



THE
SOUTH-
WESTERN
SUBURBS
OF
BEIRUT

-
AN
ECLECTIC
MICRODRAFT
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“DAHIYAH”

THE SOUTH-WESTERN SUBURBS OF BEIRUT

AN ECLECTIC MICROCOSM

ETH Studio Basel Contemporary City Institute
NICOLAS BURCKHARDT, HARRY HEYCK

Prof. Jacques Herzog
Prof. Pierre de Meuron
Manuel Herz
Shadi Rahbaran
Ying Zhou

THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIO
Wintersemester 2009

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Harry sketched by Nicolas & vice versa

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Dahiyah - An Eclectic Microcosm

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PREFACE

The Ouzai Plain represents whole Lebanon and is a no-man's-land at the same time. A paradox and fascinating conglomerate of collateral microcosms we immediately wanted to know more about.

After entering the area, one is constantly surrounded by plenty of phenomena that usually define a city, but never gets the feeling of having reached a place where to stand still and observe. Not what we would have expected from a place that used to be a projection surface for the visions of three generations of urbanists and developers.

When exploring our research perimeter we quickly realized that things work differently here. People are more careful, more observing, more silent and more introverted than in other areas of the city. This triggered our interest and we wanted to find out more and try to catch a glimpse of what lies behind this facade of scepticism and introversion.

A spontaneous invitation by locals raised our hope and made us believe to have finally gained access. Only hours later, our attempt to take a picture was shattered within seconds by an arrest through local authorities and the strict order to refrain from gathering information in the area immediately.

This restriction left us no other option than to sharpen our eye and bring things down on paper as soon as back in the hotel. A strategy that would determine the entire working process.

Credits

We would like to thank Catherine Aris, Ezzat Chbib, Valérie Clerc, Mona Fawaz, Mona Harb, Jihad Hussein, Bassam Moussa, Jad Tabet, the American University of Beirut, the Institut français du Proche-Orient, the Carnegie Middle East Center and the German Orient Institute for the active contribution to our research and their helpful advice.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Research Perimeter

Facts & Figures

Timeline Beirut and Lebanon 1900–2010

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Situation 1945

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Development of the Coastline

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Situation 1995

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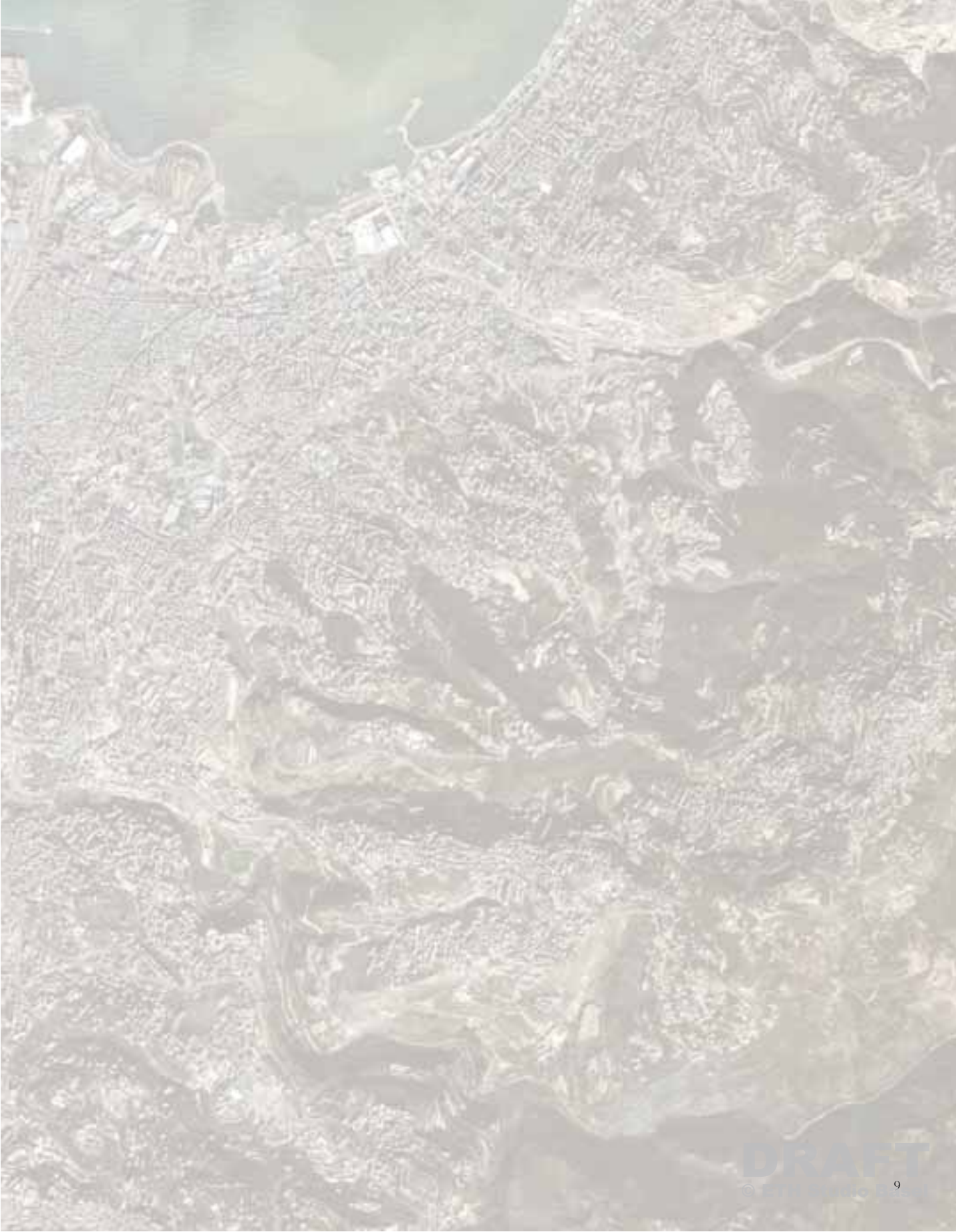


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Research Perimeter

0 m 1000 m





Research Perimeter



City Center - Basel

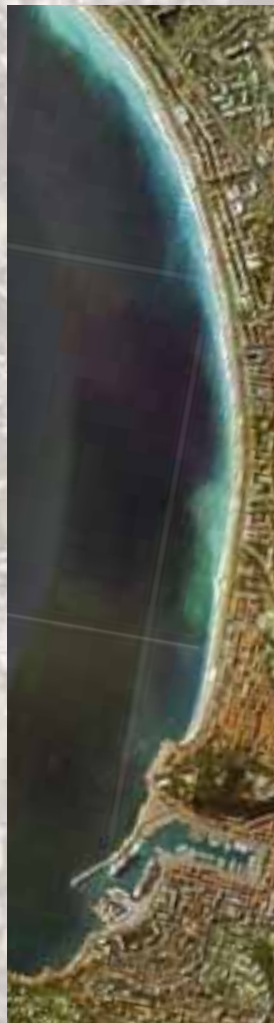


0 m 1000 m

Central Park - New York



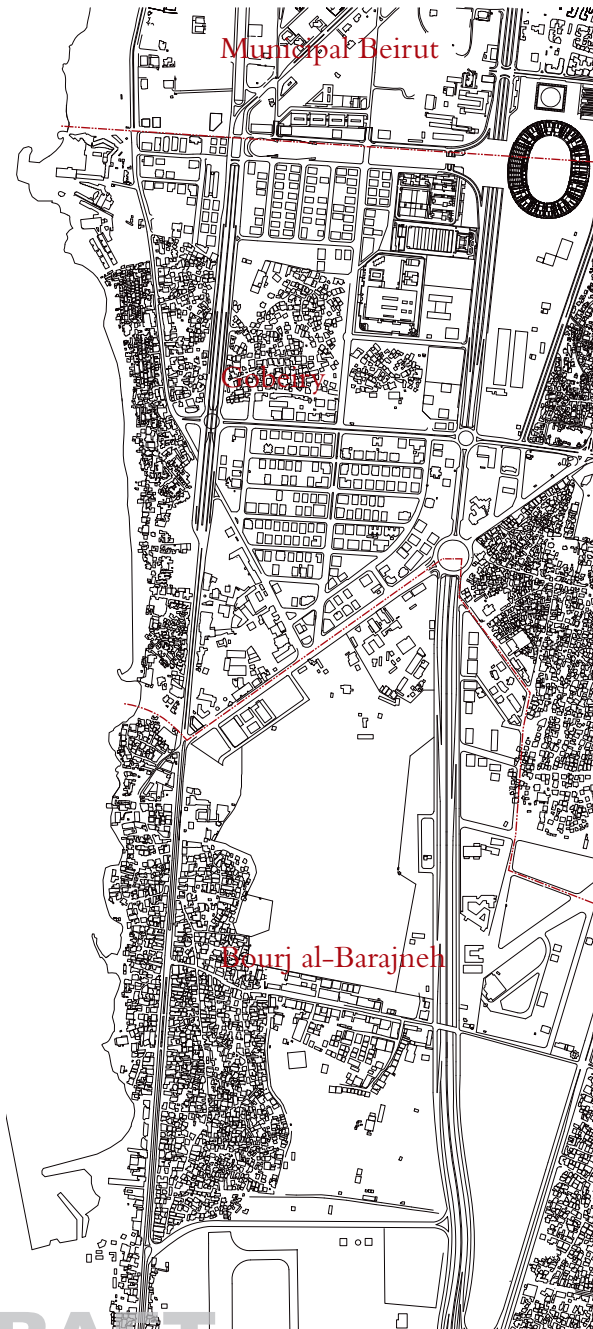
Coastline - Nice



FACTS AND FIGURES

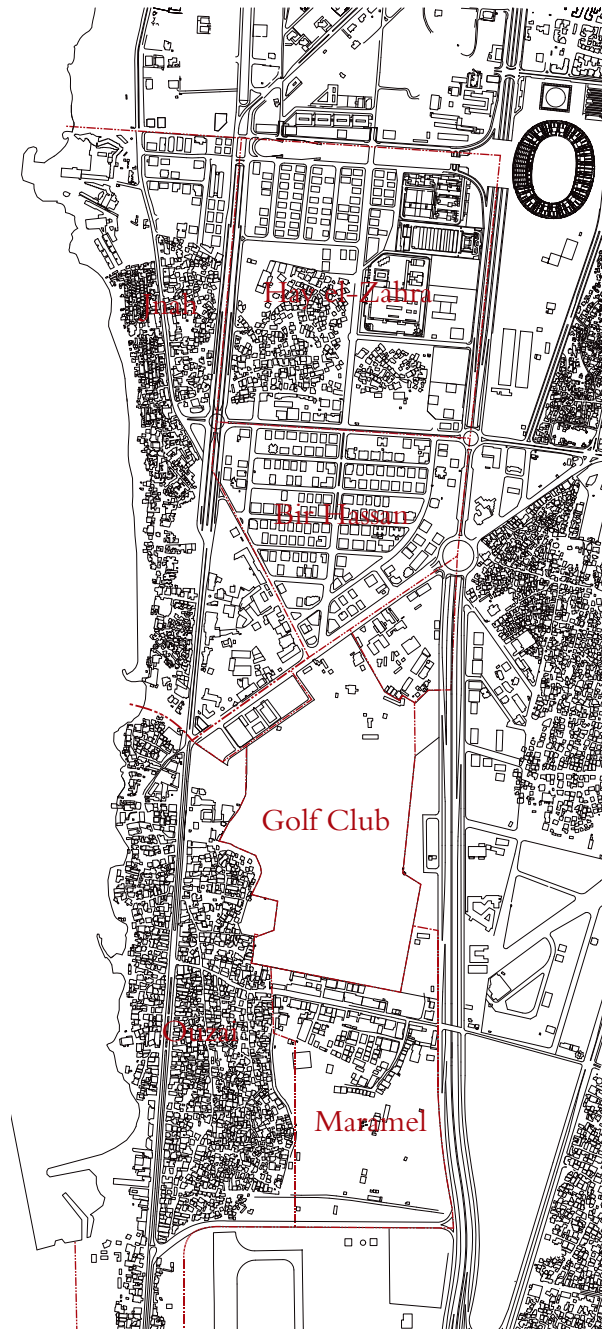
MUNICIPAL BORDERS

Municipal borders define administrative zones. Within these borders municipalities collect taxes and provide public services to the community.



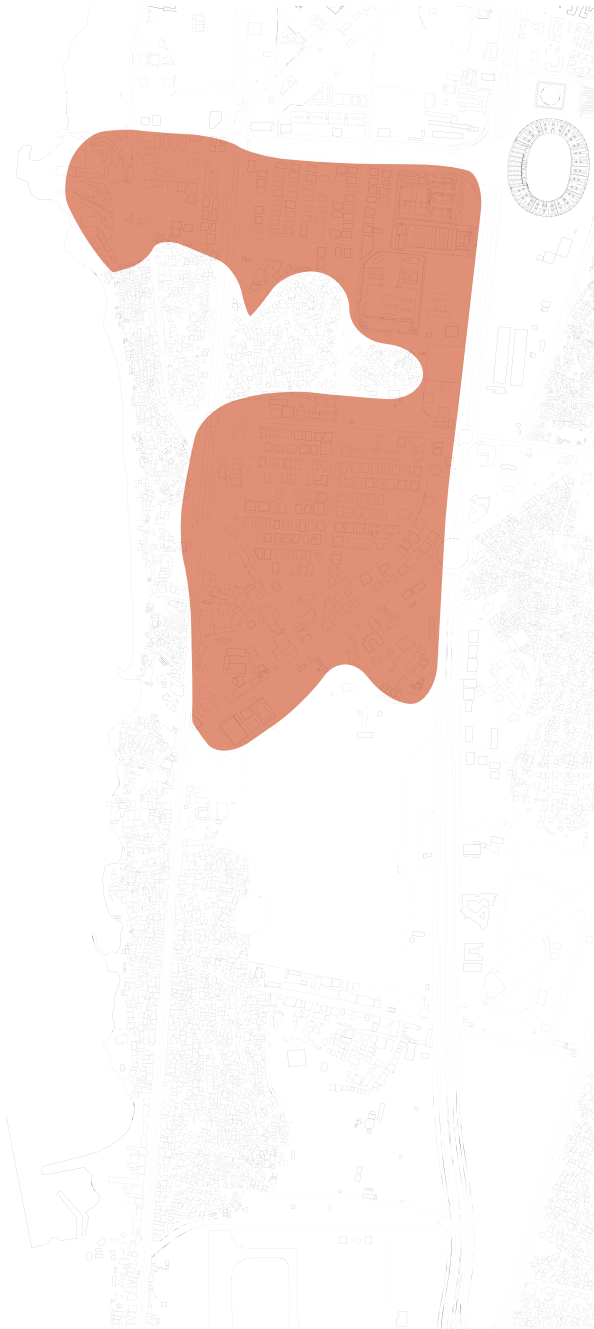
DISTRICT BORDERS

District borders define the names of different neighbourhoods. They don't have any administrative function and can also have institutional names.



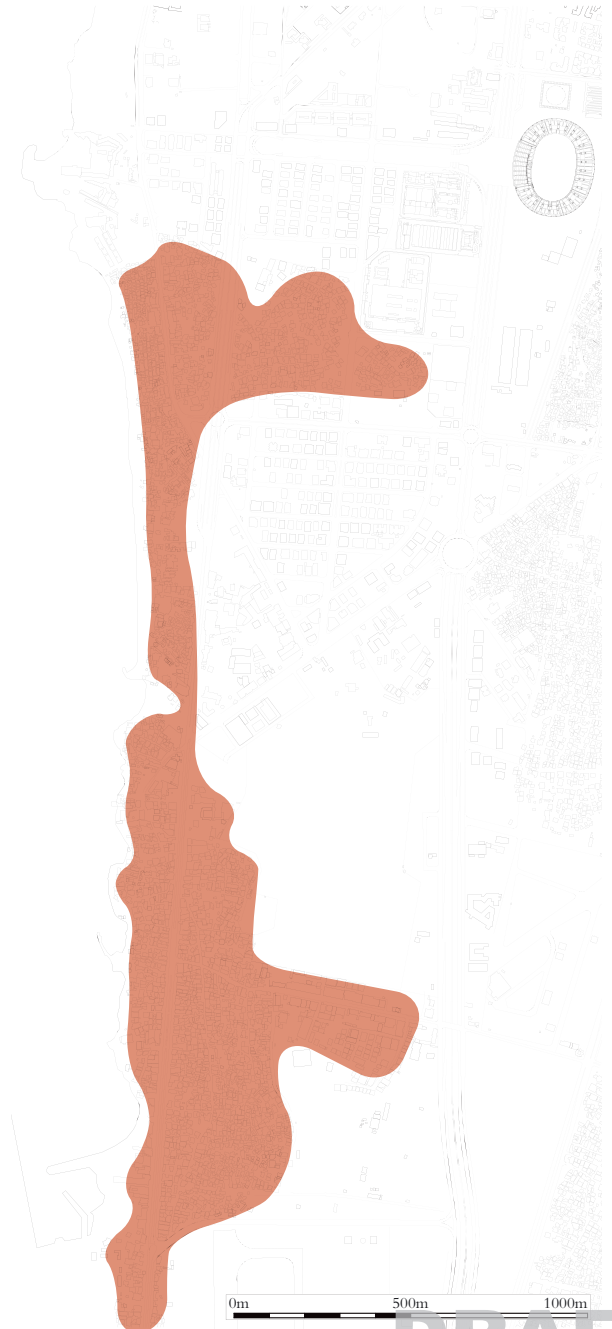
FORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Formal settlements are what is commonly known as regular built environment complying with the zoning code and other regulations. The ownership situation is clear.

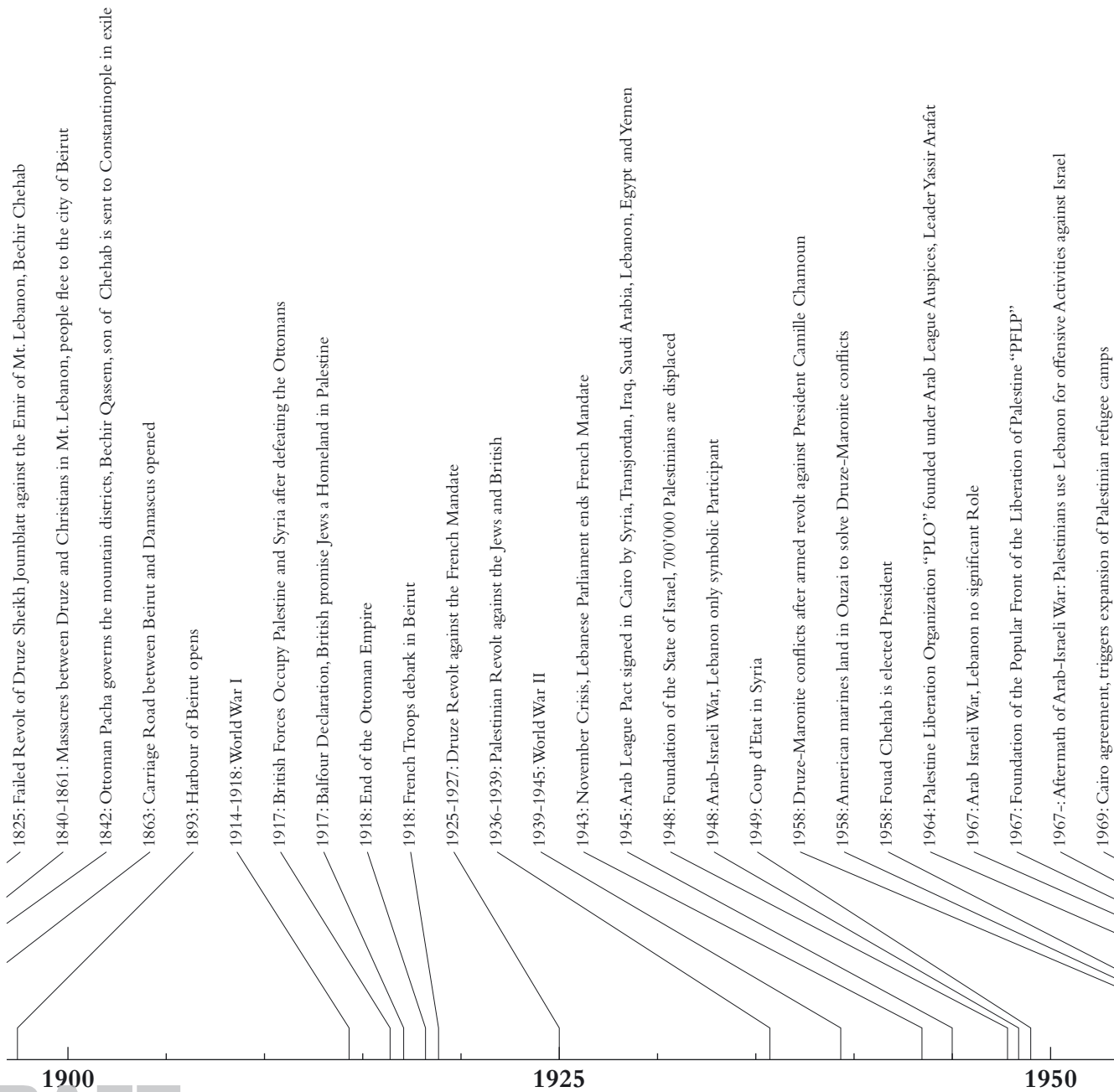


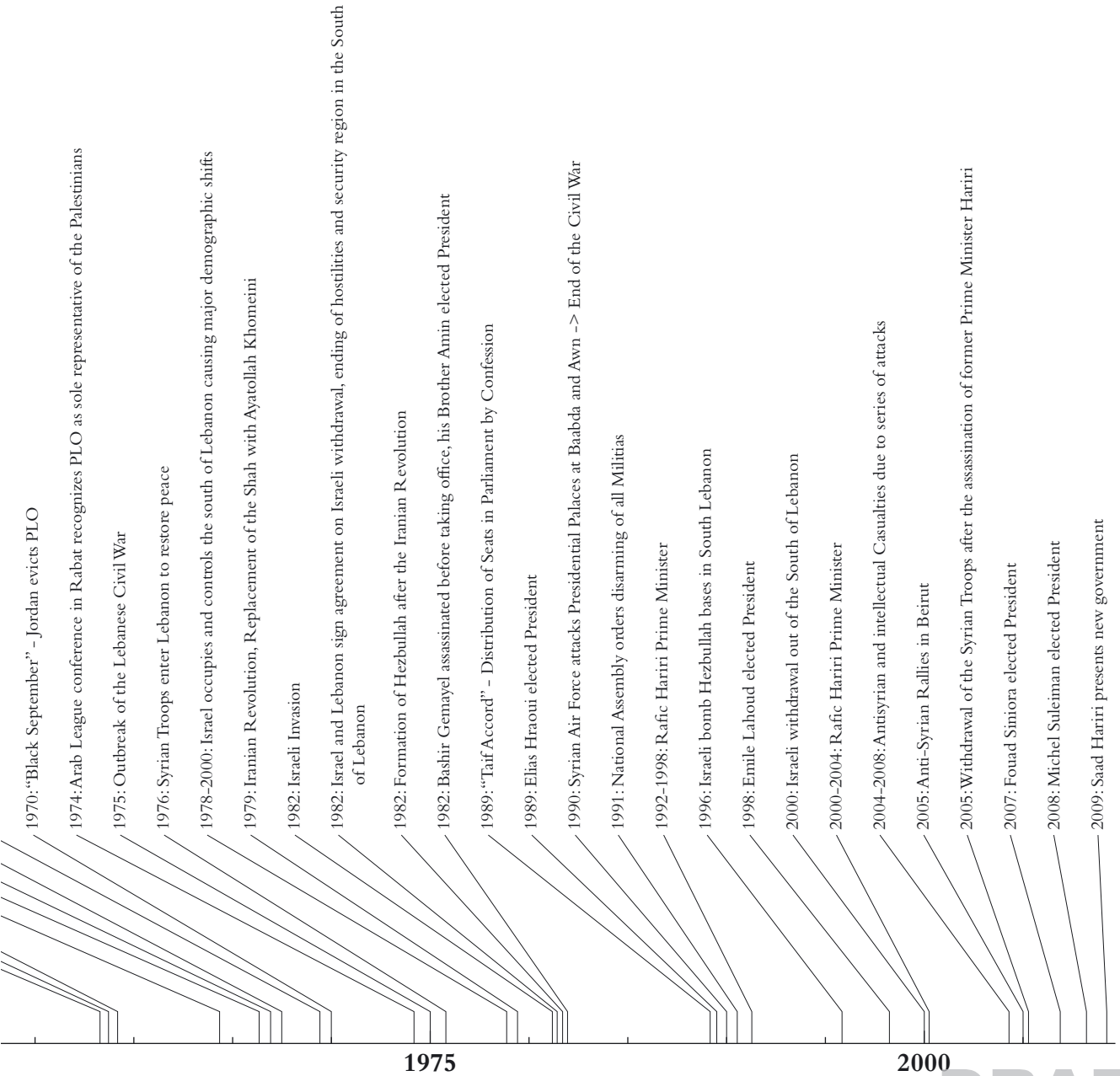
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Informal settlements are erected without permission of the actual land owners. Thus they are illegal and don't comply to zoning law and regulations.



TIMELINE - BEIRUT AND LEBANON

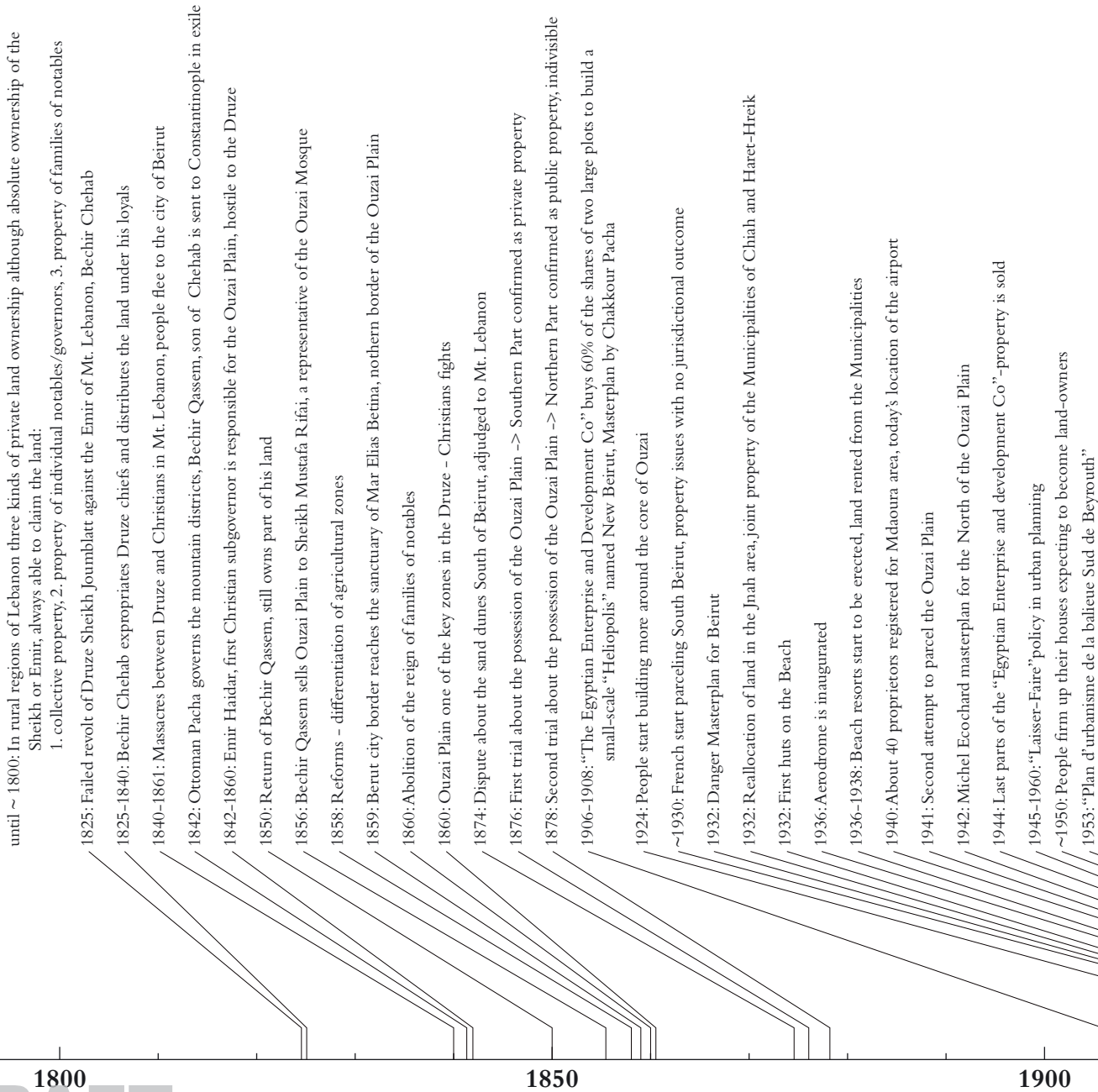


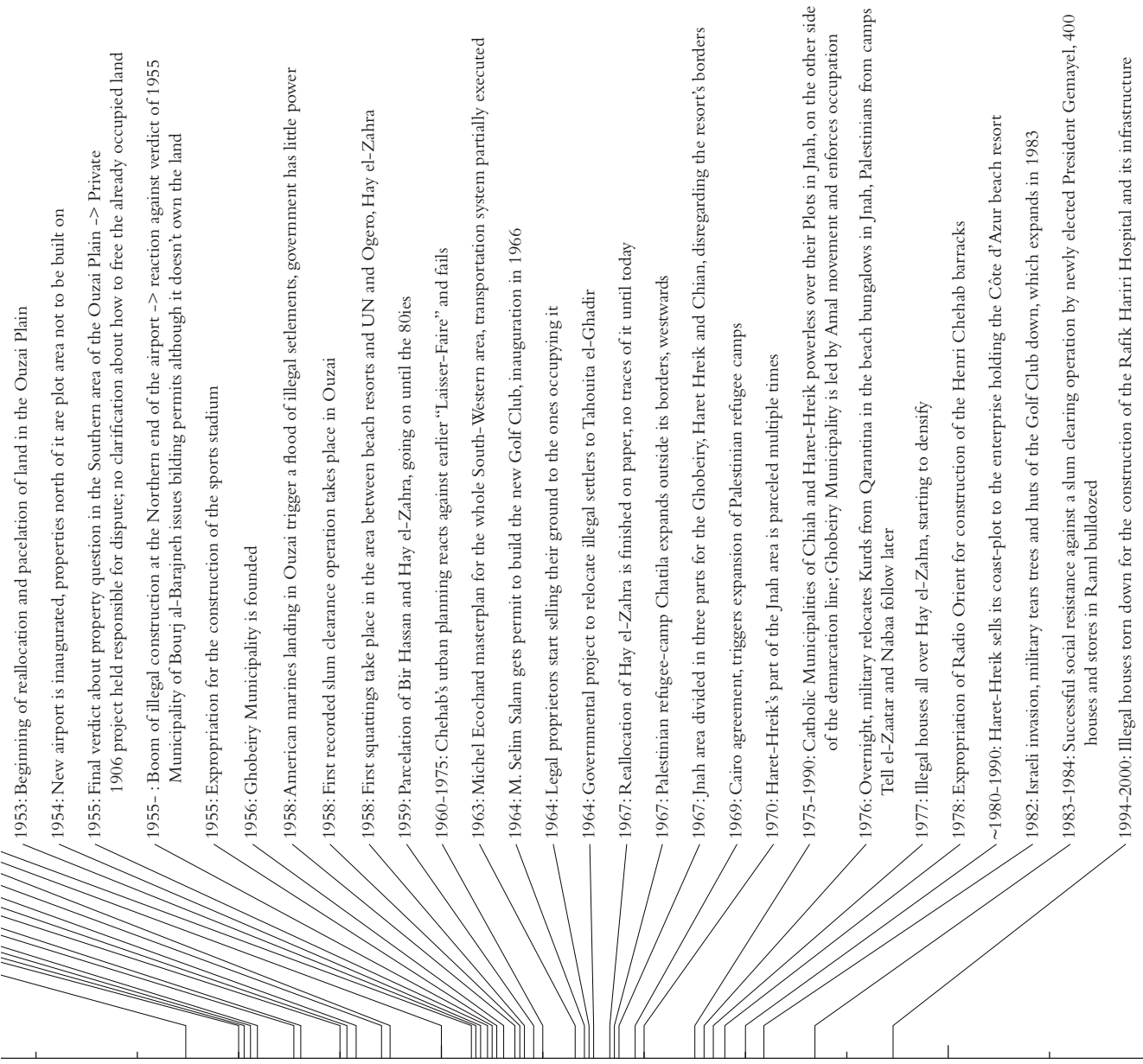


1975

2000

TIMELINE – RESEARCH PERIMETER





1950

2000

1953: Beginning of reallocation and parcelation of land in the Ouzai Plain

1954: New airport is inaugurated, properties north of it are plot area not to be built on

1955: Final verdict about property question in the Southern area of the Ouzai Plain -> Private

1906 project held responsible for dispute; no clarification about how to free the already occupied land

1955- : Boom of illegal construction at the Northern end of the airport -> reaction against verdict of 1955

Municipality of Bourj al-Barajneh issues building permits although it doesn't own the land

1955: Expropriation for the construction of the sports stadium

1956: Ghobeiry Municipality is founded

1958: American marines landing in Ouzai trigger a flood of illegal settlements, government has little power

1958: First recorded slum clearance operation takes place in Ouzai

1958: First squatting take place in the area between beach resorts and UN and Ogero, Hay el-Zahra

1959: Parcelation of Bir Hassan and Hay el-Zahra, going on until the 80ies

1960-1975: Chehab's urban planning reacts against earlier "Laisser-Faire" and fails

1963: Michel Ecochard masterplan for the whole South-Western area, transportation system partially executed

1964: M. Selim Salam gets permit to build the new Golf Club, inauguration in 1966

1964: Legal proprietors start selling their ground to the ones occupying it

1964: Governmental project to relocate illegal settlers to Tahouita el-Ghadir

1967: Reallocation of Hay el-Zahra is finished on paper, no traces of it until today

1967: Palestinian refugee-camp Chatila expands outside its borders, westwards

1967: Jnah area divided in three parts for the Ghobeiry, Haret Hreik and Chian, disregarding the resort's borders

1969: Cairo agreement, triggers expansion of Palestinian refugee camps

1970: Haret-Hreik's part of the Jnah area is parceled multiple times

1975-1990: Catholic Municipalities of Chiah and Haret-Hreik powerless over their Plots in Jnah, on the other side of the demarcation line; Ghobeiry Municipality is led by Amal movement and enforces occupation

1976: Overnight, military relocates Kurds from Qarantina in the beach bungalows in Jnah, Palestinians from camps Tell el-Zaatar and Nabaa follow later

1977: Illegal houses all over Hay el-Zahra, starting to densify

1978: Expropriation of Radio Orient for construction of the Henri Chehab barracks

~1980-1990: Haret-Hreik sells its coast-plot to the enterprise holding the Côte d'Azur beach resort

1982: Israeli invasion, military tears trees and huts of the Golf Club down, which expands in 1983

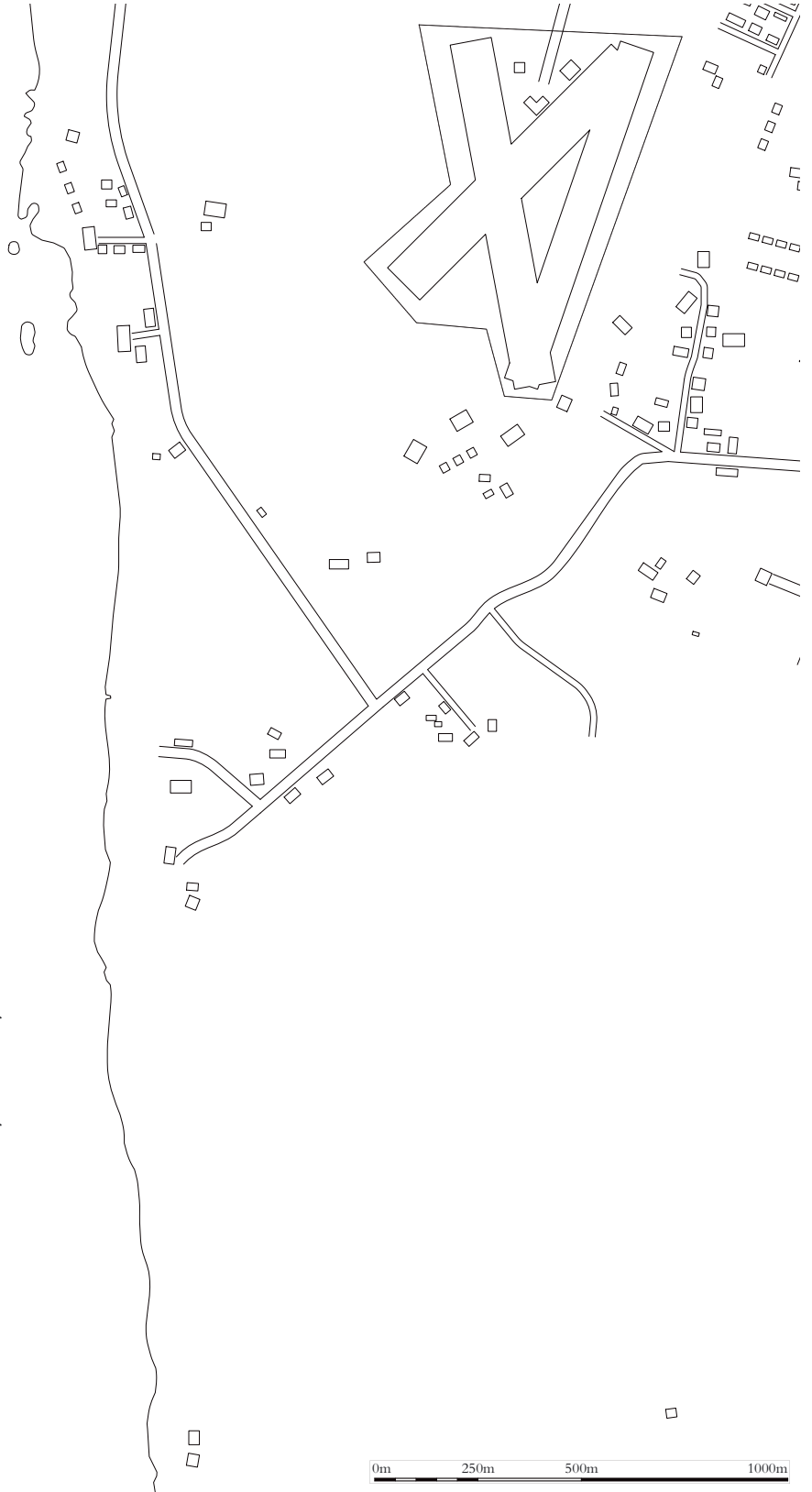
1983-1984: Successful social resistance against a slum clearing operation by newly elected President Gemayel, 400 houses and stores in Raml bulldozed

1994-2000: Illegal houses torn down for the construction of the Rafik Hariri Hospital and its infrastructure

SITUATION 1945



The land in the south-western area of Beirut is starting to be parceled in the 1930ies under French Mandate, although Beirut's city border has reached the north of the area in 1914 already. Sand dunes and forest cover the largest part of the area. After the aerodrome is inaugurated in 1936, more attention is drawn towards the South. The first traces of settlements shown in the map emerge from 1924 onwards, in the 1930ies the first beach resorts start to be planned and constructed. As a consequence, first questions of land-property arise. The only connection between Beirut and the South of Lebanon is the road to Saida, which lies East of the perimeter and thus doesn't appear in the map. The coastal road ins't to be built until the early 50ies.



VISION 1953 - "ECOCHARD II"

CLARIFICATION

The Plan shown on the right side is very controversial. Jad Tabet and Eric Verdeil attribute it to Ecochard, referring to it as the plan from 1961 for a governmental city.

The third interpretation which we assume is correct is the one of Valérie Clerc, calling it the "Plan d'urbanisme de la banlieue sud de Beyrouth" from 1953, regardless of the author.

It is very unlikely to be from 1961, because the buildings that can be seen in the Bir Hassan area on the 1962 map would have emerged in too short of a time.

THE PLAN

The Plan divides the southern suburbs in five different zones with regard to lot sizes and exploitation ratio. The minimum plot size goes from 400 to 1200 square meters and the exploitation ranges from 20 to 55 percent.

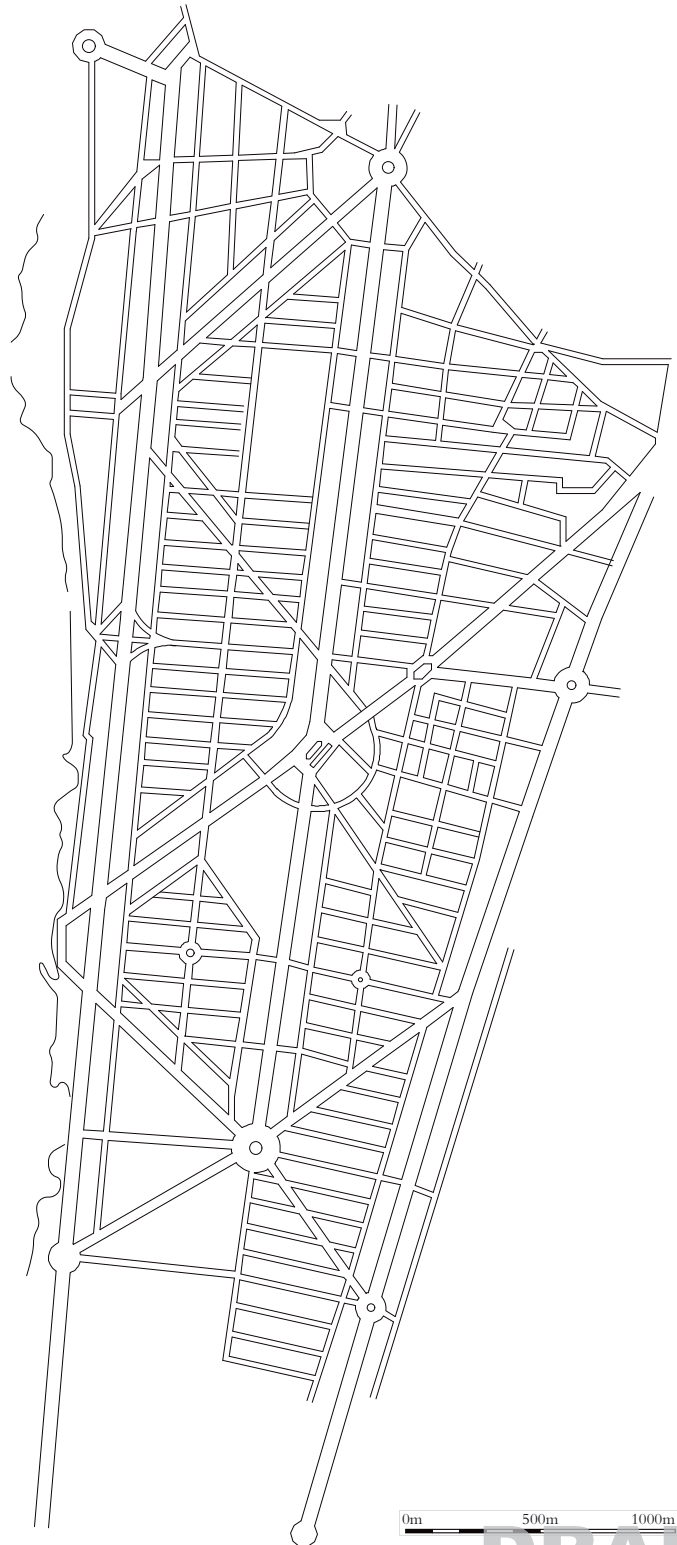
Zone number II covers most of the masterplan, the respective properties are minimum 900 sqm and 40%.

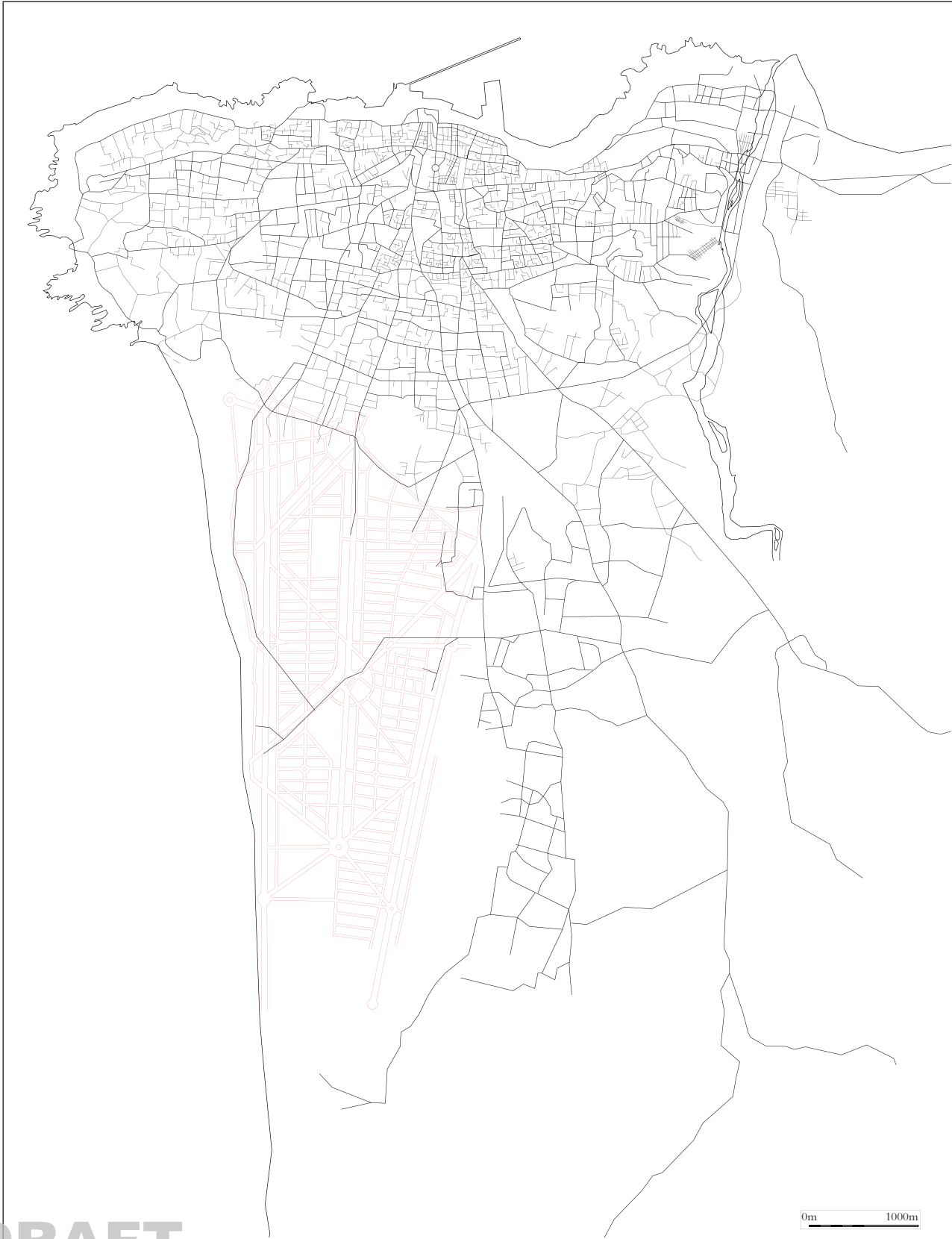
This is less than is going to be allowed in 1964 for the other outskirts of Beirut by the "Plan Directeur" and ratios aren't adjusted until Elysar.

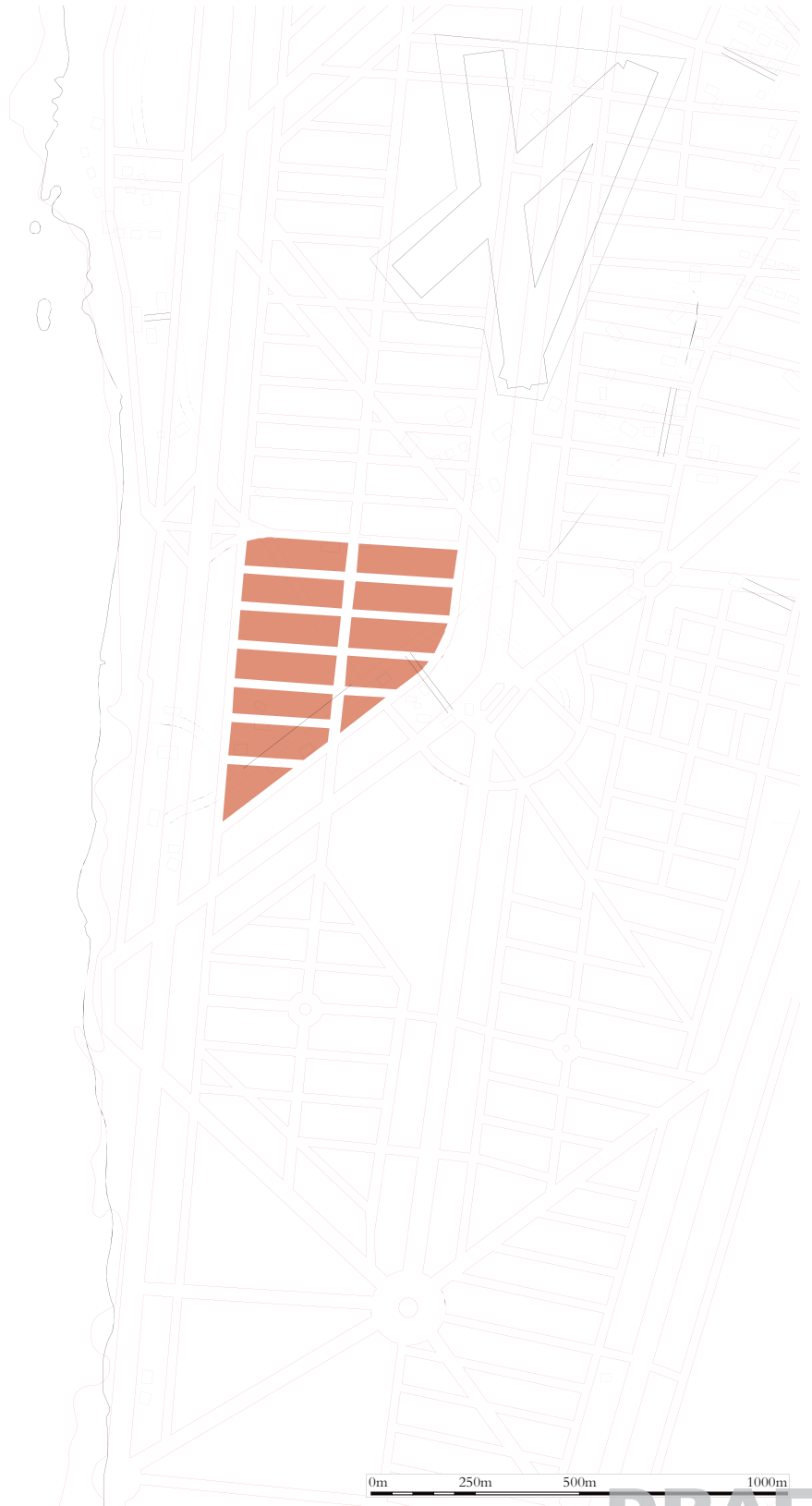
THE OUTCOME

However, due to property questions, development and reallocation in most parts of the projected area are frozen. The only realized part is made in red on page 21. Traces of it are visible in the 1962 ground plan on page 22 already.

It won't be possible to continue where plans started after the war, because many free plots were used for refugee camps. Hence, the only thing gradually executed is the system of main roads which is partially recognizable in contemporary maps.





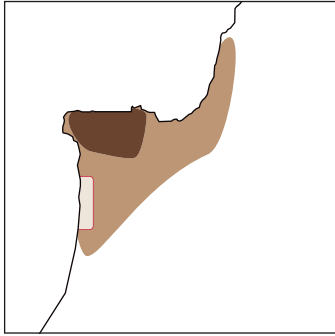


left:
Overlay of the 1953 masterplan
with the 1945 city road system

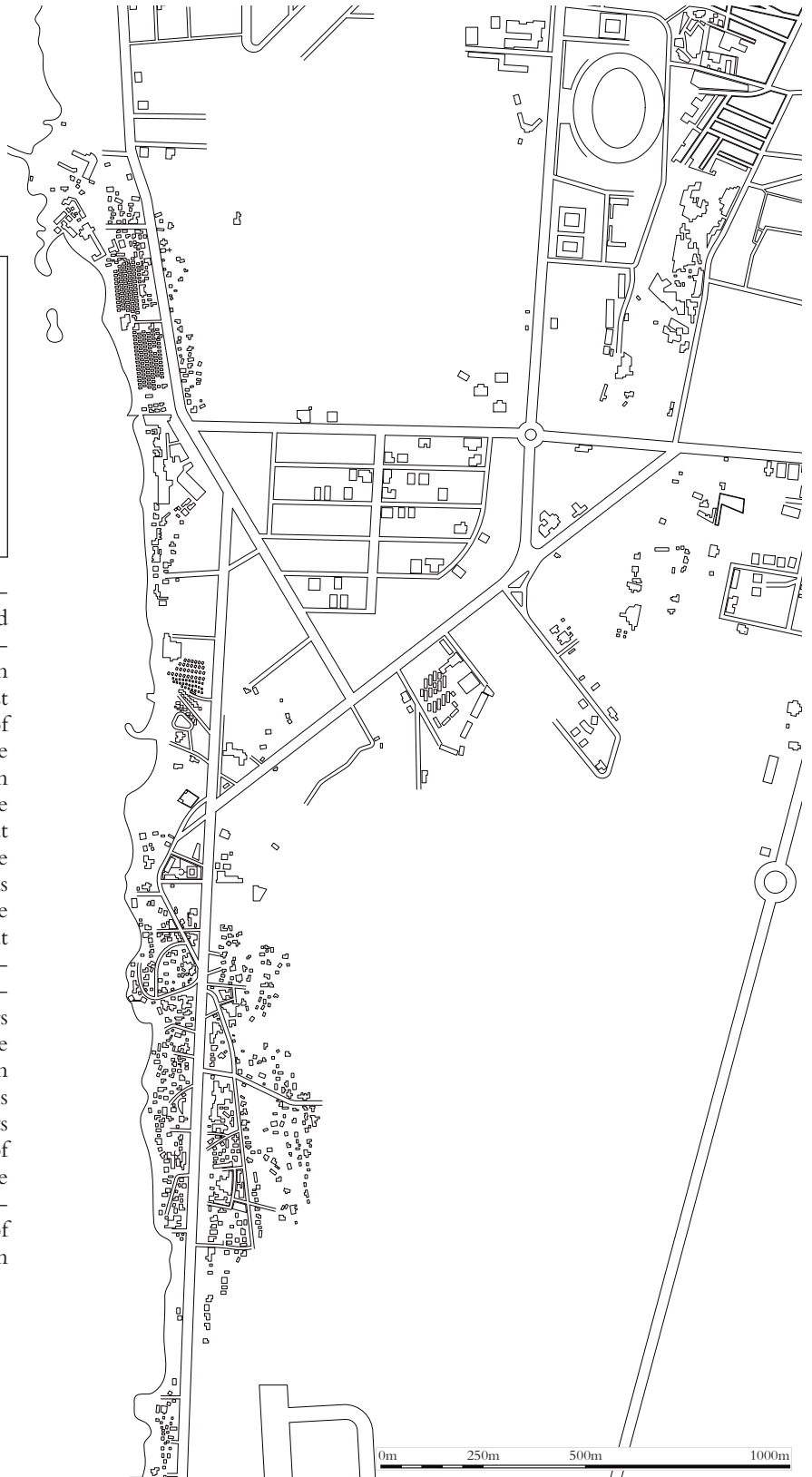
right:
Overlay of the 1953 masterplan
with the 1945 local map. The
area in red will be realized.

0m 250m 500m 1000m

SITUATION 1962



In the 1950ies, the municipalities of Bourj-al-Barajneh and Chiah dispute about the property of Mdaoura, which lies in the south of Ouzai. The most important process in terms of land-ownership takes place from 1953 to 1955 between Bourj-al-Barajneh and private owners. The verdict states that the land belongs to the private owners. Many can't use it, as it is not to be built due to the expansion of the airport that has recently been built. Furthermore the municipality encourages settlers and squatters around the core of the village of Ouzai as counter-reaction to the verdict. The Golf Club is about to be relocated from its former location to the South of Bir Hassan. The upper middle class leisure establishments cover almost the entire coastline of Jnah. Parcelation of Bir Hassan has taken place in 1959.



VISION 1963 - "ECOCHARD III"



This plan is strongly shaped by the prominent modernist ideals which at the time had a worldwide impact on urban planning issues. The planners of Beirut, once more joined by Ecochard, also live these urban dreams and promote the establishment of two regional centers located in the sandy dunes of Bourj Brajneh. The declared goal is to replace the existing mononuclear structure with a polynuclear network. These planning efforts will lead to the Greater Beirut Master Plan and its approval in 1964.

Many sections of the project description deal with the topic of circulation. A clear hierarchy within the transportation system is established, projecting highways which penetrate the city center and link it to the periphery where a new belt highway shall relieve the Mazraa Boulevard. These traffic connections which lead to Damascus, Tripoli, Saida and of course to the planned new towns in the southern suburbs are a key element of the so called third Ecochard Plan.

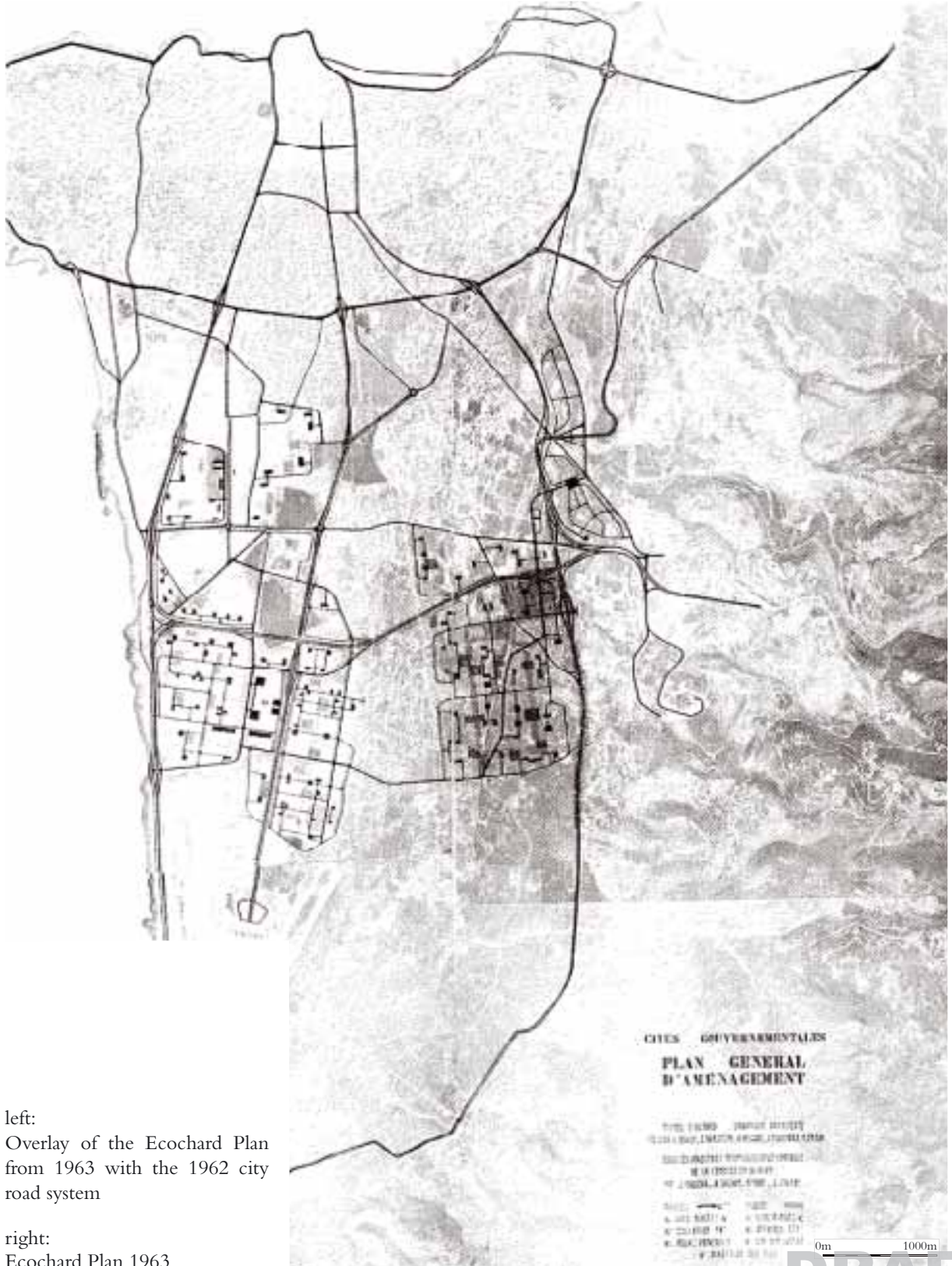
The plans for these new towns in the southern suburbs never got realized though. Instead, informal settlements spread along the roads and beaches and the appetite for speculation quickly covered any virgin area with highly commercialized parcellation schemes.





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left:
 Overlay of the Ecochard Plan
 from 1963 with the 1962 city
 road system

right:
 Ecochard Plan 1963

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COASTLINE

In 1878, the court judges a significant part of where the future beach resorts are to emerge collective property of the municipalities (see chapter about ownership). The coastline is a public space, many people use it for recreation.

At the same time as the first Aerodrome is finished in 1936, the first beach resorts start to emerge. The city has reached the area and the wish for beach resorts evolves while tourism becomes popular. Foreigners as well as Lebanese upper- and upper-middle-class start discovering the benefit of seaside resorts for their leisure. But the current events are not to everybody's satisfaction. The municipalities concede the beaches to enterprises who erect the new recreational facilities. As tenants, they can't buy the collectively owned land. Anyway the beaches are shut down to a wider public and become private. The ones located more south continue to attract Beirutis, regardless of the social environment and provenance.

In summer, wealthy families usually either rent a bungalow for a few weeks or during the whole season. Many of the people we had contact with had memories about passing parts of their youth at the beach.

Postcards from the time show the resorts as like movie settings, little paradisiac places where everything is beautiful, clean and casual.

This bourgeois prosperity is terminated in January 1976. After the Christian militias attack Qarantina and burn it down, the Kurd, Syrian and Palestinian refugees are temporarily relocated in the bungalows. As it is winter, they are empty and also due to the Green Line, many of the tenants wouldn't be able to access "their" bungalows.

Later, Palestinians from the camps Tell el-Zaatar and Nabaa follow and squat the remaining buildings. The enterprises managing the hotels are powerless, because they don't legally own the land and therefore can't make any claim.

In the course of the war, people lose interest in the beach as a leisure resort. The ones living there now are refugees and therefore care for other things. Like that, the paradisiac stages transform into neglected backyards.



Summerland

Coral Beach

Côte d'Azur

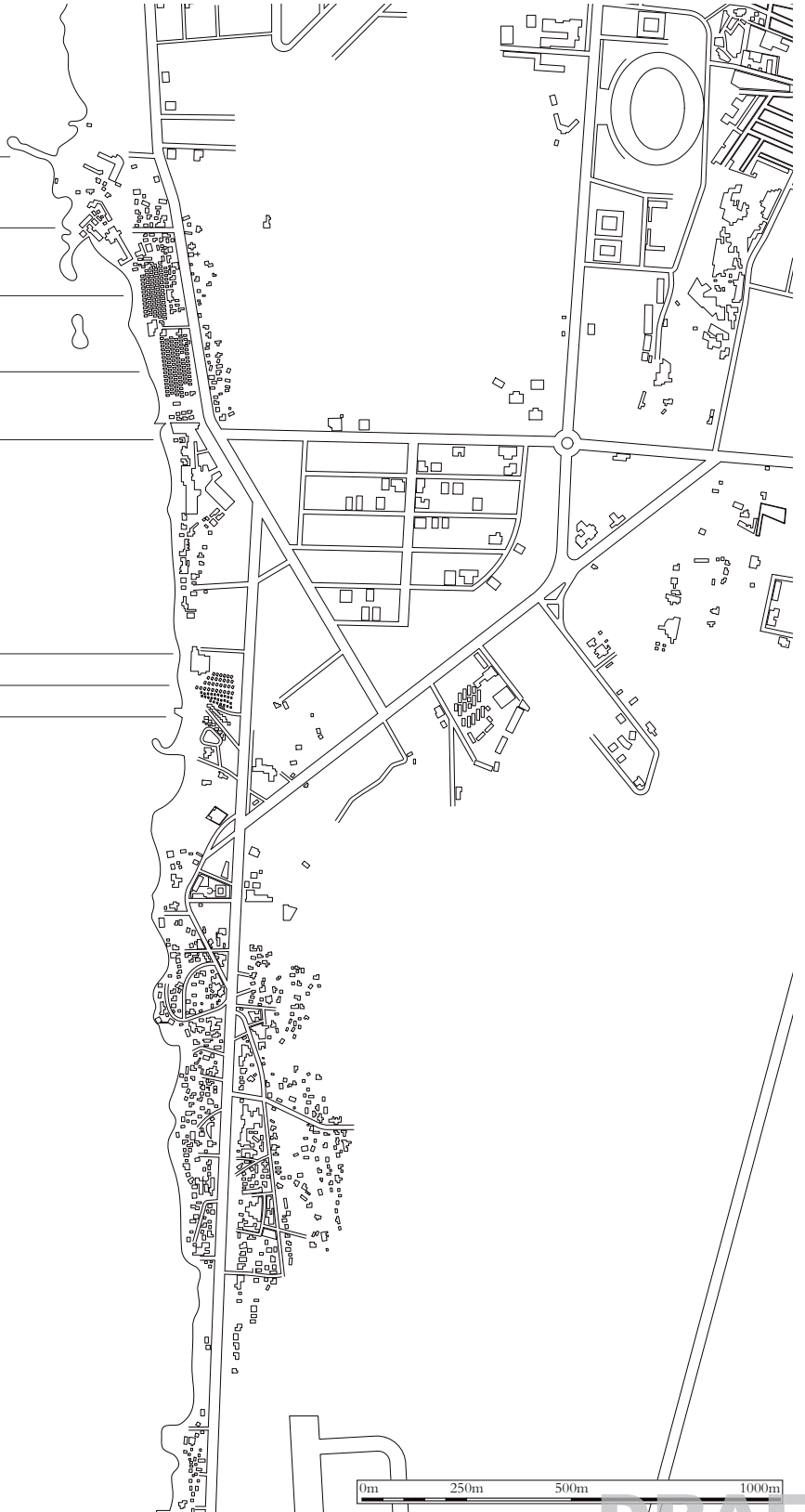
Saint-Simon

Saint-Michel

Riviera

Acapulco

Sands



left:

Postcard of Saint-Simon in 1956

right:

1962 map with beach resorts

0m 250m 500m 1000m





upper left:
Côte d'Azur and Saint-Simon
resorts, picture from late 60ies

lower left:
Current picture of the identi-
cal stretch of coastline

right:
Overlay of original resorts
with current situation

THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

PRE-WAR CONDITIONS

On the eve of the Civil War Lebanon had to cope with severe economic, political and demographic tensions. The political and economic systems of the country were dominated by Christians and led by Western-oriented business men. The ones benefitting from the system denied basic social services to broad sections of the population through a common practice of exploitation and corruption. While some communities in Beirut and the mountainous areas north and south of the city prospered economically, other communities in the Akkar region to the north, Jabal Amil in the South, and the Bekaa Valley in the east, all largely populated by Shiites and Sunni Muslims, were financially disadvantaged.

When Palestinian refugees settled in Lebanon once more after the 1967 Six-Day Arab-Israeli War, the Muslim population increased and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) carried its operations across the Lebanese borders into Israel. By 1975 about 60% of the total population of Lebanon were Muslims.

OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR

Religious identification laid the foundation for the Lebanese Civil War which erupted with attacks along religious lines dividing Muslim and Christian communities. These attacks had been carried out by opposing militias defending self-claimed turf and led to the so called battle of the hotels. To the day, deserted building complexes like the Holiday Inn remain as silent witnesses of this period. The frontline, also known as the Green Line, divided the greater Beirut area in a Christian part in the east and a Muslim part in the west.

EFFECTS ON THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS

As a result of the heavy fighting within the boundaries of Municipal Beirut the town not only structurally but also demographically imploded from its center outwards and suffered an immense outflow of residents, but also an inflow of people in need of shelter. This process of migration and displacement forced a continual segregation of the population and led to the growth of slums, squatted neighborhoods and informal settlements.

The militias involved in this process wanted to guarantee the transition of one part of their rural communities into the cities. They needed to facilitate the symbolic acquisition of a social or geographic space within their now religiously homogeneous areas. Different militias even planned for its lower income population and reinterpreted planning concepts within the structures of their own ideologies and political agendas.

While moving into the city or out of it as the conflict dictated, inhabitants of Beirut turned inwards into their homes, restaurants or private clubs seeking privileged membership or enclosing walls to keep the city at bay. On the other hand, the inner or private domain, that of the home, was weakened as whole families were displaced and forced to share cramped places.

FOREIGN INTRUSION

When the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982 and soon reached the outskirts of Beirut they were further complicating the economic, social and political situation. The conflict escalated when the Iranian supported Hezbollah militias opposed the Israeli troops in Southern Lebanon. The fact that Lebanon failed to elect a president in 1988 after the end of President Amin Gemayel's term additionally led to a constitutional crisis. Only the Taif Agreement that was drafted as a national charter of reconciliation in 1989 managed to stabilize the situation.

END OF THE WAR

The war ended in 1990 with many conflicts still unresolved. However, the reforms established by the Taif Agreement asserted some semblance of peace in the country.



Regional impact of the Civil War

STAGNATION OF LEBANESE POPULATION GROWTH

16 years of devastation and cruelties prevented population growth due to following reasons:

- 120'000 people lost their lives, 300'000 were wounded
- 800'000 - 900'000 Lebanese emigrated during the war time
- 22 per cent of Lebanese families have been displaced at least once
- Natural birth rate decreased from 8.5 children per woman in 1971 to 4.8 children per woman in 1980
- Lebanese population growth stagnated
- 300'000 houses were severely damaged

NEW SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

Massive internal population displacement and reduction of traditional division in rural and urban led to:

- Urban heterogeneity due to tremendous rural-urban migration before war
- Growing segregation of population along sectarian lines undermined social basis of Lebanese consociation
- Each armed fractions striving to create its own homogeneous sectarian territory
- Sectarian division of Beirut in West Beirut (Muslim) and East Beirut (Christian)

TRANSITION OF LEBANESE SOCIETY

Not only the geography but also the composition of Lebanese society changed profoundly:

- Forced social mobility resulting in decline and attrition of middle class and professional workforce (Health and education sector)
- Loss of productivity and efficiency
- Pre-war bourgeoisie leaving the country (Bankers, contractors, traders, ...)
- Rise of entrepreneurs who accumulated wealth in the Gulf states during the war years (e.g. Rafik Hariri), Shiite emigrants returning from West Africa, war profiteers, nouveau riches and militias
- Overall economical power of Christians dropping from 75 to 50 per cent

MULTIPOLARIZATION

The paralyzation of greater Beirut results in a regression of its predominance and primacy:

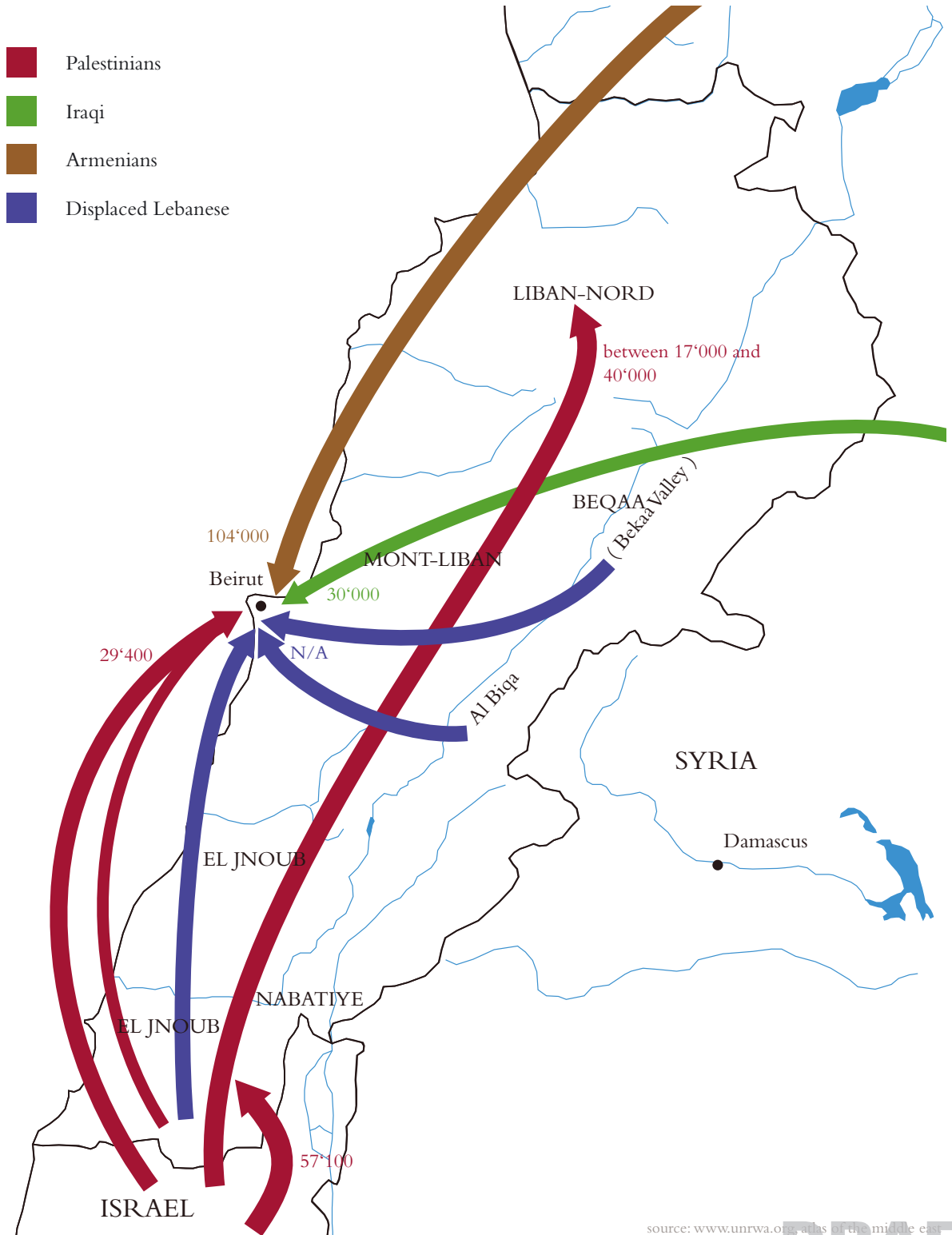
- Declining predominance and primacy of greater Beirut
- Decentralization in favour of regional poles
- Countrywide emergence of commercial networks and services

REGIONAL POPULATION SHIFTS

Lebanon has witnessed many mass migrations in the course of its history:

- 1915-17: The Armenian Genocide leads to the exodus of more than 100'000 of Armenians, many of them seeking for shelter in Lebanon
- 1948: Arab-Israeli war leads to displacement of about 700'000 Palestinians, many of them seeking for shelter in Lebanon
- 1950: Starting point of rural-urban migration of Syrian and Lebanese workers to Beirut
- 1975-90: Internal displacement of almost a million Lebanese citizens, mostly from the South and the Beqaa Valley
- 2003: Starting point of Iraqi migration to Lebanon, 30'000 to this day

CRUCIAL REGIONAL POPULATION SHIFTS



source: www.unrwa.org/atlas-of-the-middle-east

Local Impact of the Civil War

PREEXISTING CONDITIONS

Prior to 1975, most informal settlements were located near the industrial suburbs of Beirut, essentially its north-eastern suburbs. Nevertheless squatting and informal settlements already existed in Ouzai and Jnah since the 1950ies. As all these settlements are located in areas of contested land ownership , where conflicts over the establishment of land registries during the French Mandate, rising land registries during the French Mandate, rising land prices, and different political rivalries paved the way for their development.

IMPLOSION OF BEIRUT

As a result of the 16 years of heavy fighting within the boundaries of Municipal Beirut the town not only structurally but also demographically imploded from its center and suffered an immense outflow of residents, but also an inflow of people in need of any kind of shelter. This process of migration and displacement forced a continual segregation of the population and led to the growth of slums, squatted neighborhoods and informal settlements.

SQUATTING OF THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS

Shortly after 1975, most of the residents of the north-eastern suburban refugee camp of Qarantina were evicted from their houses and many started squatting in various areas of the southern suburbs, such as expensive sea-front beach resorts, empty green lots, or institutional buildings. Here they merged with the very few already present foreign workers and rural-urban immigrants and either occupied buildings or entire neighborhoods, abandoned by their owners (for reasons of security) or occupied large plots of land and transformed them into large squatter settlements. All these areas have considerably increased in density and also developed a large-scale rental market since then.

RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION

In addition to the previously mentioned people, extensive rural to urban migration occurred as a consequence of the two Israeli Invasions (1978 and 1982) and the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon (1978 to 2000). During this time most open spaces of the southern suburbs of Beirut have been transformed in what is usually called informal settlements. To the present day people from Beirut refer to these areas as Dahiyah which literally means suburb but in the case of Beirut is connoted with the poor, informal and mostly Shiite southern outskirts which carry the label of “illegal settlements”.

LOCAL POPULATION SHIFTS

The research perimeter has already been partially urbanized in the 1950ies. Large scale urbanization started in 1975 with the population shifts caused by the Civil War:

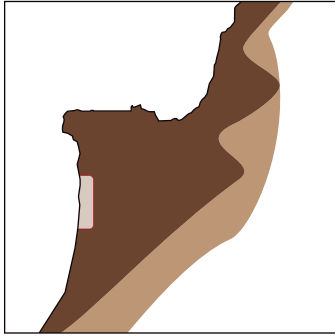
- 1977: Eviction of the Qarantina refugee camp, inhabitants seek shelter in beach resorts
- Palestinian refugees from Tell- el-Zaatar and Nabaa squat remaining empty buildings
- Constant arrival of predominantly Shiite population from downtown and north-eastern suburbs
- Extension of Palestinian camps of Bir Hassan and Shatila

CRUCIAL LOCAL POPULATION SHIFTS

- Palestinians
- Kurds from Qarantina
- Displaced from Beqaa Valley
- Displaced from Beirut
- Displaced from greater Beirut



SITUATION 1995



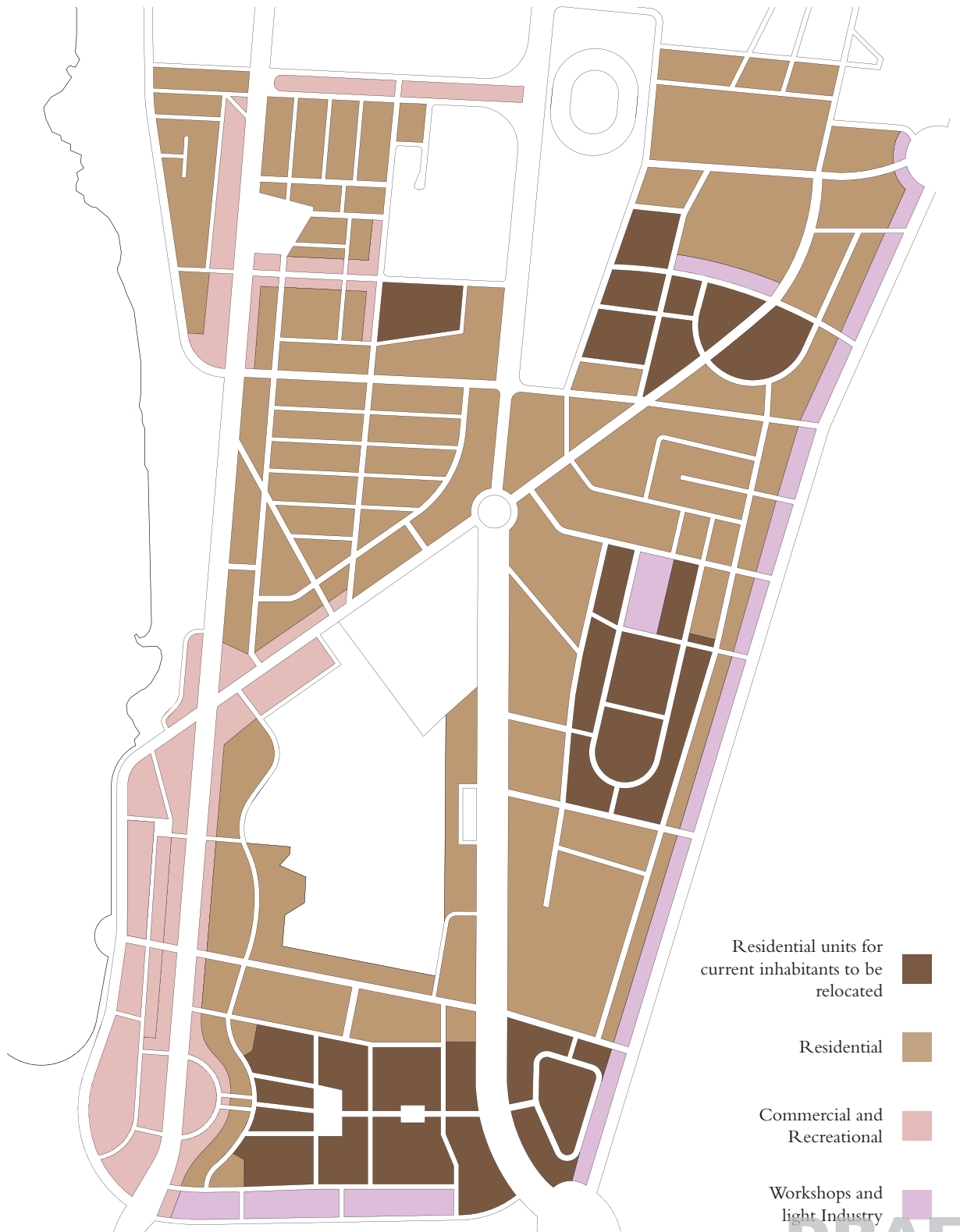
In 1995, the Civil War has been over for just a couple of years and Beirut is still recovering. Only few new buildings were erected in the Bir Hassan area and a major part of the existing ones was squatted during the past years. The consequences of the war had a strong impact on Jnah in particular, with the refugees from Qarantina and the Palestinian camps settling in the area and taking illegal settlements to a new density. Their borders have reached the UN-building and houses were torn down to start building the new Rafic Hariri Hospital.

In Ouzai as well, construction activity has continued and the settlements around the former village core have extended.

The Golf Club and the airport haven't suffered from the Civil War and stand firm while the road system has been improved. Once more, a governmental masterplan is being developed to upgrade the area.



VISION 1995 - ELYSSAR



OVERLAY WITH EXITING CONDITIONS ON REGIONAL AND ...



LOCAL SCALE

REGIONAL SCALE

Only if one is looking at the Elyssar project in relation to the whole metropolitan area of Beirut, the vast size of the development becomes comprehensible.

Obviously the traffic system and the accessibility of Beirut from the south have been key issues to the planners. The three main axis leaving the city center direction south are all sharply cutting through the project area.

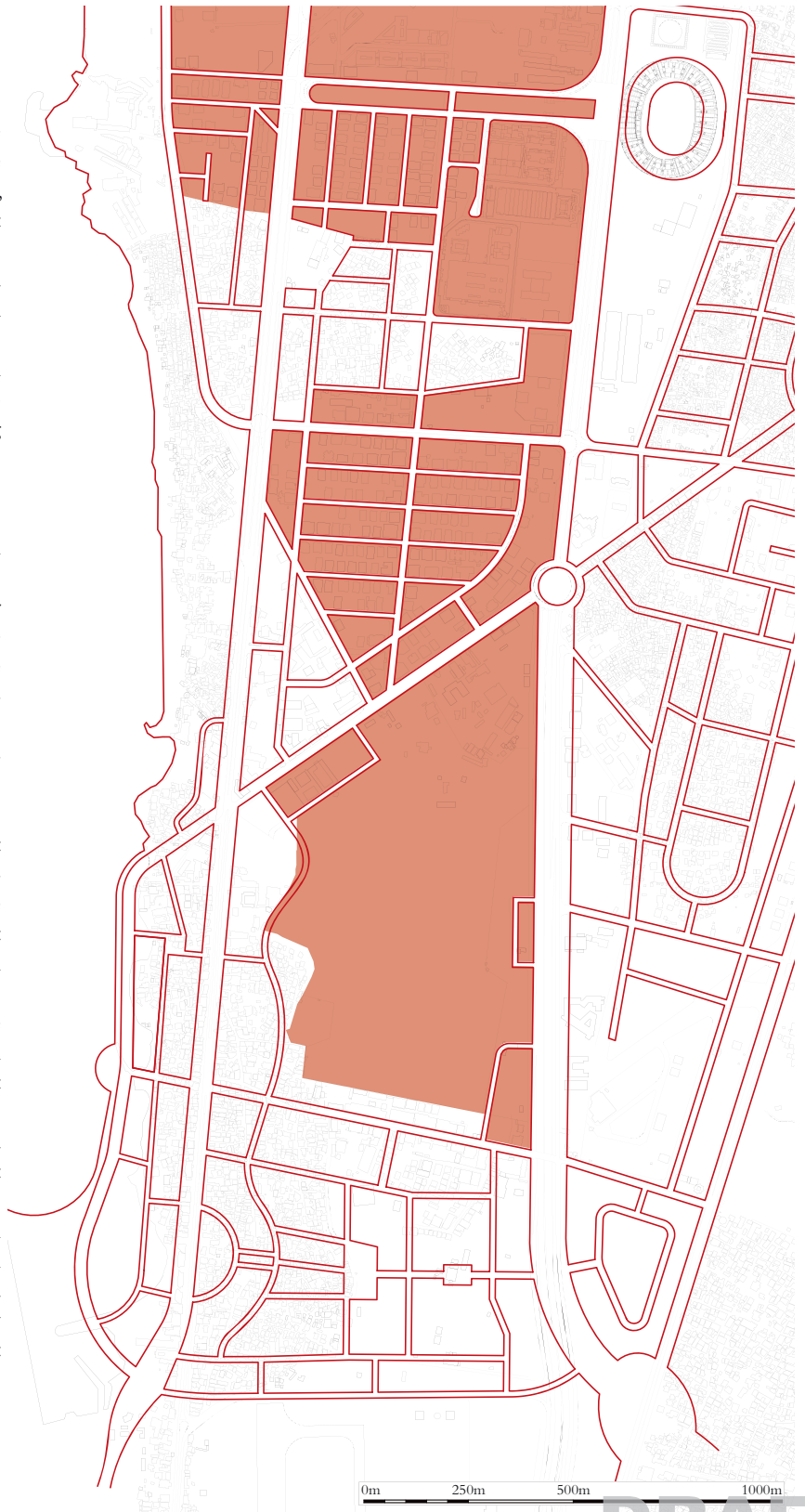
LOCAL SCALE

This overlay with the structural conditions existing in 1995 shows which sections of the perimeter will have to undergo a complete makeover and what parts on the other hand will be able to maintain their status.

It can easily be seen that all orthogonal street grids as well as the main roads and traffic nodes are not questioned. If looking at some of these points and their development over time closely, one can see that some of them exist for decades and have always been considered by urban planning.

It seems characteristic that the golf course, a completely open and totally isolated space without any existing connections to its surroundings doesn't get affected by the general planning efforts at all, while entire neighborhoods with properly working social and commercial networks shall be demolished and relocated and thereby lose all the qualities they established under these difficult and poor living conditions.

Fig: Overlay of 1995 city map with Elyssar master plan



PRELIMINARIES

The Elyssar development project was initiated under the supervision of the Lebanese entrepreneur and former prime minister Rafik Hariri and has officially been established by decree no 9043 on the August 30 1996 as a public agency responsible for the planning and development of the entire district. It is administered by a seven member's board headed by a president who is also acting as a general manager. It enjoys administrative and financial autonomy and commercial real estate prerogatives to act independently under the direct supervision of the prime minister. Compared to the SOLIDERE development taking place in the city center of Beirut, Elyssar is not a BOT (build, operate, transfer) but a PPP (public private partnership) and therefore can only be implemented in agreement with all involved individuals and parties. This does not only include politicians, planners and developers, but also inhabitants, landowners, business owners and regional political authorities like Amal and Hezbollah which are all represented in the administration board. As a result of this complex constellation scarcely any parts of the projected interventions have been realized so far and the project is on hold now.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

As many people in the south-western suburbs are living in sub-standard and illegal conditions, this project aims at the improvement of living conditions and the physical building substance in the area. Furthermore the sandy beaches of the southern coastline, the Sports City, the golf club and some recently planned shopping centers and attractions shall finally be visibly connected to the inner city of Beirut. In addition, all the future main utility lines and road networks serving the city of Beirut are supposed to pass through the Elyssar area.

Big parts of the area shall be rearranged and the entire population of the informal settlements relocated by providing them with newly build housing facilities. Only the Palestinian refugee camp, the golf club, the military barracks, the Sports City, all cemeteries, the middle class neighborhood of Bir Hassan and all educational, health, religious, institutional and governmental facilities are to be excluded from the scheduled interventions.

OFFICIAL PRIORITIES

The declared project priorities according to the planning agency (not classified by order or importance) are:

- Evacuate areas for major arteries feeding Beirut from the south
- Implement Infrastructure Projects all over Elyssar
- Redevelop Beirut South Shore
- Construct Low Cost Housing Units, Shops and Workshop
- Relocate illegal settlements
- Ensure economic development through improving the living standard of local residents when relocating them into newly constructed dwellings
- Provide possibility for a normal and planned growth of urban activities in the future
- Complement planning efforts associated with the rest of Beirut by creating development opportunities by the sea front along three kilometers of sandy beaches and by upgrading the infrastructure installations and public services around the metropolitan area

PROJECTED VOLUME

The development program was expected to be executed in four major phases over a fourteen year period and should include the following constructions:

- 560 hectares of urban and water front properties
- 10'120 Residential Units
- 1'595 Shops
- 873 Workshops
- 7'040 m of Major Roads
- 750'000 m² of Housing Infrastructure
- 1'465'000 m² of Infrastructure Upgrade
- 1'605'000 m² of new Infrastructure

CHALLENGES

The development of Beirut's suburbs is a long term and exhaustive project due to several factors:

- The majority of Beirut metropolitan population resides in these areas.
- At the macro scale the pace of urbanization in the suburbs was rapid and in some instances chaotic, leading to a fast deterioration of the physical fabric, the natural environment and the outdated infrastructure.
- At the micro scale each suburb offers a unique set of difficulties which requires unconventional planning solutions.
- Inhabitants and local authorities of the informal settlements are mostly sceptical towards the project.

Criticism

The planning authorities claim to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants by placing them in newly erected and supposedly affordable housing units. But even if they gain the advantage of being connected to public services and living in more contemporary conditions, from the overall perspective it still means a step backwards for them. First of all obtaining the new apartments is not free of charge for them. On the contrary the Elyssar officials will estimate the rough value of a family's actual habitat and deduct this amount from the full purchase price. The remaining amount is what the family eventually needs to pay for the new home.

Second of all, housing projects like the ones proposed by Elyssar and shown in the picture below don't give enough attention to the actual way people live and work. In such an environment it will hardly be possible to maintain such a close relation to the extended family as people usually do. Furthermore, they will be separated from their workshops and small industries and need to readapt their whole lifestyle.

Of course the whole project is also about opposing the local dominance of political bodies like Hezbollah and Amal and disconnecting them from a large amount of people who up till now totally rely on their social and institutional services.

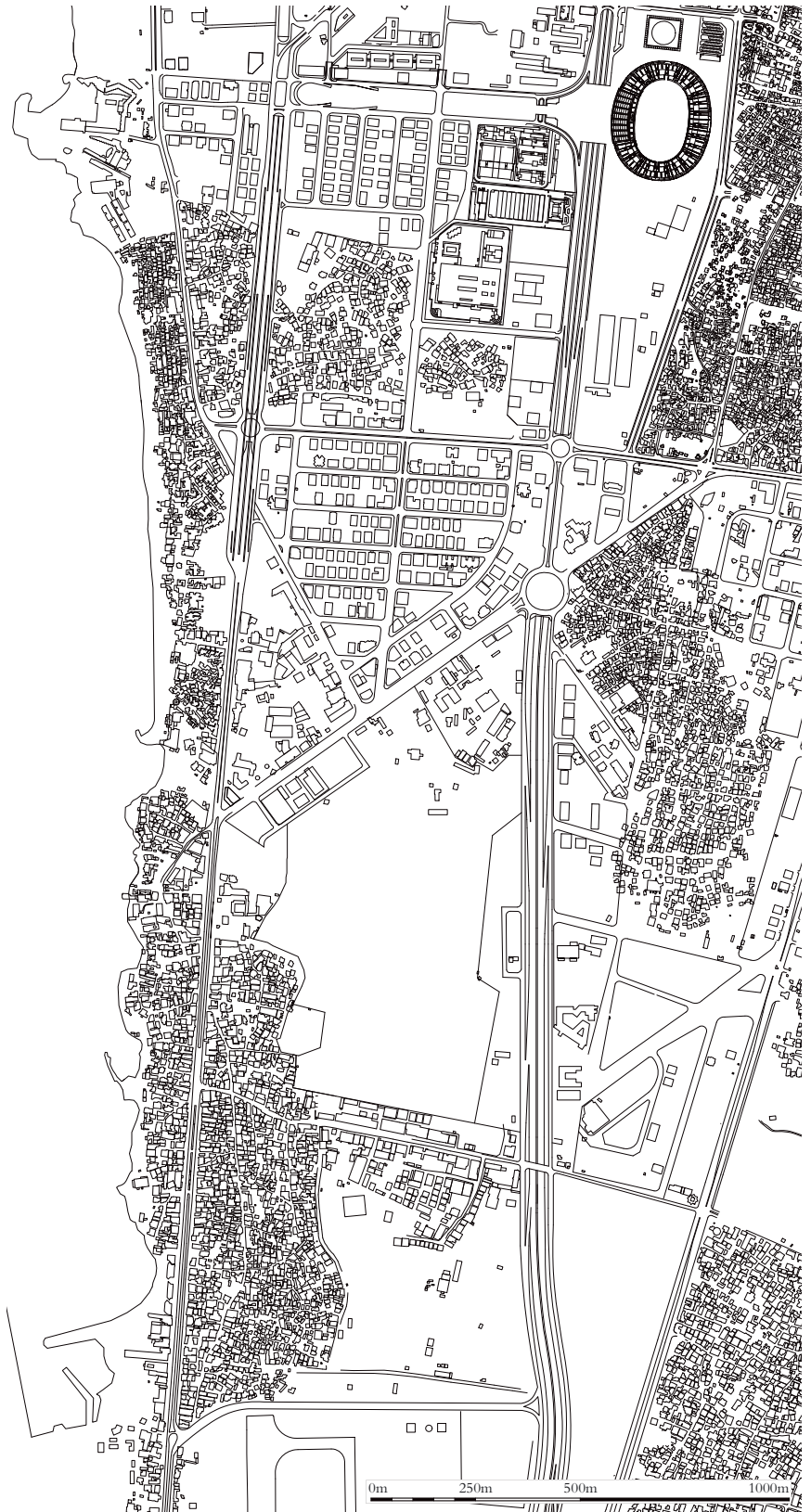


SITUATION 2006



Two years after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and the Elyssar project now being on hold, there is only weak control over building activity by the government. In the formal areas new buildings have emerged and are rapidly filling up the voids. The neighbourhood has undergone a transition back to the former upper-middle-class residential zone.

As dense as the informal areas already were, there is a significant wave of construction during the bombings of the neighbouring district Haret-Hreik by the Israelis in July and August. The airport has built a new runway on a landfill in the sea and the highway has been extended to the airport. There's a new connection from Ouzai to the highway running along the northern border of the airport. The next page shows a map with the changes over the last ten years, as they are not obvious at first sight.



1995 VS. 2006

- Red square: Replaced/torn down
- Yellow square: New



ACTORS & MECHANISMS

Ownership Situation

Political System in Lebanon

Local Political Players

Political Iconography in Public Space

Influence of Nations and Families



OWNERSHIP

The ownership has always been a matter connected to many disputes and verdicts. Especially in the perimeter, the situation hasn't been solved until today.
Page 48



POLITICAL SYSTEM IN LEBANON

The Lebanese political system is very unique, as seats in parliament are distributed fifty-fifty between Christians and Muslims and governmental leaders have to be of a certain affiliation.
Page 50



LOCAL POLITICAL PLAYERS

Next to the government, there are different parties sharing interest in the area. Various parts of the perimeter are controlled by the Amal Movement or Hezbollah.
Page 54

POLITICAL ICONOGRAPHY

Political iconography of respective parties is spread all over the perimeter. One of the purposes is to determine borders to other districts or parties.
Page 56-59

APPEARANCE IN FORMAL AREAS

In the formal areas, there are very decent flags on the lamp posts. They are well-kept and blend in with the environment.
Page 60

APPEARANCE IN INFORMAL AREAS

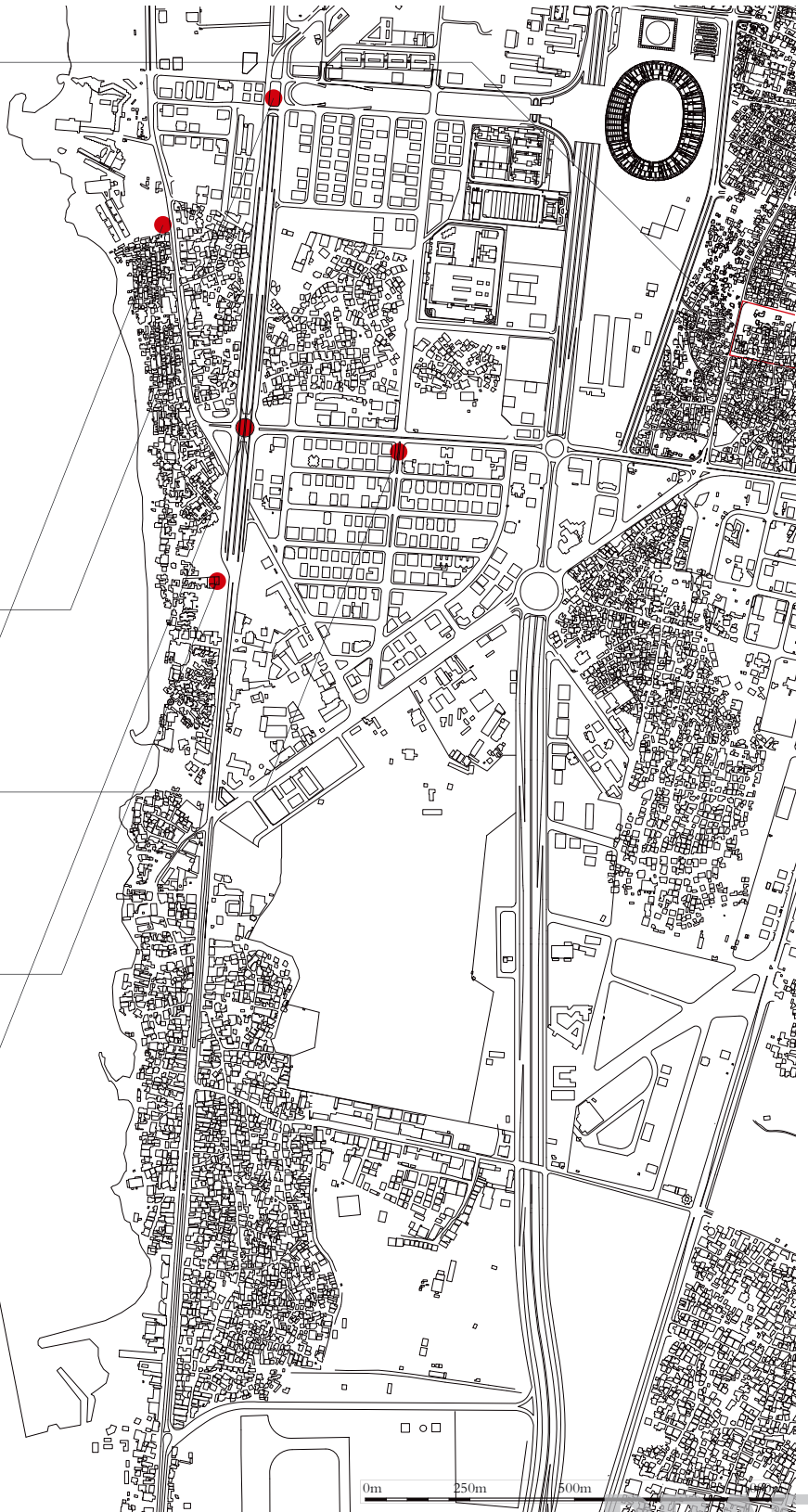
In the informal areas, the iconography increases drastically. Images of religious leaders, martyrs and large and numerous flags dominate and define public space.
Page 61

INFLUENCE OF NATIONS

Some Middle-Eastern countries such as Syria and Iran support Lebanon financially and therefore sponsor landmarks with their particular icons.
Page 62

INFLUENCE OF FAMILIES

Even though situated in extreme proximity to the city of Beirut, rural elements are still legible in some places. Community life appears to be still very important.
Page 63



OWNERSHIP SITUATION

The structure of the Ouzai Plain is very heterogenous and plots have many different sizes. Usually the closer an area is located to the city centre, the more likely it is to have been part of some reallocation or parceling plan. Under French Mandate there were different attempts, partially successful but also many unsuccessful ones, to parcel the land. The difficulties were often concerning the very question if the land was private at all. Municipalities were fighting against privates, the ones claiming that the land was public property and should be cultivated and exploited. The municipalities on the other hand had bought it from former families in power.

THE 19TH CENTURY

In the beginning of the 19th century the Ouzai Plain was reigned by Emir Chehab and in his “private” property. Theoretically, during the Ottoman rule there was no private possession of land. Their understanding of land was called “mush’a”, which means indivisible/communal. There are three different meanings of this term:

The first one was used mostly in Syria and described land that was used by a village, and with every new period which was usually three years, every villager was assigned a new extent and location of the land he was to cultivate. The second understanding is of people cultivating land that belongs to the state but is assigned to the collective of inhabitants and cultivators, buildings belonging to the municipalities. This land can be taken away at any time.

At last, it could belong to a group of people, but not in the sense of a society.

After the Ottomans, this land went back to public property, but as well private ownership of notable families with future development plans for the area.

There were two major trials in the end of the 19th century one in 1876 and the second one in 1878. The parties involved are the heirs of Moustafa Rifai and M. Tabet on the one hand and the local population represented by the municipalities on the other. The controversies were about the question of “mush’a” or private property.

The two verdicts were of different outcome. In the first one, the area where today’s airport is located was given into private property and not to the village of Bourj al-Barajneh.

The second one stated that the Jnah area was to be preserved “mush’a”. Both verdicts resulted in rights of passage. A much more weighty consequence was that with the land now being private property, speculations started, that wouldn’t find an end.

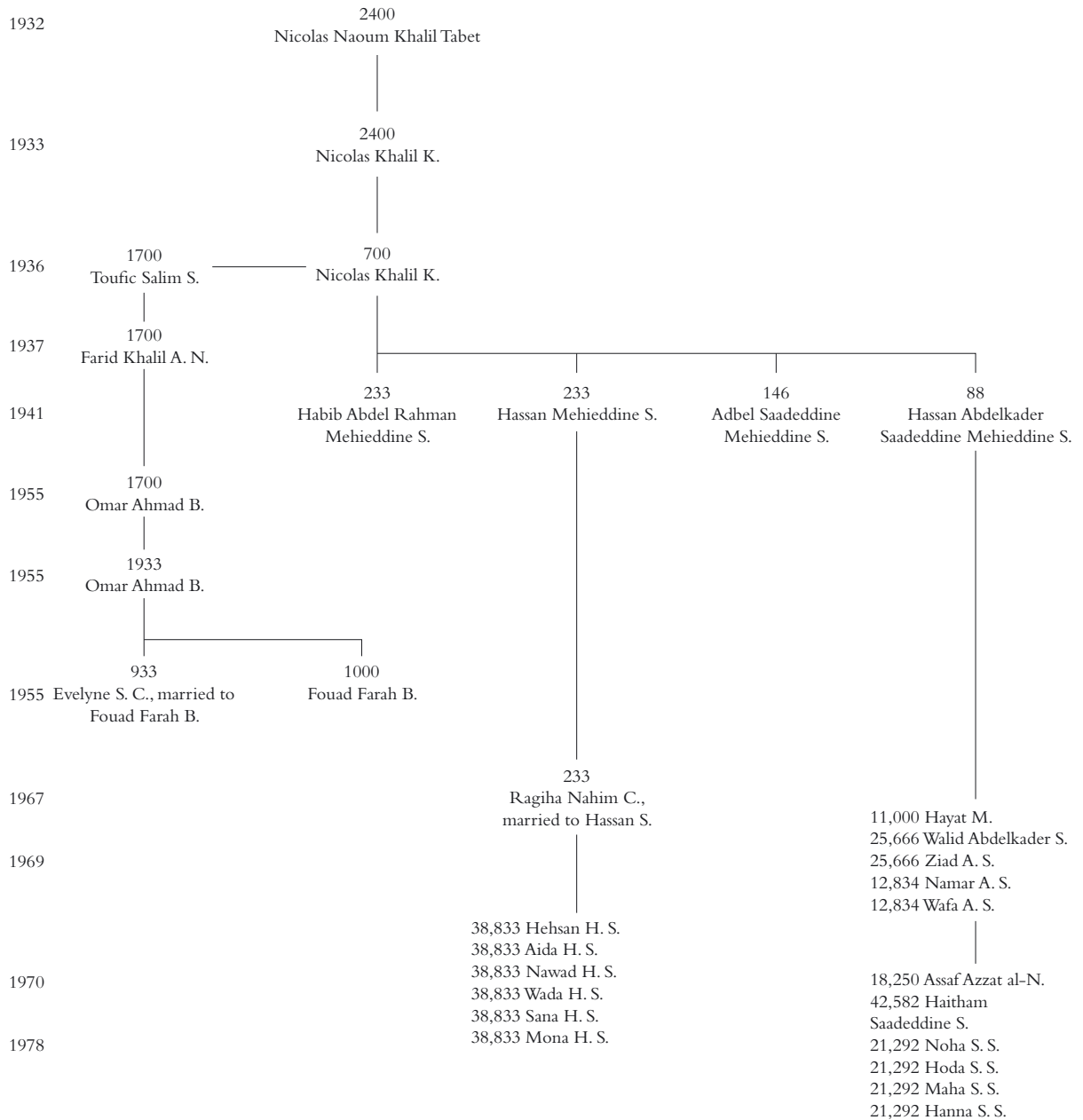
THE 20TH CENTURY

In the beginning of the 20th century, the “Egyptian Enterprise & Development Co.” bought 60 percent of the 4800 shares of two large plots in today’s Bir Hassan area. To the present day the ownership rights for a plot of land in Lebanon consists of 2400 equal shares that can be sold separately. The plan that the Lebanese engineer Chakour Pacha designed for them was never realized, but it names the same reasons as the later Ecochard plans about why exactly this zone is attractive (empty, clean,...). As the French start to parcel the southern suburbs in the early 30ies, question about property arise once more. In the meantime until 1942, one of the private plots from the 1876 verdict has around 40 proprietors, due to sale of shares. The leisure resorts as well as upcoming big investments like the Golf Club and the airport had an impact on land-stakes. It all culminated in another trial, which was terminated in 1955. The municipality of Bourj al-Barajneh lost the land that went until the sea to the municipality of Chiah in this process. Ouzai was no longer in their power but they still issued building permits and encouraged settlers to move there as a reaction. In 1964, as owners were powerless to fight against this illegal occupation of their land, they started to sell shares to the people squatting it. Very few amongst them had the financial and personal means to defend their property.

TODAY’S SITUATION

The situation today hasn’t gotten easier. There’s hardly any “mush’a” property left and owners are hard to find. Ely-sar conducted different enquiries to find them, but there is still no transparency as they rarely live on the land they actually own. The designated goal is that the government buys the shares back from the current proprietors in order to possess the necessary land to realize the plan.

GENEALOGY OF A PLOT



Ownership constellation of a plot in Chiah, assumingly representative for the area

POLITICAL SYSTEM IN LEBANON

The Republic of Lebanon is a Parliamentary Democracy whose independence was declared in 1943. The State is headed by the President of the Republic who is head of the state and symbol of the nation's unity. He strives to ensure respect for the Constitution and safeguarding Lebanon's independence and territorial integrity. He is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The Lebanese political system is based on the principles of separation, balance, and cooperation amongst the powers.

Legislative power rests with the Chamber of Deputies (Parliament), which consists of 128 deputies who are elected directly by the people for a four-year term. The Chamber elects one of its members as President of the Chamber for a similar term.

In the Lebanese Parliament, church and state have never been divided. This is perhaps the most unique component of the Parliament. The Lebanese refer to this system as 'confessional distribution' such that each religious denomination holds a defined number of seats in Parliament. This has been the case since elections that took place in 1933 where the ratio of Christians to Muslims was apportioned at 6:5 respectively. The current parliament consist of the governing anti-Syrian March 14 Alliance, the oppositional pro-Syrian and 10 independents.

Finally, the Taif Agreement that was established in 1989 and saw the end of the Civil War, ensured the reapportioning of the Lebanese Parliament such that there was equal representation between Muslims and Christians. To date, each religion holds 64 of 128 seats, or deputies as they call it, in Parliament.

In the 1960's, Muslims were not happy with this allocation of seats, considering that Muslim was the majority religion in Lebanon. Their birthrate was in fact higher than Christians, and the distribution of Parliament did not reflect this. The politicians of Christian nature were not interested in abolishing the system and this religious dissention was an integral component of the Lebanese Civil War that ran from 1975 through 1990.

Executive power is entrusted to the Council of Ministers, which draws up and implements public policy in all fields in accordance with the laws in force. The Prime Minister is appointed on the basis of Parliamentary consultations that are binding. The Cabinet is formed in agreement with the President of the Republic following Parliamentary consultations undertaken by the Prime Minister designate.

One of the public institutions newly created after the 1990 Amendment of the Constitution is the Constitutional Council. Comprised of ten members, it is responsible for the control of the constitutionality of laws and has the power to settle litigation over presidential and parliamentary elections.

Judicial power rests with judicial courts of different degrees and levels of jurisdiction. Magistrates are independent in the exercise of their functions; their decisions and judgments are rendered and executed in the name of the Lebanese people. The Judicial Power is based on the French system. It comprises:

1. Judicial tribunals empowered to settle litigation in civil and penal matters;
2. A Counsel d'Etat for administrative questions.

Lebanon has a free economical system that guarantees entrepreneurship and private property. It is led by a private sector that plays a major role in the different economic fields, especially the services sector and the financial and banking sector, which represent 70% of Lebanon's national income.



PRESIDENT
MARONITE CHRIST

SINCE MAY 25, 2008:
MICHEL SULEIMAN - INDEPENDANT

THE LEBANESE PEOPLE



SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT
SHI'A MUSLIM

Since Ocotber 20, 1992
Nabih Berri - Amal Movement

PRIME MINISTER
SUNNI MUSLIM

Since November 9, 2009:
Saad Hariri - Movement of the Future

PARLIAMENT

The Chamber of Deputies holds the legislative power. It consists of 128 deputies elected for a 4 year term

CABINET

The Council of Ministers holds the Executive Power (the Government)

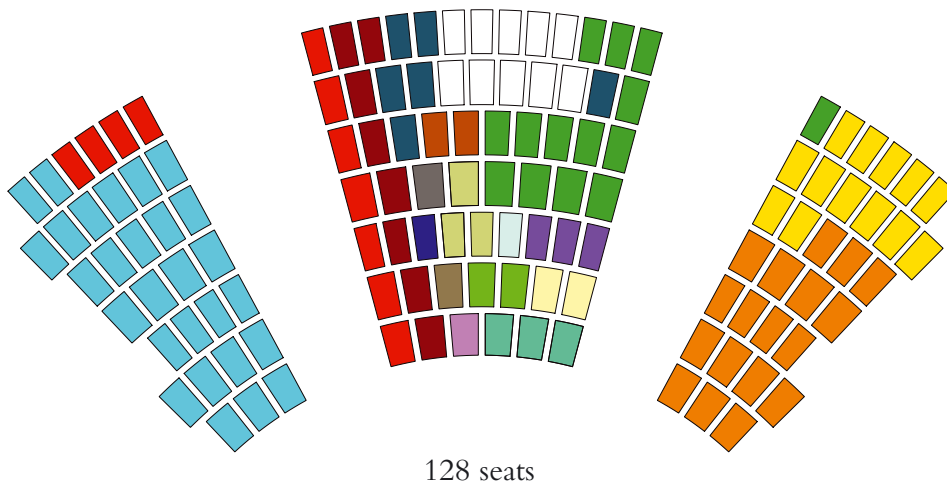
Confirms

Elects

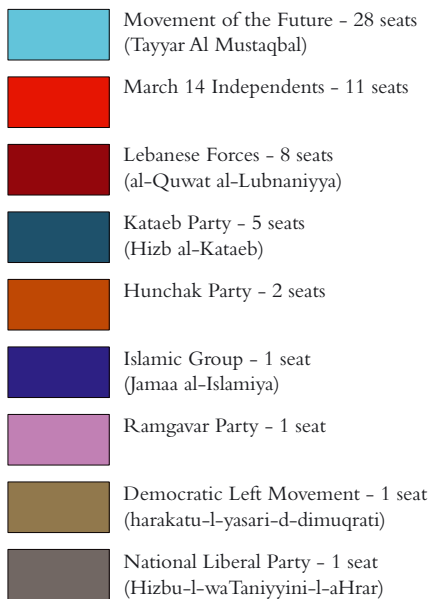
Election every 6 years

Election every 4 years

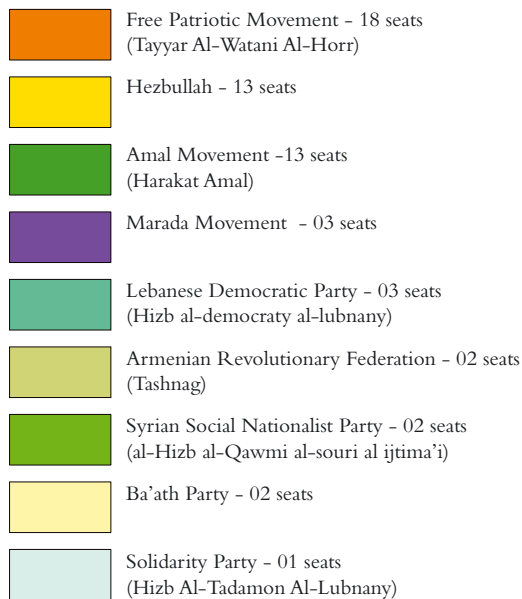
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTIES IN THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT



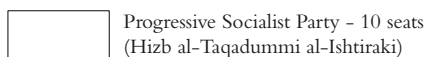
March 14 Alliance - 61 seats (anti Syrian)



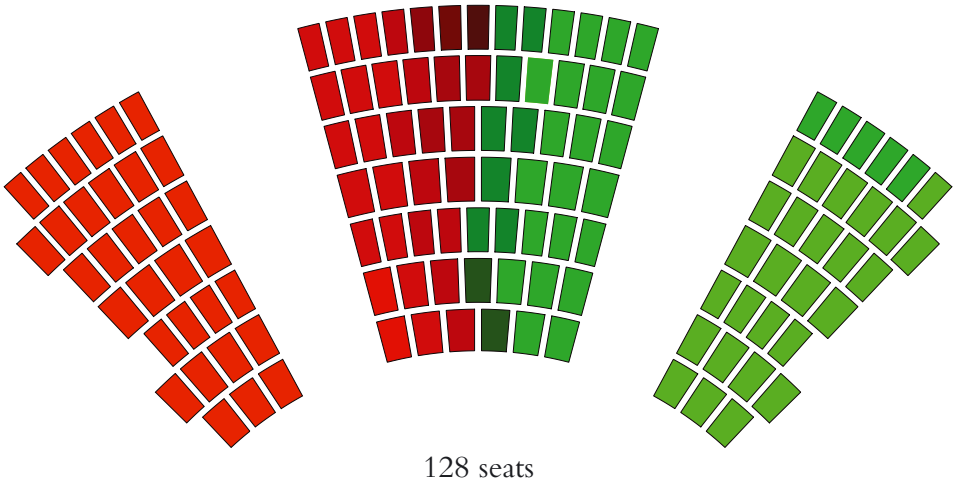
March 8 Alliance - 57 seats (pro Syrian)



Independants - 10 seats



DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIONS IN THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT



Christians - 64 seats

- Maronite - 34 seats
- Greek Orthodox - 14 seats
- Greek Catholic - 8 seats
- Armenian Orthodox - 5 seats
- Armenian Catholic - 1 seat
- Protestant - 1 seat
- Other Christians - 1 seat

Muslims - 64 seats

- Sunni - 27 seats
- Shi'a - 27 seat
- Druze - 08 seat
- Alawite - 08

LOCAL POLITICAL PLAYERS



THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT

Although Lebanon is a sovereign nation with a rightfully elected and properly working apparatus of state, certain regions of the country as well as parts of the capital are only halfway governed by the state. In Beirut, these circumstances exemplarily apply to large sections of the southern suburbs, also to the research perimeter. Whereas the Henri Chehab military barracks and the administrative district with the hospital are clearly governmentally controlled zones, Amal (green) and Hezbollah (yellow) share the influence over the remaining perimeter.



AMAL

The term is Arab for hope which is also the name of a Shiite party. It was founded in 1975 as the militia wing of the Movement of the Disinherited, a Shiite political movement. Amal grew strong with the support of Syria and the 300'000 Shia internal refugees from southern Lebanon after the Israeli bombings in the early 1980ies. The parties practical objectives initially were to gain greater respect for Lebanon's Shiite-dominated southern part. Once a powerful Shiite political party, the Amal lost its supremacy to the Hezbollah.



HEZBULLAH

The term literally means "party of God" and is the name of a Shiite Islamist political and paramilitary organisation based in Lebanon and supported by Iran. It was formed 1982 in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution with the objective of establishing an Islamic republic in Lebanon. Hezbollah is now a major provider of social services, which operate schools, hospitals and agricultural services for thousands of Lebanese Shiites. Their strongholds within greater Beirut is located in the southern suburbs where most of the cities Shiite citizens live.



SYRIA

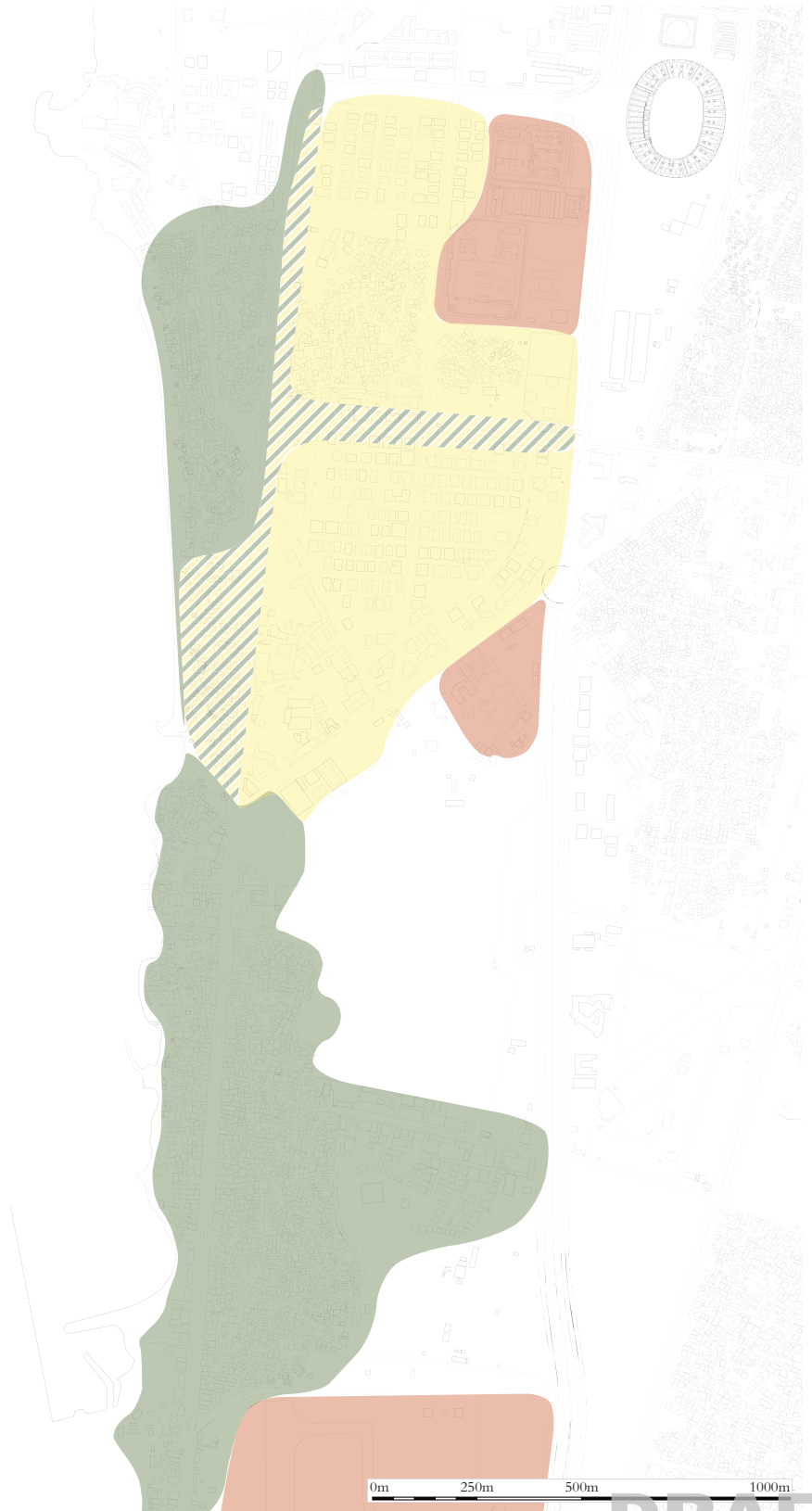
On first of June 1976, Syrian troops advance into Lebanon with 30'000 soldiers and launch attacks on LNM (Lebanese National Movement) and PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). In fact, the Syrian invasion is an attempt to claim Lebanon, which it never recognized as a sovereign state after winning independence from France in 1943. After the Civil War ends, Syrian troops stay in the country as occupying forces. Based on an UN resolution and after the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Harir, they eventually withdraw in April 2005.



IRAN

Iran and Lebanon have been pursuing a friendly relationship since the Shia Revolution of Iran in 1979, when Iranian religious leaders began reaching out to the downtrodden Shia community in Lebanon. Since then, Iran has provided Lebanon with funding for many years, particularly since Lebanon's war with Israel in 1982. Iran supported Lebanon financially and Lebanese groups, especially Hezbollah. Several western countries have accused Iran of providing extensive financial assistance and military training for Hezbollah which Iran has denied.

- Government
- Amal
- Hezbollah





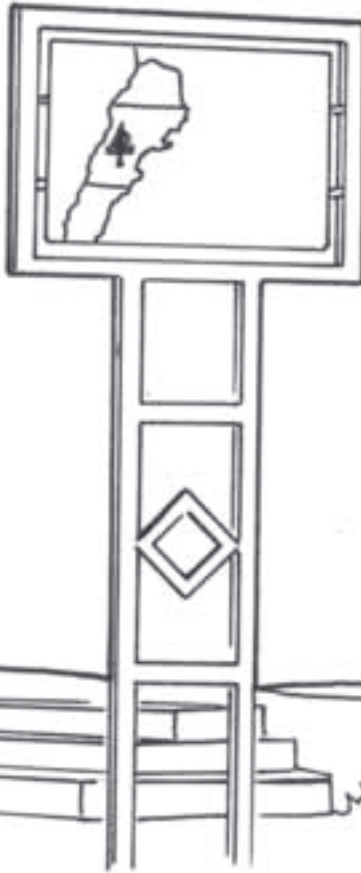


POLITICAL ICONOGRAPHY IN PUBLIC SPACE

STREET SIGN

This sign says “Jadat Al-Moukawama wa Al-Tahreer” and which means “The Resistance and Liberation Avenue”.

It has been installed by the Ghobeiri Municipality and is a signifier of the local culture there. It is named after the resistance, which refers to the Hezbollah. The fact that it shows a map of Lebanon illustrates a claim for relevance and power on a national level.



COLLECTION BOX

The object seen here consists of two stylized hands framing the sentence “Istanzilo Al-Rizk bil Sadaka”. It can be translated as “Donate when you earn” and refers to the religious duty of a Moslem to give to charity.

A cubical shaped collection box is placed right below the sign. It has been placed by the Al-Imdad Islamic Welfare Organization and is a signifier of the Islamic majority (if not totality) in that area and the religious discourse of donation. The Imdad Organization is somehow affiliated to Hezbollah as well.



AMAL BANNER

The writing says “Saabka Al-Kalem Al-Lathi la Yaghref ila min Hibr Al-Hakika mahma kanat Morra” followed by “Labaika ya Imam”. The translation would be “I will always be the pen whose ink is the truth no matter how bitter it is” and “Willingly we follow you Imam”.

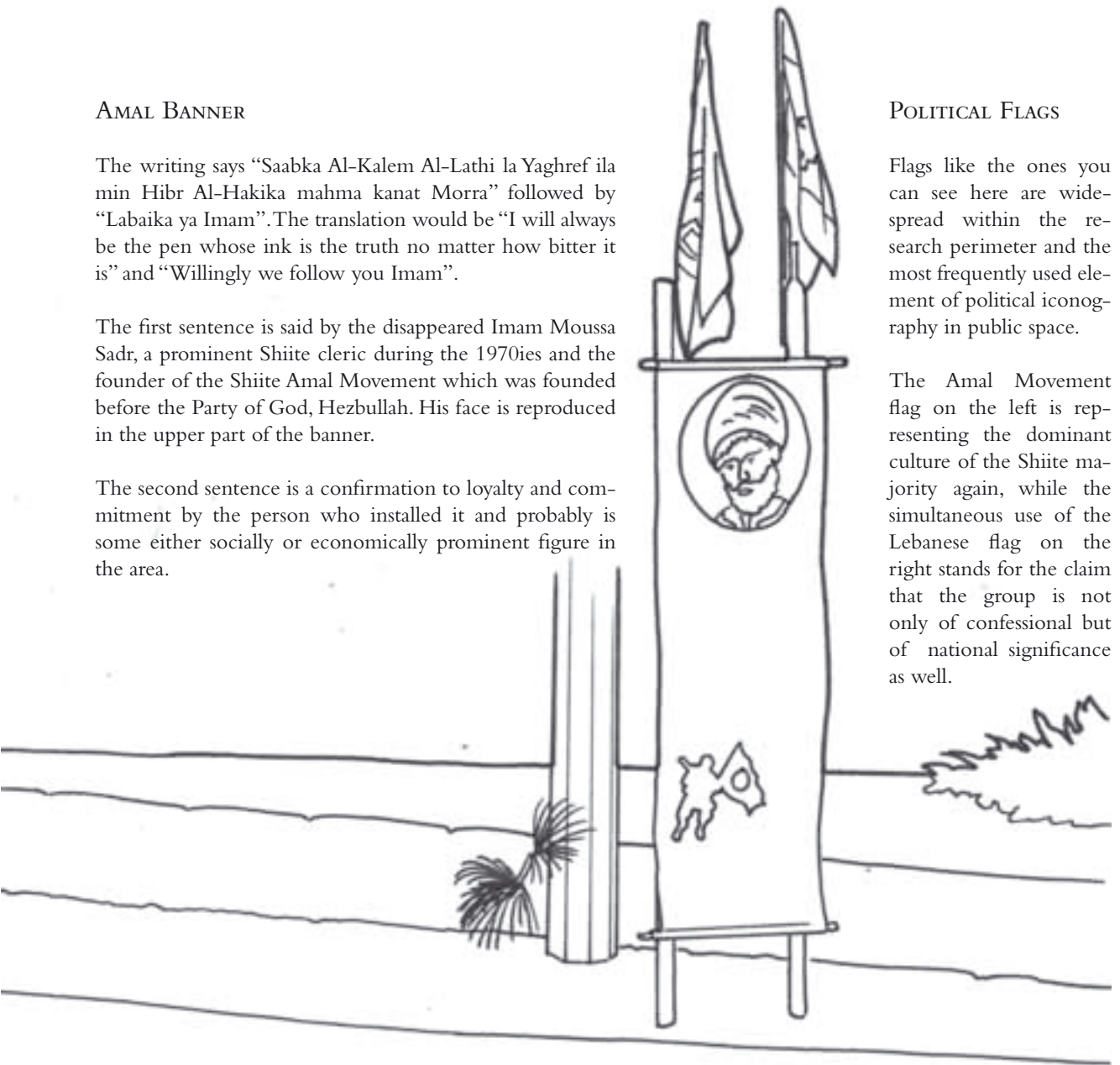
The first sentence is said by the disappeared Imam Moussa Sadr, a prominent Shiite cleric during the 1970ies and the founder of the Shiite Amal Movement which was founded before the Party of God, Hezbollah. His face is reproduced in the upper part of the banner.

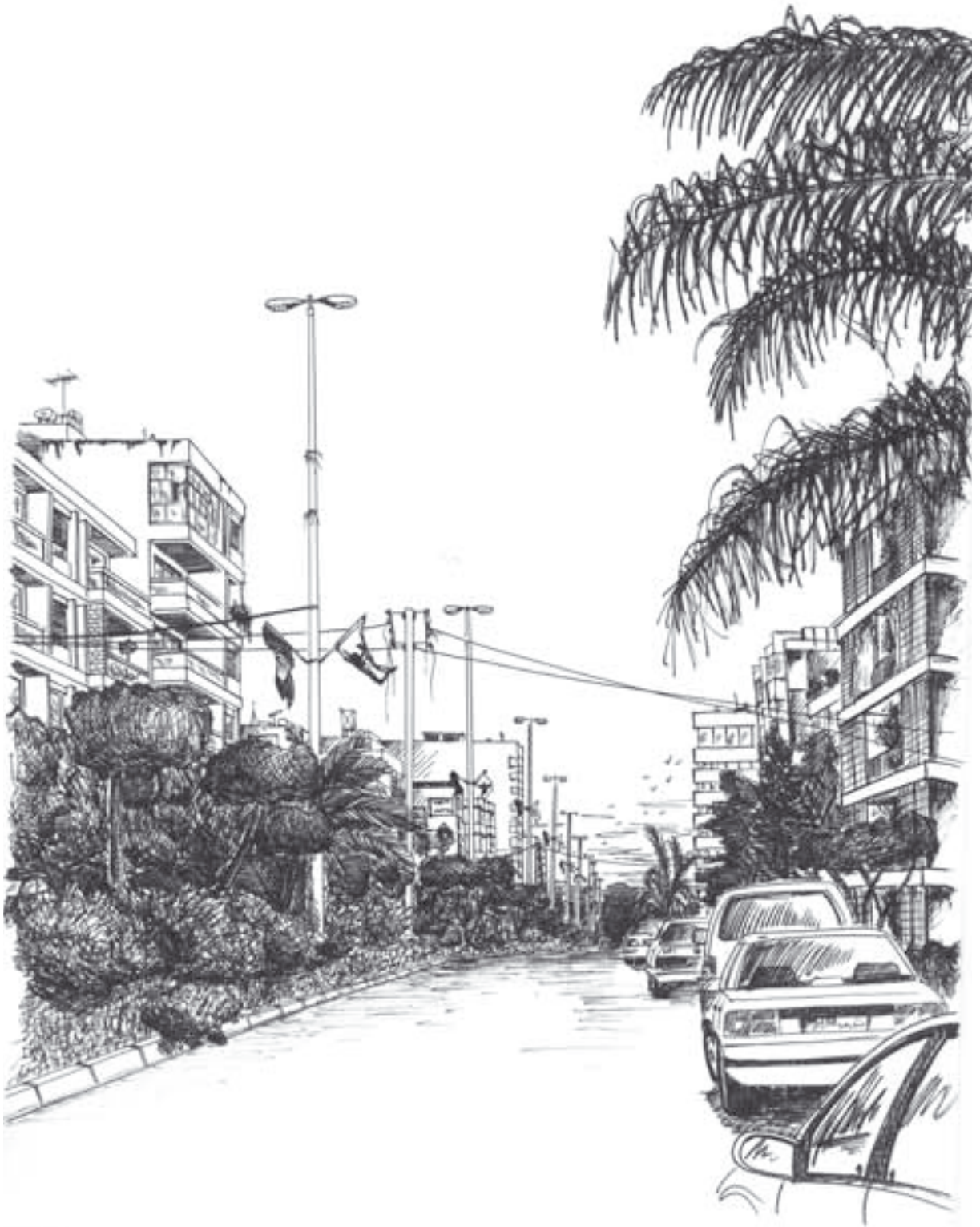
The second sentence is a confirmation to loyalty and commitment by the person who installed it and probably is some either socially or economically prominent figure in the area.

POLITICAL FLAGS

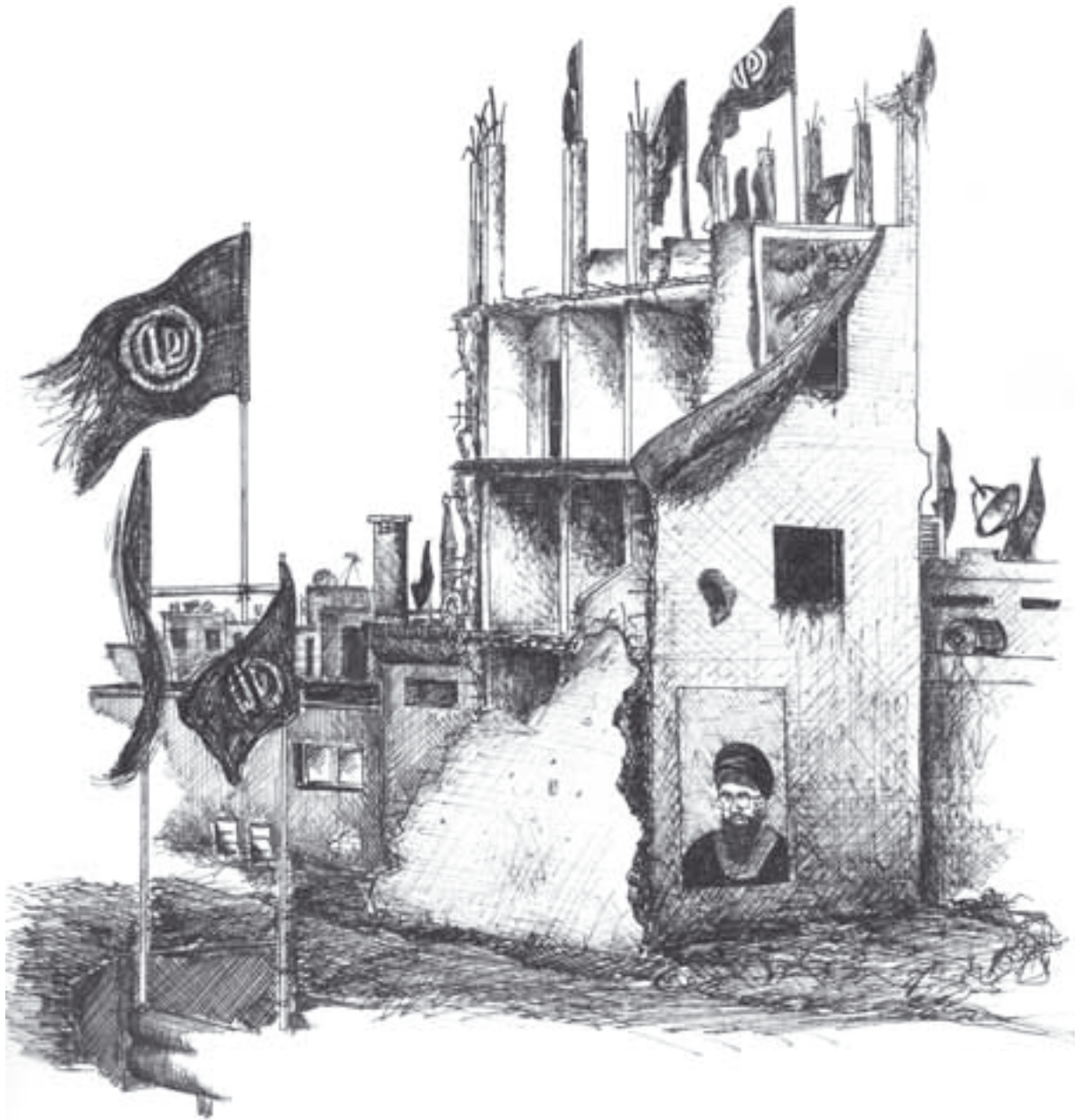
Flags like the ones you can see here are widespread within the research perimeter and the most frequently used element of political iconography in public space.

The Amal Movement flag on the left is representing the dominant culture of the Shiite majority again, while the simultaneous use of the Lebanese flag on the right stands for the claim that the group is not only of confessional but of national significance as well.





Mohammed Fakh al-Quds Street in Bir Hassan - Exemplary for use of political iconography in formal areas



Ouzai Boulevard in Jnah - Exemplary for use of political iconography in informal areas

INFLUENCE OF NATIONS AND FAMILIES

SYRIA

Although the Syrian occupying forces left Lebanon in 2005, portraits of president Bashar al-Assad or the Syrian flag can still occasionally be found in public space. Strolling through the streets of south-west Beirut they mostly appear as mural paintings, posters or banners. They can be either remnants from the era of Syrian military presence or a way residents and local institutions share their sympathy with the eastern neighbors of the county. Especially members and supporters of the pro Syrian opposition in Lebanon (March 8 Alliance) like the Hezbollah, the Amal Movement or the Syrian Socialist National Party frequently use the public space to display their affiliation.

IRAN

An other nation getting involved in the area is Iran. Besides reaching the Lebanese Shiites indirectly by financing political and social institutions like the Hezbollah, Iran is getting involved in a straight forward manner as well. The country for example realizes small infrastructure projects like drinking water tanks, roundabouts (as the one shown below) or even parks. They are usually extraordinarily maintained and greened. Besides that they always carry the Iranian coat of arms or a few other reference that relate to the donating state.

FAMILIES

Almost all inhabitants living in these settlements can refer to a rural background. This still shows to the present day, for example in the holding of domestic animals such as sheep, goats and chicken. Yet a much more significant manifestation of this rural background are the strong ties within the nuclear family and the power it aggregates by accumulating wealth and expending. In this way, certain families manage to establish a level of respect and power that goes far beyond the regular imagination. Such a predominance is strongly reminds of the head families that used to be in charge of same rural village these people originally came from.



Jinah Roundabout in Jnah - Exemplary for public appearance of foreign nations



Saint Simon Street - Exemplary for imported village and family structures

URBAN STRUCTURE

Regional and Local Road System

Borders

Services and Facilities

Properties of the Formal Areas

Properties of the Informal Areas

Commercial Activity



ROAD SYSTEM

The main traffic axes are shown in the regional and local context. In the case of the southern suburbs, they date from the 1953 plan for the area and were built continuously.
Page 68



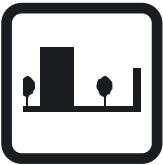
BORDERS

Different Borders that are characteristic for the research perimeter. As a consequence of the diversity of the area, there are delimitations on the inside. One doesn't notice all of them at first sight.
Page a: 70, b: 72, c: 74, d: 76



SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The area disposes over all services and facilities a regular city knows. Locations of religious buildings, commercial areas, educational facilities and such are shown.
Page 78



FORMAL

Properties of the formal areas, meaning settled and inhabited according to governmental guidelines and respecting the laws of ownership and zones.
Page 80



INFORMAL

Districts where the number of buildings that were erected disregarding laws and regulations and where the structure is highly complex in the sense of grids and patterns.
Page 86



SQUATTED

The squatted areas are treated as a part of the informal typology. They share the way of living and behaving inside the districts.
Page 90



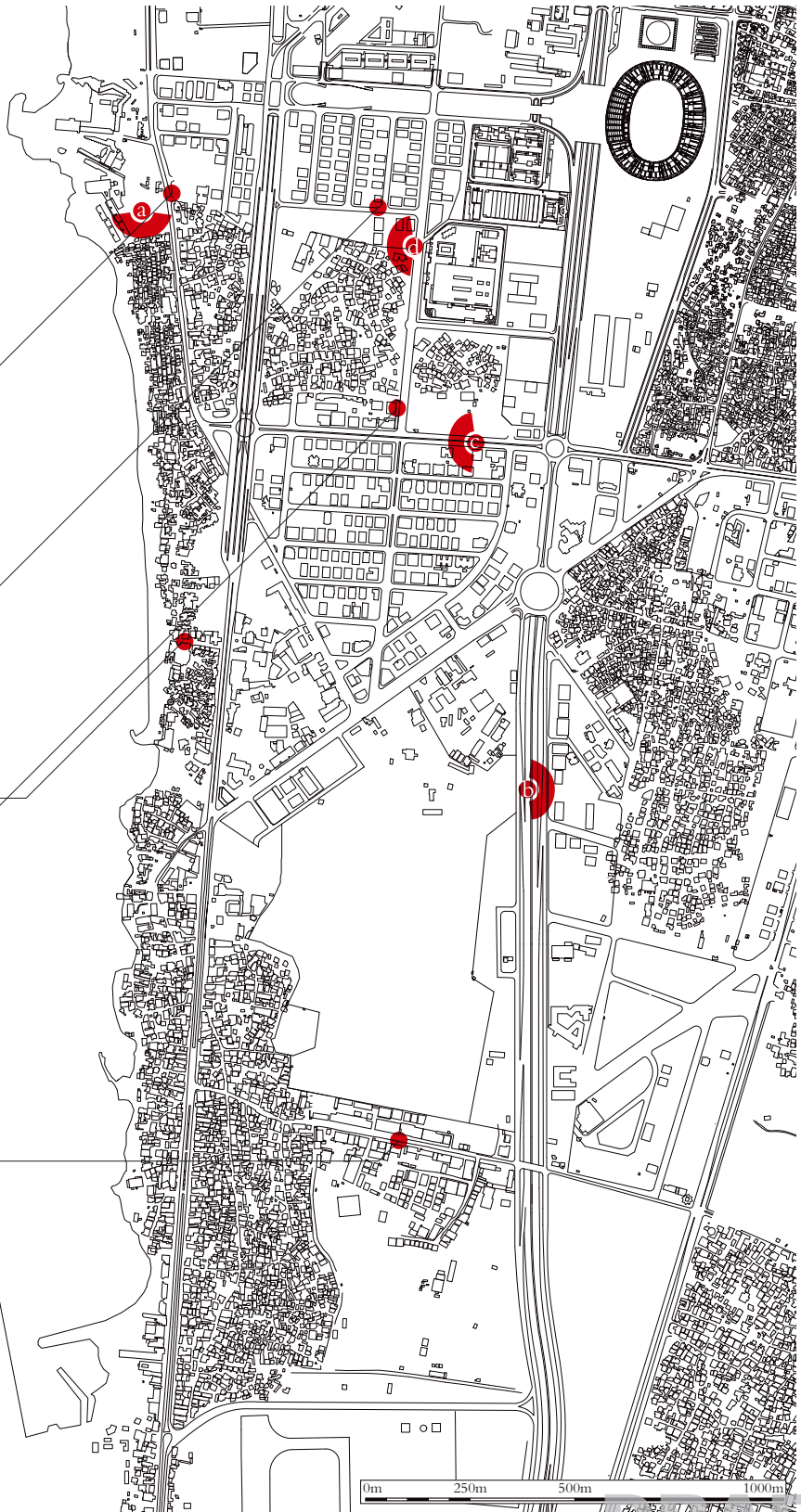
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

Particular commercial properties of the area, explaining which ones stay local and what others affect a more regional context.
Page 94



GOLF COURSE

Since 1966, the Golf Course has been an untouchable spot inside the different orders and disorders of the research perimeter. It was relocated to the very site to prevent sand from drifting in the air and disturbing the airplanes. It is surrounded by high walls, thus protected against outer influences.



ROAD SYSTEM - REGIONAL AND LOCAL



Different kinds of roads connect and separate the district from the city of Beirut. The coastal street merges directly into one of the commercial axes of the research perimeter, starting in Jnah. After driving along the coast, one suddenly find himself in a lively neighbourhood. This road later joins the Ouzai Boulevard which is the prolongation of the other larger street leading down from the belt, Moukawama al Tahir Avenue. Abass al Moussawi Avenue is an important diagonal axis connecting Ouzai to Boutj al-Barajneh and Chatila. Maramel Ouzai Street is the commercially most important together with the Ouzai Blvd. It connects Ouzai to Raml, which are two important core-villages from where a great part of the illegal settling started.

The airport highway connects the airport to the city. There are exits for the different districts but the road rather cuts the informal parts off than integrating them into the whole system. The old airport road doesn't really allow deep insights into the settlements either, but it's less concealing.

Adnan al Hakim Av

Moukawama Wal Tahir Av

Saint Simon Street

Imam Moussa al Sader Av

Abass al Moussawi Av

Hafez Al-Assad Av,
a.k.a. Airport Highway

Ouzai Boulevard

Maramel Ouzai Street

Old Airport Road



0m 250m 500m 1000m

Rafic Hariri International Airport

Jnah

Ouzai

Amal flags on rooftops

Wide stretch of beach

Dam protecting the recently extended airport runway

A steel fence prevents the informal settlements from growing further and into the Summerland Hotel property



The western border of the research perimeter is determined by the coastline. After being a center of attraction for long time, the southern beaches and the coastline as a whole have the status of an urban backyard.

Only 40 years ago, the beaches and the sea used to be a center of attraction.
Nowadays they rather have the status of an urban backyard.

The ruins of the Coral Beach Hotel: Silent witnesses of a time
when the whole coastline used to be a popular leisure ground
and characterized by beach resorts and bungalow estates.



The recessed Airport Highway is flanked by high concrete walls which completely prevent people passing by to catch a glimpse of the southern suburb

Upper floors unveil
a view onto the sea

Upper middle class residential
building under construction

The inaccessible eastern edge of the
vastly greened "Golf Club of Lebanon"



The eastern border of the research perimeter is determined by the new Airport Highway. It can only be crossed every hundred meters and clearly cuts off the perimeter from the rest of the southern suburbs.

An earth mount covered with bushes and trash obstructs the sight across the golf course in direction Ouzai and the Mediterranean Sea.

Fastest connection between the Rafic Hariri International Airport and the city center

Oversize billboards alongside the new airport highway advertise luxury products and services like jewelry, beauty treatments and the like.



This street runs parallel to the new Airport Highway and links several highway passages, upramps and exits. As it just services the Henri Chehab military barracks and the storage area of a construction company, the stretch shown in the picture is hardly frequented.

Middle class neighbourhood of Bir Hassan

Elevated coastal road

One of the few remaining empty lots

No free plots without fence



This border within the research perimeter shows the local transition from a rather wealthy upper middle class neighbourhood to informal settlements. Again it's a broad road working as a divider between different areas.

Apartment towers in Jnah,
units starting at 1'000'000 \$

Amal flag

The political parties Amal and Hizbullah mark their ground
all over the research perimeter. Part of this strategy is the
display of portraits showing political leaders or martyrs.

Squatted house

Lebanese flag

Optical barrier
to main road

Informal settlements
of Hay el-Zahra



Informal settlements of Hay el-Zahra

Formal and informal houses
touching back to back

Car for sale



This border within the research perimeter isn't determined by a road. Informal and formal houses touch each other back to back. The Rafik Hariri Hospital which has opened doors to the public in 2000 is located right behind the photographer.



This empty lot emerged during the demolition of informal settlements between 1994 and 2000 when the Rafik Hariri Hospital was built

Middle class neighbourhood of Bir Hassan



SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Although the southern suburbs have the reputation of being neglected by the government and therefore under provided with services and facilities, reality proves otherwise. The research perimeter hosts a variety of service buildings, public institutions and the like. Their distribution depends on the exact type of neighbourhood and reaches the highest density in immediate proximity to the boundary of Municipal Beirut.

The category services and facilities contains all structures of communal interest which serve the public including commerce. Many of the service buildings, such as places of worship, schools or hospitals are spread throughout the whole research perimeter and usually in superb conditions. The enclosing solid walls and fences certainly contribute to this look. Such buildings benefit the local population as well as they serve the local authorities' publicity.



RELIGIOUS

Several mosques and an abandoned Christian church can be found within the research perimeter. As the majority of the perimeter's inhabitants are Shiites, so most of the mosque serve their needs. The most representative mosque however is part of the Sunni Ouzai Imam Sanctuary and already was a key element of the former rural core of Ouzai.



HOSPITALS & EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS

While schools are scattered all over the perimeter accordingly to their necessity, the hospitals are all bundled in one single area. As they depend on access to infrastructure in a big way, they search the vicinity to main traffic axes. The largest one, the Rafik Hariri University Hospital has opened its gates in 2002, causing the demolition of several informal



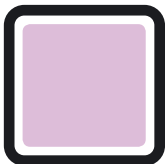
GOVERNMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

The norther part of the perimeter hosts a number of embassies. They are all located in proximity to the UN-headquarters, also comprised in this category. Further away, right next to the Golf Club, a military base can be found. Also the presence of UNRWA in the perimeter is not surprising, as they conduct field work helping Palestinian refugees in the nearby camps.



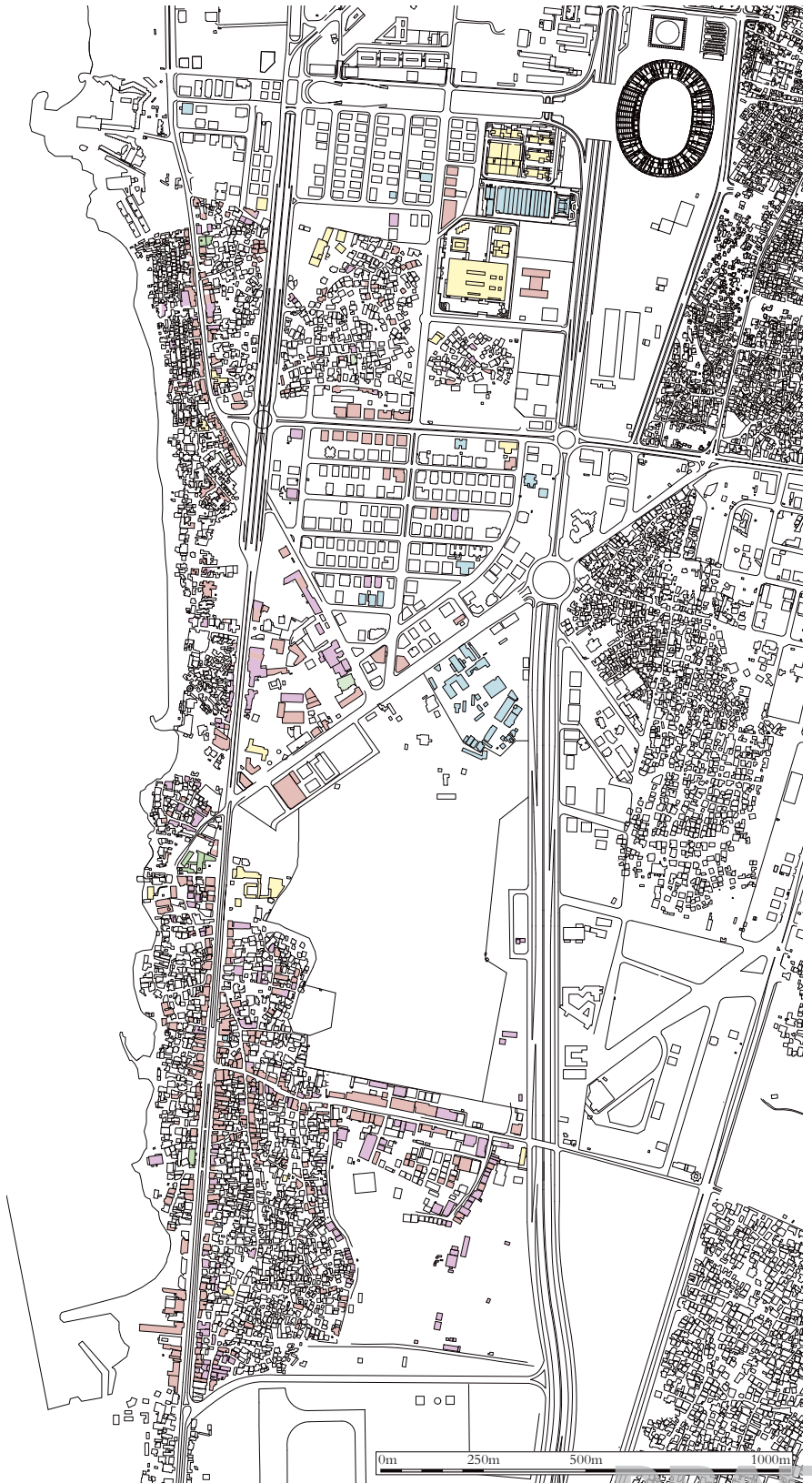
COMMERCE & SERVICES

Commercial facilities are located mostly along the main roads leading through the district. They array along the streets in a way that reminds one of the concept of a linear city. Shops include car parts sales and car repairs, office furniture, bathroom and kitchen fitters, chairs and stools up to everyday grocers, fruit and vegetable sales along the street as well as hairdressers.



WORKSHOPS AND LIGHT INDUSTRY

Most of the workshops belong to the car-business. They rent and mount parts for the official inspections, so that customers can avoid the repair of their insufficient vehicles. Many of the used spare parts come from foreign second hand cars. These vehicles arrive in halves, so that no import tax has to be paid. Some of these vehicles are even reunited and brought back on the street.



FORMAL

The urban pattern of the areas considered “formal” is a regular grid. Plots are similar in size and vary between 900 and 1500 square meters. Nowadays, most of the plots are either already occupied by buildings or under construction. Only very few parcels are left unbuilt.

Although the buildings have the same basic structure, volume, over all appearance and inner organization, every building is different from the other as they all use different styles and elements for decoration and cladding. Two things that always stay equal throughout the entire district are the height and the predominance of the colours grey and beige. This is given to the stone cladding most of the buildings are wrapped in. In between the mostly recent houses there are some reminiscences to former modernist times, when the districts were planned. Unfortunately these buildings are rare in number.

Two buildings styles of these architectural typologies are explained in more detail on the following pages.



Living

Inhabitants of these upper-middle-class housings don't show up in the street. They arrive home in their cars, park under the house and disappear immediately in the entrance. The streets make a deserted impression, the only people walking around are nannies with kids or dogs. Everything looks neat and well-kept. Balconies are glazed and privacy maximized.



Working

People living in this area don't really work there. Besides a supermarket and a few clothing stores, real estate offices, pharmacies and beauty saloons, the only larger commercial activity takes place in garages under the residential buildings in form of wholesale depots. Even where there's no business going on in the garages, people would rather park their cars in front of the house.



Shopping

In the area of Bir Hassan there are only a supermarket and few clothing stores serving their clients on street level. In closer proximity to the hospital there is an elevated number of pharmacies. In general it can be assumed that people might do their everyday shopping in the district, but rather drive elsewhere for big amounts of food, clothes and accessories.



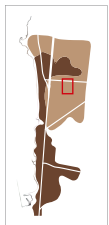
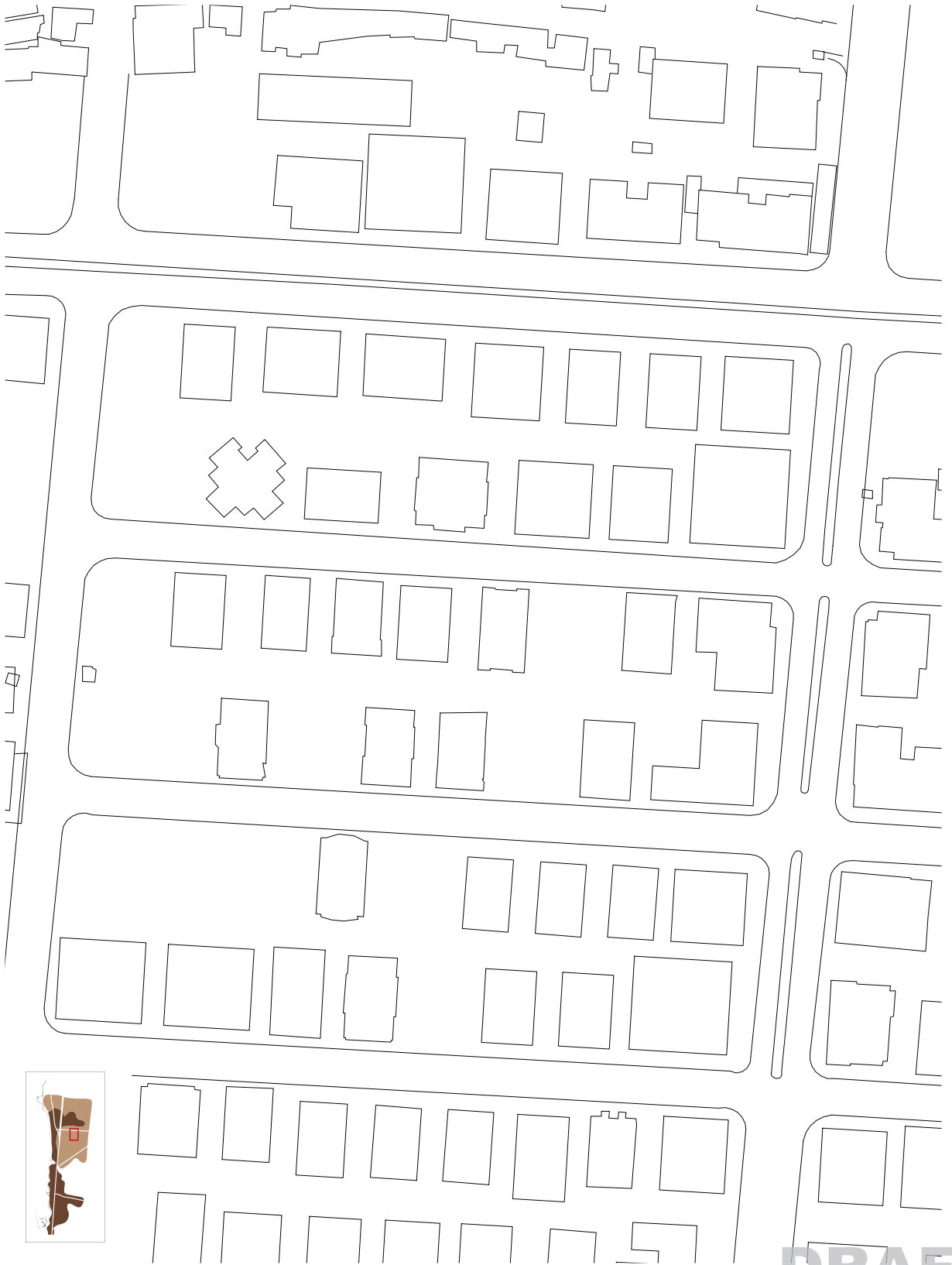
Recreation

If the inhabitants go out, they won't stay within their district. They rather go to Raouché, Hamra or other posh places all over the city. The Golf Club, which has a few members who live in the area, is the only useful leisure facility for the population living in Bir Hassan. It also offers tennis, swimming and other activities. Restaurants, bars or cafes don't really exist in the area.



Transportation

The vehicle used most is the car. People in the formal areas own big cars, all parked relatively close to their buildings. In fact, this closeness determines the interaction that inhabitants have with their surroundings, as usually the only distance they walk inside the districts is from the apartment to the car and the other way around. There are very few motorbikes and almost no pedestrians.



TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – FORMAL I

The Buildings in the formal area are single-standing with few formal parallels to the neighbourhood.

Main construction principle throughout the whole district is the one of concrete columns and slabs clad either with stone or glass. This typology is nothing else than Le Corbusier's "Domino", adapted to the actual situation. Theoretically, all his "cinq points de l'architecture nouvelle" could theoretically be applied. The more recent buildings have lost these modernist ideas and kept only the "pilotis". The few older houses however are much closer to that theory, starting with more plants around the house and more sophisticated open spaces. The balconies are open instead of being glazed with reflective glass and contain more Mediterranean elements in addition, such as brise-soleils and separating but not totally dividing elements like semi-transparent walls.

Amongst this column-slab typology, there are again two different types:

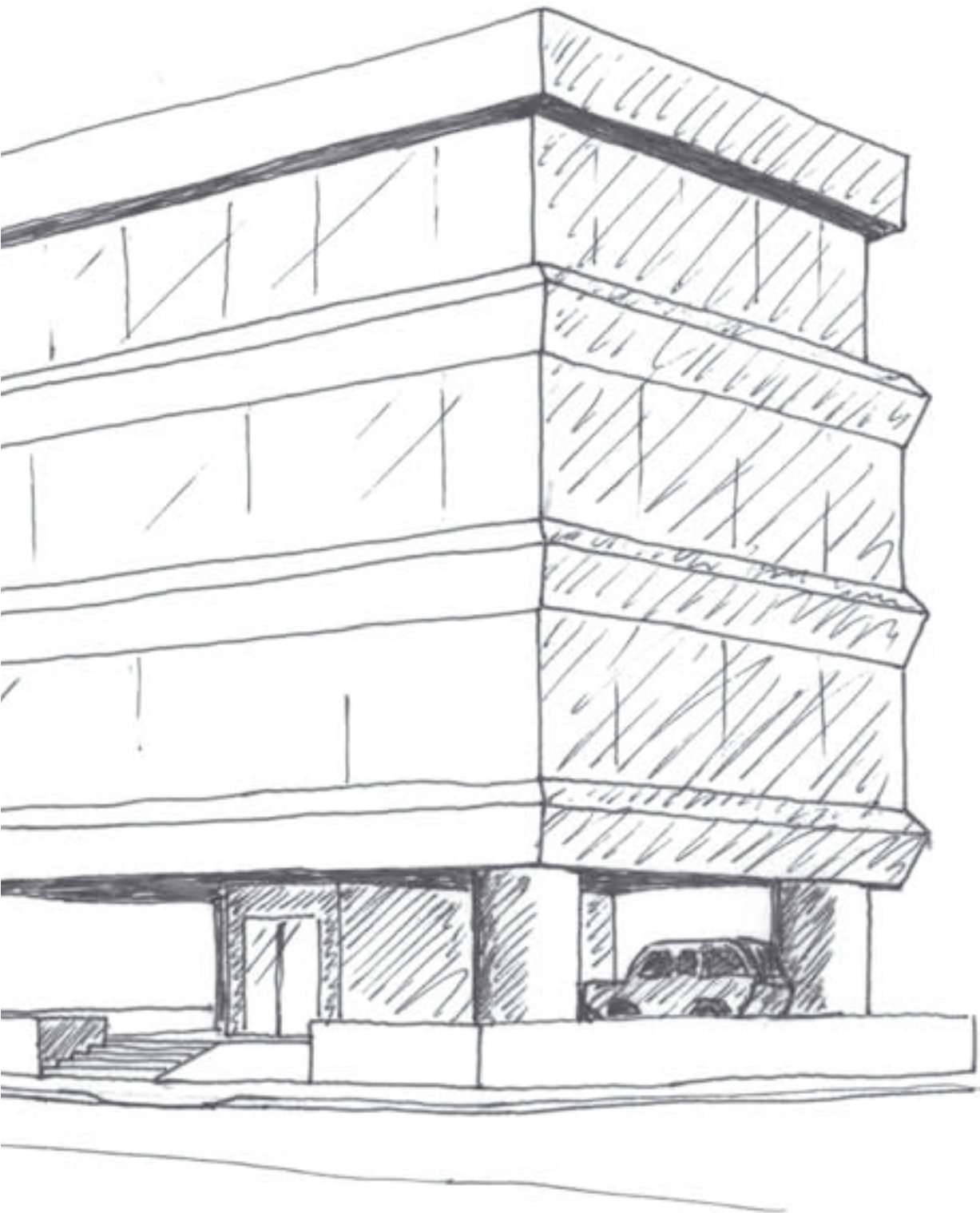
The first typology is open on the ground floor, allowing cars to park underneath. The only element reaching the floor is the concrete core with the circulation.

The second typology gives the impression of a massive block, ground floor closed. This generates more free space for lobby, concierge and maid's accommodations.

Disregarding the size of windows, buildings are usually clad with either a beige, porous stone or polished granite. The ones from the 50ies use travertine as well. Spoken in materials, the most obvious detail is the way they are applied.

While the older buildings form a coherent entity, the newer ones have one or maximum two representative facades, and the remaining sides of the building are plastered and painted. The space around the house has a pure parking function and no recreational purpose any more. The back side of the houses emits an uncomfortable backyard atmosphere which testifies its introverted character.





TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – FORMAL II

There are some differences between recent buildings in the formal area. The constructive principle is still the same though.

First thing that changes is the client. It is not exclusively local people any more, but increasing real estate acquisitions of clients from the gulf-states or Lebanese expats looking for a “pied-à-terre”. These wealthy buyers spend up to 1'000'000 \$ for full-service apartments. They can be adjusted to almost all of the first owner's wishes. The lobbies are larger than before and in the mezzanine there are rooms for maids and drivers. Depending on the individual needs one can either buy an apartment which covers half a floor and about 200 square metres, or take the whole level and join two apartments. Again, in most projects, privacy is kept by glazing spaces that remind us of balconies. But even the variety of plants doesn't make these semi-exterior places real balconies, it merely shows the focus on the environmentally detached and technically dominated way of life. Another thing that changed is the globalized buying process. All the apartments and their plans are available online and can be bought with a mouse click.

The building has a representative function and doesn't serve for pure residential purposes any more. Therefore, the design plays a role again and all four facades are considered in the design. Nevertheless, there is no real relation to the surroundings. The buildings could be erected any place possible. It would make no difference if it were Dubai, Miami or Southern France.

There have been free parcels since the end of the Civil War that are now being developed by investors, mostly in the northern part of the perimeter. Over the last few years there has been a veritable boom of corporate architecture maxing out the zoning laws. Since 1995, the density has more than doubled and new buildings are inaugurated in very short intervals. The use is mostly residential with high ceilings and commercial purposes on the ground level. Destroying old buildings and rebuilding them from scratch is one of the tactics to rise rents, as they are still inherited amongst relatives if there is a change of contract. These are the only means for landlords to adjust prices to a contemporary rate.

Investors perceive a lot of potential in this area. As the plots correspond to the Elyssar Plan in size and zoning already it is easy to get building permits and densify the area. There is one major real estate and engineering company called Ashouren which is particularly present on the spot developing several projects at a time.



INFORMAL

In the informal areas, located in Jnah, Hay el-Zahra and Ouzai, the urban pattern is very heterogenous and scattered. Buildings are very dense and expansions of the modest homes and workshops takes place on horizontal level. This dominates the appeal of all the informal areas inside the perimeter. Buildings in Jnah are rarely higher than two floors, in Ouzai they tend to grow in height sometimes. Parcels, if existing, are either disregarded or very irregular.

The Hay el-Zahra area for example has been completely parceled since 1967, but it's not visible at all in the urban pattern. On the other hand, in the Ouzai area there are larger and unparceled terrains where subdivisions are unclear. The only district with a regular grid shining through the irregularity is located in Jnah along the coast, where settling hasn't taken place around a village core but inside and inbetween the regularly built beach houses.

The street pattern is a complex web of larger roads for transport, smaller streets accessible by car and very narrow back-alleys or stairs. Even the smallest lanes are covered with tiles or asphalted. They are mostly kept tidy while garbage is dropped at the beach or in overstuffed containers.



Living

Living conditions differ a lot in the informal areas. In general however they are very low. People living at the beach suffer from the consequences very heavily. This very romantic image one associates with the beach is deceptive. The beach is the backyard for sewage and garbage. Due to their low level, houses get flooded regularly in winter as soon as it rains and the sea gets tougher.



Working

The inhabitants of these less wealthy housings work everywhere around the city, but mostly in the workshops and stores in the area. There are people like taxi drivers or chauffeurs that don't stay in the district during the day. Few women work. The business is very lively, there are people transporting car parts or other hardware from one place to the other and the buildings along the main streets are mostly housing commercial functions.



Shopping

Habitually people find everything they need in the area. At the point where the Highway merges into the Ouzai Boulevard there are people selling fruits and vegetables on the street. Other utilities from groceries and clothes up to everything necessary to furnish an entire apartment can be bought down at Ouzai.



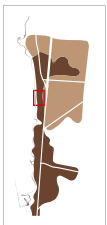
Recreation

People stay inside a close radius of their house, as relatives and friends often live in proximity. Women stay at home where they cook, raise the children and smoke water-pipes. Kids use to play under canopies, in the streets with little traffic and on nearby football-grounds. The beach is not used for recreation in the way somebody acquainted with tourism would expect.



Transportation

The same transportation means as everywhere can be found within the research perimeter. There are a lot of cars parked alongside the streets. The most common vehicles are scooters or motor-bikes, but there are many taxis and small buses driving around as well. From the way of living one can conclude that inhabitants of the area don't rely on cars as much as others, and therefore the most traffic is transit.



TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – INFORMAL

The characteristic of informal settlements is that they form a homogenous unity through lots of different building styles. It is the density that stresses this expression and a certain regularity in building heights. Constructive typologies are about the same, the most common materials are concrete and cinder blocks, in general roofs are flat or with a slight slope. Some buildings aren't plastered or coloured at all, some are.

Especially in the beach area the houses are covered with corrugated iron slabs that are held down by old tires.

The initially squatted bungalows in Jnah are visible in the ground plan but not when walking through the allies, as they were modified in most cases. In general, the substance was preserved and modifications were made in the sense of additions.

Some of the buildings are connected through continuous roofs across the allies which make the regular street grid disappear.

Even though inhabitants share with their neighbours, all the buildings are very introverted. In contrary to the squatted buildings in the Bir Hassan area, windows are glazed. Almost all of them are protected by iron railings and doors are made of metal as well.

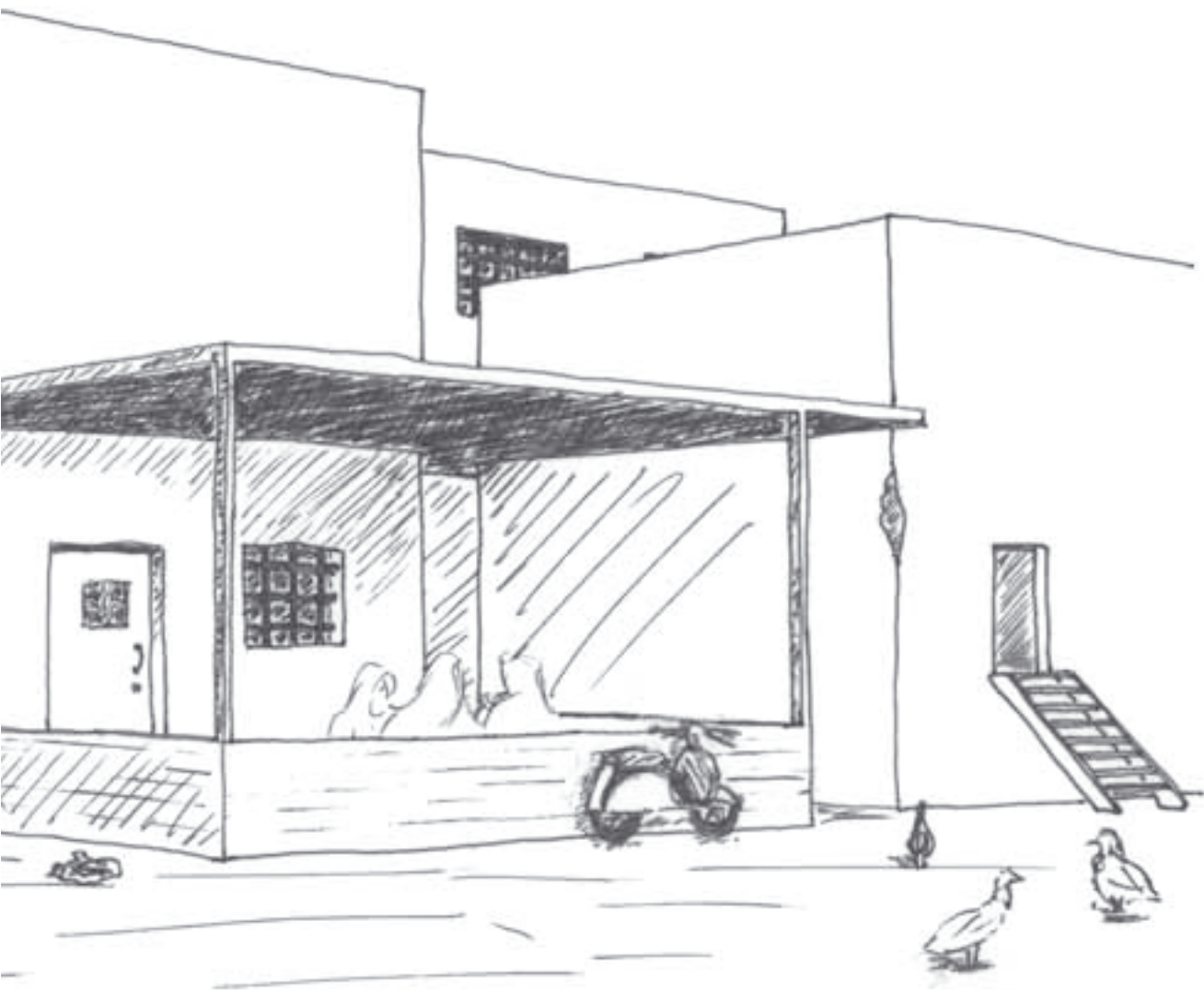
Only very few people are seen outside deeper in the informal areas as well. Few are sitting outside under canopies which work as extensions of their interior space. One can't look into buildings and it's very complicated to define where one building begins and might end. Not only the larger scale is very interlaced, but the small scale as well.

Everybody cares for their own supplies. There are water tanks on almost every roof and lots of loose wires hang from house to house. There are electricity counters attached to the house walls and water pumps in front of the buildings.

The example in the sketch shows a particular scene we encountered. We were able to talk to the people sitting out front and were shown these supply systems. Their kids all go to schools in the area and they told us that the beaches are dirty and unused. The women are afraid to go there and people in general don't use them, even though they live aside. The people we met don't all live in the same house, but in the closer neighbourhood. One of them lives abroad and prefers it to the situation depicted, the others wouldn't relocate, although they are not happy with the floodings in winter.

They shared all this information while showing us the Lebanese hospitality which we didn't experience for the last time then.





TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – SQUATTED

The ways of living, shopping, working and recreation in squatted buildings follow the same rules as in the informal settlements discussed on the previous pages.

The urban structure of the squatted buildings corresponds both to the formal and the informal districts, depending on where the house stands. In the formal area it is often a question of position. One side of the street may seem totally normal and if one casts an eye on the other side, there might be squatted buildings. In the informal area it is hard to say if a building was squatted or built the way it is.

The former leisure establishments on the beaches can still be distinguished and therefore called squatted.

The example on the right page does not belong to the former beach resorts and is one of the obviously squatted buildings adjacent to the upper middle class housing in Bir Hassan. The structural typology is the same as in the formal neighbourhood. After all as the building used to belong to the formal typology once. Therefore it also consists of concrete columns and slabs but several elements were added over time.

A very evident characteristic consist in the exterior curtains replacing the glazing of balconies. Usually glass elements are completely missing or shattered. One can perceive a very individual customization of the structure to personal wishes, especially the extension of living spaces on balconies, which are closed by walls instead of curtains in several cases. The water tanks on the roofs are new.

The very versatile building structure complies with the respective squatting, as it allows any customization and change in room disposition without technical knowledge. This option is frequently used as the blocked up windows and balconies clearly show.

Former front and backyards have changed to become dump yards and emphasize the building's neglected expression, even though squatters probably put much effort in their habitat.





TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – COMMERCE

In the informally settled areas the presence of commercial activity is striking. Along the main axes that run through the district there is a huge variety of restaurants, grocery stores, smiths, welders and many other shops or workshops. They all concentrate depending on the type of products.

The typology of most of the commercial buildings is garage-like. Instead of shopwindows they have roller shutters. When they are open, the store can extend on the pedestrian walk and display its products here. An other entity is, that stores put as many goods as possible on display. This behaviour sometimes accumulates in one of a kind subconstructions like the one shown on the right where entire car fronts are on display.

On Sundays everything is closed and there are almost no people in the streets. On workdays the opposite applies. Store owners present their merchandise on the wide sidewalks in between the randomly parked cars. Everything is packed and stacked. As there is no such thing as display windows, the shops extend onto the street as far as it is considered to be safe.

Shop and workshop owners identify very strongly with their jobs. A cab-driver stops by at a friend's garage with his Toyota asking him for some tools to repair it. His friend would help him and explain us that people don't even know his real name. "You know they call me Japonais because I'm specialized in repairing Japanese cars".

The building illustrated to the right is located in Maramel along the Maramel Ouzai street. This street evidently is the hotspot for car repairs and supplies in the whole area if not in entire greater Beirut.

That workshop and garage are located on the ground level while the upper floors are used for storage and to display spare parts is typical for this particular street and the businesses located alongside. Still dimension and extend of this example are extraordinary.





COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY



WHOLESALE

In the area of Bir Hassan there are a few underground wholesale depots. They either provide services like delivery, housekeeping and wedding planning, or sell things in large quantities, such as hardware solutions, tools, machines, flowers or plants. The only perceptible signs of their existence are the billboards next to the garage-ramps.



RESTAURANTS

There are many restaurants in the whole perimeter. The highest concentration is to be found in the northern part of Jnah. These businesses mostly offer fast and take away food as well as small snacks. Most of them also provide sitting accommodation, preferably on the sidewalk.



FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Located mostly along the Ouzai Boulevard, the street running parallel and close to the coast, people sell fruit and vegetables on barrows. Despite their position on a commuting axis, cars stop by rather rarely and it's especially people walking that buy things.



METAL/HARDWARE

Especially in the middle part of Jnah, where the highway comes back to the ground and runs into the Ouzai Boulevard there's enough indoor and outdoor storage capacity for pipes, toilets, fridges, ovens and other sanitary equipment. Many of these objects are properly piled up under the open sky where they slowly get rusty.



OFFICE FURNITURE

The sector closer to the airport goes along with office furniture sales. It's one of the three city wide businesses going on in the research perimeter apart from car sales and repairs. Clients from all over Beirut come here to furnish their offices.



EVERYDAY SHOPPING

Around the core of Ouzai there is a whole range of everyday services. There are more grocery shops than elsewhere, but one also finds hairdressers, shops selling modest clothes, accessories, and toys. Along the Ouzai Boulevard, there are a few home-furniture manufacturers as well.



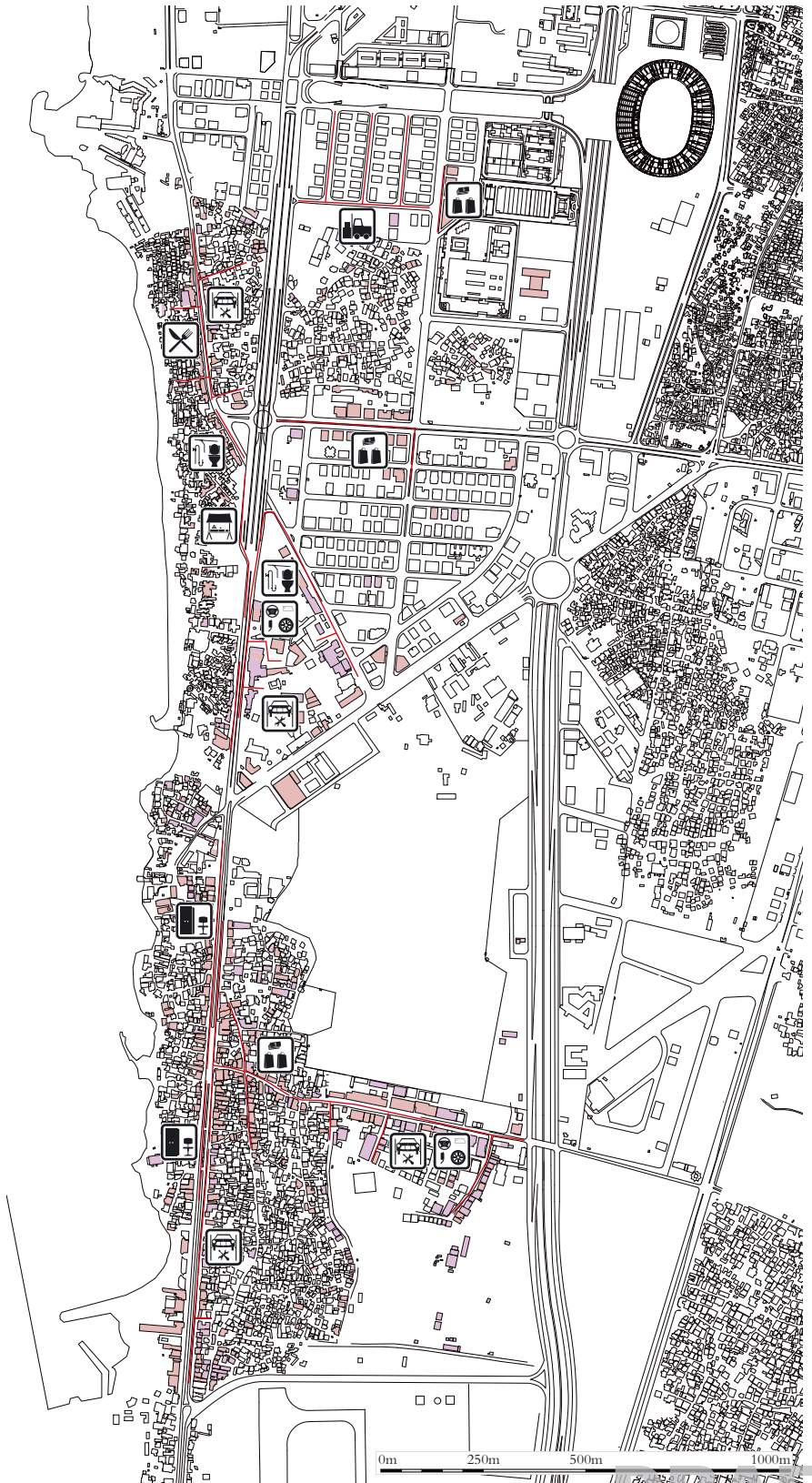
CAR REPAIRS

Mostly on the East-West-axis, there are workshops for cars. These can be divided in different regional kinds of business: In addition to just offer repairing, second hand cars are imported from Europe in halves. Like this, they pass the customs as spare parts, which brings savings by not paying taxes. Once in Lebanon they are welded back together and sold as entire cars again.



CAR PARTS

There's a particular business along the same strip as the other car workshops. It is of importance for the whole Beirut area as well. Car parts can be rented. As a measure to bypass expensive repairs before the periodical inspections, car owners pass by the area, rent the respective car parts that are defective on their cars and mount them just for a few hours. Afterwards they have their car inspected and later they take the parts back, put on the defective ones again and keep driving.



0m 250m 500m 1000m

AN ECLECTIC MICROCOSM

Situation and Outlook

SITUATION AND OUTLOOK

CURRENT SITUATION

Looking at the area now, after being acquainted with its history, structure and inner logic, one has to admit that the character of the perimeter isn't as homogenous as the clear boundaries might suggest.

The area is rather of a heterogeneous nature which results from the different functions like dwelling, commercial, educational or leisure as well as from the varying degrees of legality and illegality.

The lines along which these differences collide are mostly very easy to determine. Walls, fences, roads or waste lands frequently underline their presence.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Not only can be the obvious and previously discussed changes in urban structure, building typology and way of life be observed. Furthermore, the area can also be divided according to its various current potentials and the likely future developments. While certain areas might be able to maintain their status for another couple of decades, others can only calculate on slim chances of survival.

PUZZLE PIECES

Taking into account all the previously described characteristics and distinctions, the area can be split up into different puzzle pieces which all face varying destinies depending on a variety of factors.

The urban puzzle arising thereby identifies six different zones illustrated in the figure to the right. Theoretically one could go much more into detail and subdivide the single fragments again, but the accuracy and plausibility of such a qualitative prognosis would not apply to satisfactory standards anymore.

ECLECTIC MICROCOSM

As all this single puzzle pieces and their individual characteristics and identities come together in a clearly defined space, they create an environment that can be described as an eclectic microcosm.

Eclectic because of its diversity, microcosm because people and institutions present in this area cover the whole bandwidth of Lebanese society and represent it on a micro level. Rural immigrants on the scout for accommodation as well as upper class citizens with a passion for golf. Representatives of both parties can be found within the south-western suburbs of Beirut.



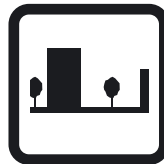
GOVERNMENTAL

- Administrative district
- Henri Chehab Military Baracks
- International Airport



SETTLEMENTS TO VANISH

- Informal settlements of ...
- Jnah
- Hay el-Zahra



MIDDLE CLASS

- Upper middle class areas of ...
- Bir Hassan
- Small parts of Jnah



GOLF COURSE

- 18 holes including ...
- Sports facilities
- Administrative buildings



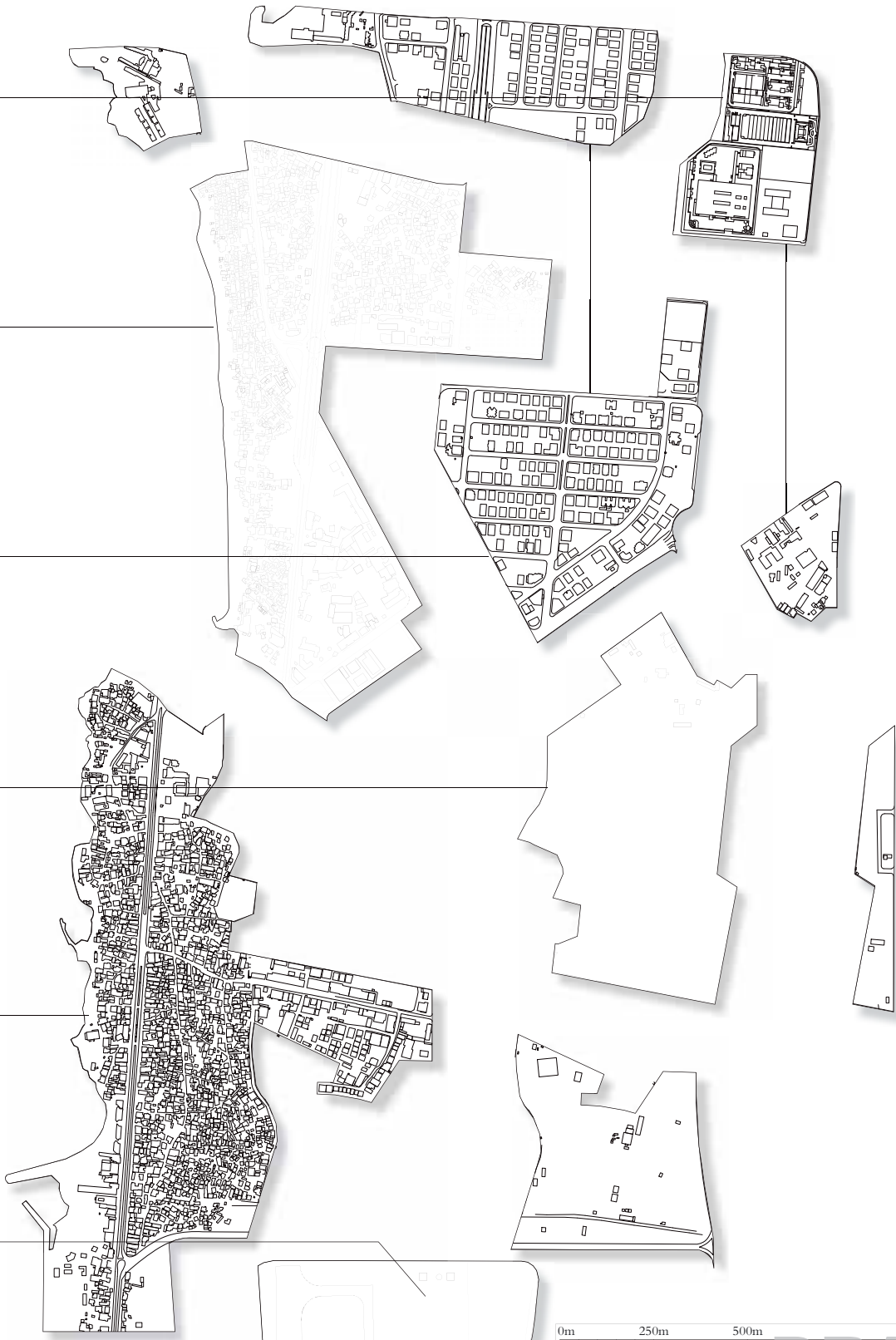
SETTLEMENTS TO LAST

- Informal settlements of ...
- Ouzai
- Maramel



WAITING LANDS

- Coral Beach Hotel
- Properties along highway
- Properties in Maramel





GOVERNMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

When the airport and the Golf Club moved down to the southern suburbs and the stadium was built, the area was facing a promising future. There were plans for a New Beirut by Egli & Meyer and a governmental city by Michel Ecochard. Parcelation and reallocation of land took place with the aim of preparing the area for this visionary interventions.

Soon enough, but latest with the outburst of war, these ideas couldn't persist. During the Civil War abandoned governmental buildings were squatted and the state lost power over the area.

Nowadays, there are a few governmental and institutional buildings left in proximity of the border to Municipal Beirut. The UN and UNRWA in particular are active in the neighbourhood, but there are embassies, hospitals and schools as well as military barracks.

The Elyssar project gives hope for institutions to stay, but the fact that the project is on hold isn't favourable for others to follow the example and move to the same area. The old dream of Ecochard's governmental district could become reality some day, decades after the first vision.



SETTLEMENTS TO VANISH

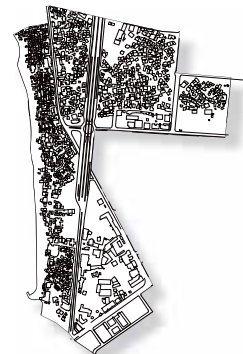
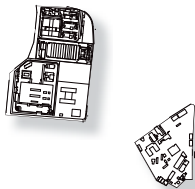
As the map on page 43 shows, many structural changes occurred in the vicinity of Jnah and Hay el-Zahra during the past 15 years.

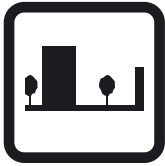
The building density in Bir Hassan has almost doubled since 1995 and only left very few parcels unbuilt. As the popularity of this neighbourhood is undisputed, sooner or later one informal structure after the other will need to give way to profitable apartment complexes.

The construction of the Beirut Governmental Hospital took place during the same time frame and was accompanied by the eviction of various informal structures. In addition to that, the recently build access roads cut through the fabric of the settlements and cut them off from each other. A subtle but weakening intervention.

Following factors indicate that the informal settlements in this area will keep disappearing:

- Sandy beaches and their proximity to the city become attractive again.
- Area is not located to close by the airport, so specific building height restriction or aviation noise are not an issue.
- Neighbouring institutional and upper class housing zones keep expanding.





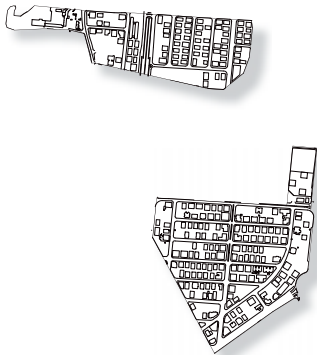
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS

The residential zones built according to governmental plans are about to expand. Investors get funds not only from future Lebanese inhabitants but also foreign people. Benefits are the slope of the area and the resulting sea view. Needless to say, there is the proximity to the City of Beirut as well.

Apart from the waiting lands that are kept free by Elyssar, the two districts under consideration are the only parts with free plots inside the whole perimeter. There is still potential to build there. In addition, the Hay el-Zahra area has been partially expropriated and destroyed for building the hospital. The streets serving this new facility have cut into the informal area inbetween and opened new spaces.

The upper-middle-class will stay in the area, probably expanding towards Hay el-Zahra and the shore.

Nevertheless, it's going to stay a satellite and won't grow to be an autonomous town with all the facilities and functions that define urban life. It works fine, all basic services are provided, but it still profits of the larger scale infrastructure of the city.



GOLF CLUB

The Golf Club of Lebanon has a very particular position inside the research perimeter. Besides the airport it is the only institution that has survived in the original disposition. It is completely detached from the processes and constructions that surround it and constitutes a very powerful unit. It is encompassed by high walls and there's enough personnel to guard the place.

These are the means that most owners of land in the area didn't and don't have and whose property is now squatted as a consequence.

As the Golf Club is the only one in Lebanon, many members come from outside Beirut as well. Also, there are many powerful people amongst the golfers.

The Club sees its future position amidst the Elyssar project, after everything is cleared up. The current chairman believes in a development of the hotel industry along the shore, compensating the people who have to be relocated: "[...]time will take care of all the things that are not really perfect."

Given this hypothesis, more tourist will come to Lebanon and Beirut and the Golf Club will be one of the profiteers.

As the Club is that strong for his monopoly position and available means, we believe that it is going to survive in the future, offering a reason for tourism and additional upper-class residential zones in the surroundings.





SETTLEMENTS TO LAST

In comparison to Jnah, Ouzai is not affected by extending formal areas or a general interest in its land. Neither have there been any larger infrastructure projects since the extension of the airport in the nineties. The area works quite autonomous as it represents a fertile mix of residential and commercial zones. The variety of specialized workshops and small industries along the coastal road and the citywide known car repair shops located in the adjoining neighbourhood of Maramel equip this part of the research perimeter with a fairly high amount of self-sufficiency and independence, which makes Ouzai the best working model within this eclectic conglomerate of microcosms at the same time.

The only immediate dangers are the Elyssar master plan or possible governmental interventions, such as an airport extension.

Yet following factors indicate that the informal settlements in this area will persist:

- Immediate proximity of the airport goes along with aeroplane noise, pollution and buildings restrictions concerning the height
- Resistance of local population against governmental is backed by the political parties of the area.
- Citywide importance of local small industries and workshops
- Strong social and economical independence
- Nontransparent ownership situation and lack of parcelling complicates legal construction



WAITING LANDS

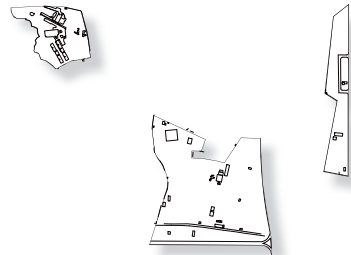
Land that is not to be built on has never existed in the southern suburbs of Beirut, for a long time even the pine woods weren't protected.

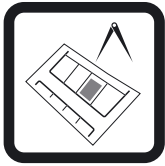
Yet, there is an interest in keeping waiting lands empty. The urban development in combination with the property question has shown that it is extremely hard to free squatted plots again. Many landowners have tried to prevent the squatting all along, but mostly failed lacking financial support.

At the moment there are a few empty plots along the Airport Highway, in Maramel and in Jnah. They are all fenced and surveilled by security personnel.

On a few of them there are temporary installations, e.g. a football-ground in Jnah as well as gravel pits and holding areas.

The past has shown that it's much less costly to keep the status quo than to let time handle the problems, that's why the waiting lands are going to be kept waiting lands, unless there are going to be initiatives from private people or institutions to erect buildings complying with the governmental guidelines. In the case of plots close to the airport, such developments are going to be protracted and complicated, because the height regulations don't allow 100% profitable establishments.





PLANNING AND CONTROLLING

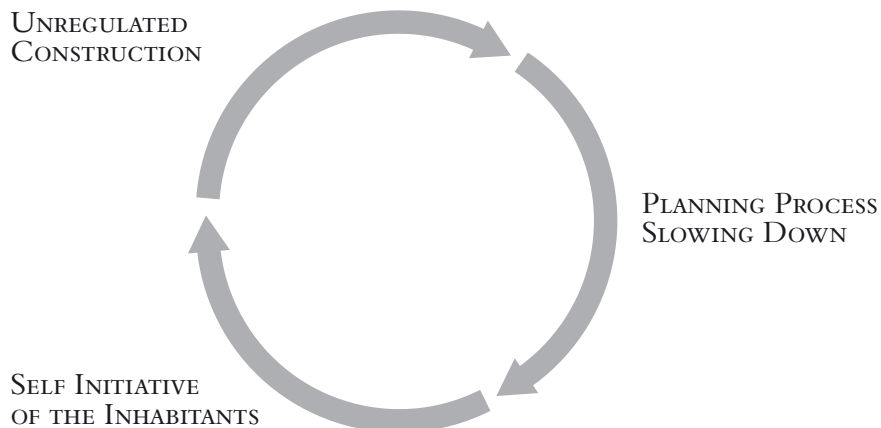
First studies dedicated to the issue of informal settlements in and around Beirut date back to the 1950ies. In 1957 a study on housing conditions led to the proposal of building 5'000 housing units to relocate the slum dwellers living in the Qarantina slum located in the eastern suburbs of Beirut.

During the following decades almost all planning proposals for Beirut's informal settlements took up the same idea and focused on rebuilding of modern housing units for the residents. This remained the number one way of dealing with informal settlements up to the day.

As Elyssar and the several Ecochard plans proof, such large scale projects only got implemented partially. Nevertheless the government sticks to this approach. Furthermore, the execution of large-scale infrastructure projects is clearly seen by the state (central or local) as an appropriate occasion to curb the development of slums or divide them in sections. Hence, highways and large construction projects like the airport extension or the sports stadium are often carried out in these dense neighbourhoods and informal settlements where they generate the occasion to displace large population groups. Another, rather cosmetic intervention that was applied to Qarantina as well, is the erection of walls to prevent people in transit from catching a glimpse of what lies behind.

The public policies have never concretely addressed slum dwellers and *laissez-faire* policy has been the rule, especially during the war time. However, to the present day municipalities tend to intervene to the lowest possible degree as they consider this area either outside their jurisdiction, or beyond the scale of their capacities.

These common practices will never create conditions to which all parties (the local and national authorities, the inhabitants, the landowners, the investors, etc...) will agree. Instead, the vicious cycle of the past will keep turning and prolong the state of stagnation (see bottom). A considerable approach for the future though could be to leave behind the idea of acting on the macro level and finally change to the micro level. Such a policy would supply informal settlements with on-site upgrading services which would be executed by governmental institutions. Such interventions would leave the well working social and economical structure of the areas untouched, but still improve the living conditions. Like this, the local potential could be activated and individual initiative encouraged. This micro approach might one day leads to more wealth and prosperity and eventually move the suburbs and their population closer to the city centre and the formal areas without actually changing their position in the urban fabric or their way of living.



APPENDIX

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Interviews
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