrings?

00:49:00 Renée
Yeah, exactly yeah. Yeah, fair. Well great, again, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me

(Asking permission to take a picture)
00:50:35 Yasser
How long are you staying?

00:50:39 Renée
Two more weeks.

00:50:40 Yasser
OK, and I'll be away this week I'm leaving on Wednesday to Tunis. I'll be back on Sunday, so the week after if you need anything, if you want to sit again, if you want me to introduce you to people, etc. Even if I'm away, you can send me message. I'll be more than happy to.

00:50:59 Renée
Thank you so much!

Interview with George Arbid
7th December 2022, Arab
architecture centre.

Selim Boulos Building
 5th floor

Adib Nahas St., Ashrafieh –
Sassine
Beirut Lebanon

00:00:06 George
Can you move forward? Yeah,
thank you.

00:00:14 George
(Talking Arabic with the camera
man)

00:00:33 George
OK, sorry we were talking in
French all the time because it said
because it was a very interesting
conversation about the building
and then about the photos of
the building that she has. She is
interested in knowing what these
represented to people.

00:00:51 George
And the changes that happened
on the way.
So now, I think the best would
be to tell me again, what is your
interest. Why are you doing this?
What is the entry point that you

have for this city and for its issue,
and then I would react.

00:01:23 Hassan
I prefer if we can. Sorry.

00:01:28 George
Sorry if we interrupt, because the
phone rang, and it seems that
there is something in the…
We have a little space. I didn't
show you, remind me to show you
what we have inside later.

00:01:43 George
We have two rooms, we have
rolls of drawings and so on, and
one room where they are working
now, which is where I usually
work, but I threw everyone in
there now, normally they're
working here. They talk a lot of
chit chat. Very nice crowd we
have. All of these are volunteers,
except Yasmina. She's paid as
a researcher with me, but the
others are volunteer, we only pay
their transportation.

00:02:03 George
They're very kind to help out.

They are graduate architects, and
they learn a lot. Yeah, by looking
at, and reading and to archive
everything.

00:02:11 Renée
The yeah, I can imagine.

00:02:12 George
Which we have in here, and so on.
OK.

00:03:53 George
Emergency response.

Master research

Renée Meijer

will presumably happen. So, if we sort of have a system which is general enough, but also specific enough that works in different projects, contexts, so it needs to be a little flexible.

And the other week, I was talking to my professor, and I explained in explained it sort of in a new way, in the sense of: OK. I'm not trying, to because eventually I have to, for the graduation at least, I have to come up with an architectural scale design...

00:06:18 George
A design, you have to produce the project and you will produce a project in Beirut? Not necessarily?

00:06:27 Renée
Well, I what I'm thinking of now is if to see if I can test the ideas that I found here and test it in a different context to see if it still works.

00:06:37 George
And would it be in at an urban scale or a building scale?

00:06:42 Renée
A building skill, but that would have effects on an urban scale.

00:06:47 George
A neighbourhood, a larger scale. It's interesting! So, it could be in an abandoned building that has potential. Like the egg for example, the city centre cinema or the st. George...

00:06:58 Renée
Yeah, for examples, yeah.

00:07:03 George
The Murr Tower or Holiday Inn. There are many Lebanese students who tried to do something on these buildings, but your approach is maybe new in the sense that there is this awareness of the difference between the aftermath, the quick aftermath after of the blast, for example, and then a time when we can prepare or plan differently towards something that is more sustainable.

00:07:35 Renée
Yeah, precisely, yeah precisely because of course in these initial phases this is not what keeps you busy. This is not what you're thinking about.

00:07:42 George
Emergency is more important. You need to save lives.

00:07:44 Renée
For sure, you have to, you know, prioritise. But especially in a period like this where you can start looking at the future again, what I found is that, in theory, this is in theory how it works, is that after chaos a system or a community is more receptive to change. So, for example, if we are in a set situation. It's solid. Things work as they do, and you then try to implement a change towards, I don't know, for example, a more sustainable climate or more

sustainable city. It's much harder to make this change than after a period of chaos where the system is a bit more receptive.

00:08:38 George
Very interesting, I will tell you what I know about cases in Lebanon where history actually contradicted a bit what you're saying. But let's put it on the table and discuss it.
For example, when there was this war, the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006. Hezbollah decided to try to, of course they wanted to help the population, mostly in the southern suburb. They created Waad, which is a company like Solidere. But Hezbollah's way to help the people rebuild their buildings and... They had a hard time convincing people. And I know this from the architects who actually worked on it, and I can give you a few names that you can talk to. They had a hard time convincing people that they should be planning beyond the building unit itself. For example, creating more parking, let's say under other parcels so that you could liberate certain parcels for something else. And people wanted their apartments more or less exactly as the way they were before. They had the feeling that if any change was done to their lives, it would be to the detriment of the way they live. So instead of moving towards what you're saying, which is to use the opportunity of the demolition of a whole neighbourhood, to

recreate a better neighbourhood. They were more concerned of not losing what they already had. Which is interesting.

00:10:20 Renée
Yeah, it needs to be to be a balance for.

00:10:23 George
Sure, so yes, for participation it's my main argument when things like this happen. Participation is important. But then it has to be informed participation. People have to be aware of what they would lose if they do the change, and what they would gain if they do it. Most importantly, it is that they should not be feeling that they are losing as individuals for the benefit of the Community. This has to do with local distrust of anything public. Anything that comes to them will not bring them a better life. People count a lot on what they can control.

00:11:02 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:11:04 George
In everything, see what we do with electricity we prefer to pay for the generator huge amounts of money, and not get to resolve our electricity issue at country level. Right, there is something wrong in the way we operate. So, your reflection is very interesting for me. For example, for us as Lebanese, because you come with a fresh eye, and you say OK, let us see what is the

lesson taken from the Lebanese case. And you may be surprised to see that, well, if participation is required and if the opinions of people is required, then how to factor in your project and reflection, the positive side of their participation and how to factor out the individualism that would forbid any planning to happen.

00:12:02 George
There are in our history there are these known cases of Écochard for example, the French planner Michel Écochard, who did work in Lebanon, and he did for Morocco and Syria and elsewhere. He planned Casablanca etc, and he said, I succeeded everywhere except in Beirut because of personal interest and it was impossible to convince people of the whole project that I had in mind to build. So, I did not succeed. That's very specific to the place. Individualism and people who can stop projects that are against their own mostly financial interests. And in planning this is very important. What do you do with private property? Do you expropriate? If you expropriate, what you give me in exchange? There is this idea that the rights of people or sacrosanct, the property rights. It's very difficult to convince that, because of public good, you have to, let's say, lower the building

ratio in an area. It's completely insane to propose it. People will not accept it because you're touching their own right to build.

00:13:21 George
And actually, the right to build is not a given right. It is not an innate right. It's a right that the authorities give you to build on your land, but we don't think it this way. When they forbid you to build, they're taking your right of building, instead of considering that when they allow you to build it, they're giving you the right to build. It's very difficult to lower the coefficient.
Second thing is the private property. If you want to plan at the neighbourhood level in the aftermath of catastrophe like this one, you need to start thinking at the amenities. If you think of parks, if you think of parking and so on. For example, if you want to preserve in a neighbourhood an existing building, that don't have parking. You know, they are let's say mid 19th century early 20th century. First argument is we need to demolish the buildings because we don't have the parking and we cannot rent the apartments without provision of cars. The issue is simple. You have a land next to it that doesn't have a building on it or you demolish what is not worth being kept, and then you do more parking under this level,

and the parking serves all the neighbourhood. It's very hard to convince people that this is the solution. But it is a very good solution because then if you do enough parking under a new structure then you can leave one empty for a park for something like a playground, for anything.

00:14:55 George
It's more efficient. So, we think more in terms of individual parcels, individual projects, and that would be your exercise here, which is to see what the mechanism is that would allow to think at an urban scale, putting into consideration all that is in the interest of your idea. So, the blasts or the or the catastrophe. What is left after some buildings were renovated? What are the buildings that were kept that need renovation? What are the buildings that can be removed, for reasons, and how do we, with all these in the same basket, produce a better neighbourhood? That is sustainable, in terms of climate response, in terms of when the new buildings are built, how do we provide the proper ventilation for the streets? I mean, do you also produce an architecture that is high tech with the all the necessary, you know, new building skins or you go for more traditional but also efficient ways, economic ways of dealing with orientations, ventilation,

solar protection and what have you?

00:15:59 George
So all these ingredients come from your understanding of the history, of the 20th century, of the place, that we have many books about that, and also what are today's possibilities offered by technology?

00:16:18 George
Bring it all together. That, I think, would be a very good project.

00:17:14 George
Ramsey Hafez you mean?

00:17:24 George
Ah, yes, Yasser.

00:17:24 Renée
I have very interesting talk with him, and he was saying you have to find a sort of balance between the communal gain and bringing the market in there as well. Because to drive everything, you also of course need funding. And I was very fascinated so far, from what I saw is a few of these sorts of deals that Beirut Heritage initiative made, for example, with the German government. The German Government was like, OK, we will give you the money, but we want this renovation to be an educational site. So, we want to educate our archaeologists on site on how to renovate, how to do this properly. And for one building they were saying, OK, we want to renovate the building for you, but we want the rents and the apartments to be not higher than this amount, and the ground floor needs to be a pop-up store, or something like this. Something in the lines of a pop-up store. And you know, with a communal sense and purpose. The owner was then like OK, yeah, this is a good understanding to help each other. What I was thinking about, is creating a place that adapts through the different phases and has a lot of the stakeholders together. So that you hold these lines very shortly. So, when something goes wrong you can literally walk into the office of

the person that was responsible, like hey, why, what happened? Why did it go wrong? And you create this transparency between everyone, and between everyone's goals as well. Yeah, so that's sort of the idea, and it comes from…
I have a sort of uncle. He's not really my uncle, but sort of, and he pointed me towards this aid gap four years ago I think, and he's been mentoring me as well. He was a director at Oxfam and is now one of the directors at the BHP foundation. What they do is this open research governance tactics, which where they want to implement this radical transparency. An example what they gave was, there was a project, I'm not sure where in Africa, but somewhere in Africa and they wanted to develop schools. So, what they did was Oxfam was responsible for the funding. Then the community was responsible for building the schools and the government, who was a bit of a corrupt government, not the most reliable, was responsible for supplying teachers and school supplies. What they did is they made this contract put it up on a central wall in the village, on a huge wall like it was projected, yeah, on a very big skill. And everybody in the community would walk by this wall every day, and there would be the date when Oxfam needed to have transferred money. The date when schools…

00:20:54 George
It's very good, because this is accountability. And this is also the best way to have people appropriate the project. It is in front of them, they can see, they can follow up. And it's not somewhere in the dark, because either they get suspicious or there is disinterest, and you cultivate interest.

00:21:18 Renée
Yeah, yeah, exactly. And also, they know who is responsible. If they have questions they know where to go. Eventually I need to have, you know, a project, an architectural scale project. The idea is now to put this in a sort of a centre, which has a certain flexibility as well, where you can see, you know, new technologies in terms of sustainability, where you have the Beirut Heritage Initiative, where you have the Arab Architecture Centre, Executive magazine, all together, and you know who to talk to…

00:21:58 George
So, you would put them and us within, as part of the programme, of the project. You mean they would move there, theoretically, in your mind, and they would be collaborating together. And is this remaining, or it's just to produce the project and then they would leave?

00:22:18 Renée
Yeah, for example, I can imagine that they… of course not move

your office, but you know, have sort of an office there.

00:22:28 George
I mean we would move the office. We don't have a problem moving.

00:22:32 Renée
OK haha, yeah, move the office!

00:22:33 George
Why not? I mean, you have to tell us where you think it should happen. Because we can… The best in projects like this, is to imagine a plausible scenario and consider that it will happen. So, it can be a utopia, but utopia is not interesting if you're not believing that it will happen, right? So, it's not recuperations. So, in your project I mean, do you have already a site or do you have a programme?

00:22:56 Renée
No not yet, but this is something, so you sort of have…The idea is then also in other cases, than just Beirut, for example, there happens something now in a different country. So, you have these first few months where other parties are busy with the priorities, and keeping everyone alive, and keeping everyone safe and taking care of the most basic stuff. You have this period which differs a bit, but let's say three months, where the dust settles. You have these three months to get a map of the city. Go to the place. See OK, how does the city function, and do like a a quick

assessment, a quick analysis, and see who are the parties that, you know, need to start communicating to save heritage. To, you know, get the right priorities, also in renovation, keeping people in the buildings, and avoid big companies swooping in...

00:24:08 George
Kick them out.

00:24:09 Renée
Kicking them out, this kind of stuff. Who are these people? How do we connect them, and what is the best spot in neighbourhood to implement this?

00:24:18 George
Umm yeah, I think it's a plausible idea. It's a good project. Beirut is a good place to experiment it with all the complexities of the situation. It makes it even more interesting and challenging for you.

00:24:26 Renée
Yeah, exactly yeah.

00:24:34 George
And I think you're talking so far to the people who are informed, and who can help you. I mean people, you mentioned the groups you mentioned. Now the next step, I think would be to choose a neighbourhood or a site, that you have to develop more your knowledge on it. And choose a programme, what will you practically be doing? And what

is the deadline for your project? Research first and then project?

00:25:05 Renée
June or July? It's quite far, yeah.

00:25:07 George
2023. And you have a part that is a report that you write and then a part that is designed? Or it's just one?

00:25:14 Renée
No, one is the research and then one is the design, and they sort of go like this, yeah?

00:25:20 George
Like this... very good. Yeah, it's good!

00:25:22 Renée
Yeah, and it's quite flexible as well, I mean. As long as I can give a reason why I did something or didn't do something then, it's OK.

00:25:35 George
Yeah, OK, I'm ready to help in any way you think it's possible, either while you're here or later by e-mail or whatever. But let me show you now, what we have as the books.
(.....)

00:26:47 George
This is the building in Beirut. The Makdisi Building, near Hamra. In the parallel St to Hamra. It represents very well the Beirut modernism; the climate responsive with the elegance of the ground floor, the caps you

saw here in the other area, you see, for the sun protection. Yeah, and there's these openings that are in the ceiling you see the sky through the ceiling.

00:27:16 Renée
Yeah, that's great.

00:27:16 George
It's funny that you have the same book at TUDelft.
(.....)

00:30:36 George
OK, so we were looking at the list of books you have... Well, I continue, let me see what could be of interest to you. These are history of European architecture I will let you look through. Yeah, I will let you look, so please go ahead and look through the books.

00:30:58 Renée
I feel like this one is good. This is interesting because I talked to Jasmine and George who is with UN Habitat, and they were explaining why some of the traditional buildings collapsed and why others didn't. For example, a few where they built extra floors on top, without getting a permit and without reassuring the structure, these collapsed for example. And structure wise, with the sandstone...
You know, this is interesting to see here, so it's a very nice analysis on what are the fragile parts if place this in the context of

now, it's interesting.
(.....)

00:34:10 George
This is a book I recently published: Designing Modernity So, we took actually case studies, and we did biographies of buildings. We asked colleagues to write biographies of buildings. And these biographies speak of the place, of the people, of the country, of the regimes, and so on. So, these biographies of buildings are very telling about what happened to these places. So, if you take the Électricité du Liban for example. Here is a building that represented Lebanon very well of the late 60s and 70s. Finished in 1971. And what happened to it, in relation to blast, for example, is very telling. This is the condition now. It was a tragedy, somebody died there.

00:34:52 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:35:02 George
And here you have the way, for example the stairs and elevators. I mean the stairs, and the stairswell. How it overlooks the neighbourhood of Mar Mikhael. And this was a drastic change here. They removed this here. They had a garden, suspended garden, where the employees could watch the sea on one side, and the neighbourhood on the other, where they had lunch outdoors. Now it is blocked. You can probably just see in one

of the recent images that it's blocked here. The idea is that from the sidewalk you would see through the building. You'll see the horizon, look.

00:35:43 Renée
Yeah yeah, it's beautiful, but it has so much… Yeah, it's a great building. I've seen in downtown. (…..)

00:40:49 George
This is about the park, the Horsh, in Beirut. It's a study on the history of the place, how it shrank, across time. The different projects done on it, but also what it means to people who live around it. And what they expect, what value it has for them. I think it's of interest for you in terms of public space.
And this is by Hala Younes. It is the catalogue of the exhibition that she did for the Bienalle, maybe two or four years ago. It's called the place that remains. So, it's about the landscape around the river from Beirut up, and it has essays by landscape architects, architects, geologists and also photographers, who interpret this area.

00:42:03 Renée
Yeah yeah, this is also how I'm approaching my research so far. So for example, talking to Yasser yesterday, who has a very economical perspective, than you with a more historical perspective and also, architecture students that just live here. You know, their

perspective.
What I've noticed as well is the reaction to the blast within the different generations. So, besides having knowledge within architecture or urbanism. The reaction, I feel, with the younger generations, they are… I see their face harden a bit and they hold a bit more anger than the older generations. I was thinking, maybe because the older generations also, you know, saw the war and you know, it's a smaller thing on a bigger timeline, let's say.

00:43:03 George
That's true. So, that's one reason. Another is also that the younger generation is freed a little bit from affiliations. Whether they are political or religious, and so on. Therefore, they don't… The younger generation doesn't feel that it needs to justify anything. They're simply angry with everyone. Rightly so, whereas the older generation is unfortunately more connected to beliefs that their community or their part, their party, their whatever, holds the truth.

00:43:55 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:43:56 George
And it's always the fault of the other. This is why the slogan of the revolution of the younger people is: All of them is all of them. You don't need to justify anything, it's all of you, all of

them. All the generations, all of the parties, all of the leaders, all of them, right? This is it's, it's an important change in the in the mindset.

00:44:20 Renée
Yeah, I think so. I didn't, you know, I went in mostly with the architectural and urban knowledge and not really with the… Political a little bit, but yeah, this was really something I noticed within the different generations. Yeah, it was a nice observation.

00:44:45 George
It's great. So, you can feel free to sit and read or come back another time. Yeah, whatever you feel is best. We can help with your research and search for knowledge and familiarity with the city. We are here for this. We're at the same time this archival place, but also library and a place of discussion. And feel free to discuss with the team of volunteers that work with us. And they can maybe also give their own opinion on what you do. They're mostly graduate architects at the moment. In which they can give you their sincere opinion.
(….)
00:50:23 George
Hassan, I thought would have cut it before. It's too late now. You know he wants to film you 24 hours!

Interview with Tala
Alaeddine

8th December 2022, Public
Works

Maison Blatt, Public Works
Abdul Khader
Beirut, Lebanon

00:00:02 Renée
So, um, uh, currently in my final year of architecture, so I study in Delft. Um, and, um, you have different studios in the Master and I'm in the studio, which allows you to sort of.

00:00:17 Tala
Um, yeah.

00:00:18 Renée
Go deep into your own fascination. Um, and I had an elective about Beirut. Um, I think two years ago, right after the blast. And this was like in the middle of COVID, so we couldn't, come here. Um, but it's, yeah, the complexity and the city, it really stuck with me. Um, so I always just, you know, really wanted to dig a bit deeper, uh, into Beirut and else.

00:00:50 Tala
So is it your first time in Beirut or.

00:00:52 Renée
Yeah, yeah, it's my first time. Um, and it's, it's very double because... It's an amazing experience.

The people are so kind and welcoming, and, uh, I've never experienced anything like that. I feel so, uh, since I came here alone, I feel like, um, if you would do this in Europe, you have a much harder time making friends. And here everybody is just very welcoming. Um, but on the other hand, there's still so much damage, which was also, you know, it's a difficult thing to see, let's say. And I heard that there's already so much, uh, rebuild. I mean, it's, I couldn't grasp the, um, the scale of the blast at all before I came, even though I read a lot and did a lot of research, I only realized it when I came here. Um, so it's. Yeah, it's a bit of a double experience, I'd say. But yeah, so, um, Beirut sort of stuck in my mind. And, I have a sort of uncle, not really an uncle, but almost, and he worked at Oxfam and works now at BHP. And he told me a while ago, I think four years ago, about, a gap between the first humanitarian aid response and then long-term development and that there's not a lot of architects working on this gap in particular. I think only Shigeru Ban is doing emergency architecture, which I think is very, you know, it's a pity. Um, and I worked in a quite a big office last year. Um, and, you know, you, there are very cool projects, there are huge projects. You know, one was, for example, for, um, the Ministry of Finance in Berlin and was like in the middle of Berlin and a huge building

and, beautiful. But also, after a couple of months, I got a bit, uh, you know, disgusted is not the word, but it put me off a bit. I was like, okay, I'm. What am I doing now? Is this really the direction I want to go in? Is this the kind of architecture I want to do? So, within this massive studio, I could, uh, combine basically these two fascinations that I had and, you know, see if you can approach architecture in a different way than the experience I had so far, the work experience. And so, I started my research, um, and I realized that Beirut is currently in this aid gap. So, uh, you know, in the beginning you have a lot of media attention funding coming in, um, a lot of people coming in to help NGOs, this kind of stuff. And then together with the media, it sort of dips. Um, and yeah, also in terms of funding. So, I spoke with...

00:04:17 Tala
So it's mainly, um, you mean by Aid gap, You mean when like everything stops from the side of the NGOs or all the parties, to give the aid, and the people like are left with no sustainable way of living.

00:04:37 Renée
Yeah. There's still quite a lot of things to do in terms of the, you know, long term development. Um, so what I'm now looking at is; is there a way to smoothen this process to, you know, get the right parties involved. Because

so far what I've seen is the, for example, how the Beirut Heritage Initiative approaches it now... So, what they did for a new project that they started is that they had a certain amount of funding, and then they combined it with Live Love Beirut; Okay, now together we have enough to do these four houses, to look at it in this way, to sort of maybe also a bit like how the owner approached it with this building (referring to Maison Blatt). Um, and what they also had a lot of funding from the German government, but then German government said like, okay, we'll give you the funding, but the restoration site needs to be a training site. So, we want to educate our historians and architects, uh, on how to renovate, um, heritage building, which I think is a brilliant, uh, you know, combination of getting it moving.
So, ideally, I would like to pull this to a bigger scale to see what kind of structures and what kind of way of thinking works. Uh, and I'm drawing my conclusions now here from, yeah, lots of these interviews, uh, in Beirut. And what I would love to do is implement it then in a different context to see if this kind of approach works in multiple contexts to, let's say really speed up the process a little bit. So, for example, something disastrous happened. Then you have these first couple of months where there's a lot of humanitarian aid coming in, and then in these

first months you do the analysis, you see, okay, what parts are heavily damaged? What parties are involved, what is important, what are the priorities? What space in the city can we use? And then right when everything starts slipping into the gap, you implement this design to smooth up this transition to the long-term development and get all the different parties very closely together, um, so you can figure out a way to get it to evolve.

00:07:26 Tala
Uh, that's very interesting, very interesting thinking.

00:07:30 Renée
Nice. I hope it would work. What's fun about the research is that the first couple of meeting, or one of the first meetings was, mainly just like me listening. Uh, okay, wait, this is how you approach it. This was the priorities. Okay? And then slowly I draw some conclusions from this because, uh, you hear the same issues. And now I'm in the phase where I'm sort of telling you the idea and then testing, you know, if you would say like, oh, yeah, this sounds plausible.
So yesterday I was at the Arab Architecture Center, you know, see bit what happened after the civil war, what worked, what didn't, history wise, because the historical perspective is very crucial. Um, and yeah, so for me to come and talk with you guys the main reason is...I'm trying

to approach this also from a multidisciplinary perspective. So, I also talk to the executive magazine, to see more the governmental structure behind it. Um, yeah. And I feel that the...

00:09:02 Tala
So, center for Architecture Executive Magazine and BHI, Yeah? Those are...

00:09:06 Renée
The main ones. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:09:09 Renée
Yeah. And then I still have a talk planned with the UN as well. Um, and then there's a lot of informal talks with architecture student, for example, this kind of stuff. Yeah. So, my question to you is, um, like in the aftermath of the blast, what were approaches that worked and what do you feel like is missing now? Do you think there is an aid gap in the first place?

00:09:42 Tala
Okay. Let me first of all, like tell you a little bit about public works and how I started to work after the blast. So basically, we are a studio that engages in everything related to spatial inequality and urban issues in the city and national scape. A lot of our project focused also on housing and on the planning, on how it is done, on a national scale. We did a lot of research on the neighbourhoods that are in the affected areas of the blast

before the blast. So, we did this exercise and some workshops to understand the housing situation in the area as a part of a bigger project that covered a lot of neighbourhoods in Beirut. And we then, like, understood a little bit how each neighbourhood was formed historically, how people came to live there. What is the housing situation there? Who are the people that are living there? How many tenants?

00:10:48 Renée
Yeah.

00:10:49 Tala
And when the blast happened. So, it was of course, one of the main intentions is to come on the site to help the people. But at the same time, because we know about the neighbourhoods, we know we have some data about it, it was very helpful to continue the work and to use that data in order to like help and try to find solutions. And to try to help. So, we started, some of the work we've done were some surveys in the field. We have also a project called The Housing Monitor. So, it was operating before the blast, and it basically documents the housing of vulnerabilities and the threats that people are facing. So, people basically were reporting about any threat and so we documented in a detailed way. So, after the blast, we launched a hotline and because we started to see that people have a lot of vulnerabilities, so they started to

call us a lot. And our field worker on the field also like found a lot of cases of vulnerabilities. So, this is how we started. Um, and on the way, we started to find what are the problems, what is happening, what is really happening? Because we are we basically a studio, like I said, we're engaged in housing issues, urban issues. We don't, we're not like other NGO's where they support beneficiaries, and give them some aid, and so on. So, we started to see some trends that are happening that. Affecting the people in, um, there... So, let me start by saying that a lot of NGOs are starting to work there, and the government basically did nothing. Other than this one law. Which the title of the law was to protect the neighbourhoods. However, they never mentioned the residents of the affected areas. So to want to protect the areas, but neglected the residents.

00:13:15 Renée
Yeah.

00:13:15 Tala
And in all the law that they, there's only like one sentence where they mentioned that we want to halt the evictions of the people for one year, and this didn't even happen. And after that, all the responses were based on like funds that were given to NGOs from, whether Lebanese diaspora or from international funders and the NGOs wanted to... So, they wanted to tell these funders

that you want to do something. So, they wanted the money. So, what they did is that they directly, like, chose what they want to do without any... They didn't ask, basically.

00:14:23 Tala
So, we started to see people coming and giving refrigerators to the people.
But this is not our basic need. We need something else now. We need, for example, the rehabilitation of our common spaces in the buildings to be able to live in these buildings. We want to see our neighbour house rehabilitated because we cannot live in this building if our neighbour is not living there. For example, this was not happening. They wanted the money, so they acted like it quickly. And at the same time, they said that they were coordinating. So, there was a lot of coordination between the NGOs. But what we saw also is that this coordination, that was happening through different moderators, like the army, the Lebanese army, or some platforms that were created online where all the NGOs like booked data. It was a bit closed between some NGOs. And what actually happened is that they divided the city, or they divided a neighbourhood and each NGO like took a part of the neighbourhood for its own.

Like; I want to rehabilitate this and you and other NGO's cannot come here. So, if this NGO got some fundings for repairing the windows, the family living in the house, they just got the windows repaired and they didn't get any other need fulfilled. And this happened a lot. And the other NGOs cannot come and see and say, I want to help here, because another NGO did the work. So, this happened a lot. And this so when you see now that a lot of buildings were rehabilitated, but there's some needs in the buildings or in the apartments or for the residents that were unfulfilled.

00:16:30 Tala
This is one thing. Another thing is that a lot of the work that they did, or the renovation that they did, at the end, because it was meant to directly help. They didn't create any form or idea of the future... thinking of what is going to happen later.

00:17:02 Tala
So, they provided the aid maybe, or they provided the rehabilitation, but they didn't know that when they did that, when they renovated the buildings, for example, the owner

is going to evict the tenants because now he can, rent the apartment for higher with higher rent. So, in this case, all the people that are renting in the area who have been living there for like 40 or 30 years, that they are now under threat of... they were basically under the threat of eviction because of the aid that's happened. And in this way, the NGOs or the humanitarian aid that was provided by the NGOs basically led in the end to the residents leaving this area. Some of the residents left this area. And we heard, we started to see and to remember other... like what's happened historically in Beirut. So, after the war... I guess when you talk to the Arab Architecture Centre, they told you that after the war in Beirut, how the centre of Beirut was rebuilt. This happened, so the people that were living there were basically evicted, and they moved to other cities away from Beirut. So, we were afraid that this will happen again. And this was happening. We were receiving a lot of a lot of reports on the housing monitor, for example, from people. So first of all, the needs, no needs were fulfilled. Second, about how the NGO's dealt with the issue of keeping residents. So, what we try to do is to convince some NGOs to like at least have a certain paper that they can sign with the owner and the owner, saying, okay, if you rehabilitate this, I will grant that these tenants will stay in the same room, etc.,

because people wanted their neighborhood to stay as it was. So, they didn't want to change how it looks. I mean, from the shops there, or the livelihood, or the people coming there, etc. So, after the explosion Airbnb's that were starting to come to the neighborhood, It was an area were a lot of real estate developments started before the blast. But after the blast these intentions grew because of what is happening.

00:19:55 Tala
Uh. So, yeah. So, these are the issues. Why am I telling you that? Because it's related to the aid. So how money, like quick money to respond to quick disasters like at the end failed in some ways.

00:20:19 Tala
Um, and we have, for example, a lot of cases where some NGOs, they started to give aid for, cash for rent, for example, they started to give cash for rent or shelters sometimes because they got the funds. And after a while they stopped this service. So, a lot of people like they couldn't... Some people were getting cash for rent, but their houses were not renovated, for example, or they worked at the port, but now the port is destructed, so they

cannot return and work there. Or in some of the shops where they worked were destroyed, or they lost their jobs because of the economic crisis. So, it was due to COVID, due to the explosion and due to the economic crisis in general. So, the aid that once came stopped at some times. And these people found again, themselves vulnerable and under threats. And one of the main threats I'm talking about is not the housing, that's two. Because this is the main issue we are basically documenting. So, it happened a lot and there were no sustainable solutions for the people to stay or for the people to regain their work. Except in the examples, you gave. So, you gave an example where there was an initiative where they tried to train the people to start to convert the buildings. Or for example, they got the fund to renovate some heritage building. And the people like tried to help in this renovation. But this didn't happen a lot. So, the people basically have their own work and when they lost their work or when they lost their homes, that they were basically… either they left the area, or they seek the help here of political groups and some affiliations. That's basically in Lebanon is a way for this sustainable, uh… So how people feel they're safe or they can stay here is because they have these affiliations. So whoever doesn't have this affiliation or the support of some political or religious

group is left alone. And there is no solution for him or her.

Yeah.

00:23:07 Tala
So, yeah, that's me. I talked a lot.

00:23:10 Renée
But no, this is crucial information for me. This is exactly, why I came here with this question. So basically, Okay, what? Even though it seems like a good solution in the beginning, that actually, um, creates new problems, let's say, like, just quick money, as you said.
let's see. So, okay, this is basically sort of the, the, the. Yeah, that's the holes that you can fall in, let's say, where there are certain tactics that worked very efficiently. What did work?

00:24:01 Tala
What did work? I'm very… I don't want to be so negative, but there's some examples where, things happened, and they say it succeeded. In some renovation projects for example. There two renovations, a project that they say they succeed. But it was basically because there were funds. There was an involvement of some academic and NGOs all together coordinating. So, there was the architect, the designer that who always thought of some solutions. And at the end, it happened. And at the end, the residents were kept there because

they signed some papers. So, what we what we want to push for is basically, on something related to architecture and housing. So, if you come like and tell you want to renovate but at the end you will leave, this isn't the solution or if it will happen at the, this is not a solution. So, if someone gives funds to renovate for the owner or for… there is a lot of models that could be used. Uh, in order to sustain the residents and the building. Or this cluster or this neighbourhood can like, uh, continue living as it was and, creating jobs and so on. So, there's a lot of models that could be used in return of the fund. So, we cannot give like a fund to renovate, except if you provide this certain model that can provide affordable housing for certain people. And we have a lot of examples. So now we are starting to talk about it. So, at the beginning, after right after the explosion, people didn't think of that. They didn't think of that. So now conversations started about what models can be used for the remaining buildings. Because now we also have a lot of building that were already abandoned before the explosion. But we also have a lot of buildings that are empty because people left after the explosion. So how are we going to renovate these and how people are coming back? We want to provide affordable housing. So, let's try to find some models and some solutions. And I'm participating in a lot of workshops

and a lot of panels that are happening now, and they're trying to see how we are getting funds and who is going to give this fund. So, there is… I don't know, some French people that are, uh, like providing some solutions and providing conditions in order to give this fund, for example. And they started thinking of models. And we have public works, for example, in 2018, two years before the explosion, we did a certain competition, and it was an international competition called think housing in order to like try to push people. On the international level to find some models to implement in Beirut and certain neighbourhoods in certain cases, studies. Two of them were in the affected area of the explosion. And we already have a lot of models that could be implemented. So, it's now the time basically to try to start thinking about how to implement these models. And a way to keep it sustainable.
You know what I mean? I mean, we want the people to come back to this place. We want affordable housing. People came here to work. Some people came to live here because they wanted to work near the port or they wanted to work near the train, back then. So there was a train station there. There was the port. There was a lot of cross, a lot of shops. They lived there because they wanted to live near their work. And now they left because they have no options. So, it's a

way to let the people come back, pay this affordable rent or these affordable fees and they can work in this area too. Uh, so a lot of models can be implemented in this way. They can be financial models and design. So they combine design and financial.

00:29:23 Renée
Yeah. Yeah.

00:29:25 Tala
Um, and I don't know, I can't give you the link maybe to this housing competition. We don't have any physical copies any more.

00:29:30 Renée
Yeah, that would be great. it's interesting because this touches on, what would be the final goal, of my project is to… is to basically, to put it a bit bluntly, to use it as an opportunity.

00:30:03 Tala
Yeah.

00:30:04 Tala
Um, and this is something, uh, for example, uh, it happened in Rotterdam, I live in Rotterdam, and Rotterdam was completely bombed during the Second World War. Uh, so the whole city centre was gone. I think three buildings, survived something like this, and it used to be very similar to Utrecht and Amsterdam. So that's like very small plot sizes. And during the war, um, they already put a few urban planners and architects together to see, okay,

how can we rebuild Rotterdam once the war is done to, like, kick start this? Um, and what do we want it to be like? So, we sort of took the moment to see, like, okay, for example, we have little green space in the city and, it was 1945. So, you know, also the car coming in. So we're like, okay, let's make the city on a bigger scale, uh, have more green implemented within the city to sort of use the destruction as an opportunity.

00:31:15 Tala
Yeah, but the problem here in Lebanon is that the architects or the urban planners that we have are very… They don't think out of the box, not on the design level, and not on a multidisciplinary level. So, they the only thing about the plot, either the design, if they are like architects or the revenue if they are real estate developers, because we have a lot of developers. And basically, the people who drafted the law, the building law, are working as estate developers. So, we have a very shitty building laws. So, this is the issue. So, after the explosion. We had a lot of visions coming from some people in the field. Architects or students or so on. We started to see these renderings of the port area where we have the big developments and an area where you can… I don't say that we don't need that. Of course, the port area needs to be alleviated and revived and rebuild in some way, but in a

way that meets the needs of the people.
We did a lot of community meetings after the explosion. And I want to talk about an experience now a bit. They always said, we don't want to see our neighbourhood change more, that it changed during the explosion. So, we don't want to see… So, they want to come back here, and find a building that was destroyed and a certain High-rise that came in its place. so here the neighbourhoods. actually, if you… So, we have Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze this area. Buildings with shops, with the ground floor where people can meet. We have a lot of spaces in between the buildings and the alleyways where people meet. We sit together, they sit together. They basically did that. So now if, for example, another building, new building is built, there's that entrance. People like came come with their cars to an underground parking and they go up to their apartments and no one can see each other. So, it's very… no social interaction anymore. So, this is when I say a change in how the neighbourhood is, this is one aspect of the change.
Also, of an old shop is replaced by a Bar or it is replaced by a certain nightclub or restaurant. So that's a lot of change to be enabled. While basically, it was relying on the older crafts and so on. And this this is what we witnessed in the area from before the explosion. But people are

afraid that it will happen more and more. And, how Airbnb's are coming. And this is an area where we have a lot of old people, too. So, this is important to notice because of people at the end will die and the area is a freed for a new development and for new visions and so on.
So a very important thing is to, like, look at the needs of the people. When we want to look at the needs of the people, a participation process is very important for any design project or any sort of creating that model, if we want it to be sustainable because they are the people that that will maintain the sustainability. So, what we did also after the explosion and coordination with a lot of partners, basically we made an agenda which is. An NGO working on the legal issues. So, we try to help people organize into a sort of association, the residents to organize in a sort of association. And this association, it doesn't speak in the name of all the residents, but it's an organizational framework that can say, I'm here, you, whoever you are, I want to do a certain plan, a certain master plan, a certain project. We want you to come and talk to us first, to present it to us, to see our needs, to consult us in order to confirm or not. Because this is our city. This is our neighbourhood. So this association was created for that. Um. It was difficult for people to organize after the explosion.

So we saw a lot of people on the streets and helping and like renovating or cleaning or so on. But to organize, they found it very difficult. And helping them also was very difficult. Until now, they are now working on a lot of issues. But they failed until now to work on the bigger issues. Which is like to follow up on how the explosion happened and who's responsible? So on. This was one of the rules of the association. But they're now focusing on small things, like if a certain project in a neighbourhood is going to happen, we want to be consulted. There is the 3RF, there's a framework, a very big framework for the reconstruction called the 3RF. So, there's a lot of money coming in. They started to think of where to stand in. Because if we don't think of that, the money won't come. So, they are demanding to be part of it. And until now they are, for example, side-lining them. They also now working on things related to how bars in the area are... So, a little bit focusing on small goals. So, how bars in the area, in residential areas are exceeding the volume of the music, or valet parking are closing the streets at night and people cannot find parking spots. So, they are working on small things in order to keep their neighbourhoods how they want it to be. But yeah, they until now, they basically fail to work on the bigger issue, the bigger picture. And the government doesn't see them, so this also is an issue.

00:39:14 Tala
So, in the absence of the government we have a lot of potential through the NGOs, through architects, through academics and through universities and the studios they do about the explosion and so on. We can find sustainable solutions that combine some economic models with design models in order to provide this... I don't know how to say affordable housing, livelihoods, or a competition, and it is sustainable. So, and I tell you, this is happening now. The conversation is happening now, and it happened back then. So, if it happened back then, a lot of problem problems were resolved. So what we see now, a lot of people left. It's a country. Have a risk management plan. So everything like happened suddenly. People like, try to find some solution for themselves. And one of the things to be sustainable or to stop relying on religious and non-political groups and political affiliations, who basically invest in the disasters in order to gain some support. And you'll be my supporters, and I don't care about your neighbour. So we have seen a lot of buildings where this political group or this religious group, renovated an apartment in a building and all the building

was still destroyed. And this was a major issue which created a lot of, I should say, conflict, tension between the neighbours. So why is he getting aid, and I am not?
00:41:14 Renée: So, yeah, Yasmine told me this as well. Yeah, this is very particular. Who is helping, Who, basically. Yeah.
00:41:22 Tala: And these models, also, to be sustainable, they need to be coupled with a change on the high level, which is the. Level of loss. And so, a lot of amendments need to be done. A lot of new laws need to be implemented in order that this change would be sustainable. And not only on the level of the affected areas and neighbourhoods, but also on the level of the city as a whole, because the whole city was affected by this.

00:41:58 Tala
Um, and the work of the NGOs, for example, was directly...
So, they neglected a lot of neighbourhoods that also were affected. And this was related to where the funds are coming from or coming for. And based on um... I don't want to say this, but this sector, it's basically based on a lot of sectors. So, political, and religious. So, the area that was affected by the explosion was basically an area where a lot of Christian people live. But there's also a part where

Muslims live. So, there was that issue that we want to protect the Christian areas in order to avoid the Christian people to leave from this area. So, a lot of funds came there in order to help the Christian, so for Christians to stay there. For example, a neighbourhood called Byculla, which is very not very far from here. It's a neighbourhood with a lot of historical buildings. And it's under a very big real estate threat. So, what happened? All the funds, all the help, all the aid, like, neglected this area, even the law neglected this neighbourhood, whereas it was very effected because of some political and sectarian way of thinking.
So, this is important? So, when we when we think of models, when we think of solutions, we want to think for all the people. Something that could be replicated maybe on a national scale or to be considered, coupled with a lot of changes to the laws and the policies on the housing. So, on the housing level, we don't have a law: The right to housing. And basically, this is very important in order to keep things sustainable. We don't have a good building law, and this needs to be changed. We don't have any disaster management here. So, this is very important to us. And also, there's... A lot of institutions need to be involved: public institutions, the municipality of Beirut. The municipality of Beirut has a very

big group, and they didn't do anything. Also, all the institutions related to planning, like the Directorate General Planner. So, they didn't do anything, um, they didn't do anything. I think the Directorate of Antiquities, which is called antiquities but it's basically all the heritage building under its mandate, basically. So also, where her involvement was very, and I guess BHI told you that, it was relying on external resources like BHI and architects and restorers and all to get the data and to get the work done. And they don't have the funds. So, it was yes, it's very difficult.

00:45:52 Renée
And it's like, the synergy is missing.

00:45:56 Tala
It's very important to know everyone's role in... What everyone should do..

00:46:00 Renée
What is your everybody's responsibility? Interesting. Yeah. This, I heard before. So basically, also what you're saying is that you sort of need something that enables the community to point at the one who is responsible?

00:46:24 Tala
Yeah, Yeah.

00:46:26 Renée
So, this is what I'm looking at now as well. And, for example, this sort of uncle of mine, with

Oxfam and BHP, they have these models as well, um, especially in situations where there is an unreliable government. So, what they do is implement radical transparency, something that Yasser, from the executive magazine, also mentioned is that this radical transparency, could work very well together with making the lines between all these parties as short as possible, because then, it's very clear for everybody who is responsible for someone. So, if somebody, uh, neglects that responsibility, they can very easily say; okay, what happens? So, to make these lines very short?

00:47:29 Tala
This is what we tried to do a little bit. When we, we basically produced after the explosion a guidebook for the people related to housing and urban issues. And it was like a commentary on the law of the protection of the area. So, we commented on it. We divided it in different sections based on different themes, but at the end of each section we added on the back some demands from the people. Based on the workshops and the community meetings. And in each demand or in each session of the piece. We basically, like said, so this needs to happen by this institution. This institution needs to do this. This law stays this, or this needs to be implemented, etc. So, people don't know this. So, we got a lot of people, for example, in the

affected area didn't know at all about the law.

00:48:25 Renée
Yeah. Yeah, I can imagine.

00:48:27 Tala
Yeah. A lot of people and they didn't know what it does. Especially this article that says that for one year you cannot be evicted. So, a lot of people were getting evicted after the explosion and they didn't know that they have the right to stay. And there's this like article that says this. So, we tried, during fieldwork, to use the chance to tell them this. We distributed the guidebook, etc. so it's very important. This communication with people to the institution, each one, about who is responsible for what. And each attracts... in the renovation of buildings, there's a lot of actors that could be involved. So, it's not each one is responsible. And it's very complex. And it's also controversial. So, there needs to be at least on the planning level, everything related to planning, it needs to be... we don't have a Ministry for Planning. We don't have a vision for the whole. So, there's something related to development on the level of the country.

00:49:56 Renée
Yeah. Yeah.

00:49:57 Tala
But it needs to be done by a certain entity. It's something that needs to be like, when we do a

certain master plan, or we don't want to work in certain areas based on a certain vision for the national scale. So now we're saying we want to do something in the port. Yeah, let's gather some designs and some master plan. But what is it? Let's neglect for example, that Beirut has a master plan from 1953. So, it's a very outdated master plan. We want to think about the city as a whole, not only about one neighbourhood or a port within this city. So, it's very important to look at stuff like this.

00:50:34 Renée
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:50:35 Tala
We don't have a ministry for housing. We don't have any data related to how... there is no official data.

00:50:43 Renée
No, just in an office like this.

00:50:56 Tala: Yeah. So don't we don't know how many people live in these neighborhoods. We don't know how many buildings. Uh, yeah, we don't know how many buildings are there. How many are abandon. So, BHI did some work to see where are the heritage buildings after the explosion. This was not done before. So how many heritage buildings, how many abandoned buildings? How many destroyed buildings? We don't have such data. So, data is very important.

00:51:21 Tala
Yeah, definitely. Yeah. Who are the people that live there? So, not all of them are the Lebanese, for example. And a lot of concentration of the government maybe was towards Lebanese to help Lebanese, whereas a lot of NGOs and aid come for Syrians. For example, and neglected the Lebanese because a lot of funds, you know, because Syrians are refugees, So, the money comes for the refugees or the communities that host refugees. So, this was also an issue who is living there? We have migrant workers, the Syrians, you know, Lebanese. So, the solution that needs to be done as a solution for all of these. Because they form the city and therefore, they have the right to the city, the right to live in the city. So basically, any models should not like exclude any of them.

00:52:15 Renée
Yeah. Yeah. And really prioritize the community's needs, all aspects of the community. Yeah. I'm not sure how much time you have left. What time is it?

00:52:22 Tala
Yeah. Yeah. a little bit.

00:52:25 Renée
I have one... So, there's this

synergy in this communication between all these different parties, and it's just going, you know, a bit besides each other. Um, I feel like this radical transparency could be a good solution. So, an example for this was a project from Oxfam, and they were going to build schools, and what they did is they had a contract, so they had basically three parties involved. Oxfam was responsible for the funding and then the community was responsible for building the schools, and then the municipality was very unreliable in that case as well, uh, was responsible for getting teachers and school supplies. So, what they did is they printed this contract onto a huge wall in the middle of the village. Um, so everybody in the whole community would walk past it and would like, read, uh, the contract and it would literally say, okay, by this date, Oxfam needs to have transferred money by this date, the schools needs to be done building by this date, we need to have five teachers. Um, and this worked very effectively because it really enabled literally everybody in the street to say, Oh, I think...

00:54:08 Tala
Uh, they actually know that there are some funds. So, what is the purpose of disposal. What are we going to do with it? So here funds are coming. And people don't know about the funds. And we had a lot of NGOs like this who were created after the explosion.

There are a lot of NGOs that work very well, but I mean, there's a lot of they just got the funds, and they distributed aid but it wasn't how it needs to be done.

00:54:41 Renée
It was a bit of a chaotic mess let's say also to from an outsider perspective to sort of map what happened is quite difficult. Um, I even heard stories where there's now also NGOs that acted a bit corruptly with money, this kind of stuff and.

00:55:07 Tala
I guess. And here is, it's an issue too, because we're afraid that at some times
the government... So you know there is this economic crisis where you cannot withdraw your money if it was in dollars. We cannot use dollars except if it comes from outside. As fresh dollars. as we call it, so people can withraw them as fresh dollars. So, when the NGOs got funds, they got that in dollars, basically. And in this way, the government does not like receiving any... The government and the banks want to try to gain from what the NGOs receive because it's happening... So we're afraid that sometimes based on what you said, so some NGOs are corrupted, they will stop this availability of fresh dollars from outside and this will be a major issue. And even if they stop something called NGOs, because they said that once. And that's why Public works is both

part of NGO and part of a studio because we we're afraid that sometimes that one will stop. So how can you continue? Um, so this is an issue because the NGOs are the ones that are renovating and are building and are providing aid and providing all of that.

00:56:53 Renée
Well, I feel like you guys have much more of the local knowledge and also see, in that sense, the priorities much clearer.

00:57:03 Tala
Yeah. And what everyone sees now is that NGOs are part of what is being planned for the city. Because they do have, they can provide their expertise. They can provide their knowledge, they can provide them, basically. So, the funds come from somewhere. This is what we need. There's the NGOs, there's the community, and there is also the government that needs to be involved somehow. But this is not actually what this is what is not clear now, because it is corrupted and people don't want it. But at the end, there are some institutions that actually need to be involved.

00:57:52 Renée
Yea. It's a complex.

00:57:57 Tala
And it's very important, with any vision also, no one takes that into consideration, is, everything related to the assets that the government or municipality have,

basically needs to be asked. So, the municipality and the Lebanese government, have a lot of plots or empty plots or build plots in the affected area. So, this is very important in any solution or any plan or any vision for the area. So, what do we do with these plots? So, some people think, if you want to build affordable housing to some people, it could be done on one of these plots. It could be also part of... so where people can garden. Anything that is for the benefits of the people and the needs of the people. So, it should be part of the plan. Yeah. Um, you know, instead of saying we want to sell, and we want to privatize public land, which is happening now. This, off course has happened a lot after 2020, after the crisis. It's also an issue on the national level, and we also are doing research about this.

00:59:23 Renée
I mean, I see why this is happening, because there's no good regulation about this. I mean, it's, it's also market wise, pushing in that direction. Um, since there's no borders put on it. Um, but yeah, that's the last thing you want to happen. It's a very complex case. And, I mean, we didn't even touch on the fact, you know, that some of the base systems are not working, such as energy or this kind of stuff. Um, but, yeah, but it is a very... for me it was a very helpful talk, at least. Yeah.

01:00:12 Tala
I'm really glad that you chose Public Works to talk to.

01:00:15 Renée
Yeah, but I really wanted to be my, uh... I want my research sources to be NGOs, but for example, especially also offices that already existed before the blast that already had some data, have more local knowledge.

01:00:33 Tala
Yeah. So as I said, so we started doing that because we already have some research and some work there because we have this tool on this project, the housing one. So, after, it wasn't related to the explosion, but after the explosion we also launched a new project, which is the land observatory. Uh, the land policies Observatory. So, we have the housing monitor that gets reporting from the ground, from people and we had that land policies observatory that, documents and sees and monitors what the government does and what is happening on the higher level and in the institutions, whether it is the government, the ministries, or the municipalities, etc., the laws are there. So, when we commented on the law, after the explosion. It was part of this project. Uh, we are now monitoring a lot of flows. So that's impact the lives of people in the affected areas and other areas too. So yeah, we're

trying to do this one projects for the people.

01:01:41 Renée
Yeah, I mean, with so many initiatives, even if they're if their driver is very pure and, you know, comes from a good place, let's say, you just run into a wall every turn you make, basically. Um, because. Yeah, it's just the basics. Yeah. Yeah.

01:02:13 Tala
Yes, but in the first place, you try to provide the information that you had to the people. Because when, when they know that this is being like passed with the parliament, they can do maybe something. Sometimes they may not because we have lack of organization frameworks. And another point which is very important: I talked about the association, at the Level of the neighbourhoods. But I believe that before the war, for example, in Lebanon, we had a lot of neighbourhood committees and people were organized on the level of neighbourhoods. This helped them contain the livelihoods in the neighbourhoods. They maintained, how they lived there. We now lack this such framework of organization on the neighbourhoods level, on the level of the city and of the level of, how we say it... Like the orders of engineer. What do you call the other word? When people who work on the same...

Where workers organize in order to get their rights with syndicate: syndicates!

01:03:42 Renée
Syndicates. Yeah, yeah.

01:03:44 Tala
We have a lot of issues with the syndicates and all those we have. It's also political and religious and affiliated, so it's not really a syndicate work or, you know, the workers force. We don't have this, and we don't have the organization on the neighbourhood level. Whereas back then. Um, the fifties and the forties. We had this and people like, if they need it for example housing, this organization would help them squats some buildings of the municipality, because they needed housing. And also if there is like certain public project they maintained and managed it in order to be sustainable. So very important to have. Like such committees, such organizational framework on the local level, on the neighbourhood level, in order to maintain any model that's going to help. It's may not to be like an association of a level of the neighbourhood, but it could be some committees. That's good and keeps things sustained. Yeah.

01:04:54 Renée
And, um, I feel like this would be important systems in a sense of that people would know who to talk to, where to go with an issue. Because I, I can imagine that for a

lot of people, like you mentioned as well, they, they just didn't know, how a law worked or if they were protected or not.

01:05:21 Tala
Right! There's a lot of challenges in a way of as this committee is representing. Sometimes people within the neighbourhood feel that they are leaders. this shouldn't happen. But basically, these are challenges that also should be thought about and we are trying to see, on the local level, how can we learn from other experiences and other countries. And for example, we are finding this in Latin-America, for example. They have a lot of organization experience. So, it's very important.

01:06:09 Renée
Yeah. I can imagine it bears similarity. Nice. Good. I have one final question. Can I take a picture of you?

01:06:19 Tala
Um, of the space? Yeah.

01:06:21 Renée
With you in it? If possible. If not, it's also fine. Um, it's just, you know, to sort of give an image for everyone back home. So, they see you with, like, what kind of settings I am? It's a very old camera.

01:06:37 Tala
I can stand over here!

01:07:05 Renée
Great. Yeah.

01:07:08 Tala
Let me give you some publication.

01:07:12 Renée
Oh, yeah. I'm very interested in also in this one that's sort of commented on the law. Oh.

01:07:21 Tala
That would be... It's an Arabic, Sorry. But I have some others in English.

Interview with Claudine Ramadi

14th December 2022, Dutch Embassy.

The Netherlands Tower, 10th floor
Avenue Charles Malek
2073-0802 Achrafieh
Beirut, Lebanon

00:00:04 Claudine
So just to repeat this, so I was talking about leveraging the emergency funding. I was telling you that as in, like as a situation in Lebanon, we do not classify this situation as an emergency. And as an embassy, we try not to, basically, "humanitarianise" the situation; we try to continue working on development. This is our general approach. We do have humanitarian efforts, but as much as possible we try to integrate them in what we call the Nexus approach, linking them to other key priority areas. Let's say for example, if we do wash... we might do washing schools, but then also work on education in these schools on strengthening their education systems. So we kind of mix the humanitarian with development. So basically, the humanitarian development Nexus. That's what we try to use.

00:00:55 Claudine
And not to, basically, make this a humanitarian situation, which it really it is, but it's not an emergency one anymore, right? And at the same time... Well, I'm just going to go back to the way to the blast, because that is what you were asking about, so at that time, that was when we were able to leverage that emergency again. We did have some efforts to support small NGO's that we're rebuilding. I do know that we also... what I understand is, we also supported some businesses that were affected, so different kinds of structures... they were affected mostly structurally, right, so supporting them with that. Yeah, but I don't think we had like this huge intervention as a donor, at the time, it was...

00:01:46 Renée
But it's quite interesting that you basically connect these sorts of emergency humanitarian responses to like more of long-term development tactics, let's say.

00:01:59 Claudine
Yes, so not emergency... Emergency is always short term, yeah, and emergency is always a direct response to a situation that just, you know... A sudden shock. But for example, the sudden shock of the economic crisis we do not consider as an emergency situation, because it's not really a humanitarian situation, so an emergency would be a result of a climate issue or a war. Such as the Syria crisis. Also, the Syria crisis has been going on for 11 years, so it's no longer an emergency.

00:02:26 Renée
Yeah, yeah, I can...

00:02:27 Claudine
So this is basically how it's classified, like you... Depending on the phase, depending on the... What caused it. So the way... The blast definitely was considered...

00:02:37 Renée
Yeah, an emergency yeah. Yeah of course. Who, who classifies this, or how is this done?

00:02:43 Claudine
So, of course we have our internal classification. You have classifications from the United Nations as well. It also often depend on their assessment of the situation. For example, the Syria crisis has mainly handled the refugee... Refugee issues from the Syria crisis are mostly handled by UNHCR, of course, so they are the ones who are aware of the numbers, of the reasons people are coming, the number of people who are moving, let's say, from Lebanon to another country. Relocating, resettling. So, they are the ones who do these assessments mostly and we depend on that, but generally saying... so it's not the Dutch embassy saying the Syria crisis is no longer an emergency situation, it's...

00:03:26 Renée
More of a...

00:03:27 Claudine
...the entire humanitarian sector that works on its own. And you see... I don't know if you got to see any of the camps?

00:03:39 Renée
No. We have one to...

00:03:39 Claudine
Yeah, that would be really nice for you to see as an architect actually.

00:03:42 Renée
Yeah, I really wanted to, but I think it was a bit difficult. I had one contact, but they were not allowed to bring anyone in and officially... According to the Dutch Embassy, we kind of... It's like a red zone, so we cannot uh...

00:04:00 Claudine
Yeah, they're considered red zones, yeah.

00:04:01 Renée
Actually, go there. Would have been, I think very...

00:04:05 Claudine
Yeah, we could have maybe organised something like that, but I could show you some photos, yeah? So this is a humanitarian situation, and it's a, it's a really bad one, right? But unfortunately...

00:04:17 Renée
They're located like a bit South of

00:04:20 Claudine
So they're located south, north… Bekaa, which is West. Yeah, so they're located mostly in rural areas. No, you don't have any urban areas, so you don't have them in the cities really, but right outside the cities you find them, so in Tripoli, right outside Tripoli you will see camps, most of them are in Akkar and Bekaa and some in the South.
So this… I don't know if anyone told you about the situation of camps in Lebanon, I don't know if this is relevant to you, is it?

00:05:37 Claudine
So I will tell you very briefly, so you could tell me if you want to hear more about it. So, the idea about so this is, for example, a latrine or a toilet… The idea is that the Lebanese Government never allowed any organisations to have more permanent structures for Syrian refugees. So basically, what happened was just…This brightness… What happens was you have these latrines for example, these are relatively new. Over the past 11 or 12 years these have been changed so many times because NGO's are always testing what is the best, what system is best? For example, the system of releasing grey water from the tent.
They also keep testing what's best, and for example, sometimes you have the water just staying there and they keep trying to change it or dislodging the toilet stuff. So this is basically sorry…

00:06:33 Els
There is a lot of cholera at the moment, is there?

00:06:38 Claudine
Yes. So, they're usually like really weak structures. They're just wood, and they're covered with… sorry. These are my old colleagues. OK, so they're wood and covered with this material. I'm not sure what it's called in English.
We call it 'shadr' in Arabic, and every winter these get disrupted. And they're rebuilt. They're supported again by…

00:07:07 Claudine
No. So you have some of these camps that are next to… next to rivers for example, and the river floods every year.
That's in Nahr al-Kalb. We actually had an evaluation for that camp, the services… And basically, what they tried to do was… So, this is the tent, and what they tried to do was put concrete blocks at the bottom, just so that the water wouldn't come in when it floods, and they didn't let them do that, the army came and removed them. So, they are not allowed to have anything close to a semi permanent structure even. They're only allowed to have the structure with cement on the floor, wood going upwards, and then it's covered with the plastic sheets, and then obviously you can add any wood you want internally to… To hold the snow, for example, better.

00:08:09 Claudine
Exactly, so this is the situation for for Syrian refugees and the Palestinian refugees, for example, do have camps where they were given small geographic areas that they could live in, but the idea was that they could not scope out. So what did they do? They went upwards.

So now you have buildings that are randomly built on top, like floors that are randomly built on top of each other, so this family has two sons. The son gets married, needs a house, he builds on top, the other son builds on top and you see buildings that are in a really bad situation.

00:08:46 Claudine
Yeah, and in both kinds of camps you don't have proper sewage systems. They're not linked to the the general sewage systems of the city or the town that they're in. So, you always have the problem of hygiene issues. Sewage flooding in these areas. Disease spreading. Electric issues. Everything that has to do with electricity is always on the outside. So in the Palestinian camp for example, I can also show you that you basically have… Something like this… And when it rains, it's a disaster. So, this is a street in a Palestinian camp. This the… It's that tight. And then these are the electric cables. And this is just a small example. Here you have streets that are so much worse.

00:09:41 Claudine
So, these are permanent

structures, right? Because they've given this land for Palestinian camps. So this land is for Palestinian camp now. However, you cannot expand, you can only go upwards.

00:09:55 Claudine
So, this is making all the structures weaker and it's basically...

00:09:58 Renée
And they put these bars in.

00:10:00 Claudine
...Extremely dangerous and then you have all of these and then no one can fix them because you don't know what's being used and what's not. And no one's responsible for this anyway. So this is basically the situation. This is inside their homes, the walls... Black mould, lots of issues basically so... Just to give you an overview of how... when we're talking about the humanitarian situation, how Syrians and Palestinians live in Lebanon. If it's relevant.

00:10:27 Renée
Yeah, for sure, yeah. And also, if it's not relevant, I mean it's very good to see this and to learn about this, I didn't think... Yeah, I didn't really have a clear image of it. I don't know really what my image was but I'm a bit shocked I must say.

00:10:48 Claudine
It is shocking and it's really shocking when you see it first hand. That's... if you had more time I would have taken you.

00:10:56 Renée
You're not going tomorrow morning by any chance?

00:11:02 Claudine
No, I mean definitely you... don't do it, but you can pass in camps. You can just walk in. Do not do it whatsoever, those are red zones, because you know, it's it's easy for you to just walk in and walk around, but they'll realise that you're someone else and you never know where you are and who is around with you, or what risk you might put yourself in... So, for me because I'm Lebanese, It could be a bit easier so I I have gone into so many... Passing camps on my own. It was...

00:11:31 Renée
And you speak the language, which makes it different, yeah?

00:11:34 Claudine
And I know where I am and, you know, I know people inside. So if I need someone I can contact them. I usually go for work. Yeah, not with the embassy. That was before...

00:11:42 Els
But in Beka Valley it will be freezing now, won't it?

00:11:46 Claudine
Yeah, and this is the problem. So in these tents you can imagine that it's so cold, and then there's so much snow in this area. First of all, most of these tents break because of the the weight of the snow. The wood is not enough. And then you have, obviously, if the tent doesn't break, how do these people get warm? It's very difficult. It gets really cold up there.

00:12:06 Renée
Yeah, you don't have like the thermal mass of like concrete. Which should have lower... or keeps this temperature stable.

00:12:15 Els
Yeah, but also the snow on these fragile constructions? Can it... I don't know how much snow there will be falling.

00:12:23 Claudine
A lot in the 'Bekaa and that's why you have some families and some companies that completely close down in the winter and move to Akkar, for example, to the lower areas, the areas by the seaside basically.

00:12:36 Renée
What is the role of the embassy in all of this?

00:12:39 Claudine
So as the embassy we, we work on shelter, we do support UNHCR and the UN network, now we're going to work on it more. Actually, previously we weren't working on it that much because it's very little shelter and wash. So you have Shelter, is one kind of intervention, which is for housing. It can be for either informal tented settlements or collective housing units which are just apartments that people rent out, or a whole building that's all refugees inside, and they rent. Because sometimes they're not in a good condition, so you have to rehabilitate them as well. It can be for just like a refugee household that has rented an apartment on their own, but the apartment is in a really bad situation, so that's kind of the Shelter intervention that's usually done in Lebanon and then you have Wash: water, sanitation, and hygiene. Which is in the Syrian camps. It has to do with the latrines that are outside as you can see, they're always outside the tent and even in the winter that's a problem. And for women that poses a problem because sometimes they feel like they may be harassed or uncomfortable to go in and out.

00:13:43 Renée
Yeah, I've heard that this is one of the biggest problems in refugee camps all over? The harassment of women and how unsafe it is that they have to like, at night, leave the tent to go to the toilet that they don't do this anymore.

00:13:59 Claudine
Many of them will not do that,

yeah, or even for children, same thing. And same thing with collective housing because often collective housing has shared toilets. So they also may not feel comfortable. It depends who they're sharing it with. It depends how many people share the toilet. So I once visited the whole building that had one toilet on the roof. And you'd basically have to go to the roof every time you need to use it. And the lady was so scared to send her children. So, it's yeah, so Wash is basically, it has to do with the bathrooms. It has to do with linking them to clean water. Water sources or for cleaning, but also for drinking and drinking… In Lebanon we don't have like you know, tap water that you can drink or water sources that come to you directly. It's usually bottled water or we teach them how to basically clean, if necessary, to clean the water that they get for cleaning the house, how to filter it, more or less. Yeah, so, and we teach kids how to wash their hands and blah blah blah. So we are going to increase our intervention on that now as the Dutch Embassy. As I told you we are not a donor that works a lot in humanitarian. We try to work on development more, but when we do work on humanitarian, we try to make that link.
Now with the situation in Lebanon. Unfortunately, it has turned. We went from most donors working on development up till 2019 to donors, slowly

changing that again, we're going back to humanitarian because of the situation, the poverty, people's inability to maintain their homes, people who got evicted from their homes, who now live in very dangerous situations.
So that's why all of us are now starting to think of how we can basically do that shift, and we are doing it through a really big programme that we have that's called Prospects. So we are now in the top five donors to Lebanon, which is really lovely and Prospects is our biggest programme to Lebanon and it works on education, employment and protection. So as you can see, we've linked them, and the protection is the part that has humanitarian. So protection in terms of giving people their basic rights but also protection of women from gender based violence. And we have recently integrated child protection as well.

00:16:18 Claudine
That's just more or less what we're doing.

00:17:04 Claudine
No, you cannot have that in a camp. So basically, if you were to do something like that, it would have to be on another land. So what is a camp? A camp is: I own the land.
And I decided that I want to speak with the municipality and agree that I will rent this land out to refugees. Yeah, because basically the person gets paid for it, yeah? So, you have specific lands that are now categorised as this is the refugee camp, the only thing you can do is a non permanent structure. However, you have the structures of collective sites, now collective sites have always been buildings that already exist. And just, you know someone who wasn't able to sell apartments or it's just really old that they can use it or whatever, so they end up taking that. A person also again, rents it out. Well, we never had anything planned in Lebanon. And I think because it's illegal, so you cannot come and be like, well, I am going to build this very nice structure that is very systematic. You know, houses have a very specific shape.

Everyone has the same kind of housing, proper bathrooms, blah blah just for refugees that is illegal. We cannot do that here.

00:18:20 Claudine
I think the Ministry of Interior, and municipalities that's called the Ministry of Interior Municipalities. So basically that's the one that has the internal security forces. All the municipalities in their control, and they're usually the ones who make these kinds of decisions. I think though, this is also at a higher level. I mean they control the situation more, but this kind of decision is made maybe at, you know, the whole government level together or even Parliament. Because these are, it's very complicated because we have a very complicated relationship with Syria and Lebanon. I don't know if you know about it, yes, so you know, I'll see someone who's Lebanese, telling me that the Syrian army raped his children, for example. Well, how do you expect this person to come and be like: yeah, well I am going to rescue them now and give them safe space in my country when they came and fought with me in my own country. So we have a very complicated relationship. That's really sad.

00:19:24 Claudine
They just left in the 90s there. I mean, I remember seeing them myself so. You know, yeah, you have the generation that's now the youth basically who knows about it and then everyone else who knows them even better and who probably had incidents with them.

00:19:46 Claudine
Exactly. So, there's this whole like resistance to really being able to give that proper aid to them that you know, that would at least give them a bit of a decent life in Lebanon. And that's really what we've done. And so far it's really unbelievable that, you know, there hasn't been any kind of solution, not even a housing solution. I mean, that's the most basic thing. Just give them proper housing. That doesn't mean they're going to own the house. You're just giving them somewhere comfortable to stay, yeah.

00:20:18 Claudine
Only in three sectors, sanitation, which means waste… sewage treatment facilities. We're working with the textile upcycle thing, I want to talk to you about, the textile upcycling facility so they have also named it as a sanitation facility so that they can actually get Syrian refugees to work, which is amazing. So, anything that you can label as sanitation, basically. Because we don't have… So, to us it's either new clothing or second hand, but then we don't have anything called upcycled or you know, reuse in a different way, we repurpose.
So, they took advantage of that, for example. So that's one sector of sanitation. Another sector is agriculture, and that's why you see many of them living in Akkar and in the Bekaa, because it's really easy for them to be able to work there.
And do you have what was the last one? Construction. So these are the only three sectors they're legally allowed to work in. However, the Lebanese economy is maybe about 50% informal. A huge part of our economy is informal, so many of them work in the informal economy. So, for example, if you were to go to a wedding, and it's like in a big resort or a restaurant or whatever, and there's only waitresses. Most of these waiters will be Syrian. So, you see that they're not working in their own sector, but this is kind of informal employment, because, OK, maybe the the venue is formal, but the person, service provider is a non-formal service provider who gets them and comes with them.
So yeah. So you see that a lot and we also work on that. So we try to, as much as possible, work on formal employment because we see this as a means for decent working conditions.
However, we cannot deny that there are so many situations where someone can make a living from working in the informal sector rather than doing nothing whatsoever, right? So we also support that, so we also try to create employment in different sectors where we can, and we try to study the market first and see where it's possible. Our partners of course then.

00:22:33 Renée
Yeah, I feel like this is… I would say one of the first steps to sort of have this integration, let's say and and… Yeah, I wouldn't say it's like a short-term solution, but it's it's definitely, I think, very important. We have the same issue now in the Netherlands where we have a lot of refugees coming in and and… Well, a lot? - compared to here, probably not, and it's a difficult situation because I feel like a lot of people are a bit scared and intimidated, let's say, so they're quite a lot of people that are opposed, and for example, refugees are not allowed to work. And then there's not that much informal work in The Netherlands. And, while at the same moment we have a lot of jobs available at the moment, so it's a bit weird situation because we're going into probably a crisis a little bit as well, but there are a lot of jobs available, and I feel like… You know to… Yeah, to give someone placement and also connect somebody to a country and then, you know, also create sort of a moral connection with the country, and you know, people that already live there, and refugees I feel like working or having sort of a daily purpose is very important. And yeah, it's not possible due to the law.

00:24:11 Claudine
Yeah, unless you're a legal migrant. But if you're, you're yeah… We actually have… Our ambassador had an interview about that recently that should be published soon, about irregular migration and the consequences. Because people think that… People risk their lives on boats, yeah? Thinking that they're going to go live their best life and eventually find themselves stuck in a refugee camp and they don't understand the consequences of that, they think that, you know, they're not in Lebanon anymore, so all their problems are resolved. But actually here at least, they may be able to find employment or something, and a way to build their skills and a way to slowly get out and just, you know, put their lives out of risk.

00:24:54 Els
Yeah, of course we have the double standard now in the in the Netherlands because of Ukraine people coming in and they are allowed to work and things are smoothed out quite quickly for them. So now the big question is why Ukraine people... why is it possible to do it for them and not for others.

00:25:16 CLaudine
That's a good question.

00:25:17 Els
Yeah, it's a very good question.

00:25:18 Renée
I feel like a lot of people answer it in terms of culture, that their culture is a bit closer to ours. I don't think I agree with that, and it's also just like, it's it's... I think it's more visible, let's say, or it's just... Really, as simple as that their country is closer so...

00:25:42 Els
Yeah, and it was a sudden shock and it's.. the sudden shock makes people like, OK come here, we help you. And then it's not a prolonged situation. Not yet yes. And then we had these... All these pictures of people trying to get their pets along with them. So, I thought: Ohh, let's help them. Let's help the pets... And it's a different situation. But the question is on the table why them and why not everybody else from outside Europe.

00:26:16 Claudine
Yeah, yeah, I mean, you know hosting people is one thing, but then giving them all the opportunities that you're not giving others is a completely other thing.

00:26:26 Els
Exactly, exactly. And there's a kind of grey area in between.
00:26:28 Renée
Yeah yeah but it circles back to to my research in terms of... You sort of have this momentum and everything sort of moves easier while you're still in the emergency situation. And then afterwards, how do you manage this like this is so much harder to make a change or to get people to see the importance of it. Yeah, for example, with the blast in Beirut you also if you look at it on a global perspective, the fact that there is now a war in Ukraine, it shifts a lot of the humanitarian efforts to Ukraine, so therefore Beirut is no priority anymore.

00:27:18 Claudine
Yeah, unfortunately this is always the... The system with humanitarian funding and the end of the day, you're limited, right? Each country has a certain amount of money and they want to use it in the best way that they can. And you never know what kind of surprise will come up and when you need to shift your funding.
I just have a question so, so far what like if you were to assess this

aid gap that you're talking about. What would you say are the main reasons for Lebanon?

00:27:49 Renée
For Lebanon to be in an aid gap, yeah, well I think it's a a bit of a collapse of multiple systems. So how the theory describes this is that you have an aid gap, so you still have to make the transition to long term development and at the moment there is like... So, for example in you have here in Beirut, of course the story of the Phoenix that's saying how resilient Beirut is, and I think the opposite actually might be true that you sort of now see an extra spiral down, and this extra spiral down... You see the collapse of the financial system. The brain drain. So, these, the... Especially brain drain, I think this is, for like, because you're sort of losing the future generation, let's say.

00:28:53 Claudine
Yeah, this is extremely important.

00:29:03 Renée
Yeah, yeah for long term development this is, this is crucial, so the brain drain...so everybody just leaving that has the means to leave. An economic system, and I feel like this sort of effects also... In terms of you know, physical care, let's say, because I think slowly you might also lose your best doctors or your best lawyers.

00:29:25 Claudine

Oh, we are losing them. My doctorates usually are here for two weeks and outside for two. Yeah, God knows when they're just gonna leave.

00:29:37 Renée
Yeah, yeah, exactly so. It's sort of slowly effects all. It trickles down, so it's like this extra spiral down and what I've heard so far, there are few people that are like; yeah, you know the story of the Phoenix, and Beirut is rising again, but then at the moment I also hear a lot of people that it's just a completely exhausted system, and mentally the blast was a sort of... such a hard blow, let's say.

00:30:03 Claudine
Yeah, and the coronavirus too.

00:30:05 Renée
Yeah, so it was really the build-up let's say. It's insane how much came together. Yeah, so I think this is really something... I feel like there is, and some literature says this as well, but what I observe on the ground is that you have this second spiral down.

00:30:35 Claudine
So, I'm going to break it down for you as development and how we do it, and how it's done in general. So of course the most important kind of development, and the only way to develop a country effectively is to work with the government, right? It's the macro level kind of development

where you are able to set effective systems. And something interesting to read about – Mercy Corps has something called their market systems approach, which is really nice, and we work with Mercy Corps and we tried to implement this in Lebanon, but it is so difficult, and it talks about how to strengthen the different systems that affect a certain thing that we're trying to support. So, for example, for us to support entrepreneurs, how to strengthen this entrepreneurial ecosystem? How to strengthen the export systems that we have, because you know, now we talk a lot about generating income from abroad.

00:31:28 Claudine
Just think about the banking system. How can you work without a financial property? So obviously these are very obvious problems, and this is why in Lebanon whoever tells you they're working on development is lying: you cannot work on development in this situation and for us, as the Dutch Embassy, we do not get direct financing to the government so long as they do not adopt the reforms that are requested by the IMF. We will not give direct funding to the government because we give it based on conditions. We don't give it just, you know, take it of course and then...

00:32:04 Claudine
So that's the macro level, and really no one's that able to work on the macro level. Now we do have - sorry my cat's fur has come with me today, it seems like.
Yeah, so we worked a bit on the macro level with some topics. For example education. I oversee education at the embassy, and I mentioned the coronavirus, because for last year for example, the last school year, students got about 50 days of school only, 45 - 50. Something like that. Imagine out of the entire - which is, I think it's about 120 days the entire school year, yeah, so they barely got half the school year. And it was mainly due to these lockdowns, and everything related to COVID and because going back to the macro level as a country we don't have the right infrastructure to teach remotely. And especially at public schools, private schools are different. You know you can always find a way, but because people usually have money. And again, not all private schools, some private schools are not because people are rich... It's just because private school is a trend in Lebanon and you have so many private schools, probably I think more than public. So, so only some private schools were able to integrate these systems. So, we work with the Ministry of Education, for example through

UNICEF to improve the systems and the structures and whatnot. So that's the kind of work that we could do, and what is it? It's not giving the ministry money directly. They do support the ministry. So, we give UNICEF and they do somewhat support the ministry. But it's, it's always based on specific, not conditions that we would have, specific conditions that UNICEF have would have, and specific deliverables and what they've done with them is really for them to develop a good five-year plan to leverage more financing in a way that's more structured. They've become more transparent.
The World Bank has supported them with setting a system, and UNICEF. With setting up a data system, so now we can get more data from them. In the beginning we have the challenge of transparency. Now it's getting better, so you have some agencies and usually the UN agencies that can work a bit with the government. But to tell you that this has a long-term impact we cannot confirm, but education was an emergency. And that's why it's an exceptional case where they can directly support the government like that, right? But we can't support them with everything you know, right? So there are so many things that... so education is one thing. But then you have, you know, other topics and things that this government would do that we do not support. So sometimes we just we decide

based on a certain situation that OK, we might, you know, tweak the rules a bit, but again we don't give the direct financing. And if it's one of our partners and it's, it's limited, let's say.
Now, that was the macro level, but then you have the meso and the micro levels, right? So let's say the micro levels of community and the meso level is all the businesses and institutions that work in this country. Now if you were to work at the meso level in development, let's say, as we were talking, you could have more impact. However, is this impact sustainable if you don't have the macro level and this is what we're really always trying to measure, and sustainability is the hardest thing to measure, right? However, it is clear that in many cases it is not sustainable. But we still do it because it's the only way you know if you support 100 people and then twenty of them figured something out and we're capable of securing their livelihoods, then you say you at least did something right.

00:35:47 Claudine
It's better than doing nothing at all. But at the end of the day, this support that we're giving... And if we go to the micro level. Which is upskilling youth and giving them the skills they need to join the labour market. Take them into the mass or give them a job.

But is this job sustainable? Will this business last in the current economic situation?

00:36:12 Claudine
Yeah, it's all effective. So basically, what I'm trying to say is this macro level affects everything under it, right? However, we work at the levels under because we cannot work at the macro level, we do not have a government that allows us to work with them at this level, but to tell you that, you know, that that gap you're talking about is being addressed. It's almost impossible to address. Because of the situation that we have at hand, that's one reason. Another reason... In Lebanon, I don't know if it's the same for other countries - actually, I'm very curious to know, but all our governing framework, governance frameworks are all the frameworks that we use to kind of steer the different sectors that we work in, in humanitarian and development. They're so fragmented. So, we have the Lebanon crisis response button. We have the emergency response button, we have the CRF. Blah blah blah blah blah. You have so many different ones, you have Lebanon humanitarian NGO firm, Lebanon Humanitarian Development Forum, Lebanon

Humanitarian Forum, like what? So, each one is so split up. It's so difficult to bring them all together and then we have the UN agencies.

00:37:24 Claudine
We support them a lot. However, that doesn't mean we approve of everything they do 100%. We always try to influence them and change some things. But you know these are huge agencies that are very political. And global. And you can't come and be like... Well in Lebanon this doesn't work. We need to change the way you do it, because sometimes it's just the system in the entire UN, so this makes it a bit more difficult for us.

00:38:00 Claudine
And that's why now we're working on localization, trying to support more local entities in the country and strengthening them. But yeah, this fragmentation means that you have so much aid coming in, and it's not well coordinated. Everyone's trying to coordinate it and using these fancy names to develop new frameworks. I don't know what. And you go into meetings, and you feel like people

don't even know what they're talking about. Yeah, because everyone is so confused. No one understands what's going on. We have been into meetings, and we all agree, like OK, sometimes I come out and I've tried to say to my boss like I didn't understand what's happening, but then she says it to me, I'm like OK, it's not just me. It's too much and unfortunately this is the reason why you can't really bridge that gap. It's because of that ineffective coordination and that fragmentation.

00:38:49 Claudine
But also, you have something... So, the UN agencies oversee sectors. Let's say the Wash sector UNICEF is one of the main people who know... well I think UNICEF and UNHCR... Education, you have UNICEF, you have UNESCO. But then you see that you know, I don't know. I'm always doing education or UNICEF is doing employment. So, they come with a mandate. UNICEF is for children, education and maybe a couple of other things, but then eventually they end up doing support to businesses. Because they're young entrepreneurs, so, so it kind of deviates off what they're initially here for, and then you see these duplications between them and at the same time, their inability to coordinate.

00:39:39 Claudine
They cannot coordinate because it's highly political for them and each one of them has a different way of working. Although they're all UN agencies. But then these are the umbrella that overseas every sector that we have.

00:40:03 Claudine
At the end of the day, they want to be the bigger agency and more money and more donors, yeah.

the first place. He first worked at Oxfam and now BHP Foundation and he used open research governance and then the tactic is radical transparency, and so these two together I'm trying to implement to see if you can like have this decentralisation that's like slowly grows, let's say, and for example Yassar was saying, you know a a key thing would be to have this problem that you want to solve and then link it to the market to see… to sort of, you know get this… Yeah, very basic approach. Let's say if there's money to be made, then you can make this step, let's say to sort of link these two. So, you were saying like, for example like you rent land from the church. The Church like owns a lot of land here and then you have like the, let's say the humanitarian goal of fixing some of the electricity problems. So, this is your goal. You rent land, you get some money to invest in and build like a solar field and then you connect it to the governmental system. So, you're saying like you start off with this and then you do this for all these villages and then at some point you connect these so that they sort of grow into a bigger scale, let's say, so this was his approach a bit, but I'm curious what your perspective would be on an approach like this, or… If you see it working.

00:42:44 Claudine
Completely, complete decentralization… Well… Yeah,

I mean in Lebanon we have the problem of decentralization, it's a huge problem that we think is… Even if you look at, you know, Lebanon as a whole. You have this tiny dot that's Beirut, even geographically, everything is centralised here. All businesses are here, all big schools, universities, everything is here. You have very little things and everything across the rest of the country is very probably nothing next to what's geographically inside Beirut. And that's one thing. But also decentralising decision making, decentralising government…
So, I agree with this approach. I mean. Well, one thing we always overlook is the local government. So, if you want to decentralise in Lebanon, a good way is to strengthen local government and he mentioned the example of land of churches, but there are lands of municipalities. Municipalities have resources that they don't know how to use, and this is one way to decentralise is to start going to local governments. And trying to work with them on solutions within their communities.
And then you could probably implement something like what you're saying. So, in the end of the day if you were to do that… If you were exempt from the the idea that you were just talking about, most approval you need is from the local government and the community itself, right? If you want to go into decentralisation.

And that's why a big part of decentralisation is how to engage these local governments, these municipalities, they can also be watcher establishments for example. We have one watcher establishment per area. If you're doing something with water, how to engage them.
But also, how to engage this community because in Lebanon we also have very specific mindsets. We're very weird. I don't know how we turned out to be this way, but anyway. Yeah, so I think a big part of it is also talking to the communities and understanding what makes sense for them. Will they make use of this? Will they contribute in any way?
You know what kind of resources do you have in terms of human resources? And how can you use these human resources and engage them in what you're doing, so that they see the value of it so that they feel ownership and they want to maintain it?

00:45:08 Renée
Yeah, yeah, so you have this sort of collective responsibility. Yeah, this is crucial, I would say.

00:45:11 Claudine
Yeah, and like the simplest example, is that so many donors came into Lebanon and built these… Numerous sewage treatment facilities across the entire country and decentralise the system basically and try to kind of have sewage facilities

for smaller areas, sewage treatment facilities… And at the end of the day, none of them were used, none of them were maintained. Because every time someone would come in to do this intervention, they would see the intervention: I need to build a facility. I will speak to these stakeholders because I need to engage them to build this facility. But what is the long term plan? How do I hold them accountable? How do I engage the community so that they feel accountable, so that they feel this ownership, so that when this with treatment facility is not working, they do something to make it work?

00:45:52 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:45:58 Claudine
Yeah, you know they push the municipality, they push the water establishment. They have a role in it. Maybe they find people within them who have the maintenance skills to go and fix whatever problem is in there. If the municipality cannot afford it right now, so this is the idea, and this is something we keep losing in projects in Lebanon, you see so many donor funded things that were build, but then died out and these are huge investments.

00:46:21 Renée
Yeah yeah yeah it's nice. This is exactually the second let's say, biggest thing I would say

that needs to be tackled: How do you hold the parties that are responsible, how do you hold them accountable, and I feel like especially the government like this one, this is crucial. So, I was thinking about this, OK, how would this work and this I took the I I I didn't mention it yet, but I was about to the BP Foundation example already used radical transparency in order to hold those responsible, accountable. So, a small example of what they did so this is a much smaller scale, was a project in Africa. I can't remember where somewhere in Africa, they were building a couple of schools and there were basically three parties involved. It was Oxfam. Did it actually? Oxfam, they were responsible for the funding. Then you had the community, they were responsible for building, and then you had the municipality, and they were responsible for school supplies and for teachers. What they did is they built this contract up with everybody's responsibility when they needed to be done and they put this contract on a huge wall in the middle of the village. So, everybody in the village just walked by it and knew exactly by which date Oxfam needed to have transferred the money, by which date the school needed to be done and by which date there needed to be, let's say 10 teachers and school supplies. And this works very well because it's like everybody in the whole community knew what was

happening when it was happening and who was responsible. And so it's like it starts on a very small scale, let's say, but I think if you start this tactic on a small scale and especially make it so visible for just everybody to see that everybody walks past it every day, that you can really sort of build this up, and eventually you know have enough weight to actually hold those responsible to hold them accountable, I feel.

00:48:50 Claudine
Yes, and this is always donor funded. Yeah, and just a a weakness of most donors. So I come from the NGO World. This is my first donor job. I am purely a field person. I've worked so much on the field with so many different NGO projects and I've always seen the weakness, NGOs aren't there to stay for long. You know, if they lose their funding and they don't find any other funding, they may need to close offices, layoff staff. Staff are only there because their project-based NGO's cannot do post project accountability which is a big weakness. But it's the natural structure of this system, but who can do that? It's the donor, and this is something donors don't think of that much. So, they think that OK, this is the funding we have it for three years. We want to find a partner we're going to implement. Even if they put all their energy and love and effort and knowledge into this project and build something amazing. Once it's

done, it's done. Can you close it on the system? And we don't ask anymore? You know this is a big weakness of the system. It's that the donors giving the money are not holding these countries and governments and institutions accountable beyond the last day for funding. Basically, yeah, and I think if this is something that could be addressed the way a donor approaches things. Yeah, you could have much better. You could have more sustainable programmes. Yeah you can understand what happened to your programme. The most basic thing at least see what's going on beyond the intervention. So yeah, this is something you don't see I've never seen any donors do this. There's a time now. Some donors will say OK, six months after the intervention will have an evaluation, Umm, right, but then one year later, what's going happen? Two years later, what's going to happen to the country. It's not like they're gone. Not like the NGO. The NGO's gone. Or the project's gone and the staff that were there for it are gone. But we are still here.

long. I feel like the feedback loop needs to be much shorter, like the evaluation and feedback loop. Yeah, interesting.
OK, thanks, some very helpful things. Yeah no, no, definitely yeah I I can explain the idea. I eventually have to come up with a design idea so it's a bit sad, because I have one year only and eventually, I have to have a building because, of course I study architecture and also at some point I have to stop the research. And it so it's now, it's overlapping a little bit, but I cannot continue to research, because eventually it's also nice for me to like graduate you know.

00:52:02 Claudine
Yeah, of course.

00:52:05 Renée
See what my money is worth, let's say. So, I have to also like test the design ideas now and I'm not sure if it will work but like with gathering all the information that I have so far, this is now what I've come up with. And so basically, I can make like a little drawing. Yeah, I did some sketches, but I don't have like all my materials here because I couldn't bring it, so it's like still very basic. So, the idea now is that you have Armenia Street right in Miguel, and then at some point you have. Here you have this gas station that is still... The destructed one. And then at some point. So, this is north-south, East, West, so here is the port. You have a

block like this. There's a huge tower over here in the middle, and then there's a smaller one over here and there's plots over here. This plot, it's a corner plot and there's a small house over here and which is completely destroyed and it's now like walled off. It used to be parking; I think. So, there's like concrete, so this is the plot I chose now to like implement the idea. The idea is that you build sort of this public centre so let's say it's a huge Dome and within this Dome, it's like, it's It needs to be completely approachable for everyone, so it needs to have like. I would say opposite of what the downstairs looks like here. So, if you walk towards this building, it's like, am I allowed to go in?

And you really need something that is super approachable for just everybody. That's also lives in the neighbourhood. Also, for example, refugees or homeless people, for everyone to walk in. And then connected to this dome, you have like all these offices of different parties involved, different stakeholders and like this can be on like sort of a flexible base, let's say so you have, you know I want to structuralize, to be like where you can build these offices in or like take them out. You know the, it needs to be like the sort of dismantle and like flexible construction. Within these stakeholders or within these boxes you put different stakeholders. So, for example

you have an office of the Arab Architecture Centre to really connect to, what is the history of Beirut? What is the mentality? You have, for example, a public works, for an interdisciplinary architecture, urbanism firm that we're already here before the blast, so they know a lot of the history, then you have some NGO's that were, you know, they started after the blast. Then you have the UN. Maybe even a box for the municipality, and if this stays empty, this this is also you know a message for everyone that walks in. And then within this dome, you want, uh, very clear information, so you want everybody to see what is going on. Also keep track of the developments and so basically, and also for example, offers for mental health. Let's say, because I can see that this is huge part of you know rehabilitation, yeah. And so basically the idea is that you can walk in, and somebody can tell you OK, this is where you need to go, or that this two come work together on something, or that somebody and some stakeholder says OK, I want to do this and then it doesn't happen, the other can say like hey? What's going on? Because you literally make each other's neighbours, so you feel much more responsibility. So, you have direct lines you have more responsibility and like the whole, you can connect better to the neighbourhood and then also developing through different phases. These offices change.

Other stakeholders come in so you have like for example, I can imagine that you have a project and then the NGO is gone, but you have these different parties that can follow up on how it is developing, how it is used. Yeah, then also can connect clearer to the community. So, this is now sort of the idea, which is, I would say probably quite idealistic, but yeah. I have to design a building eventually so this is now I would say the best translation of the research that I can do so far. But yeah, I'm curious what you think?

00:57:12 Claudine
So, you want to do something around the area of the Beirut blast and the initial function of it has to do with the Beirut blast as well.

00:57:20 Renée
Yeah, yeah.

00:57:21 Claudine
Why did you choose the Beirut blast.

00:57:25 Renée
Well, basically because it's part personal fascination. I've been very fascinated with the country and the city due to it so many different factors going on different, yeah things and It's about on the timeline of this aid gap, so it's been two years since the blast and for example, I yeah, I don't want to focus on these first phases. I feel like there's so many parties involved already and also,

it's not the time I would say to start thinking OK. How can we for example, to put it a bit bluntly, use this as a chance to you know, get some things to change for a more sustainable city, so this is not the part that my research focusedmon, but it's really the phase after, so the phase like this. Where it's yeah, it's been two years, you know there's not that much attention on it, especially from the Netherlands on, let's say from the perspective of the Netherlands, you don't hear anything about Beirut anymore.

00:58:52 Claudine
about the blast or Beirut in general?

00:58:55 Renée
Both. OK, yeah.

00:58:59 Claudine
I mean, the blast happened. The damage of the blast, that was physical on structures, has mostly been addressed, a big part of it was addressed not fully, but a big part of it, Mar Michael is up and functioning again. People are living in their homes. The more expensive buildings are still taking a bit more time to be fixed, the ones that you see on the port side but there's they're being fixed, so most of the heritage buildings have been fixed now.

00:59:22 Renée
Yeah, there's still quite a few that's, you know. But the yeah, this is one of those examples

00:59:29 Claudine
So, for example, we focus we do not focus on heritage at all or culture at all, like even when I told you humanitarian, at least we have some things that are humanitarian and we're increasing. But culture and heritage are completely of our list and not even on our new ministers. No, because you're talking about development. So the way to blast is a humanitarian situation. To me it's not linked to development. The only part that was linked to development was maybe the impact it had on businesses and other institutions in that area.
But if I were to look at Lebanon from humanitarian to development.. I like the structure. It's pretty cool. I like the idea because you can change it, that's what's nice. It's like you can always bring in something new. Depending on the changes in the context, depending on what's going on.
Now, the way I would see it is that Lebanon is a country with so many NGO's and so many development agencies and similar entities and again super fragmented, you know, not link to each other. People don't understand what NGO's are, what they're doing here, how they get money.

01:00:39 Claudine
So sometimes I would imagine something like this could bring in these different agencies that really work on development and not specifically about. I don't want to change your idea, but this is how we suggest.

01:01:36 Claudine
Yeah, maybe I'm not sure. Different cultures, different people thinking. I don't think the context of Africa is not Lebanon, for example. Lebanese people like to have fun. They're not serious, they just want, as you can see, like in a crisis, and the amount of people that are

so hyped up and people are drunk and happy and dancing. They always want something to entertain them. I'm not sure, if other cultures are like that. No, yeah. So, to kind of engage like these people in something like this, you need to give them a reason to come so we're not used to public space. We have no idea what public space is. We have zero public services. Only a few public hospitals and schools, but that's it. No one knows what it means to share a space with someone or to walk into a space and just explore it you. So, what I would suggest is think of how you're going to attract these people, maybe some activities maybe? This is me coming from the employment and entrepreneurship and business support perspective.

01:02:43 Claudine
Or maybe giving people an opportunity to showcase products to showcase what they produce whether it's handmade, whether it's food, whether it's mass production of I don't know, some kind of chemical or cosmetic products or whatever, but this is something we miss out on in Lebanon. Marketing is not something you get to do often. NGO's support a lot of businesses, so it could be a space that brings businesses, NGO's how NGO's support them. These

businesses can can come in and out, change every while they have like a little market where you can buy products where you can get educated about what kind of services NGO's give. What is the entrepreneurship system in Lebanon, for example. As an entrepreneur, what can you benefit from? So that's the way I see it. If I'm looking at it from a development perspective and not humanitarian. And that's where you go from humanitarian to development. Yeah, because Lebanese people were not in a humanitarian situation but now are because they're saying about 80% of the population is below the poverty line?
They say it's something like, it was 55 or 80. These are two different numbers. Oh God OK, I'm off today with my numbers.

01:03:56 Claudine
But a huge portion of the population was pushed below the poverty line and they're not looking for humanitarian aid, they're looking for development to get back on their feet and giving that kind of space is really important where you can see what options you have. Where anyone can come and showcase. Where any NGO that with a new programme can come and showcase. Where they can do outreach, that's also always difficult. They can

give out information about
their programmes and people
can choose to enrol. So, if you
were to link like the, you want
to put something from NGO's,
Local government can also be
included., and what you're saying
even if it's empty? I love that
idea, and when they decide not to
come then it's a symbol, yeah, I
really like that.
And then you have the producers,
whether they're businesses or
they their self-employed, whether
they're non formal producers or
whatever, with people who are
actually doing, giving a product or
a service that generates income
that develops the economy, that
links us to global markets, right?
And in the end, that's it's such
a nice space to bring donors in
to bring anyone who's visiting to
come and see and understand
and get an idea of what is
available. So this is, this is what
I would focus on the Beirut blast
is… it has past. And we've learned
a lot from it, and it put us through
a lot of pain and everything.
But we, as Lebanese, we're not
resilient and we hate that word
now By the way, right? Like we
don't linger because in the end of
the day, if we're going to linger on
something, we are the ones that
are more at loss.
Of course, I'm not talking about
the families of the victims. They
have a completely different
situation. If you lost a person
during this… I don't even know
how they feel to be honest, but
I'm talking about the majority

that was affected but had to
get out of this. Right now this is
not relevant to them they don't
want a reminder about it. They
don't want to see it. If you tell
me there's something about the
Beirut blast, I don't want to be
there. There's a trauma for me.

01:06:03 Claudine
This brings up my trauma again,
right? Although I wasn't even
there. I just saw it in videos and
I'm traumatised.

01:06:12 Claudine
I saw my brother come and shop
the next day because he was
in the house, and he literally
said the building moved to one
Direction and then went into the
other and he was so lucky he had
the windows open. But just seeing
him that way, it was unbelievable.
So I don't want anything to remind
me of that and If you want to talk
about the culture and the heritage
of Beirut, you can also do it in
that kind of space, right?

01:06:34 Claudine
So, you can mix it in but not from
the Beirut blast perspective.

No no.

01:06:38 Claudine
From the perspective of, you
know what the rich history, the
beauty of it, yeah. I don't know,
what can Beirut look like if we
took better care of it? How it can
look like this European town or
city, right?

01:07:57 Claudine
Aaah really? Did you speak to
Salim himself? He is adorable!

01:08:15 Claudine
Yeah, I do. Yes, actually I have a
plan to do something similar, but
he's the most designer I've seen
that has done something quite
similar to what I would like to do
because it's very elegant, very
simple. It's amazing.

01:08:59 Claudine
Modernised embroidery, which
is really important right now.
So you have a lot of artisanal,
beautiful items in them, and a
lot of them are embroidered, but
our embroidery is still very old
school. So if you were to get one
of these items, you're not going to
wear it, and what you really need
to do is kind of tailor it to new
tastes and this is what he's doing,
which is really nice.

just left his shop before COVID started because of revolution and everything didn't work. Went back to the South won a price, price was in the bank, so the money was gone so actually, he was left with nothing but for his family and all the artitions of there in South. And he started a web shop. And with this web shop, of course all the Lebanese, due to the brain drain, leaving Lebanon, could get in touch with the tradition of Lebanon in a modernised way, in a different world. So in the end he is really quite successful in one hand, reaching out to Lebanese outside Lebanon, at the other hand, bringing in foreign money, and connecting this southern part of kind of way back traditional way of working, which is not really on vogue anymore and getting it into a modernised world and getting it attractive again, and I was in the shop yesterday and a young Lady such as yourself came in, quite a modern lady and her goods were prepared because they work on pre-order and she was really like happy to have it, just in time before Christmas.
And that was amazing. It it kind of blew my mind like he was on the bottom of my list of designers to to see here to visit from my point of view. But then my point of view suddenly shifted like; wait Oh. This is the Lebanese point of view, and this is interesting, and this is what I came for to see that and see that this perspective and to see that

optimistic approach and the way this global modernization of the world and global connecting of the world works on a scale like this and it really gave me a really good feeling. So that's maybe a little bit, Kind of a crossing point between what you were saying (Claudine) about festivities and and not the public area being important but the family things that the festivities of the Lebanese people and where you are telling (Renée) about and this accessible area and what to show there and what to connect there? Because I can imagine that this could work. This is a kind of educational thing you could do as creative mind and Saleem Azam had this creative mind to do this, but you could bring in other creators just to kind of be inspired by this example so and but you have to have support as a creative person like Ahmed we saw yesterday, who was on his own was doing beautiful things on a crossover of art and design clothing also from the graphic and interior perspective, but he's on his own. He's lost, and his mental health is not too good. So yeah, interesting...

01:13:10 Claudine
Yeah, You have so many of those. yeah, I think this kind of space can give that motivation that people need when you see what other people are doing. And unfortunately, we only see it at specific events and these specific events only target specific people,

yeah? They are always the NGOs, the donors, the agencies that work on this? But it's never the general public. The general public has no idea what we do in terms of development.

01:13:39 Renée
Yeah, well, I think this is, you know, crucial because in the end it's about them.

01:13:44 Claudine
exactly, and there are so many opportunities for them, and they never know about them because they don't know that these exist. They don't know that there are entities that do this, and so many of them have ideas and the Lebanese are entrepreneurial by nature.

01:13:57 Renée
Yeah, I noticed that.

01:14:02 Claudine
They don't know what they can do. They never have the right support, so it could be a good way to have that kind of public space where that pushes people that gives them that motivation that's ongoing and maybe every month or every 2-3 weeks. There's a different thing. There's a different thing that's happening, instead of one event per year or two events per year that only target the same people and every time you go to another event by another entity. It's the same people again and again and again so...

01:14:30 Renée
You don't get out with this.

01:14:31 Claudine
So I need to cut this short, right here, because I have a deadline at 12 to try to reach it, yeah?

01:14:35 Renée
Oh Yeah, of course! Can I maybe, very quickly take a photo of you and this beautiful view?

01:14:44 Claudine
Yeah, a photo of us, of course!

01:14:46 Els
I will I will, I will. No, I will if you sit down and I can take your analogue photos from my perspective.

01:15:02 Claudine
Which university are you studying at?

01:15:06 Renée
TU Delft. So, Technical University Delft and yeah, it's quite a good university I would say. But yeah, I'm noticing now I'm very happy I'm in this sort of interdisciplinary track because I feel like.bYou know, for example, your perspective is so different than what we get taught, and these need to connect. So it's interesting because I brought a few mentors out from outside just to, you know, get different perspectives.
(camera starts spinning back)
I think it's done, that's perfect though!

01:15:48 Claudine
That's so cute that you use that, do you develop them yourself.

01:16:00 Renée
No, I wish I could, but I'm getting into it now a little bit, but I feel like it gives a much better vibe and I have like a very old phone, so this guy gives much better pictures.

01:16:04 Claudine
That's so nice! I haven't seen one in ages.

01:16:07 Renée
And it's automatic. So, with all the interviews I have done, I have like an analogue photo and then you know it gives a bit of a setting of all the conversations.

01:16:19 Claudine
That's good. If you have any other questions later, please feel free to reach out. I'm happy like once you've analysed and come out with the results, if you still feel like you want to explore anything. If you want to validate anything. Let me know you can have a chat anytime.

01:16:35 Renée
Thank you so much! For me it's been a great conversation.

01:16:39 Claudine
Yeah, for me too! I wanted to just quick quickly tell you about the fabric aid have you heard of them?

01:16:43 Renée
Oh yeah.

01:16:48 Claudine
So, we have just, so the the first time we supported a social enterprise, we have just given them funding. Fabric aid are basically working to become the upcycling hub for the region for clothing and what they do is they even get shipments from outside of Lebanon, they're working with H&M, Lacoste and several other big textile companies to get their leftover clothing to upcycle it and reuse it.
So, some of the things that they do so they have different clothing lines and you can cheque their website, everything on there, and I can always link you to them if you want to have a call with them to.

01:17:22 Els
Oh yes, I would love to.

01:17:23 Claudine
Yes, it would have been nice for you to see the facility, but I feel like if I contact them now, I'm going to put them on the spot, and I don't want to do that? Yeah, so I don't want to work for the under pressure. I know they're also closing their year and they're a bit busy, but it's very fascinating facility.
It's amazing to see what they're doing, so one thing they do is that they give a decent shopping experience to vulnerable communities. They open small shops there where they sell second hand clothing at about 33 cents per piece. It's a bit more expensive in Jordan. It's about a dollar per piece it used to be a dollar here before the crisis, which is still nothing.
They have other shops where you can sell your clothes. They have specific brands and they have pricing for. Let's say that a Zara top cost this much that have brands this much and then they have all these different brands. You can come and sell your clothes and you can also buy clothes from these shops and then they have something that I think would be interesting for you that you could also cheque out online. It's called salad so the new brand that they've opened and basically, they because suits are made, they're tailored to specific bodies. So what they do is they kind of detach all the different pieces of the suit and then put it up to make new modern kinds of clothing like hoodies and stuff exactly. So, this is it, it's Wear salad. And this is kind of their brand. It's really cool. It's really hip.

01:18:44 Renée
I'll give them a follow.

01:18:45 Claudine
So they make it from suits, hoodies.

01:18:47 Els
This is so good.

01:18:49 Claudine
That's amazing, yeah.

01:18:50 Els
Yeah no, but I see immediately I saw a few… we have a festival in the Netherlands called fashion clash. Yeah, and this would be so good to representing them.

01:19:01 Claudine
Oh, they would be so happy to do something like that.

01:19:03 Els
Yes, and I know the creative director of fashion flash and I got my contacts over here in Lebanon via him, and so he wants me to.. He really loves me to report back.

01:19:24 Claudine
Then I could thank you through e-mail if you that way.

01:19:26 Els
Oh yes please do yeah.

01:19:32 Claudine
If you email me, that way I don't think you with the general director and maybe you guys can set up a meeting.

01:19:37 Els
Yes, please, and maybe next time we're here I could visit it. Yeah, that would be wonderful, yeah, I think so too. I think this would be so good for fashion clash yeah, Oh yes yeah yeah that's that's great. I love it.

01:19:54 Claudine

But if you hear it from them and you hear like how they're doing, it's amazing they're even doing merchandise for so upcycled merchandise. To replace the other kind of merchandise that big companies buy for their events and whatnot. So they're doing stuff like that so they can make merchandise for any kind of company. Yeah, they'll be giving us probably merchandise actually for King's Day this year and it's coming year and the year after. Yeah, so it's really cool.

01:20:19 Renée
That's cool.

01:20:22 Claudine
So, they are trying to formalise the curriculum right now. The public sector has long, so they'll take it on, so they will. So, it's really nice. They've like filled up the whole the whole value chain. They've done everything they can to first of all, teach people how to deal with this to implement this kind of work and and to go to different kinds of markets going from marginalised communities to more expensive clothing for...

01:20:52 Els
But this is not only interesting for Lebanon, but you can take the whole idea to implement it in other places.

01:20:58 Claudine
They're working in Jordan and Egypt, and they're trying to go further. And they have a lot of

Connexions in the Netherlands, now and they're trying. But this connexion would be amazing as well for them I'm sure, yeah yeah, that's nice, right, yeah.

01:21:08 Renée
Yeah, very cool. I think that would be nice if you could make that happen.

01:21:20 Renée
I hope we didn't take it too long.

01:21:29 Claudine
Thank you so much, and it was lovely to meet you. Anything you need, let me know. And good luck with your education going forward!

01:21:47 Renée
Thank you so much!!

THEMATIC CODING

OBSTACLES

Transcription Claudine
Ramadi
[7,62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,48% Coverage

Now with the situation in Lebanon. Unfortunately, it has turned. We went from most donors working on development up till 2019 to donors, slowly changing that again, we're going back to humanitarian because of the situation, the poverty, people's inability to maintain their homes, people who got evicted from their homes, who now live in very dangerous situations.

Reference 2 - 0,62% Coverage

we have a very complicated relationship with Syria and Lebanon. I don't know if you know about it, yes, so you know, I'll see someone who's Lebanese, telling me that the Syrian army raped his children, for example. Well, how do you expect this person to come and be like: yeah, well I am going to rescue them now and give them safe space in my country when they came and fought with me in my own country. So we have a very complicated relationship. That's really sad.

Reference 3 - 0,42% Coverage

Yeah, unfortunately this is always the… The system with

humanitarian funding and the end of the day, you're limited, right? Each country has a certain amount of money and they want to use it in the best way that they can. And you never know what kind of surprise will come up and when you need to shift your funding.

Reference 4 - 2,33% Coverage

00:27:49 Renée
For Lebanon to be in an aid gap, yeah, well I think it's a a bit of a collapse of multiple systems. So how the theory describes this is that you have an aid gap, so you still have to make the transition to long term development and at the moment there is like… So, for example in you have here in Beirut, of course the story of the Phoenix that's saying how resilient Beirut is, and I think the opposite actually might be true that you sort of now see an extra spiral down, and this extra spiral down… You see the collapse of the financial system. The brain drain. So, these, the… Especially brain drain, I think this is, for like, because you're sort of losing the future generation, let's say.

00:28:53 Claudine
Yeah, this is extremely important.

00:29:03 Renée
Yeah, yeah for long term development this is, this is crucial, so the brain drain…so everybody just leaving that has

the means to leave. An economic system, and I feel like this sort of effects also... In terms of you know, physical care, let's say, because I think slowly you might also lose your best doctors or your best lawyers.

00:29:25 Claudine
Oh, we are losing them. My doctorates usually are here for two weeks and outside for two. Yeah, God knows when they're just gonna leave.

00:29:37 Renée
Yeah, yeah, exactly so. It's sort of slowly effects all. It trickles down, so it's like this extra spiral down and what I've heard so far, there are few people that are like; yeah, you know the story of the Phoenix, and Beirut is rising again, but then at the moment I also hear a lot of people that it's just a completely exhausted system, and mentally the blast was a sort of... such a hard blow, let's say.

00:30:03 Claudine
Yeah, and the coronavirus too.

Reference 5 - 0,11% Coverage

So that's the macro level, and really no one's that able to work on the macro level.

Reference 6 - 0,36% Coverage

Yeah, it's all effective. So

basically, what I'm trying to say is this macro level affects everything under it, right? However, we work at the levels under because we cannot work at the macro level, we do not have a government that allows us to work with them at this level

Reference 7 - 0,40% Coverage

In Lebanon, I don't know if it's the same for other countries - actually, I'm very curious to know, but all our governing framework, governance frameworks are all the frameworks that we use to kind of steer the different sectors that we work in, in humanitarian and development. They're so fragmented.

Reference 8 - 0,51% Coverage

But yeah, this fragmentation means that you have so much aid coming in, and it's not well coordinated. Everyone's trying to coordinate it and using these fancy names to develop new frameworks. I don't know what. And you go into meetings, and you feel like people don't even know what they're talking about. Yeah, because everyone is so confused. No one understands what's going on.

Reference 9 - 0,21% Coverage

It's too much and unfortunately this is the reason why you can't really bridge that gap. It's because of that ineffective coordination and that fragmentation.

Reference 10 - 0,50% Coverage

I've worked so much on the field with so many different NGO projects and I've always seen the weakness, NGOs aren't there to stay for long. You know, if they lose their funding and they don't find any other funding, they may need to close offices, layoff staff. Staff are only there because their project-based NGO's cannot do post project accountability which is a big weakness.

Reference 11 - 0,40% Coverage

You know this is a big weakness of the system. It's that the donors giving the money are not holding these countries and governments and institutions accountable beyond the last day for funding. Basically, yeah, and I think if this is something that could be addressed the way a donor approaches things.

Reference 12 - 0,37% Coverage

Now, the way I would see it is that Lebanon is a country with so many NGO's and so many development agencies and

similar entities and again super fragmented, you know, not link to each other. People don't understand what NGO's are, what they're doing here, how they get money.

Reference 13 - 0,54% Coverage

 yeah, I think this kind of space can give that motivation that people need when you see what other people are doing. And unfortunately, we only see it at specific events and these specific events only target specific people, yeah? They are always the NGOs, the donors, the agencies that work on this? But it's never the general public. The general public has no idea what we do in terms of development.

Reference 14 - 0,35% Coverage

exactly, and there are so many opportunities for them, and they never know about them because they don't know that these exist. They don't know that there are entities that do this, and so many of them have ideas and the Lebanese are entrepreneurial by nature.

Transcription George Arbid
[6,03% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4,15% Coverage

For example, when there was this

war, the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006. Hezbollah decided to try to, of course they wanted to help the population, mostly in the southern suburb. They created Waath, which is a company like Solidaire. But Hezbollah's way to help the people rebuild their buildings and… They had a hard time convincing people. And I know this from the architects who actually worked on it, and I can give you a few names that you can talk to. They had a hard time convincing people that they should be planning beyond the building unit itself. For example, creating more parking, let's say under other parcels so that you could liberate certain parcels for something else. And people wanted their apartments more or less exactly as the way they were before. They had the feeling that if any change was done to their lives, it would be to the detriment of the way they live. So instead of moving towards what you're saying, which is to use the opportunity of the demolition of a whole neighbourhood, to recreate a better neighbourhood. They were more concerned of not losing what they already had.

Reference 2 - 0,91% Coverage

if participation is required and if the opinions of peoples is required, then how to factor in your project and reflection, the positive side of their participation and how to factor out the

individualism that would forbid any planning to happen

Reference 3 - 0,97% Coverage

So, we think more in terms of individual parcels, individual projects, and that would be your exercise here, which is to see what the mechanism is that would allow to think at an urban scale, putting into consideration all that is in the interest of your idea.

Transcription Tala Alaeddine
[16,56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,43% Coverage

So it's mainly, um, you mean by Aid gap, You mean when like everything stops from the side of the NGOs or all the parties, to give the aid, and the people like are left with no sustainable way of living.

Reference 2 - 2,20% Coverage

So, there was a lot of coordination between the NGOs. But what we saw also is that this coordination, that was happening through different moderators, like the army, the Lebanese army, or some platforms that were created online where all the NGOs like booked data. It was a bit closed between some NGOs. And what actually happened is that they divided the city, or they

divided a neighbourhood and each NGO like took a part of the neighbourhood for its own. Like; I want to rehabilitate this and you and other NGO's cannot come here. So, if this NGO got some fundings for repairing the windows, the family living in the house, they just got the windows repaired and they didn't get any other need fulfilled. And this happened a lot. And the other NGOs cannot come and see and say, I want to help here, because another NGO did the work. So, this happened a lot. And this so when you see now that a lot of buildings were rehabilitated, but there's some needs in the buildings or in the apartments or for the residents that were unfulfilled.

Reference 3 - 0,49% Coverage

Another thing is that a lot of the work that they did, or the renovation that they did, at the end, because it was meant to directly help. They didn't create any form or idea of the future… thinking of what is going to happen later.

Reference 4 - 1,38% Coverage

Tala: So, they provided the aid maybe, or they provided the rehabilitation, but they didn't know that when they did that, when they renovated the buildings, for example, the owner

is going to evict the tenants because now he can, rent the apartment for higher with higher rent. So, in this case, all the people that are renting in the area who have been living there for like 40 or 30 years, that they are now under threat of… they were basically under the threat of eviction because of the aid that's happened. And in this way, the NGOs or the humanitarian aid that was provided by the NGOs basically led in the end to the residents leaving this area.

Reference 5 - 0,41% Coverage

So, yeah. So, these are the issues. Why am I telling you that? Because it's related to the aid. So how money, like quick money to respond to quick disasters like at the end failed in some ways.

Reference 6 - 1,70% Coverage

Um, and we have, for example, a lot of cases where some NGOs, they started to give aid for, cash for rent, for example, they started to give cash for rent or shelters sometimes because they got the funds. And after a while they stopped this service. So, a lot of people like they couldn't… Some people were getting cash for rent, but their houses were not renovated, for example, or they worked at the port, but now the port is destructed, so they cannot return and work there.

Or in some of the shops where they worked were destroyed, or they lost their jobs because of the economic crisis. So, it was due to COVID, due to the explosion and due to the economic crisis in general. So, the aid that once came stopped at some times. And these people found again, themselves vulnerable and under threats.

Reference 7 - 1,14% Coverage

So, the people basically have their own work and when they lost their work or when they lost their homes, that they were basically... either they left the area, or they seek the help here of political groups and some affiliations. That's basically in Lebanon is a way for this sustainable, uh... So how people feel they're safe or they can stay here is because they have these affiliations. So whoever doesn't have this affiliation or the support of some political or religious group is left alone. And there is no solution for him or her.

Reference 8 - 1,16% Coverage

Yeah, but the problem here in Lebanon is that the architects or the urban planners that we have are very... They don't think out of the box, not on the design level, and not on a multidisciplinary level. So, they the only think about the plot, either the design,

if they are like architects or the revenue if they are real estate developers, because we have a lot of developers. And basically, the people who drafted the law, the building law, are working as estate developers. So, we have a very shitty building laws. So, this is the issue.

Reference 9 - 1,35% Coverage

 So, they are demanding to be part of it. And until now they are, for example, side-lining them. They also now working on things related to how bars in the area are... So, a little bit focusing on small goals. So, how bars in the area, in residential areas are exceeding the volume of the music, or valet parking are closing the streets at night and people cannot find parking spots. So, they are working on small things in order to keep their neighbourhoods how they want it to be. But yeah, they until now, they basically fail to work on the bigger issue, the bigger picture. And the government doesn't see them, so this also is an issue.

Reference 10 - 2,36% Coverage

Um, and the work of the NGOs, for example, was directly... So, they neglected a lot of neighbourhoods that also were affected. And this was related to where the funds are coming from or coming for. And based

on um... I don't want to say this, but this sector, it's basically based on a lot of sectors. So, political, and religious. So, the area that was affected by the explosion was basically an area where a lot of Christian people live. But there's also a part where Muslims live. So, there was that issue that we want to protect the Christian areas in order to avoid the Christian people to leave from this area. So, a lot of funds came there in order to help the Christian, so for Christians to stay there. For example, a neighbourhood called Byculla, which is very not very far from here. It's a neighbourhood with a lot of historical buildings. And it's under a very big real estate threat. So, what happened? All the funds, all the help, all the aid, like, neglected this area, even the law neglected this neighbourhood, whereas it was very effected because of some political and sectarian way of thinking.

Reference 11 - 1,10% Coverage

Yeah. A lot of people and they didn't know what it does. Especially this article that says that for one year you cannot be evicted. So, a lot of people were getting evicted after the explosion and they didn't know that they have the right to stay. And there's this like article that says this. So, we tried, during fieldwork, to use the chance to tell them this.

We distributed the guidebook, etc. so it's very important. This communication with people to the institution, each one, about who is responsible for what.

Reference 12 - 1,55% Coverage

00:50:20 Tala
We don't have a ministry for housing. We don't have any data related to how... there is no official data.

00:50:43 Renée
No, just in an office like this.

00:50:56 Tala
 Yeah. So don't we don't know how many people live in these neighbourhoods. We don't know how many buildings. Uh, yeah, we don't know how many buildings are there. How many are abandon. So, BHI did some work to see where are the heritage buildings after the explosion. This was not done before. So how many heritage buildings, how many abandoned buildings? How many destroyed buildings? We don't have such data. So, data is very important.

00:51:17 Renée
Yeah. I mean, it's a base for your decision making.

00:51:21 Tala
Yeah, definitely. Yeah.

Reference 13 - 0,90% Coverage

And a lot of concentration of the government maybe was towards Lebanese to help Lebanese, whereas a lot of NGOs and aid come for Syrians. For example, and neglected the Lebanese because a lot of funds, you know, because Syrians are refugees, So, the money comes for the refugees or the communities that host refugees. So, this was also an issue who is living there? We have migrant workers, the Syrians, you know, Lebanese.

Reference 14 - 0,39% Coverage

Uh, they actually know that there are some funds. So, what is the purpose of disposal. What are we going to do with it? So here funds are coming. And people don't know about the funds.

Transcription Yasmine Dagher
[0,61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,61% Coverage

there is a lot of initiatives that were born following the blast. Most of them are not active right now. Because the funding to be honest funding has been very, very low. It's been more than a year now that, there is no funding at all actually, because also of the Ukraine war. All of the international organisations are

concentrated there, which is very normal.

Transcription Yasser Akkaoui
[3,65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,28% Coverage

The explosion of Beirut port wasn't just a mistake, it's a. It's a. It's a failure in the system itself

Reference 2 - 0,46% Coverage

But all this thinking didn't happen because the system... and again what we call the system. All these little components, none of them was doing his or her job, you know?

Reference 3 - 1,02% Coverage

Because now there are in an atom leap, with free atoms, and everybody is pulling in a different direction. We don't have a vector that is guiding us towards very specific purpose or goals. You know, and this is what that's keeping Lebanon at the same status quo since 1943 or 44. This is because everybody is pulling in a different direction, you know, and this is destructive.

Reference 4 - 1,18% Coverage

It's again, because here we feel that they have been betrayed by the system itself and every

opportunity for you to get back at it, you will, yeah, whether it's kicking the box with his foot, or throwing a stone at it. Or kicking a public bus, you know, or not paying your taxes or avoiding something else? You do it. Because it's not inclusive, it's extractive and it has been sucking our blood for the last, I don't know, 100 years.

Reference 5 - 0,71% Coverage

That was aggravated by the distance that gets created between central governments and the, for example, Municipal governments, you know? And this is what allows the inefficiency to happen through corruption, money laundering, all the worst thing that can happen.

STRATEGIES

Transcription Claudine Ramadi
[4,22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,17% Coverage

And that's why now we're working on localization, trying to support more local entities in the country and strengthening them.

Reference 2 - 0,74% Coverage

So, I agree with this approach. I mean. Well, one thing we always overlook is the local government. So, if you want to decentralise in Lebanon, a good way is to strengthen local government and he mentioned the example of land of churches, but there are lands of municipalities. Municipalities have resources that they don't know how to use, and this is one way to decentralise is to start going to local governments. And trying to work with them on solutions within their communities. And then you could probably implement something like what you're saying.

Reference 3 - 0,39% Coverage

But if I were to look at Lebanon from humanitarian to development.. I like the structure. It's pretty cool. I like the idea because you can change it, that's what's nice. It's like you can always bring in something new.

Depending on the changes in the context, depending on what's going on.

Reference 4 - 1,19% Coverage

Or maybe giving people an opportunity to showcase products to showcase what they produce whether it's handmade, whether it's food, whether it's mass production of I don't know, some kind of chemical or cosmetic products or whatever, but this is something we miss out on in Lebanon. Marketing is not something you get to do often. NGO's support a lot of businesses, so it could be a space that brings businesses, NGO's how NGO's support them. These businesses can come in and out, change every while they have like a little market where you can buy products where you can get educated about what kind of services NGO's give. What is the entrepreneurship system in Lebanon, for example. As an entrepreneur, what can you benefit from? So that's the way I see it. If I'm looking at it from a development perspective and not humanitarian. And that's where you go from humanitarian to development.

Reference 5 - 1,01% Coverage

But a huge portion of the population was pushed below the poverty line and they're not

looking for humanitarian aid, they're looking for development to get back on their feet and giving that kind of space is really important where you can see what options you have. Where anyone can come and showcase. Where any NGO that with a new programme can come and showcase. Where they can do outreach, that's also always difficult. They can give out information about their programmes and people can choose to enrol. So, if you were to link like the, you want to put something from NGO's, Local government can also be included, and what you're saying even if it's empty? I love that idea, and when they decide not to come then it's a symbol, yeah, I really like that.

Reference 6 - 0,72% Coverage

And then you have the producers, whether they're businesses or they their self-employed, whether they're non formal producers or whatever, with people who are actually doing, giving a product or a service that generates income that develops the economy, that links us to global markets, right? And in the end, that's it's such a nice space to bring donors in to bring anyone who's visiting to come and see and understand and get an idea of what is available. So this is, this is what I would focus on the Beirut blast is... it has past.

Transcription George Arbid
[2,34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,98% Coverage

your approach is maybe new in the sense that there is this awareness of the difference between the aftermath, the quick aftermath after of the blast, for example, and then a time when we can prepare or plan differently towards something that is more sustainable.

Reference 2 - 0,25% Coverage

Bring it all together. That, I think, would be a very good project.

Reference 3 - 1,11% Coverage

It's very good, because this is accountability. And this is also the best way to have people appropriate the project. It is in front of them, they can see, they can follow up. And it's not somewhere in the dark, because either they get suspicious or there is disinterest, and you cultivate interest.

Transcription Tala Alaeddine
[7,10% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,77% Coverage

So first of all, the needs, no needs were fulfilled. Second, about how the NGO's dealt with the issue of keeping residents.

So, what we try to do is to convince some NGOs to like at least have a certain paper that they can sign with the owner and the owner, saying, okay, if you rehabilitate this, I will grant that these tenants will stay in the same room, etc.,

Reference 2 - 0,56% Coverage

So, it's a way to let the people come back, pay this affordable rent or these affordable fees and they can work in this area too. Uh, so a lot of models can be implemented in this way. They can be financial models and design. So they combine design and financial.

Reference 3 - 1,10% Coverage

So, we try to help people organize into a sort of association, the residents to organize in a sort of association. And this association, it doesn't speak in the name of all the residents, but it's an organizational framework that can say, I'm here, you, whoever you are, I want to do a certain plan, a certain master plan, a certain project. We want you to come and talk to us first, to present it to us, to see our needs, to consult us in order to confirm or not. Because this is our city. This is our neighbourhood.

Reference 4 - 0,98% Coverage

But to organize, they found it very difficult. And helping them also was very difficult. Until now, they are now working on a lot of issues. But they failed until now to work on the bigger issues. Which is like to follow up on how the explosion happened and who's responsible? So on. This was one of the rules of the association. But they're now focusing on small things, like if a certain project in a neighbourhood is going to happen, we want to be consulted.

Reference 5 - 1,58% Coverage

When we, we basically produced after the explosion a guidebook for the people related to housing and urban issues. And it was like a commentary on the law of the protection of the area. So, we commented on it. We divided it in different sections based on different themes, but at the end of each section we added on the back some demands from the people. Based on the workshops and the community meetings. And in each demand or in each session of the piece. We basically, like said, so this needs to happen by this institution. This institution needs to do this. This law stays this, or this needs to be implemented, etc. So, people don't know this. So, we got a lot of people, for example, in the affected area didn't know at all

about the law.

Reference 6 - 1,45% Coverage

And another point which is very important: I talked about the association, at the Level of the neighbourhoods. But I believe that before the war, for example, in Lebanon, we had a lot of neighbourhood committees and people were organized on the level of neighbourhoods. This helped them contain the livelihoods in the neighbourhoods. They maintained, how they lived there. We now lack this such framework of organization on the neighbourhoods level, on the level of the city and of the level of, how we say it… Like the orders of engineer. What do you call the other word? When people who work on the same… Where workers organize in order to get their rights with syndicate: syndicates!

Reference 7 - 0,66% Coverage

But basically, these are challenges that also should be thought about and we are trying to see, on the local level, how can we learn from other experiences and other countries. And for example, we are finding this in Latin-America, for example. They have a lot of organization experience. So, it's very important.

Transcription Yasmine Dagher
[7,90% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,88% Coverage

Yeah, there's a governor for Beirut. And he was elected actually a few months before the blast. And, uh, he is very keen on preserving heritage. So, the first thing that he did like following the blast, the first press conference that he said was like; I'm not going to let people destroy their houses even if there is like structural damage. We're going to try to encourage people to renovate. If you need to present permits because for every any type of construction or renovation. Like you're building a new tower, or you need to renovate a house or whatever you need to apply for permits. So, kind of like, you make it easier for people to renovate their houses without permits if they were affected by the blast in constructive ways. So, a lot of people were able to renovate 10 days after the blast. And at the same time the Ministry of Culture as well as the members of parliament, and the governor of Beirut put in place a law, that's called law 194. That would prevent any owner of selling or destroying its heritage building. So, what they were scared of is that the whole Solidere thing would replicate.

Reference 2 - 0,97% Coverage

And then now, to be honest, us, we're collaborating with anyone. We're still in constant communication with anyone. Right now, we're working on a renovation project, which is in collaboration with another NGO. But again, we're doing this type of matching funds. Because they have a bit of funds, we have a bit of funds. Alone we won't be able to renovate something, buy together we are able. So there's still a lot of collaborations, but again I guess, 80% of the NGO's that were here on August 5, 2020 are not working anymore in Beirut. They are back to their thing.

Reference 3 - 1,06% Coverage

It was an abandoned building before the blast, and it's managed by the Ministry of Culture and so the architect's restorer, BBHR, what they did is a sort of on-site training. Because the building was abandoned, there is not this need to bring back the inhabitant's home, you know. So, they have the possibility to take their time and actually do appropriate training to people that want to develop their heritage skills. The Germans were actually very interested in this type of idea. Where you help people develop a skill. And so, this renovation... So, they did a lot of small renovations like this.

This was funded by the German.

Reference 4 - 1,24% Coverage

Then they gave him a condition which was because he has commercial ground floors and residential upper floors. There were like; your commercial ground floor, you're going to try to open some sort of pop-up shop or interactive thing that would encourage people to learn more about the Beiruti houses. So, he needs to do a sort of exhibition space if you want, that's free of charge or whatever. This was the condition for them to renovate the building.
And for the upper floors, in case he wants to rent, it shouldn't be a very high rent, it should be very affordable, but that's only for a certain period of years. So, they say, OK, our funding is equal to let's say $200,000. So, for two years you need to be affordable and all of that.

Reference 5 - 1,78% Coverage

We were the first to do some sort of deal like that, and then other NGOs actually found that very, very interesting and they started applying this to other stuff. So, Beit El baraka, the NGO I talked about before, what they did is that they renovated the House on Serso St which is the parallel street but, on the hill, like right upstairs. So, they renovated but

they did not renovate the whole building. They renovated, they just closed the windows, and they renovated the ground floor, and they are currently using the ground floor for five years to sell products. In order to get like products that are offered to them, and they have a restaurant and everything. So, all of the benefits from the restaurant goes to helping families that are in need. So, there is a lot of deals that are happening like this. And it's actually a good thing because you know, again, owners they have a house that's multiple floors, but they're only living in one. What do I do with the other floors? And it's only temporary. You know, five years, two years, 10 years it's...

Reference 6 - 0,77% Coverage

Yeah, and we also realised very quickly that when you renovate just one building, but the rest is destroyed around it, people won't come back to their home because, you know, the small like the small shops where you can buy your fruits and vegetables, the bread and everything. It's still closed. Your neighbours are not there, and people are very like... with their neighbours. So, they're very, very close. And this is how we develop the clustering strategy.

Reference 7 - 0,19% Coverage

So when we rebuilt the wall before plastering, we added the fibre mesh for example so that it consolidates more.

Transcription Yasser Akkaoui
[14,58% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,45% Coverage

it's a feedback loop. And this is what guarantees a continuous improvement and update of your policy making. That the whole system will continue, so this is dynamic.

Reference 2 - 1,55% Coverage

OK, so there's something wonderful that happened in the last 10-15 years, which is the emergence of, what we call the design thinking. Whereby every corporation you know needs to identify needs to re-purpose and elevated scroll to the human to solving the human centred problem. So, everything we hear about today and this is what young people are invited to do. And I'm sure at TU Delft they are teaching you how to solve problems you know that's what you're doing in Lebanon. You're trying to understand where this problem came from. And how do you solve this problem.

Reference 3 - 1,95% Coverage

And once you identify your purpose or the problem you want to solve, you know? It becomes your raison d'être, it's your reason of being. And as long as the problem is valid, doesn't matter how much you try, and how much you fail, but you keep on trying. That's why it's called the fail fast and try again system. So Renée starts trying to solve that problem, she analyses it, she tries to solve. She identifies a way to solve it. If this way doesn't work, she has to find a better way to solve it. So you keep on finding, it's called a tentative approach to problem solving. So you keep on trying solve it. And the thing is, the beauty of this is that investors will keep on giving you money. Because the problem is valid.

Reference 4 - 0,84% Coverage

who are the components of this, right? Who are the problems of this? We have the system which is proof that it doesn't solve, you know. The world is not a better place since the creation of the UN, with all the respect for the UN. But funny enough the private sector can be a source of solving these problems.

Reference 5 - 1,53% Coverage

You're slow. and it takes forever

in the end to do things, and that that's the price. Until you invite the private sector to come and to identify from the 1,000,000 and one problems that you identify that need a solution, that you qualified and quantified. If you're able to allow the private sector to come in and say, OK, we want to solve that problem... You know, and let the private sector get involved: one, to drive a person. Two, it could create value: shareholder value and community and societal value and environmental value, If you set the standards right.

Reference 6 - 1,49% Coverage

So if you want to solve these problems positively, with fresh new technology that integrates all that the mind can.; it's the project sector that can do it. And this transformation has happened in the last 10 to 15 years. And the double effect or the new things that are happening also the private sector, by embarking this, they are becoming more human, they are becoming more responsible and they're becoming more accountable. So, this is also an inflection point that will favour the ethical corporations and will isolate the unethical corporations.

Reference 7 - 1,27% Coverage

So what you talking about, It's

is very similar to a movement that started after the 2008 crisis, It's called: The integrated reporting. Which basically tackles the asymmetric information between all the stakeholders. Integrated reporting is about exactly what you said is; the frequency and depth of reporting or having access to information, in a responsible matter. In the way that is accountable and responsible, right? And this is what we call the integrated report

Reference 8 - 0,60% Coverage

Because the smaller the distance, and the smaller the asymmetric information, the better the system works. Why? Because you are the one that is representing me in the municipal council, I know you, you are my neighbour.

Reference 9 - 1,58% Coverage

But what works, and it's working now, you know, is a lot of municipalities are coming together and say you know what? We would buy the narrators. We're going to rent land from the church, because here the church has a lot of land, we are going to install solar panels, and then we're going to use the grid of the government to distribute the electricity. With counters, now order for everybody to pay, instead of $0.50, we're going to

bring it down to 27 cents. And investors will come in. Investors are basically the expats of that municipality. And they are always putting money in.

Reference 10 - 0,82% Coverage

So the private sector comes in, and unless it's lucrative, you know, unless people can derive value and profit, it won't work. You know handouts, will never have achieved the desired goals because you can always outsmart them where you can mis-use the money, especially just going through the ministry.

Reference 11 - 0,55% Coverage

I agree with you that decentralization or having a more micro approach to problem solving on a municipal level. You will have more care, more willingness to do good, and more willingness to prevent harm.

Reference 12 - 0,87% Coverage

So, the more decentralized, and the more micro the solutions are, definitely mitigates the distance between the stakeholders. If we're using what we call the ethical thinking. You become more candour and less utilitarian, this is one. And two, if you integrate the private sector just for you to create a web of

interests.

Reference 13 - 1,08% Coverage

That create value and can grow value over time you can succeed. So I totally agree, if you have something that is all based on transparency, accountability, integrated reporting in a timely manner that uses innovation and technology and problem solving, that only comes from the private sector basically and the small community. Chances are this is the best way, for example, for Lebanon too.

PREREQUISITES

Transcription Claudine Ramadi
[1,45% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,56% Coverage

Yeah, so I think a big part of it is also talking to the communities and understanding what makes sense for them. Will they make use of this? Will they contribute in any way?
You know what kind of resources do you have in terms of human resources? And how can you use these human resources and engage them in what you're doing, so that they see the value of it so that they feel ownership and they want to maintain it?

Reference 2 - 0,62% Coverage

Because every time someone would come in to do this intervention, they would see the intervention: I need to build a facility. I will speak to these stakeholders because I need to engage them to build this facility. But what is the long term plan? How do I hold them accountable? How do I engage the community so that they feel accountable, so that they feel this ownership, so that when this with treatment facility is not working, they do something to make it work?

Reference 3 - 0,27% Coverage

From the perspective of, you

know what the rich history, the beauty of it, yeah. I don't know, what can Beirut look like if we took better care of it? How it can look like this European town or city, right?

Transcription George Arbid
[1,55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,19% Coverage

Emergency is more important. You need to save lives.

Reference 2 - 1,36% Coverage

Participation is important.
But then it has to be informed participation. People have to be aware of what they would lose if they do the change, and what they would gain if they do it. Most importantly, it is that they should not be feeling that they are losing as individuals for the benefit of the Community. This has to do with local distrust of anything public

Transcription Tala Alaeddine
[8,52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2,67% Coverage

So, if you come like and tell you want to renovate but at the end you will leave, this isn't the solution or if it will happen at the, this is not a solution. So, if someone gives funds to renovate

for the owner or for… there is a lot of models that could be used. Uh, in order to sustain the residents and the building. Or this cluster or this neighbourhood can like, uh, continue living as it was and, creating jobs and so on. So, there's a lot of models that could be used in return of the fund. So, we cannot give like a fund to renovate, except if you provide this certain model that can provide affordable housing for certain people. And we have a lot of examples. So now we are starting to talk about it. So, at the beginning, after right after the explosion, people didn't think of that. They didn't think of that. So now conversations started about what models can be used for the remaining buildings. Because now we also have a lot of building that were already abandoned before the explosion. But we also have a lot of buildings that are empty because people left after the explosion. So how are we going to renovate these and how people are coming back? We want to provide affordable housing. So, let's try to find some models and some solutions.

Reference 2 - 2,17% Coverage

We did a lot of community meetings after the explosion. And I want to talk about an experience now a bit. They always said, we don't want to see our neighbourhood change more, that it changed during the explosion. So, we don't want to see… So, they want to come back here, and find a building that was destroyed and a certain High-rise that came in its place. so here the neighbourhoods. actually, if you… So, we have Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze this area. Buildings with shops, with the ground floor where people can meet. We have a lot of spaces in between the buildings and the alleyways where people meet. We sit together, they sit together. They basically did that. So now if, for example, another building, new building is built, there's that entrance. People like came come with their cars to an underground parking and they go up to their apartments and no one can see each other. So, it's very… no social interaction anymore. So, this is when I say a change in how the neighbourhood is, this is one aspect of the change.

Reference 3 - 0,69% Coverage

So a very important thing is to, like, look at the needs of the people. When we want to look at the needs of the people, a participation process is very important for any design project or any sort of creating that model, if we want it to be sustainable because they are the people that will maintain the sustainability.

Reference 4 - 1,27% Coverage

So, in the absence of the government we have a lot of potential through the NGOs, through architects, through academics and through universities and the studios they do about the explosion and so on. We can find sustainable solutions that combine some economic models with design models in order to provide this… I don't know how to say affordable housing, livelihoods, or a competition, and it is sustainable. So, and I tell you, this is happening now. The conversation is happening now, and it did not happened back then. So, if it happened back then, a lot of problem problems were resolved.

Reference 5 - 1,22% Coverage

And one of the things to be sustainable or to stop relying on religious and non-political groups and political affiliations, who basically invest in the disasters in order to gain some support. And you'll be my supporters, and I don't care about your neighbour. So we have seen a lot of buildings where this political group or this religious group, renovated an apartment in a building and all the building was still destroyed. And this was a major issue which created a lot of, I should say, conflict, tension between the neighbours. So why is he getting aid, and I am not?

Reference 6 - 0,50% Coverage

So, the solution that needs to be done as a solution for all of these. Because they form the city and therefore, they have the right to the city, the right to live in the city. So basically, any models should not like exclude any of them.

Transcription Yasmine Dagher
[0,35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,35% Coverage

For us, for example, with the Beirut Heritage Initiative, everything that we found on site, everything that we could reuse, we kept it and reused it, and we did not try to create new stuff and add new things.

Transcription Yasser Akkaoui
[3,64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,00% Coverage

I think basically, to trigger a reaction in point of behaviour, you know… You need a system that's functional, that is always able to assess and not only risks but also opportunities and move towards these opportunities. So, a system like Lebanon that's too busy with sustaining our existence and our resilience, this also means we're missing on a lot of opportunities.

Reference 2 - 1,53% Coverage

Yeah, I mean it has to be a bottom up approach. It cannot be a top down approach. Yeah, so unless what I hope the UN can put down the problem and say, well, this is the problem you mentioned; The three million children. Without, let's say, reading classes or shoes, you know, and let the private sector intervene in trying to solve this problem and driving investment and use this iterative approach. And just to agree with your uncle, only the private sector is able to introduce innovation and technology. The UN doesn't know innovation and doesn't know technology.

Reference 3 - 1,05% Coverage

It's because inclusiveness is an integral part for its success. Everything that's bottom up, it means inclusiveness. Everything that is top to bottom, risks of being extractive by design. And once it's extracted, that means people will avoid implementing it, we will try to outsmart its implementation, but if they own it, it's theirs. And it's inclusive and everybody will be part of it.

Reference 4 - 0,05% Coverage

Inclusiveness is key.

OTHER

Transcription Claudine Ramadi
[1,32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,17% Coverage

So we kind of mix the humanitarian with development. So basically, the humanitarian development Nexus. That's what we try to use.

Reference 2 - 0,18% Coverage

Over the past 11 or 12 years these have been changed so many times because NGO's are always testing what is the best, what system is best?

Reference 3 - 0,68% Coverage

Because people think that... People risk their lives on boats, yeah? Thinking that they're going to go live their best life and eventually find themselves stuck in a refugee camp and they don't understand the consequences of that, they think that, you know, they're not in Lebanon anymore, so all their problems are resolved. But actually here at least, they may be able to find employment or something, and a way to build their skills and a way to slowly get out and just, you know, put their lives out of risk.

Reference 4 - 0,28% Coverage

Right now this is not relevant to them they don't want a reminder about it. They don't want to see it. If you tell me there's something about the Beirut blast, I don't want to be there. There's a trauma for me.

Transcription George Arbid
[7,84% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,77% Coverage

Umm yeah, I think it's a plausible idea. It's a good project. Beirut is a good place to experiment it with all the complexities of the situation. It makes it even more interesting and challenging for you.

Reference 2 - 1,03% Coverage

This is the building in Beirut. The mock DC building, near Hamra. In the parallel St to Hamra. It represents very well the Beirut modernism; the climate responsive with the elegance of the ground floor, the caps you saw here in the other area, you see, for the sun protection.

Reference 3 - 1,17% Coverage

This is about the park, the Harrish, in Beirut. It's a study on the history of the place, how it shrank, across time. The different projects done on it, but also what it means to people who live

around it. And what they expect, what value it has for them. I think it's of interest for you in terms of public space.

Reference 4 - 1,87% Coverage

00:43:03 George
That's true. So, that's one reason.

Reference 5 - 1,71% Coverage

Another is also that the younger generation is freed a little bit from affiliations. Whether they are political or religious, and so on. Therefore, they don't... The younger generation doesn't feel that it needs to justify anything. They're simply angry with everyone. Rightly so, whereas the older generation is more, still more, fortunately, but still more connected to beliefs that their community or their part, their party, their whatever, holds the

truth.

Reference 6 - 1,29% Coverage

And it's always the fault of the other. This is why the slogan of the revolution of the younger people is: All of them is all of them. You don't need to justify anything, it's all of you, all of them. All the generations, all of the parties, all of the leaders, all of them, right? This is it's, it's an important change in the in the mindset.

Transcription Tala Alaeddine
[8,59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,50% Coverage

So, after the blast, we launched a hotline and because we started to see that people have a lot of vulnerabilities, so they started to call us a lot. And our field worker on the field also like found a lot of cases of vulnerabilities.

Reference 2 - 3,08% Coverage

00:13:00 Tala
So, let me start by saying that a lot of NGOs are starting to work there, and the government basically did nothing. Other than this one law. Which the title of the law was to protect the neighbourhoods. However, they never mentioned the residents of the affected areas. So to want to

protect the areas, but neglected the residents.

00:13:15 Tala
And in all the law that they, there's only like one sentence where they mentioned that we want to halt the evictions of the people for one year, and this didn't even happen. And after that, all the responses were based on like funds that were given to NGOs from, whether Lebanese diaspora or from international funders and the NGOs wanted to... So, they wanted to tell these funders that you want to do something. So, they wanted the money. So, what they did is that they directly, like, chose what they want to do without any... They didn't ask, basically.

00:14:23 Tala
So, we started to see people coming and giving refrigerators to the people. But this is not our basic need. We need something else now. We need, for example, the rehabilitation of our common spaces in the buildings to be able to live in these buildings. We want to see our neighbor house rehabilitated because we cannot live in this building if our neighbor is not living there. For example, this was not happening. They

wanted the money, so they acted like it quickly.

Reference 3 - 0,75% Coverage

So, after the war... I guess when you talk to the Arab Architecture Centre, they told you that after the war in Beirut, how the centre of Beirut was rebuilt. This happened, so the people that were living there were basically evicted, and they moved to other cities away from Beirut. So, we were afraid that this will happen again. And this was happening.

Reference 4 - 0,89% Coverage

Because people wanted their neighbourhood to stay as it was. So, they didn't want to change how it looks. I mean, from the shops there, or the livelihood, or the people coming there, etc. So, after the explosion Airbnb's that were starting to come to the neighbourhood, It was an area were a lot of real estate developments started before the blast. But after the blast these intentions grew because of what is happening.

Reference 5 - 1,21% Coverage

Also, of an old shop is replaced by a bar or it is replaced by a certain nightclub or restaurant. So that's a lot of change to be enabled. While basically, it was

relying on the older crafts and so on. And this this is what we witnessed in the area from before the explosion. But people are afraid that it will happen more and more. And, how Airbnb's are coming. And this is an area where we have a lot of old people, too. So, this is important to notice because of people at the end will die and the area is a freed for a new development and for new visions and so on.

Reference 6 - 1,53% Coverage

 A lot of institutions need to be involved: public institutions, the municipality of Beirut. The municipality of Beirut has a very big group, and they didn't do anything. Also, all the institutions related to planning, like the Directorate General Planner. So, they didn't do anything, um, they didn't do anything. I think the Directorate of Antiquities, which is called antiquities but it's basically all the heritage building under its mandate, basically. So also, where her involvement was very, and I guess BHI told you that, it was relying on external resources like BHI and architects and restorers and all to get the data and to get the work done. And they don't have the funds. So, it was yes, it's very difficult.

Reference 7 - 0,63% Coverage

There's the NGOs, there's the

community, and there is also the government that needs to be involved somehow. But this is not actually what this is what is not clear now, because it is corrupted and people don't want it. But at the end, there are some institutions that actually need to be involved.

Transcription Yasmine Dagher
[13,26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,79% Coverage

Our heritage law dates back from the 1930's, so during the French mandate, the active heritage law, the one that is in application right now dates back from the 1930's and mainly states that everything that was build before the 18th century, so 1700, is considered as heritage. So that's even before the Ottomans reign in Beirut. And we do have parts of sites that dates back from the Roman empire, but they are not visible to the eye because they are under the ground.

Reference 2 - 0,31% Coverage

But in Beirut it is actually very difficult to preserve heritage and our ministry of culture was founded in 1992, so thirty years ago, before that there was no ministry of culture.

Reference 3 - 1,37% Coverage

The Ministry of Culture was founded in '92 and those regions, were the most affected by the Civil War because Beirut was mainly divided into two, around this (the green line) and there was West-Beirut and East-Beirut. And this was a line of demarcation here, so mainly all of this, all of the action was happening here, which means that all of the neighbourhood and the city centre was deeply affected by the civil war. And what happened following the Civil War is that the whole city centre was bought by a company called Solidere and they kind of destroyed everything and rebuild it with the same facades, but the interior, everything was different and their response: so was to OK fine. You did Solidere. It's too late, but let's preserve everything that's around. Let's preserve whatever still has value.

Reference 4 - 0,44% Coverage

And so the heritage, the heritage law that is currently like, we're still waiting for it to be voted. It was voted by the ministries, but not by the Parliament yet. And UNESCO, since the blast retook the whole study and is trying to improve it for it to pass.

Reference 5 - 1,23% Coverage

But what they did after the

blast is that they founded a task force, that they called BHR Beirut. But heritage rescue. So, it's architecture restorers. I think they were like maybe 15 architects, restorers and they all were teachers at the Lebanese University, so they also so all of their students were volunteers. And what they did is that they mapped the whole city: Heritage buildings. And they also put the level of damage like they tried to do some sort of message statements like what's the first step to preserve this building et cetera, and then those people from BHR, the main ones, not the volunteers, we're consultants on all of the renovation projects, so they have to come, and check that the work was done properly

Reference 6 - 0,36% Coverage

00:19:15 Renée
Yeah OK, so this is sort of, one of the problems that arise from my research so far, is that you sort of slowly going to this dip. So, the acceleration is sort of moving out.

00:19:15 Yasmine
Yeah, they are.

Reference 7 - 0,85% Coverage

 We're still working, but the second we don't have anything. We're all stopping because, again, it was founded by 6

members that are all, if you want, working pro bono on this. For them, Beirut Heritage Initiative, it's a project, so they're giving their time for it. But they're all have another job, a main job, you know. So, they are working during the day to their job, and then at night they see everything that's related to the Beirut Heritage initiative. I'm currently the only full-time member.

Reference 8 - 1,29% Coverage

So, following the blast, what we did is that we started having a sort of map with the database and so I'm the one that's always updates this database. And in August, two years after the blast, we did the small reports on how many heritage buildings were affected. How many were renovated? How many were not renovated? And there is still... So, in the first zone, the zone that was the most affected, there are still 40% of heritage buildings that are in need of renovation. But you don't have any funding, you know, but out of the 60% that was renovated, 20% was renovated by the owners, so there is 40% that was done by NGOs and all of that was done with, I think less than $20 million I think like, let's say 300 buildings, less than $20 million, which is nothing.

Reference 9 - 1,83% Coverage

Yeah, that's one of the positive effects of the Lebanese... of the current crisis, you know the economic crisis. If you pay in dollars, you can even have a discount. Yeah, it's horrible, but because our funding comes from Europe and you ask and everything, so it's mainly like EUR and dollars and... To give you an example, we finished in August the renovation of 1 house where the initial price was... We thought two years ago that it would be around 7 hundred $800,000 to renovate the house. So, we did the design and all of this, and the budget. And then when we did the bidding process, we always sent to multiple contractors, to see who has the most competitive but it's contractors that are specialised in heritage renovation. So, we had three different offers. One of it was for $450000 The other one for $400000 and the third one for $350000. And where we had estimated 700,000. So, there is huge difference, and even one of the guys, the one that gave us the offer for 400 was like if you pay everything in U.S. dollars, then count to $320,000 like there's an 80,000 discount.

Reference 10 - 0,67% Coverage

Originally the sea was just here, but then they built the highway, and they built the port on the

sea and we found photos of the house being right at the sea. So, it's this house. OK, before and after, so it's a house that's directly facing the point, so it very affected, yeah? So, this is a view of the shoreline in the 1890s. Approximately. OK? Right now, all of the sea there is the highway.

Reference 11 - 0,60% Coverage

It's not just this that... In the last two years, but since the end of the civil war, actually we've had lots of help and thinking wise, you know. like the World Bank funded I don't know how many studies on like public system of transportation and stuff like that and then nothing actually happens. So, people are actually fed up with like those big ideas.

Reference 12 - 0,94% Coverage

00:58:40 Yasmine
Regarding what? This?

00:58:48 Yasmine
Yes and no. I know it is going to take a lot of time, especially that in the past three years there

was a lot of people that left the country. The people that could leave are actually the people that have the means to leave and go and start somewhere else. And so, the people that stayed or the people that... or, wanted to stay like me.

Reference 13 - 0,98% Coverage

Yeah, the sense of community. Actually, it exists in most Arab countries, but people don't know about it because most of the people think like... Especially in Lebanon, you have a lot of different religion and it's the reason that we had the civil war, you know, like the different type of religions and political parties and all of that. But a lot of people, they just don't care about this anymore. It's literally a system that follows our parents and our grandparent's generation, but our generation does not care about this and we're all trying to get along and to be friendly

Reference 14 - 0,61% Coverage

He wanted us to live and to have a better life outside of Lebanon, because here you have like economic crisis and it is a poor country, even though it doesn't show in the capital which is

Beirut. But this region is OK, but you have neighbourhoods that are very, very poor. And when you go outside of Beirut, most of the people are not living in like proper ways.

Reference 15 - 0,53% Coverage

the arches did not collapse but the facade was detached from the rest of the building and so we had to... you insert stainless steel rods on the corners of the walls and it's like braces for the teeth. It's the same thing you slowly screw them closer every day for the façade to go back. Yeah. It was a huge thing.

Reference 16 - 0,50% Coverage

We're doing a lot of seminars with Ukraine for them to encourage them to start rebuilding the second the war is done and everything, and we would like you Lebanese people to give a seminar on how to start and how to build a community to rebuild.
We were like, yeah great but give us more money!

Transcription Yasser Akkaoui
[2,16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,54% Coverage

And this is key for resilience, right? And Ukraine in 2014,

2015 has worked on serious decentralization efforts, which contributed to the resilience of Ukrainians villages, to overcome the attacks.

Reference 2 - 0,80% Coverage

We have 1016 villages. If each village is able to sit together, scratch its heads, you know, and identify innovative ways to solve the problems, whether related to environment, whether related to electricity, energy or pollution, etc. They can do it better than waiting for our central government.

Reference 3 - 0,82% Coverage

Ideally, what I would love to have is for example a bunch of TU Delft students, who would come, you know, and participate in design thinking sessions, that will allow us, allow us, say a village, to identify the best renewable energy solution to adopt, and design this, and let the private sector join.