

Pearls for Lebanon

Ole Bouman

In November 2006, three months after the Summer War between Hezbollah and Israel, a small, international group of architects and urban designers visited Lebanon. Their goals were to assess damage, meet colleagues, examine the opportunities for new dialogue, and brainstorm about the possibilities of reconstructing destroyed cities and their public domains – despite the seemingly unchallengeable animosities and political deadlocks that have been part of Lebanese life for decades.

Of course, we read about the ruptures in social life, the aggression that may easily emerge even in regular disputes, and the superposition of different worldviews within this one small country. But we also were intrigued by reports of a new mutual understanding among the Lebanese people, an integration seemingly prompted by the sheer aggression of an outside invader; a kind of ‘United We Stand’ atmosphere, which social theorists call ‘negative integration’, and which can be much stronger than any attempt at dialogue within a group or population.

But then we were standing there, on the sidewalk some 20 kilometers south of Beirut, facing hundreds of thousands of tons of rubble and debris caused by the massive bombings by the Israeli. Here we were with a group of Christian and secular Lebanese architects and students, who clearly didn’t consider this mass destruction as part of their own plight. Within minutes it was crystal clear that national feelings were much weaker than loyalties to class, religion or sect. The tragic fact emerged that, although we kept talking about what was going on in Lebanon as if it were happening in a single country, the truth of the matter was that it was happening in an area with multiple – and very different – communities, which only shared a common name and territory thanks to historical coincidence.

I tried to consider what it would mean to experience a massive attack on Dutch soil, with endless destruction, yet with people reacting as if it was not their war, but other people’s war. In such a scenario, bombed bridges would cause no outrage but only be regarded as a nuisance, similar to other nuisances like the death of fellow civilians and huge economic losses. My imagination failed me.

This profound lack of communication, comprehension, dialogue and engagement hasn’t stopped bothering me since. To avoid the consumption of other peoples’ predicament as merely an unbearable lightness of being and just going home, we tried to set up a conversation with designers, politicians, philosophers and architects, in order to start thinking about projects that would: a) break through the traditional boundaries of the prevailing group think and, b) reclaim common ground and public domain right across existing cultural divisions. The results are about to be materialized in a series of upcoming projects, as described on the following pages.

MARCH 2007

PRICE
AND DATES
ON THE BACK

What's all this noise about?

DE BALIE 6 MARCH

Magazine / Web

Studio Berlin

Think Inside

B16

L'agrement chez l'habitant

Pearl's Projects

Brenneke

Guerilla Architecture

International Competition



09

20 IDEAS

March 2007

- 3.** MY LEBANON, YOUR LEBANON...
an introduction to the Lebanese melting pot

- 5.** DAJÉ
what's all this noise about?

- 7.** STUDIO BEIRUT
a fixed common space with mobile events

- 11.** THINK TANK
tired of thinking big? think tank

- 13.** BUS
public space hits the road



- 18.** LOGEMENT CHEZ L'HABITANT
Lebanon from a local point of view

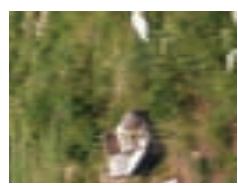
- 19.** PEARL FOUNDATION PROJECTS
In South Lebanon

- 20.** A BOATLINE FOR LEBANON
By Ole Moystad from HP Landskap

- 21.** GUERRILLA ARCHITECTURE
Students Projects

- 22.** INTERNATIONAL IDEAS COMPETITION
For public spaces in Lebanon

- 23.** QUIET ZONE
Mobile gardens / Voice-Over Beirut



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WWW.FLICKR.COM
BEIRUT TEAM
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WWW.BLOGGINGBEIRUT.COM

MY LEBANON, YOUR LEBANON...

It was in 1920, under the French mandate, that the final boundaries of Lebanon were created. It resulted in a Lebanon similar to a cheese fondue cooked in cold water, a melting pot between different communities that didn't really melt.

Lebanon is about contradictions.

It's a small country where eighteen communities, of different backgrounds and aspirations, sometimes contradictory coexist. It has many political parties, most of which are religiously tainted; radical political parties whose leaders are democratically elected and social parties where leaders are inherited. It's a place where education is sacred, but culture is neglected; yet it's the sanctuary of most Arab thinkers and artists. It is also a tourist destination for all surrounding Arab neighbors because of the mild weather, beautiful landscapes, and relative sense of freedom which has given Lebanon power and influence over the region. It's a society with western aspirations (way of life, music, movies, languages...), but a low sense of respect for the law; it's also a society of eastern backgrounds, which makes it vulnerable to all religious issues and thus a fertile ground to exercise these conflicts. It's a country where the press is relatively free, but mostly owned by political lords. It's a place where personal initiative is high, but economic burdens force young educated Lebanese to work in jobs that leave them little time to focus on anything else (culture, politics...). Lebanon can be the ground of dialogue between all communities, it's one of those places different cultures can meet and interact; it can also be the ground of war, and never ending conflicts between those same communities and foreign players.

It's a place where you will definitely find many things you can relate to, and a bunch of other things that you can't even begin to understand.

All these factors have resulted in a massive immigration (the number of Lebanese abroad is approximately double that of Lebanese residents). This Diaspora has two faces: the physical immigration which is draining Lebanon from its intellectual and productive force, and the mental immigration, which is making Lebanese residents helpless and indifferent to their country's situation.

After the July war, all of Lebanon's friends rallied up in a humanitarian and economical effort. Since the level of despair and destruction was high, all organizations worked on a large scale, not always without a political price. With the big budget projects that were initiated, it was easy to overlook the details. Beirut, as a cultural city, suffered yet another setback.

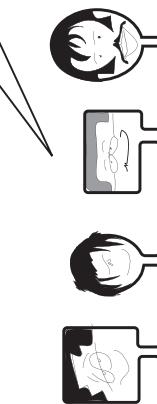
Yet again, Lebanon is at a convergence point. The situation is blocked between two political sides with contradictory visions of the country, leaving little space for a third choice to evolve. But it is exactly in times like these that people should have access to alternatives. Cross road after cross road we realized that the need for action dealing with social issues is bigger even if it means rescheduling our priorities in our projects.

In November 2006, several Dutch foundations took the initiative to visit Lebanon. Together with a group of local partners, we visited war zones in Lebanon in what seemed to be routine war tourism. The turning point that made this event different from any other war tourism was the debate held on the last days proposing several ideas on what to do next. What can be the role and function of public space in the reconstruction of Lebanon. The brain storming continued on the Beirut Unbuilt blog and led to several concepts. The projects are an attempt to raise and talk about these issues. It's a way to wake up the local mental immigrants and give them a platform where they can express their ideas and thoughts. These are common spaces where different people will hopefully find something of interest to them and interact with "the other". These spaces will try to promote that difference is enriching, and conflict doesn't have to lead to physical violence... They are not a third choice, but a platform from which multiple choices can be made by different actors. This concept includes spaces that you will have to visit, and spaces that will come to you wherever you are... All these projects fall under the same umbrella of getting together to encourage dialogue, forming a sort of common space, a common ground even. They differ from each other in the way they address you and the media they use, to try to affect the maximum number of people and the most diverse public. There are already many contributions to these projects, a list which includes Archis (Volume), Partizan Publik, Pearl Foundation, Ymere, DIGI, and the Prince Claus Fund from the Netherlands, and local partners who form the Beirut Team, all aiming at widening this network and including more contributions, acting as a think tank. These activities that we present are also a way to encourage foreigners to visit Lebanon and create an emotional link with this small but very inviting country which will hopefully make it impossible to bomb ever again. And we assure you, you will want to stay there, as passionately as many Lebanese want to leave.

What we are asking for is not only your financial help, but also mental and emotional support for our projects in order to benefit from your expertise; this is why you will find proposals but also questions in our presentation.

We hope Pearls for Lebanon will be a step that adds a little bit of hot water to the melting pot.

Thank you





"لشون كل هيل ضجة"

ضجةٌ مجَلَّةٌ ثقافيةٌ ذاتُ شُقْ أخْبَارِيٍّ وشُقْ تَنْفِيذِيٍّ،
أثْرَا فَحْسِلَةً مُسْتَفَلَةً تَسْدِيرُ لِلْعَقْبَنِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ وَالْإِكْرَانِيَّةِ،
تَتَخَصَّصُ بِعِسْمَالِ الْمُشَبَّهِ عَلَيْهِ الْمَحْدُودِ لِتَكُونُ صَادَةً حَلِيلَةً
لِلْمَخَالِفِ الْمَطْلَقِيَّةِ وَهَذِبَانِ الْمَعْلُومِ.
تَضْمِنُ ضَجَّةً صَوْهَانَ الْأَصْوَاتِ كُلِّ مِنْ يَسْعُ إِلَيْهَا
جَهْدَهُ فِي الْفَكْرِ الْعَمَدِيِّ وَالْفَنَّونِ وَالْمَقْنَفَةِ، إِنَّهَا وَسِيلَةٌ بَحْثِ
وَمَحْدِيدَةٌ، وَمُتَنَبِّعَةٌ مُنْتَزَلَةٌ لِلْمَدْرُودِيَّةِ وَبِرْوَتِ وَسَمِيلِيَّةِ،
يَنْجِفُ لِيَحْمَدَ مَسَاحَةً تَفَشَّلُ بِهِسْنَىٰ وَتَصْمِيمَهُ لِتَسْبِعَ أَقْوَامَ.

DAJJÉ

What's the Noise about?

loïse – Dajé in Arabic – is a magazine for cultural intervention, dedicated to experimental projects and their realization. An independent, bilingual (Arabic–English), quarterly magazine dealing with some key issues in the Middle East, it opens up boundaries and serves as an interface between subjects of regional intervention and global debate.

noise joins forces with those of like mind in one quest to seek new directions in architectural thinking, arts and culture; it is a medium for socio-political activism.

Initiated by Studio Beirut and Volume, this project is an attempt to open a forum for research and design, enlarging the network of the Think and Act tank.

Studio Beirut stands for a fixed common space where projects are discussed and launched by various partners, then *Noise* will be its two-dimensional, widely disseminated noise will be heard and read.

This 'zero' issue of *Noise*, distributed for free with Volume 11: *Unbuilt*, is a special edition on projects evolving around public spaces in Lebanon. These projects were presented at the show 'Pearls for Lebanon' at De Balie Amsterdam, on the 1st of March 2007.

join in and let's make some Noise!



In a country where communities became segregated after a long civil war, it was only natural to focus the Beirut Unbuilt debate on finding a common ground that could unite the Lebanese by having them share the same visions. Studio Beirut is the first step in this direction, a place where these subjects and issues are initiated, discussed and promoted. In essence, Studio Beirut is simply a common space.

From Gemmayze House to Studio Beirut

Over the last three years, we have been organizing a public space in what is known now as the Gemmayze House. In the last years, Gemmayze has grown into the strong hold of the alternative scene, with the house as one of its centres. The house is a feel-at-home where parties, exhibitions, movie making, play rehearsals and several gatherings took place for free, (a simple bring your own drink affair). The unexpected frequentation by a large number of people made this house a meeting place for many Lebanese and Foreigners in Beirut. It became a place where people feel comfortable and meet others even if it didn't hold events regularly.

This experience made us also see the need for such spaces where amateurs and fresh graduates can operate, and where projects can be discussed and executed (International Day of Peace in Khiyam, Come home exhibition, Exchange party, Beirut unbuilt). The Beirut Studio will be an equipped version of the Gemmayze House. It will try to respond to all these needs while having several tools to enlarge its network through several media and local partners. Ideally, Beirut Studio will not only be a third choice, but a platform from which new choices and ideas are initiated.

There is nothing simple in a common space

Studio Beirut will have to be a place that looks beyond ethnic and socio-economical enclaves, tries to avoid any negative connotation (religious, territorial) and promotes public policy and culture.

It's an open place for populations from different backgrounds to explore various development plans through a range of activities, and learn how to apply them on the national, ideological and political level to formulate a common plan for all. Studio Beirut is a place that initiates thinking and discussions on architecture, art, culture and urban development, and their role and responsibility in society.

It's a place that facilitates and stimulates students, fresh graduates and amateurs in their artistic and cultural expression. Finally, Studio Beirut will be a portal to cultural Beirut for foreigners, a welcoming and well connected place that provides a kick start to explore the city and other regions of Lebanon.



Come home exhibition



Studio Beirut, a unique destination



The program is divided in several sections, establishing a centralized base for certain activities and insuring larger area coverage through decentralized events. The Studio Beirut is the base for other projects and their launch station.

Fixed program: (based in Studio Beirut)

>**Café Lounge** that serves light beverages and snacks, and offers an internet connection
>**Meeting room** to host events, with an urban show as a platform for thinking and discussing recent urban and social developments in tandem with other projects.

>**Cine Club**, a monthly cycle of picked movies that is followed by discussions on the subject, **Library**, and an exchange book shelf, where you can exchange any book you don't need with others.

>**Lost & Found**, where you can buy and sell objects that you don't need anymore, or objects of design by young amateurs artists.
>**Offices** for the website, magazine and the edition of the alternative Beirut map that guides you through our events, Hostel, and collaborating partners activities.

>**Exhibition space** for artists, fresh graduates and amateurs.
>**Teaching courses** in different areas
>**Workshop space** dealing with politics, media, art, culture, architecture and design as instruments of social engineering, addressing their role and responsibilities in society.

Events: (decentralized activities)

The Events of Studio Beirut will be held outside its premises as frequently as possible. These Events will be parties held with local collaborators, auctions on -design items, big feasts where all Studio Beirut visitors are invited to architectural and artistic contests, forums...

Finally there is one regular event. A tour, led by an architect, planner or writer, is also planned every two weeks in different parts of the city. **Walking the distance** is an opportunity to explore new aspects of the city with questions relevant to social, political and cultural topics.

The events organized outside the Studio will enable us to reach people in different regions, backgrounds and interests.

Beirut has a rich cultural life, and the night scene is especially active. The city is famous in the region for its clubs, festivals and galleries. That said, many of the platforms and venues in Lebanon have a rather exclusive character.

Studio Beirut will be a space in the city that has no personal or financial targets, thus it will be easier to avoid any connotations, because it works in an open and in an inclusive matter.

The Studio Beirut, as the name indicates, is located in Beirut, as this city is currently the base for all debates and art life in Lebanon, and all events will be dispersed on the rest of the Lebanese territory.

Studio Beirut, with its approach and programs, is a unique project in Lebanon.



Through the media it uses (magazine, website), Studio Beirut will have to cover other parts of the Middle East. Issues and developments in the wider region will be addressed in the Studio; formats and media will be exported to the surrounding countries. As stated earlier, Studio Beirut in its simplest form as a common space dealing with uncommon issues; such, it will not only affect Beirut but also the wider region.

think tank example



Think Tank



STREET BLOG: STUDIO BEIRUT PROPOSES A NEW WAY OF USING PUBLIC SPACE AS A POSITIVE INSTRUMENT IN THE ENGINEERING OF SOCIETY. OUR THINK TANK WILL BE THE GENERAL PUBLIC, USING WALLS AS THE COMMUNICATING PLATFORM. THE WALLS WILL BE USED TO SEND AND RECEIVE QUESTIONS DEALING WITH THE LEBANESE SOCIETY.

The fact that the country lacks any free posting structures and this situation led to a chaotic and polluting posting on walls all over the cities.

The street blog contributes in claiming the sidewalks as a common public space and investing these spaces as an area for discussion and promoting various cultural activities.

A specific space on the wall will be dedicated to studio Beirut's 'send and receive corner', posing such questions as "if I was in charge of the country, would..." The public can post their ideas and send their questions and suggestions in this space, while the rest of the wall is dedicated freely to public use (concert promo, theatres or movie trailers, advertisements...) under the title "you are allowed to post on this wall" as a response to the municipalities graffiti: "you are not allowed to post on the walls" which you can see all over the city walls.

Thinking about our city

Do walls have ears?

The chameleon wall mimics the background of a wall in any region where it will be implemented (depending on each region, the wall texture and colour will change), ensuring its visual integration. The project also includes added values such as the bench and an attached pen.

The Think Tank will provide an urban 'easy access' platform used by Studio Beirut to communicate with the public and enlarge its network, providing urban structures lacking to the city and causing, by their absence, great visual pollution. The presented structure is based on a "chameleon wall" that melts with the background and will be offered to municipalities and placed in strategic locations (sidewalks in front of theatres, public spaces, cinemas, pubs, public phones...) and in Studio Beirut. All planning and feedback will be received by Studio Beirut and published in the magazine and website.

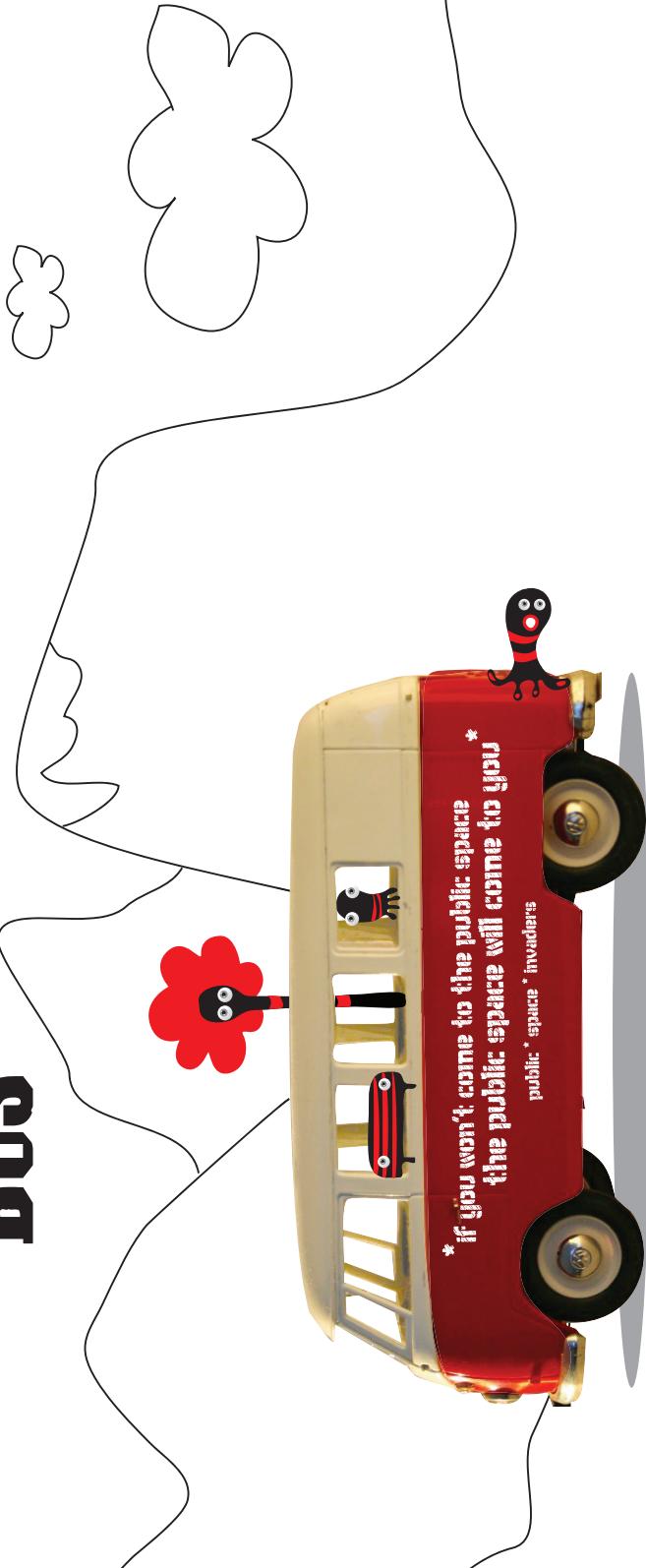
At a later stage the BUS will help distribute the Think Tank in every region it will visit.



Smart Talk

The Think Tank is an opportunity to introduce an urban element that serves multiple purposes, and boosts the communication between citizens (collecting a sincere vision since the participant will remain anonymous). The number of stands produced can increase to cover wider regions and different cities, and become a referendum structure on a national level.

BUS



The BUS, is scheduled to be launched as the final phase of the project. It addresses local people's needs by delivering useful, well conceived spaces and services. It will be part of much larger communal facilities. It does not form a microcosm in a region, but links itself with surrounding communities.

The program is simple and divided in several categories to try to attract the largest number of people, and all services are affordable to all people. The BUS is composed of... a bus. It will transport performers (musicians, kids activities..), benches, lighting, a wc, but also free food, an exchange library and sport equipments and any activity that creates an instant animated public space. The program includes the use of local materials and demands local participation in the public space (depending on each region we visit, it could be local musicians or poets, feasts or dances, kiosks that sell local products...) to promote that space and make sure that it is up to the locals to sustain and maintain it in the future.

Moving Publicity

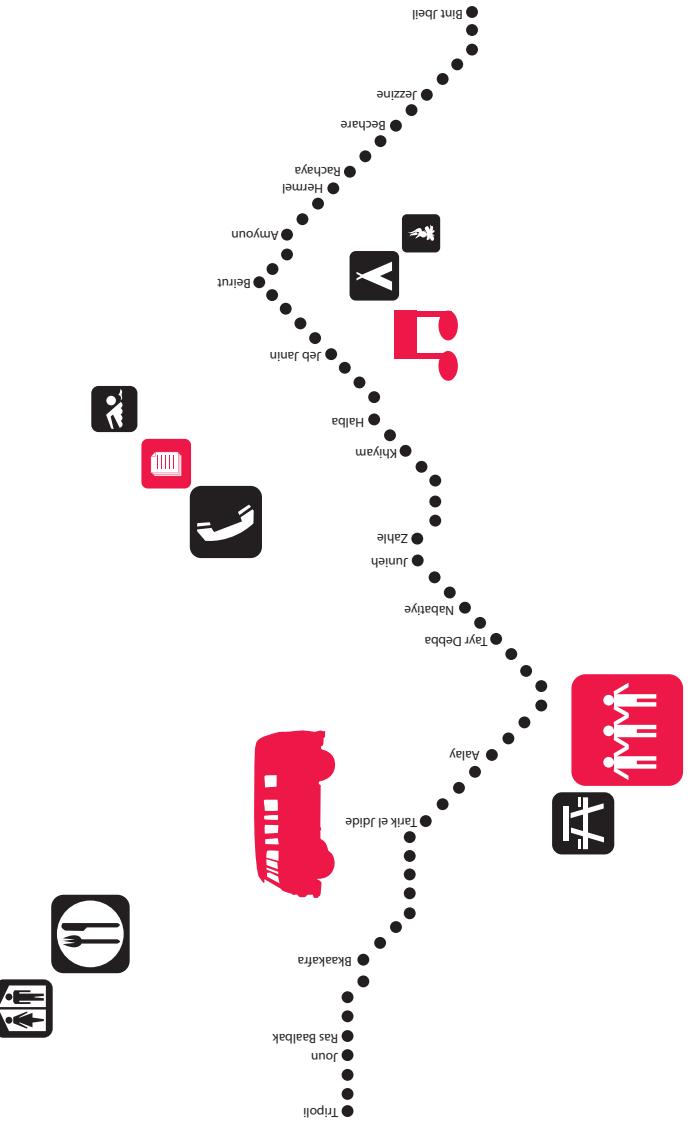
THE LACK OF COMMON SPACE CAN BE SEEN IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. THIS IS NOT ONLY DUE TO THE LACK OF SPACE ITSELF, BUT MAINLY TO THE CONNOTATION EXISTING PUBLIC SPACES HAVE.

During the civil war in 1975, Lebanon was architecturally divided into sectarian regions, in which each religious community exercised its own urban rules and formed its own public spaces which reflected its perception of space and ultimately was only used by this specific community. Snipers and bombs deprived the Lebanese from the culture of walking the streets or hanging out in parks. A daring project is intended to address this issue and to create public spaces that initially will be as generic as possible and where different people from diverse backgrounds can meet.

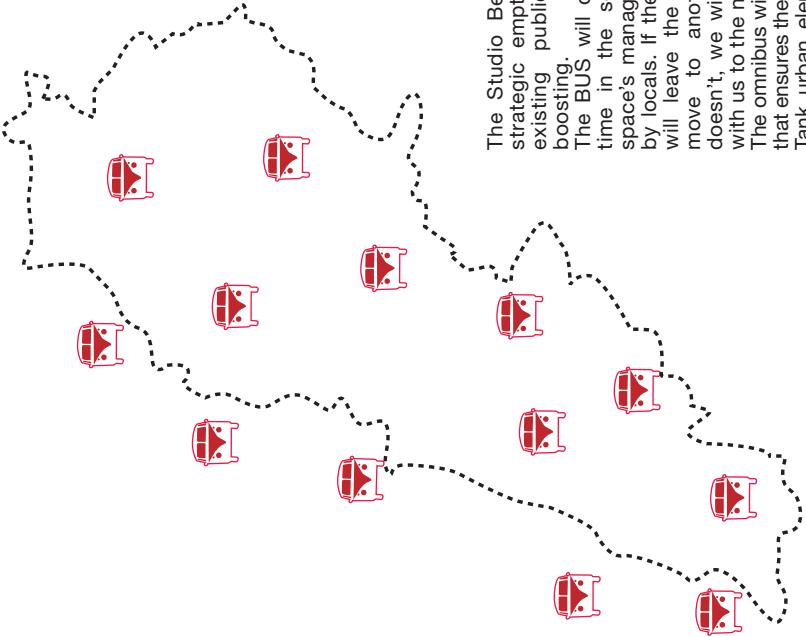
Rather than concluding that public space and community life are in decline, we should envision a society receptive to pluralism. A dynamic intervention is needed to contribute to social space.



In parallel to the fixed platforms represented in other projects, through and similar to Studio Beirut (the mother ship), a movable platform is intended to reach those who cannot, for any reason, access the magazine, the website or the studio itself... This movable platform is represented by a bus, or an omnibus (since omni means for all), that will be moving from one location to another. Instead of transporting people, as it commonly does, this omnibus will transport space, or more specifically, will generate instant public space.



Lebanon Moving



The Studio Beirut team will choose strategic empty lots of land, or an existing public space that needs boosting. The BUS will operate for a period of time in the selected area until the space's management can be handled by locals. If the experience works, we will leave the basic equipment and move to another destination. If it doesn't, we will just move everything with us to the next destination. The omnibus will be the mobile platform that ensures the proliferation of the Think Tank urban element, promoting Studio Beirut and enlarging its network.

All planning and feedback will be received in Studio Beirut and published in the magazine and on the website.

Moving forward

The omnibus, with its line "if you won't come to the public space, the public space will come to you", is also a way to encourage locals to claim their public space, as it is presented as a system apt for development. It will promote the expression of activities and visions of the locals through public space by establishing a physical contact between different communities. They are the decisive factor on whether it will be a one night stand, or will prosper and live on.



BUS

[BEIRUT]
Studio
COMING SOON FROM

DOCUMENT CULTURE MIGRATION

JEAN NOUVEL STEVEN HOLL TOYOTOMI OSCAR NIEMEYER RAFAEL MONEO BERNARD KHOURY RICARDO BOFFIL

BASED ON THE IDEA OF LIVING IN A HOUSE WITH IT'S OWNERS AND SHARE THE SPACE (THROUGH A ROOM RENTAL) AND FOOD EATING FROM THE FAMILY MEAL] THIS KIND OF TOURISM BRINGS PEOPLE CLOSER TO LOCALS, TO THEIR TRADITION, WAY OF LIFE AND TEMPER.

Such an initiative will assure a host space for all people interested in taking a closer look to Lebanon in a moderate price and through an authentic experience. It has been introduced locally by already one organizations: Zico house. Therefore we need to decide if we want to establish a new network of locations or append the sources that are interested to the existing organizers.

In addition to the mentioned project, a youth hostel is being planned in the Gemayzé house hoping that we include it in our contacts for people searching for an affordable space to spend their stay.

www.hotelbanais.com

A Hostel In Beirut

Why a hostel?

Of all the schemes that you might think about for enhancing and improving Lebanon, a hostel might seem the least likely choice. However you are terribly wrong. A number of factors indicating a changing reality in European travel trends are as apparent in Lebanon as elsewhere in the world, namely; the rise of budget airlines, the internet and the growth in independent travel. Undoubtedly Lebanon could be a popular destination for backpackers because of its geographical, climatic, social and cultural assets. Beirut offers sea, ski, unique ancient archaeological sites, beautiful people, Phoenician science, good food, a lively night scene and easy travel to the more traditional Arabic hinterland.

The benefits for Lebanon in encouraging the backpacking scene can be explained as follows. The daily spending of a backpacker may be lower, the travellers tend to stay longer and travel wider in the destination. Because the length of stay is longer and most spending is made with local businesses, the local economic impact can be far greater than for other types of tourists.

Backpackers and independent travellers tend to be trendsetters back in their home countries, helping to promote a destination, particularly through word of mouth and the rise of the internet as a mass communication tool. For example, New Zealand, Thailand, Vietnam and India were discovered by the budget travel market, and are now amongst the leaders of the mainstream market as well.

Backpackers tend to be highly educated, and though 'low budget' now, are more likely to be of high disposable income in the future. Destinations that they find attractive and enjoy as backpackers are likely to be ones which will become a destination of choice for them and their families in the future.

Why would a Hostel work?

Introducing a tourist flow to a country that is still recovering is only possible through the independent travellers and backpackers because the only requirements for this type of travellers is the presence of an adequate infrastructure to host them, their adventurousness and curiosity overcomes any instability.

How to set up a hostel and what we need

The hostel in Beirut is being developed by Studio Beirut in collaboration with The Circus Berlin which is part of the European Hostel Cooperation. The Beirut Studio team already came up with a financial study for setting up and launching a hostel in central Beirut. We need your support developing this project and connecting Lebanon to the rest of the world. This project will be the start of a safety net based on the idea of emotional attachment and identification, people who will visit Lebanon and stay in the hostel, and similar places we hope this project will catalyse, are likely to become the advocates and speakers of an internationally peace-oriented flourishing vision of Lebanon.

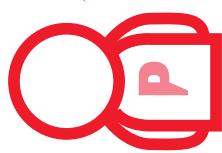
**will be very upset when they hear about
TAG A FAMOUS BUILDING IN BEIRUT, our graffiti contest!!**



P E A R L
FOUNDA TION

Initiators: Ole Moystad, Norway and L.E.F.T New York
(Possible) partners: municipalities of harbour cities
in Lebanon, municipality of Rotterdam,
Norwegian government, Dutch government

PEARL IS A FOUNDATION WHICH WAS SET UP DURING THE RECENT WAR IN LEBANON.



Pearl supports the restoration of public services and the realization of cultural activities

Many projects were initiated by Pearl in the south of Lebanon.

Omalzhausen

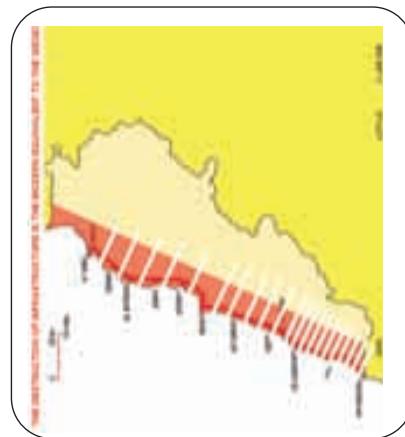
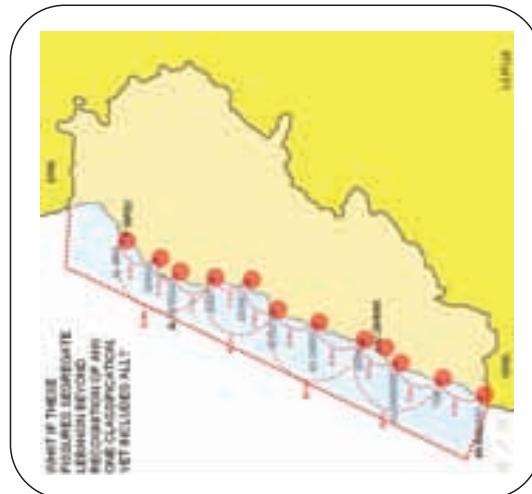
卷之三

സാമ്പത്തിക പരിശീലനം

Furthermore, Pearl aims to stimulate intercultural understanding by bringing people together and to encourage a dialogue

See also www.pearlfoundation.com

A FERRY AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR TRANSPORTATION ON LAND: INITIATES DIALOGUE AND FOCUSES ON THE ARCHITECT'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES



Transportation in Lebanon, although it is a small country, can take a long time especially now the roads are destroyed in the recent war. A fast boat line along the coast can improve travel time, but will also form an alternative to travelling alone in a car.

A ferry is a relaxing and nice way of transportation that gives room for meeting people, working and reading. The structure envisioned is 'light' meaning that it can be implemented easily by local municipalities and no huge infrastructural schemes are necessary.

In the present unstable political situation were the central government is not very potent to create overall infrastructures, this plan forms a realistic alternative.



INTERNATIONAL

INDIA COMPETITION

FLEXIBILITY SURPRISE
TRANSGRESSION ACCUMULATION
GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD SPEED

URBAN ARCHITECTURE

Workshop under the supervision of BERNARD MALLAT and JOUIMANA AL JABRI

UNORTHODOX WAYS OF
THINKING...DESIGNING...BUILDING...
IN HARET HREIK
by MAUREEN ABI GHANEM



Urban Analysis : Haret Hreik
The Mission
To design a structure that functions



Permanent POD: In 'Parts'
In the Urban and Architectural Fabric, as bus stops,
newspaper stands, public seating, planter...

REDISCOVER DAHIEH
by YASMINE ABBoud

The SK8 lane should be provided in between roads and sidewalks in order to facilitate skating circulation. Special exits should also be provided to enable skater to latch on to the adjacent vehicular circulation.
Flattened plots that have been hit by missiles should allocate space for a scar (pool, half pipe...) Location of the skating moment should be at the estimated impact point of the missile. Scars should be surrounded by a minimum of 50 square m. and not more than 150 square m. of green grass.

THE LAUNCHING OF INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITIONS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE FOLLOWING:

- Giving visibility to Lebanon
- Changing the image of the city
- Creating opportunities for young Lebanese and foreign architects
- Creating a market for cultural tourism
- Allowing public participation in shaping the built environment
- Enriching the quality of life of the Lebanese

>> This project will be addressing the following issues:

- Over the last decade, hundreds of public buildings and projects have been designed and built in Lebanon in an elusive way.
- Almost none of such public buildings or spaces have been decided upon through a process of national or international competition.
- The result is outstandingly chocking since the objects created were never identified nor accepted as part of the public realm.
- It is no more acceptable to smuggle and force soulless buildings and their residual spaces on our built environment.
- Lebanese architects, town planners, and government are guilty of being inactive and silent facing the "laissez-faire" situation.
- Lebanon's Public spaces whenever they existed served as melting pots of cultural differences.
- The diversity that people are exposed to in these public spaces is eye-opening and leading to new ideas beyond each ones insular world.
- The aftermath of the latest summer war on Lebanon drew attention to the lack of adequate public spaces in certain areas especially in the southern suburbs of Beirut.



ROUTE ZONE



Voice-over Beirut

> mobile gardens

Trafficscape Mobile Gardens:

is an experimental project that was triggered as a reactionary act to Beirut's sprawling traffic jams and, at the same time, the city's acknowledged lack of green space. Trucks containing landscaped greenery travel on Greater Beirut's highways introduce a new organism to the road's usual components: Cars packed front to back, beggars and street vendors, chaotic advertisement boards (visual pollution) and toxic gases (atmospheric pollution). In such a setting, Mobile Gardens transgress to flirt with the spatial aspect of the traffic space; adding a sense of intimacy and a pleasant feature to be experienced, simply providing oxygen in addition to the potential of being an intriguing means of transportation.

Trafficscape Mobile Gardens was exhibited in the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2003 where it was received with the well intended humor and intrigue. The theme of the Biennale was Mobility_Room with a view, which focuses on the road_scapes and puts its finger on the lack of attention to the qualities of such places.

Project By: Fadi Sareddine
In collaboration with: Joumana Al Jabri



Trafficscape

The non-space of the traffic setting starts to acquire spatial qualities.

Trafficscape is an installation/project that is not meant to be an end product but rather a commentary on a situation or an enzyme to mutate the road scene and push into gaining friendlier properties. The concept was expanded to a city version where car rooftops were turned into customized gardens allowing car parks densely spread throughout the city to become visual gardens as the parking lot turns from empty to full.



“ Visitors to Beirut risk a trip solely into the spectacular. Apart from Martyr Square and the Corniche, most of the cities landmarks are places and buildings that refer to war and destruction. The Murr and Holiday Inn towers, the iconic Barakat building, the remnants of the Green Line, the Sabra and Chatila Memorial Site, many of the obvious entries penetrate the city from its most vulnerable, raw, dramatic site.

The spectacular is the obvious. But there is much more to the city.

This website proposes a number of new entries into the city of Beirut. Places and spaces of inductive urban myth, seductive memories and provoking thoughts. We welcome, first-time visitors and residents alike, to dig into Beirut.

The first tour presented at Voice-over Beirut is 'Catastrophic Space', a walk through Ashrafieh, Eastern Beirut. 'Catastrophic Space' welcomes you to a small neighborhood just off Sassisne Square.

Wandering through the area, Tony's voice-over will introduce ideas on the porous city and the notion of catastrophic space and time.

At the site, a rich reference library gives context to the tour (art, literature, topography, photography).



THE BEIRUT TEAM PRODUCTION
PRESENTS

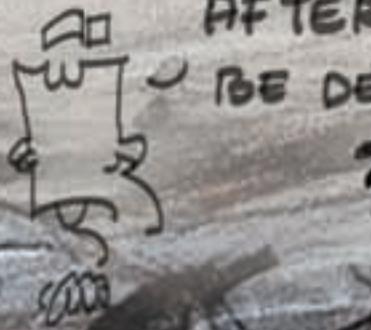
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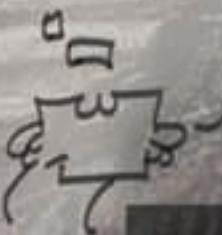
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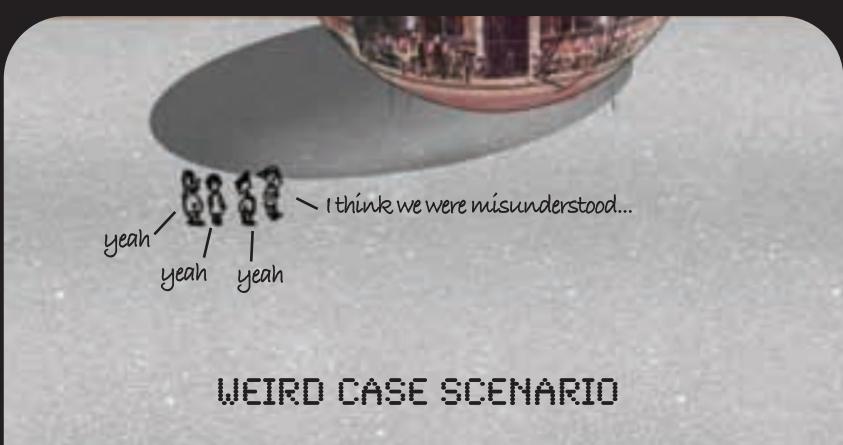
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WORST CASE SCENARIO



WEIRD CASE SCENARIO

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