URBAN OBSERVATION
ZOKAK EL BLAT
BEIRUT - LEBANON

MAJAL
Academic Urban Observatory
Institute of Urban Planning
October 2012
Written by
Rita E. Chedid

Collaborators
Marieke Krijnen
Bruno Marot
Hala Moussawi
Jean-Marc Adjizian

Cartography
Vicken Ashkarian

Directed by
Serge Yazigi

Acknowledgement
Jennifer Casagrande PHD Student

Architecture Students (ALBA) for their contribution to Architectural and Economic Activities Surveys
Jamayla Cahaccour
Claudia Sadaka
Eliane Daccache
Lena Osseiran
Racha Hajj Chahine
Christelle Khalil
Mohammad Ajam
Wael Hajj
# TABLE OF CONTENT

## INTRODUCTION

1. THE CHOICE OF THE STUDY AREA ................................................................. 5  
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH ..................................................................... 6  

## CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY

1. ZOKAK EL BLAT URBAN DEVELOPMENT ....................................................... 9  
2. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ZOKAK EL BLAT .................................. 10  
3. INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK .................................... 16  
   3.1. Land Use And Exploitation ...................................................................... 16  
   3.2. Laws Pertaining To Built Heritage .......................................................... 17  
      3.2.1. The Ottoman Period ....................................................................... 17  
      3.2.2. The French Mandate: The Antiquities Regulation ........................... 17  
      3.2.3. The Urban Planning Law ................................................................. 17  
      3.2.4. The Building Law ............................................................................ 17  
   3.3. Studies On The Protection Of Historical Buildings In Beirut Percentral Areas 18  
      3.3.1. “Association De Protection Et De Sauvegarde Des Anciennes Demeures” (Apsad) Study 18  
      3.3.2. The Directorate General Of Urban Planning (Dgup) Study ............ 19  
      3.3.3. The Khatib & Alami Study ............................................................... 20  
4. DRAFT LAW FOR THE PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARD OF OLD BUILDINGS AND PATRIMONIAL SITES 21  

## CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY ........................................... 22  

1. STUDY OBJECTIVES ...................................................................................... 22  
2. STUDY FRAMEWORK .................................................................................... 22  
3. DATA COLLECTION SOURCES AND FORMS ............................................. 25  
4. DATA SUCCESSFULLY OBTAINED .............................................................. 25  
5. DATA PARTIALLY OBTAINED, ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES .................. 25  
6. DROPPED INDICATORS ............................................................................... 26  
7. CONCLUSION: MAIN ISSUES AT STAKE IN DATA COLLECTING PROCESSES IN LEBANON 26  
   7.1. Lack Of (Reliable) Statistical Data ......................................................... 26  
   7.2. Unwillingness Of Public Officials And Institutions To Collaborate .......... 26  
   7.3. Unwillingness Of Private Officials In Institutions To Collaborate .......... 26  
   7.4. Time Loss In Taking Appointments ....................................................... 26  
   7.5. Informal Contacts And Snowball-Effect ............................................... 26  

## CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS ......................................................................... 27  

1. THE URBAN DIMENSION ............................................................................ 27  
   1.1. Road Network ...................................................................................... 29  
       1.1.1. The Roads ....................................................................................... 29  
   1.2. Blocks And Parcels ............................................................................... 29  
       1.2.1. The Disappearance Of Empty Lots ................................................. 31  
       1.2.2 Residual Lots .................................................................................. 32  
   1.3. Buildings ............................................................................................... 34  
       1.3.1. Occupation/Built-Up Area ............................................................... 34  
       1.3.2. Age ................................................................................................. 37  
       1.3.3. Typology ......................................................................................... 38  
       1.3.4. Use ................................................................................................. 39  
       1.3.5. State ............................................................................................... 40  
       1.3.6. Heights ......................................................................................... 41  
       1.3.7. Façade Materials ......................................................................... 43  

## TABLE OF CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>The Choice of the Study Area</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>Methodological Approach</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Zokak El Blat Urban Development</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Historical Evolution of Zokak El Blat</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Institutional and Regulatory Framework</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Land Use and Exploitation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Laws Pertaining to Built Heritage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Ottoman Period</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The French Mandate: The Antiquities Regulation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Urban Planning Law</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Building Law</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Studies on the Protection of Historical Buildings in Beirut Percentral Areas</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>“Association De Protection Et De Sauvegarde Des Anciennes Demeures” (Apsad) Study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Directorate General of Urban Planning (Dgup) Study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>The Khatib &amp; Alami Study</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Draft Law for the Protection and Safeguard of Old Buildings and Patrimonial Sites</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Study Objectives</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Study Framework</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Data Collection Sources and Forms</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Data Successfully Obtained</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Data Partially Obtained, Alternative Strategies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Dropped Indicators</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>Conclusion: Main Issues at Stake in Data Collecting Processes in Lebanon</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>The Urban Dimension</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Road Network</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>The Roads</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Blocks and Parcels</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>The Disappearance of Empty Lots</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Residual Lots</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Occupation/Built-Up Area</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Typology</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Heights</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS</td>
<td>Façade Materials</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3. Change In The Heritage Building Function ................................................................. 86
3. FRAGMENTATION .................................................................................................................. 86
3.1. Significance ...................................................................................................................... 87
3.2. Explanation And Causes In Zokak El Blat .................................................................... 87
3.2.1. Zokak El Blat’s Spatial Division ................................................................................. 87
3.2.2. Zokak El Blat’s Political Division .............................................................................. 87
3.2.3. Zokak El Blat’s Social Division .................................................................................. 87
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ................................................................... 88
4.1. Social Development Strategy ......................................................................................... 88
4.2. Economic Level .............................................................................................................. 88
4.3. Urban Planning Level ..................................................................................................... 89
4.3.1. Heritage Conservation ............................................................................................... 89
4.3.2. Spatial Planning ......................................................................................................... 89
4.4. Governance Level ......................................................................................................... 90

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: PLOTS’ AREAS IN PATRIARCHATE SECTOR ................................................................. 33
FIGURE 2: PLOTS’ AREAS IN SOLIDERE SECTOR...................................................................... 33
FIGURE 3: SALES TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 ...................................................... 50
FIGURE 4: SALES TO FOREIGNERS’ TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 .................. 51
FIGURE 5: SUBDIVISION TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 .................................... 21
FIGURE 6: MERGING TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 ............................................ 51
FIGURE 7: PROPERTY TRANSFER TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 ..................... 52
FIGURE 8: DEMOLITION TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 2005 - 2011 ...................................... 21
FIGURE 9 CONSTRUCTION PERMITS IN BEIRUT 2002-2010 ................................................. 53
FIGURE 10: CONSTRUCTION PERMITS IN LEBANON 2002-2010 ........................................ 53
FIGURE 11: EVOLUTION OF CONSTRUCTION PERMITS 1997 - 2012 .................................. 54
FIGURE 12: NEW DEVELOPMENTS APARTMENT SIZES IN M2 ........................................ 60
FIGURE 13: REAL ESTATE PRICES/M2 SOURCE: RAMCO REAL ESTATE ......................... 61
FIGURE 14: VOTERS MOUHAFAZAT BEIRUT IN 2009, BY SECT ........................................ 64
FIGURE 15: VOTERS IN ZOKAK EL BLAT ............................................................................. 65
FIGURE 16: VOTERS IN ZOKAK EL BLAT IN 2000, BY SECT ........................................... 65
FIGURE 17: ECONOMIC UNITS OCCUPATION STATUS ...................................................... 69
FIGURE 18: ECONOMIC UNITS LEGAL STATUS .................................................................. 70
FIGURE 19: ECONOMIC UNITS PROPERTY TYPE .................................................................. 71
FIGURE 20: ECONOMIC UNITS RENT TYPE ....................................................................... 72
FIGURE 21: ECONOMIC UNITS FUNCTIONS ....................................................................... 73
FIGURE 22: DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE PATRIARCHATE AREA .... 76
FIGURE 23: DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN SOLIDERE AREA .................... 76
FIGURE 24: ECONOMIC UNITS SURFACE .......................................................................... 76
FIGURE 25: ECONOMIC UNITS STATE ................................................................................. 77
FIGURE 26: EMPLOYMENT RATE .......................................................................................... 78
FIGURE 27: SIZE OF BUSINESSES ...................................................................................... 78
FIGURE 28: LABOR FORCE GENDER AND AGE DISTRIBUTION ........................................ 79
FIGURE 29: LABOR FORCE CONFESSIONAL DISTRIBUTION ............................................. 80
FIGURE 30: LABOR FORCE EDUCATION LEVEL ................................................................... 80
FIGURE 31: LABOR FORCE PLACE OF RESIDENCE ............................................................. 81
FIGURE 32: LABOR FORCE PLACE OF BIRTH ..................................................................... 82
FIGURE 33: CUSTOMERS’ ORIGIN .......................................................................................... 82
FIGURE 34: PRICE CATEGORIES ............................................................................................ 83
Beirut is the capital of Lebanon. The urban area of Beirut contains about 50% of the Lebanese population. Its strategic location, south-east of the Mediterranean basin, makes it a financial and commercial hub occupying an important place in trade. Besides its economic role, Beirut is a cultural centre with many academic and cultural institutions.

Schematically, Greater Beirut, in its «physical» dimension may be divided into three distinct zones that are:

- The city centre;
- The peripheral area, that has a more disparate morphology compared to the centre;
- The pericentral belt, located between the two sectors. The urbanization of this zone began in the nineteenth century and it is undergoing now radical transformations.

Pericentral districts are suburbs that stretch along the main historical axes of the city of Beirut. Their spatial extent resembles a spider web with an opening to the sea. The urbanization of these areas began in the nineteenth century. The pericentral belt, which has been previously neglected in favor of an «uncontrolled» expansion of peripheral districts, seems to be drawing attention today manifested by an extreme real estate activity. In many parts of the neighborhood, the old buildings are being replaced by modern high rise buildings.

Beirut city has five pericentral districts: Minet el Hosn, Zokak el Blat, Bachoura, Saifi and the Port. The pericentral ring occupies an intermediate position between the center and periphery. Urban and social criteria, prevailing on the fringes, bring the pericentral areas closer to the city center although they do not play a prominent economic role. Inhabiting the pericentral area means having access to the multiple services of the city centre while avoiding the commotion and the high land and real-estate prices of the latter. This helps us better understand the inclusion of this area in the urban dynamics, identify its potential to evolve and keep up with the transformation.
1. THE CHOICE OF THE STUDY AREA

Within its urban monitoring activities, Majal is following up the development of the areas adjacent to Downtown Beirut.

The focus of this pilot-study is the district of Zokak el-Blat, a neighborhood that has been researched by MAJAL at an earlier stage in the context of the urban regeneration of the pericentral district (Archimedes Project, 2008) and establishing a cultural trail along Zokak el Blat district (From Alphabet to Nahda: Zokak el Blat, Paths and Great Figures, Beirut Book Capital 2009).

Pericentral areas present many dynamics both spatially and socially. Moreover, MAJAL is conducting the study across Zokak el Blat since it is the first district to expand outside the city centre. Zokak el Blat urban development observation constitutes a pilot project through which we intend to develop a reflection and a methodology that can be replicated in all pericentral areas.

Zokak el Blat is currently divided in two spaces: the Patriarchate and Sérail. This division is underlined by the opposition between the private and public urbanism. Moreover, the presence of a major road infrastructure within Zokak el Blat, namely Fouad Chehab Avenue, reinforces rupture and dichotomy between these two spaces.

The accessibility to this district, combined with its proximity to Beirut Central District is supposed to make it a very attractive economic hub, in particular for enterprises seeking to be established next to Beirut Central District. Nevertheless, the undergoing radical urban transformations threaten these potentials: the urban degradation, the vast road infrastructure projects, the waves of migrations from and to the district, etc. are major elements that contribute to Zokak el Blat’s fragmentation.

The project has two objectives:

• Assessing, understanding and analyzing the social, economic and spatial changes, within this district. Contrary to the Sérail sector, the pericentral areas were not subject to a reconstruction plan. It is interesting to understand the development dynamics for Zokak el Blat district in the absence of any strategic reconstruction plan;
• Predicting future consequences in terms of regeneration, loss of identity, heritage conservation and fragmentation. Findings and results will be disseminated through:
  • Bi-annual scientific and accurate data and figures, in the objective to try to fill in the existing gap due to lack in existing updated data;
  • Reports that interpret these data and predict trends; these reports will help local agents such as the municipality and other administrations in benefiting from a clearer understanding of development dynamics taking place on the ground;
  • Recommendations based on this research that will help local agents in identifying suitable strategies for sustainable planning and other interventions.
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The main hypothesis is that the district of Zokak el Blat faces complex development dynamics differentiated in space and time, due to socio-spatial and politico-religious singularities. Some regions of Zokak el Blat neighborhood experience drastic and rapid mutation in function and morphology, accompanied by loss of identity and collective memory and the destruction of built heritage.

To this end, the analysis will consist of a thorough spatial analysis of the territory of Zokak el Blat. This analysis focuses on urban, social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions while going through an observation of trends in land and real estate markets. Moreover, a lateral dynamic is worth exploring: the governance. Within the same territory, two governances are prevailing: public and private.

Therefore, this report is the first step in the direction of realizing this ambitious project. It consists of a pilot-study exploring the feasibility of such a project and identifying a workable methodology, including a set of indicators, data collection methods and applicable theoretical backgrounds.

The report is divided into four main chapters:

Chapter 1 is a case study that highlights the urban development of the district, the evolution of its role and the institutional and legal framework.

Chapter 2 outlines the data collection methodology. It consists of several interconnected steps that include: defining the objectives, identifying the obstacles and constraints that hinder the fieldwork in order to select the study framework, determining the sample, designing the questionnaire and identifying the source of information, collecting, processing and analyzing the collected data.

Chapter 3 presents the survey results while emphasizing on the main issues and assets that characterize the area of study. To do this, chapter 3 will be divided into four sections.

Section 1 analyses Zokak el Blat’s urban morphology. It focuses on the possible evolution of the urban structure, the factors determining the urban cohesion or fragmentation and the issues determining the functioning of the studied area.

Section 2 tackles the social dimension. It focuses on Zokak el Blat’s social structure modification and change, the population pressure and the integration of social groups that recently settled in Zokak el Blat.

Section 3 details the economic dimension. It focuses on the identification of the existent economic characteristics.

Section 4 studies real estate and land dynamics within Zokak el Blat district. It focuses on an identification of the market trends, the urban restitution and the impact of the real estate pressure on historic buildings.

Chapter 4 concludes the report by interpreting findings and providing recommendations for future interventions. It focuses on the proposal of urban policies, the requalification of the existent urban structure, the integration of migrant population and finally the expansion of the district through its proximity to Beirut City Centre and the other pericentral districts.
CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY

Zokak el Blat is located south of downtown Beirut a zone that has suffered the consequences of war. Fouad Chehab Avenue divides it into two: the north side and the south one. Each side, although belonging to the same city, has its own development dynamics.

The northern side, ravaged by war, is part of Beirut Central District. It follows the reconstruction program entrusted to the private company SOLIDERE, while obeying the Master Plan that gave the city of Beirut a modern infrastructure. This space is characterized by its elegantly refurbished buildings and its homogeneous urban fabric. However, Beirut City master plan stops at the edge of pericentral districts. Thus, Zokak el Blat is divided into two spaces: SOLIDERE or Sérail district and the Patriarchate which is the vicinity of the southern side. The Patriarchate area, the traditional neighborhood of Zokak el Blat, was highly damaged by war. It owes its reconstruction and rehabilitation to initiatives of the civil society and owners, and this, in the absence of urban planning and program prerequisites.

The Patriarchate area is bounded by Fouad Chehab Avenue to the north and Salim Salam Avenue to the east. This traditional area is characterized by a dense urban fabric. Like other pericentral neighborhoods, it witnesses urban dynamics that threaten its identity, its architectural and urban heritage, its characteristics, the quality of life, etc. at a fast pace. These dynamics are related to the existence of a spontaneous unplanned urban development, land speculation and real estate pressures.

The urban fabric of the Patriarchate area is dense and varied. Its shape is marked by a rugged topography. Socially, the bourgeoisie occupied the old mansions and villas while the middle class and the poor ones resided in the same district as well.

The district lacks of public spaces. The neighborhood did undergo small urban rehabilitation operations and beautification. These operations affected mainly buildings such as schools, religious communities, NGOs, etc. However, the morphology of the area is threatened by the process of land and property speculation. This process is accelerated by a building code that allows the exploitation of additional areas. This major difference between existing built areas and authorized ones jeopardizes the heritage character of the neighborhood since it results in the demolition of old buildings in favor of new high rise ones.
1. ZOKAK EL BLAT URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Zokak el Blat’s origin is intimately linked to the history of the paved road or Zokak el Blat Street nowadays known as the Amine Beyhum Street or Maurice Barres Street. The paving of Amine Beyhum Street aimed to promote the neighborhood residential attractiveness while granting the district a pioneering role in the expansion of the city outside its limits.

Zokak el Blat is one of the first sites of Beirut city’s urban expansion beyond its boundaries. It is characterized by its direct access to downtown through Amine Beyhum Street. The district’s official administrative boundaries go back to 1920, the time of the French mandate era in Lebanon. During this period, the cadastral reorganization has made Zokak el Blat an electoral constituency and a real estate land «Mantaqa Aqariya” of the city of Beirut.

The administrative limits of the district are bounded by several streets:

• To the North: France Street separates the district of Zokak el Blat of Minet el Hosn;
• To the East: Capuchins Street, Basta Street and Ahmad Tabbara Street define the limits with Basta and Bachoura;
• To the South: Avenue of Independence and street Osman Ben Affane mark the beginning of the district of Moussaytbeh;
• To the west: the streets, Mar-Elias and Abdel Kader separate Zokak el Blat from Zarif and Kantari localities.

Moreover, two main roads go through the area:

• Fouad Chehab Avenue which is a main east-west artery. This avenue isolates the northern area (Sérail or SOLIDERE) that includes the Grand Sérail from the southern part (the Patriarchate);
• Salim Salam Avenue, located at the eastern end of Zokak el Blat, links downtown to the airport and splits the neighborhood.

The objective of the study is to conduct an analysis on the state of the neighborhood in order to analyze the factors that have conditioned its urban transformation from a purely agricultural area, to a garden suburb and later to a dense pericentral area in an urban state of decline. Our assumption consists of three interrelated ways of thinking about the forces shaping a city:

• The process referred to as gentrification;
• The significance of urban heritage;
• The process of urban fragmentation.

Gentrification, because we hypothesize that Downtown Beirut has a significant impact on its surrounding areas that could be understood as a form of gentrification, where a neighborhood undergoes significant socioeconomic and demographic changes as a result of real estate investment in the area. Heritage, because tangible and intangible forms of heritage, that characterize the district of Zokak el-Blat are disappearing at a fast pace. Urban fragmentation, because the neighborhood is increasingly fragmented.

Map 3: Zokak el Blat Geographic delimitation and Bounding Streets

1 The majlis baladi is the Lebanese equivalent of a municipal council.
on the social, political and sectarian level. Together, these notions will hopefully explain our findings; help us predict future developments and think of recommendations that will help shape possible interventions by local agents.

It is essential, before tackling the fieldwork findings, to go through the historical evolution of the district as well as the institutional and regulatory framework regarding the land use and exploitation and urban heritage safeguarding.

2. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ZOKAK EL BLAT

The Three Founding Stages of Beirut’s Modern History: Urbanity Under (Re)Construction

Phase One: From the Nahda to the 1940s post-Independence period. Phase one, between 1840 and 1975, corresponds to vibrant years of urban construction carried out successively by the Ottomans and the French Mandate along with the first Lebanese governments after the 1943 Independence. After its subjection to the Ottoman Tanzimat, Beirut went through a period of expansion outside its surrounding walls essentially due to opening up to several influences - mainly European - that significantly changed its urban fabric. Between 1875 and 1912, the city expanded at a high rate as a result of massive migration waves - mainly Christians - tied to the decline in the raw silk industry and the sectarian fighting in Damascus and Mount Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Beirut bourgeoisie - highly represented within the majlis baladi1 - played a significant role in the urban development and management of the city mainly by relocating its residences to pericentral areas like Zokak El-Blat, Minet El-Hosn and Rmeil. Led by the urban elite essentially composed of Sunni and Christian populations - this Nahda-related movement contributed to the emergence of intellectual, dynamic and residential areas through the development of luxury mansions at the edge of the economic central areas; this also contributed in the destruction of the traditional urban fabric and cultural heritage through the works conducted with the objective of modernization. At this time, according to Saliba (2000):

“The city center and its immediate surroundings formed a homogeneous townscape and a continuous spatial entity with no major breaks in its urban fabric, differentiated only by a gradual change in land use from office, commercial, and institutional use to high-density residential buildings”.

While these first initiatives of private stakeholders could be considered as the beginning of a creeping privatization of urban affairs, the intellectual and creative dynamics occurring in Zokak El-Blat were made possible by two major features of the late 19th century:

• The cultural innovations developed in a fertile socio-cultural setting. Many Lebanese figures of the Nahda used to teach, write and publish major pieces2 and concepts while they were established in the area. This unprecedented and regional cultural effervescence contributed to the

Map 4: Zokak el Blat’s Urban Fabric 1876

1 With the aim to make it printable, the simplified version of the Arabic alphabet was created in Zokak El-Blat.
quality of urban life and social relations in the area. Associated with an efficient synergy with other cultural institutions - British, American, French along with the local community -, this emulation reinforced the political and cultural influence of Zokak El-Blat from local to regional levels.

- The coexistence of middle-class, urban and poor families who set up a community based on mutual respect and support, often symbolized by the practice of milk brotherhood\(^3\) (Hanssen and Genberg, 2002). By promoting sectarian diversity at the local scale and through positive economic and intellectual competitiveness with other pericentral areas, they strongly believed to contribute to civil peace. This fine social and confessional architecture was mainly built on and around a dense network of worship and education establishments.

With the beginning of the French Mandate in the early 1920s, the pericentral neighborhoods faced several major evolutions. In the case of Zokak El-Blat, it resulted in the increasing affirmation of its political role through the presence of institutional buildings such as the political representation of Mandate authorities, combined with the increasing number of of political discussions held in private mansions. In the meantime, new waves of Shiite migrants arrived, coming from two of the newly integrated areas in Greater Lebanon - Jabal Aamil (in the south) and Baalbeck Hermel areas, and were accompanied by an influx of Kurd populations fleeing Anatolia. Consequently, these newly urbanized populations significantly contributed to changing the confessional balance of the district and reinforced - with the support of the French Mandate authorities - the empowerment of sectarian-based benevolent organizations in order to cope with famine and epidemics following the First World War and to facilitate the assimilation of new migrants. In this regard, as the Mandate power contributed to the emergence of the confessional-based quota system for the political representation of Lebanese society\(^4\), the French High-Commissioner encouraged the establishment of the Amiliya Society of Beirut dedicated to the Shiite population of Zokak El-Blat in order to counterbalance the growing dynamics of the Sunni’s Al Makassed El Kheiriyah that had started to take over the area at that time. In addition to the political and cultural features explained above, the pericentral belt was also becoming an economically strategic area for urban elites because of the exponential development of the port and its related services.

The Independence era that began in 1943 also brought some key elements to understanding the different city-centered historical and political layers. Three parameters appear as especially crucial:

- The growing power of sectarian-based segregate trends where the 1958 crisis and its related social discontent and structural tension are often depicted as a prelude of the 1975-1990 civil war. Indeed,

---

\(^3\) The brotherhood of milk is a traditional practice where a woman was able to breastfeed babies in a village or neighborhood, regardless of their social or sectarian background.

---
it was especially noticeable in Zokak El-Blat where the fear produced by these first civil incidents led many Christian families to leave this mixed area in order to build their home in more homogeneous districts.

- The large-scale and state-led infrastructure projects carried out in the early 1960s under the Fouad Chehab government in order to respond to the 1958 social unrest and to mostly facilitate the development of private economic initiatives. This included upgrading the major roads connected to downtown and the construction of the pericentral expressway - also called the “ring” - that involved heavy destructions of the city’s morphological fabric. In Zokak El-Blat, it resulted in a clear division between the northern part - adjacent to downtown - and the southern one. These drastic changes in the neighborhood also led to the departure of many Maronite, Armenian and other Christian minorities. As a result, new migrants - especially of the Shiite community - moved into the empty apartments and reinforced the incremental confessional imbalance.

- In parallel, while the successive pre-1975 governments favored a laissez-faire attitude - except with regards to infrastructures serving the development of economic interests as mentioned above - and left to civil society and private institutions their planning obligations to ameliorate local living conditions, the Beirut Municipality developed G. Riachi municipal master plan (1954) including zoning regulations. These are based on a concentric gradient scheme where the highest building ratios applied to the center, before decreasing towards peripheral areas. Unfortunately, the highest ratios matched the location of the oldest urban fabric described earlier and that of highest quality. This outdated zoning scheme is still ruling the current urban development in Beirut with the tragic consequences we can imagine on the quality of the existing urban fabric, especially when, at the same time, the private sector kept progressively taking over the urban development dynamics through the massive financial influx stemming from neighboring Gulf countries.

Strongly influenced by exogenous factors, phase one of the creation of modern Beirut left a substantial heritage in terms of residential buildings and architecture, public infrastructure (schools, places of worship, road networks, etc), intellectual and political culture, and local and regional identities. In this regard, the role of the first neighborhoods to be developed outside the medieval city walls was central because most evolutions and innovations occurred there, namely in areas like Zokak El-Blat, where we witnessed the development of original and complementary functional connections with the historic city center. In the meantime, because of their crucial role in the intellectual, political or economic realms, urban elites progressively developed a private sector-oriented culture and system of urban governance based on specific balances of power minimizing the role of public authorities in urban development policies.

Overall, phase one assembled different layers of a complex urbanity based on urban landscape and physical environment, modes

---

4 Created in 1932, the ‘national consensus’ was supposed to protect minorities from the dictate of majority rule, which generated a sense of communal mistrust, inferiority, vulnerability, persecution, and “on the popular level” ignited “fanaticism” as Carla Edde asserted in her article “Le mouvement associatif à Beyrouth” (2004). It consecrated the sectarian-based architecture of Lebanese society and authorities that are still in place today.
of urban management along with culture and identities that started to be threatened with the outbreak of the 1975 war, as the seeds of conflict were already there.

**Phase Two: The 1975-1990 Civil War:** During the fifteen-year war, Zokak El-Blat experienced a limited amount of destruction, giving a frozen character to the urban fabric. However, the neighborhood was divided into two sectors: the northern area - adjacent to the city center and previously considered as the most cosmopolitan part - became a continuously disputed area and a no-man’s land, while the southern part - down from the Fouad Chehab expressway - continued to develop in its pre-war complex trends and dynamics. Destruction happened in traditional houses that were squatted or destroyed to accommodate refugees from Southern Lebanon fleeing the war with Israel. More than physical, the war-related consequences were sectarian and spatial. Indeed, the different sectarian-affiliated militias took partial or total control of the district, reinforcing the confessional fragmentation of the area where military control incrementally translated into urban appropriation. Militias also provided municipal and social services to their own communities in order to ensure their loyalty and encourage the enrollment in armed struggle. In parallel to the increasing presence of Sunni and Shiite populations in this area located in West Beirut, a large majority of the remaining Christian and Kurd populations migrated from Zokak El-Blat to East Beirut or even abroad. Shiite populations fleeing the 1982 Israeli invasion replaced them. As a consequence, Zokak El-Blat became a symbol of a large-scale upheaval of socio-demographic and sectarian-spatial geographies leading to the emergence of a divided city from the micro-local to the metropolitan scale. In terms of stakeholders, the war confirmed and established a constellation of sectarian-based militias and political groups that annihilated the implementation of any global approach to urban affairs even if two planning scenarios were proposed in 1977 and 1986 by French planning agencies, under the initiative of the Municipality of Beirut and the state Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)\(^5\), respectively.

Consequently, the local ruling power of sectarian and political groups has strongly contributed to the emergence of ‘ideological territories’ (Davie, 1992) or ‘body politics’ (Fawaz, 2007) associated with the related political and spatial strategies. At the level of “In-Between Territories” (IBTs), they took the leadership of most religious or educational institutions that were still strategic for the structuring of local urban life. Furthermore, the war upset the spatial and functional connections between Zokak El-Blat and the city center where most fighting and destruction was concentrated. As a result, the development of sectarian-based peripheral centralities favored the rise of radial connections between pericentral districts and their sectarian hinterlands and centralities. This pericentrality-inflicted balancing set the ground for the interface position of the IBTs with the post-war redevelopment of the city center. From this set of major and multi-scalar upheavals related to the war, Beirut inherited a fragmented model of ‘territorialized confessionalism’ (Chapuis, 2009) that is still at the heart of the current debate.

\(^5\) The planning scenarios proposed in 1977 and 1986 were developed by Atelier Parisien d’Urbanisme (APUR) and Institut d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme de la Région Île-de-France (IAURIF), respectively.
Phase Three - The Post-1990 Era:
If fragmented Territorializations are still one of the driving forces of Beirut’s urban development and management, these trends are now combined with formal and informal reconstruction processes and the emergence of powerful neoliberal-based dynamics of metropolization. Indeed, these are impacting many aspects of the production of urban space from the axiology and framework of urban policy - market-driven and competitiveness-based trends, flexibility of planning laws to the benefice of real estate development - to urban forms - zoning, car-driven infrastructures, high-rise buildings - and urban stakeholders. The official objective of reconstruction is economic: to base the renewal of all of Lebanon on Beirut’s tertiary functions (Verdeil, 2001) as defined by Sassen’s global cities (1991). To meet with this purpose of redeveloping the city center into a new Central Business District (CBD), SOLIDERE - a private company - was created on the primary principle that private investment is the motor of urban regeneration (Samara, 1996). But, as Saliba (2000) asserted:

“The CBD reconstruction plan evolved without a clear strategy concerning its immediate surroundings. SOLIDERE seemed to have adopted the "island planning" approach. Both at the district and sub-district level, the BCD Master Plan turns its back to its periphery”.

In other words, the Municipality of Beirut - and more generally the top-down and government-based logic of reconstruction as implemented by the CDR - had no vision or reconstruction plan for the city, including its pericentral districts. This was still the case till mid-2011, more than twenty years after the end of the war.

In the case of Zokak El-Blat, SOLIDERE included the northern part of the district - until the Fouad Chehab expressway - in its revitalization perimeter, something that directly created a multi-factorial division between both parts of the neighborhood. In the northern part annexed by SOLIDERE, war refugees squatting in empty apartments benefited from compensations by the private company in exchange for their leaving. Amal and Hizbullah’s6 negotiators managed to get compensation for 5,000 to 6,000 Shiite refugees. In the meantime, compensated for their expropriated properties by shares in SOLIDERE, legal owners and tenants were discouraged to come back to the area. Accordingly, out of more than one hundred old houses or mansions only a few were preserved and later on restored by SOLIDERE, most of them intended to be sold or rented out to new elites or foreigners working in embassies and international agencies. In a couple of years, both physical and social fabrics and spaces experienced a significant alteration with the appearance of renovated buildings with sidewalks and green areas corresponding to specific and updated planning regulation framed by SOLIDERE for its perimeter. The beginnings of a large-scale gentrification process was in progress (the concept in Beirut differs however from the one in unindustrialized states as it takes here a more political configuration and it occurs mainly in a newly built fabric).

6 Amal and Hizbullah – also called ‘Party of God’ - are the two major political parties representing Shiite population in Lebanon.
the seat of the Prime Minister (also called Grand Sérail), and its globalized urbanism and architecture signal a drastic change with its neighboring southern part of Zokak El-Blat. The Fouad Chehab expressway spatially indicates this break line between the new city center and IBTs in landscape as well as in use and representations.

Indeed, the southern part was excluded from the project of downtown reconstruction and, as we explained earlier, it is still under the rule of the 1954 zoning codes. Thus, the section is starting to experience the diffusion of SOLIDERE’s planning and socio-economic pattern leading to the emergence of territorialized and segregate processes of market-driven gentrification. We compare it to a neoliberal shockwave produced by the project of downtown redevelopment - or earthquake - that is progressively impacting the IBTs. Moreover, while SOLIDERE was essentially draining some ‘happy few’ foreign investors and developers, Lebanese Sunni and Shiite developers seem to have appropriated these practices by developing most of real estate projects at SOLIDERE’s edge of southern Zokak El-Blat. Even if this trend already existed - to a limited extent - during the few golden years preceding the civil war, one of the most representative indicators of this current process is the incremental disappearance of cultural heritage with an exponential destruction of traditional mansions to be replaced by high-rise apartment buildings, exploiting the excessive floor area ratios, and the prime location next to the CBD (Saliba, 2000). The sociologist S. Khalaf already underlined “the impacts such projects could have on de-facing the city’s collective memory and distinctive heritage” during the early stages of reconstruction in 1993. According to the first results of a survey carried out by Majal1, these luxury apartments would be inhabited by newcomers composed of middle and high income Shiites and Sunnis to a lesser extent. Therefore, real estate prices are under pressure and jeopardize access to affordable housing for original residents with all the risk of increasing socio-economic and sectarian segregation, something we will analyze further in our report.

1 A comprehensive and multi-annual survey has been started by Majal in order to assess and monitor all the mentioned evolutions occurring in Zokak-el-Blat. If the first qualitative results seem to confirm the described dynamics - and hence the validity of the notion of deconstruction-, the findings of the forthcoming quantitative results regarding households evolutions, real estate dynamics or heritage management will be essential to take into account to validate - or not- the processes we introduced in this report.
3. INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

From the beginning, the urban development of Zokak el Blat occurred in a spontaneous and uncontrolled way especially within the absence of a strong legal and institutional framework governing urban development and protecting the patrimonial built fabric.

The first municipal council was elected in 1868. The building code for Istanbul and its provinces is the first building code that was implemented by Beirut municipality at that time. It covered Beirut city center and its pericentral districts that have been incorporated to the city of Beirut with the creation of the “Wilayat of Beirut”. During this period, the urban development of Zokak el Blat was the result of private initiatives undertaken by the notables of the neighborhood and the land owners and that, in order to ensure the accessibility of their plots and facilitate the movement of carriages. These initiatives to create and widen streets required a consensus between the land owners, on the one hand, and the municipality on the other hand. Thus, during the 19th century, urban planning was a process of consultation between local people (the notables) and the municipality that was the authority guaranteeing the enforcement of laws.

The efforts of the French mandate in urban planning have mainly targeted the city center of Beirut. In addition, the French mandate has focused on infrastructure projects that improve Beirut’s connections and its linkages with its hinterland in the aim of strengthening its urban functions.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, foreign urban planners such as Ecochard, Egli and Doxiadis provided master plans for Beirut with the purpose to assist the municipality of Beirut in planning urban sprawl generated by the demographic pressure on the capital and its fringes. Extensions of streets, peripherals arteries, etc. were designed to decongest the city in improving mobility within those neighborhoods. These plans had to face private sector’s resistance and where therefore only partially adopted.

3.1. LAND USE AND EXPLOITATION

- Patriarchate Sector

The building ratio in the Patriarchate area of Zokak el-Blat is, as in the rest of Beirut, guided by a zoning plan that dates back to 1954. The district belongs to either zone 2 or zone 3.

In zone 2, the ground exploitation coefficient is 100% for the ground floor and 70% for a floor. The total exploitation factor cannot exceed 5. For zone 3, the ground exploitation coefficient is 60%, while the total exploitation factor cannot exceed 4 (see Map 11: Zoning Limits).

In 1992, a decree was issued (2791/1992) amending the implementation framework of the national building law, easing the construction of high rises. The biggest step towards increasing the exploitation of land and real estate however was taken in 2004 with the issuance of a new construction law (646/ 2004) and its implementation decree (15874/2005) in 2005. The justification behind increasing land-use is the supposed scarcity of land in Beirut. Main changes included the removal...
of staircases, maid's rooms and double walls from the built-up area (BUA) allowance, and an increase in balcony surfaces that can be deducted from the BUA. Other changes include safety regulations and earthquake proofing measures, as well as 1500m² extra areas in exchange for a public parking of fifty cars minimum. In total, an estimated twenty percent of BUA is not included in the calculation of the total exploitation area, up from eight percent under the 1983 building law (Krijnen, 2010).

Foreign investment in real estate has been facilitated in several ways during the past years, for example with a law easing regulations applying to the acquisition of property by foreigners (296/2001), lowering real estate registration fees and providing tax breaks and discounts for foreign investment companies (Krijnen, 2010).

**Sérail Sector**

The part of Zokak el-Blat that stretches north of Fouad Chehab ring road falls under the construction and planning rules of SOLIDERE's private real estate company that was put in charge of reconstructing Downtown Beirut.

In 1991, Law 117 was passed, allowing a private real estate company to take charge of postwar reconstruction works. In 1994, the “Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction” (SOLIDERE) was established to develop Downtown Beirut into a high-end financial center. SOLIDERE is in charge of developing and reconstructing the area, selling lots to developers or (re)constructing buildings themselves. Private property in the area was transferred to SOLIDERE, which issued shares in return.

Construction in the SOLIDERE sector of Zokak el Blat is regulated by decree 5714/2001, an updated version of the initial master plan. The district belongs to either zone 1 or zone 2.

In zone 1, the ground exploitation coefficient is 100% for the ground floor and 70% for a floor. The total exploitation factor cannot exceed 5. For zone 2, the ground exploitation coefficient is 60%, while the total exploitation factor cannot exceed 4.

The boundaries of Beirut Central District were determined in 1991 but expanded by subsequent decrees. SOLIDERE compiled a detailed master plan that is stricter than the general Planning Code, particularly as far as Article 16 of the building law is concerned. The DGA has to schedule excavations in such a way as to minimally delay the reconstruction process. Buildings that SOLIDERE decided to retain cannot be increased in height and should be restored following a restoration brief issued by the DGU. They may or may not be classified in the Register of Retained Buildings and/or in the National Inventory List. In some cases, built-up areas can be added, as long as they do not alter the architectural character of the building. Demolition is allowed when a building is too damaged to be rehabilitated or if later construction is damaging the character of the building. Heritage buildings should be rebuilt according to their original design. The HCUP has to approve all these procedures.

### 3.2. LAWS PERTAINING TO BUILT HERITAGE

Despite the importance of built heritage as an engine of development and preservation of collective memory and identity, it remains subject to threats and pressures. Indeed, the weakness of the legal and institutional framework for the protection of architectural heritage as well as the land and property speculation puts the district at risk. This section reviews the texts of laws governing the protection of heritage buildings.

#### 3.2.1. The Ottoman Period

In Lebanon, the institutionalization of the notion of heritage conservation has emerged during the Ottoman period in 1869. During this period, the notion of heritage was reduced to ruins and archeology. It was only in 1906, and after the massive destruction of old buildings that the concept of heritage buildings was introduced.

#### 3.2.2. The French Mandate: The Antiquities Regulation

During the French mandate, the Antiquities Regulation issued on 1933 defines the notions of antiques and real estate. It allows historic monuments listing, prohibits their manipulation without state consent and provides compensation to owners.

#### 3.2.3. The Urban Planning Law

The construction law of 1983 requires obtaining a permit for construction in classified areas. This permit is subject to prior approval of the Directorate General of Antiquities. Are exempt from the permit the works related to condition improvement that do not affect the building structure.

Moreover, this law defines neighborhoods, streets, historic buildings or sites that should be protected and enhanced for artistic, historical or environmental reasons.

#### 3.2.4. The Building Law

The building law, No. 646, promulgated on 11.12.2004, played an important role in heritage preservation. Section 13 imposes on some buildings additional conditions related to public safety, health, landscape architectural, Lebanese art styles, and the provision of additional equipment corresponding to the importance of the construction. Moreover, this law gives the power to refuse a building permit if the building or buildings in question are likely to be harmful to health and public safety, the natural landscape, the environment or architectural landscape.
3.3. STUDIES ON THE PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS IN BEIRUT PERICENTRAL AREAS

Since 1990s, several studies, aiming at the conservation of architectural heritage in Beirut pericentral areas, were conducted.

3.3.1. “Association de Protection et de Sauvegarde des Anciennes Demeures » (APSAD) Study

In 1995, the Minister of Culture assigned the APSAD to draw an inventory of historic buildings in the pericentral areas of Beirut. This study identified 1019 buildings focusing on two periods: the Ottoman modernism (1860-1920) and the French Mandate (1920-1943).

94 buildings were identified in Zokak el Blat. 46 were considered of high architectural value while 25 were of moderate architectural value. Most of the buildings with high architectural value lie in the north-west along the streets Abdel Kader and Amine Beyhum. A second phase should have given more detailed information in order to establish the legal framework for preserving these buildings.

The Minister asked the President of the Municipality of Beirut to freeze the listed buildings. This measure was objected by the owners who have put pressure on the state to remove their buildings from the list.
3.3.2. The Directorate General of Urban Planning (DGUP) Study

In 1997, Former late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri assigned the Directorate General of Urban Planning to conduct a re-evaluation of the APSAD study. The commission was composed as follows: the DGUP, the DGA and the APSAD directors. The study identified 520 buildings to be ranked on the entire pericentral belt.

In Zokak el Blat, the number of listed buildings is 65. They are concentrated along Abdel Kader Hussein Beyhum and Amine Beyhum streets.

The implementation of this study proposed to suspend all activities of demolitions until adopting new zoning regulations and the formulation of new legal and financial guidance to support this conservation effort. The owners could benefit from a transfer of surfaces that were not exploitable to specific areas where high rise buildings do not disfigure the urban landscape.

In October 1997, 98 buildings were removed from the list. The total number of buildings was reduced to 469. Subsequently, the High Council of Urban planning approved this study unanimously. However, in 1998, the Council of Ministers rejected the results of this study.
3.3.3. The Khatib & Alami Study

In July 1998, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), presented to the government a study conducted by Khatib & Alami private office. The approach focused on the classification of buildings into five categories: A, B, C, D and E according to their age and architectural value. The study states that buildings in categories D & E (250 buildings) which construction dates back to the French mandate would be exempted from classification. In Zokak el Blat, the study proposes the preservation of 26 buildings in categories A, B & C and releases 30 others (D & E).

This study was approved by the Cabinet although challenged by heritage activists because it threatened the historic buildings.
4. DRAFT LAW FOR THE PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARD OF OLD BUILDINGS AND PATRIMONIAL SITES

The draft law proposed in 2007, advocated plots preservation in three steps:

- Decision of Development and Protection: The Minister of Culture decides whether to protect a plot or not. The effects of this law extend to six months, after which measures shall be repealed if the temporary decision is not made on time;

- Temporary decisions: The Minister of Culture, with the help of a technical consultation committee and the authorization of the Higher Council for Urban Planning (HCUP), determines the area and the plots to be protected. In addition, the Minister must set up the temporary measures to which that area is subject. This decision extends over two years and may be renewed only once;

- The decree related to final development is discussed and approved by the Council of Ministers following a proposal of the Ministers of Culture and Public Works.

The draft law suggests the establishment of two lists: “the list of temporary protected patrimonial plots” and “the patrimonial plots list”.

The draft law considers incentives that would facilitate and enhance the conservation of the classified plots:

- Compensation equivalent to up to 75% of the area of which the owner was deprived. Such compensation shall be made by granting a permit to add a building on other plots located outside the protected area;

- Exemption of tax for built-up properties and municipal taxes over a period that varies from one year to ten years, in addition to taxes imposed when obtaining modification and restoration permits;

- Exemption of 50% on transfer fees and registration fee.

It is worth noting that this draft law has not been voted so far.
CHAPTER 2: DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

1. STUDY OBJECTIVES

Data collection is a key activity to implement our monitoring and evaluation strategy for Zokak el Blat area. Before starting the data collection process in Zokak el Blat area, we started a pre-data collection planning. We tried to define the purpose of the data collection, identify what we want to know from this evaluation and finally, and who are the beneficiaries of the gathered, processed and analyzed data.

Our main objective is to identify indicators to monitor the urban development in Zokak el Blat in order to generate recommendations and strategy proposals for local and public authorities. It is the first exercise done at Beirut City level.

Categories of indicators we are interested in correspond to the problematic of a post-conflict city where the context is very complex. Local and public authorities are still failing in terms of Strategic Planning and urban management to overcome territorial challenges: the existence of a dynamic entrepreneurial private sector, the prevalence of community and political tensions, the threatened patrimonial urban fabric, the immediate proximity to SOLIDERE area, etc. This territorial context led us to consider indicators related to the notion of heritage conservation, urban transformation and fragmentation.

2. STUDY FRAMEWORK

Based on the hypotheses we formulated, and after assessing in how far we would be able to collect data on them (for example, in many cases it is impossible to measure an increase or decrease of a certain aspect because there are no data available for ten years ago), a set of indicators was devised to collect data that would help us assess developments in the pericentral area that have taken place over the past decade. While initially we designed a comprehensive list of indicators, several difficulties encountered during the data collection process forced us to limit our study to four categories of indicators. Most importantly, the lack of socioeconomic and population/census data forced us to reconsider our entire framework.
The initial list of indicators for the year 2010 was as follow:

**Indicators of fragmentation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Real estate pressure</th>
<th>Number of real estate transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of construction permits and their volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Land prices per zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real estate prices per zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal real estate tax rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappearance of empty land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. State of residences</th>
<th>Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 120 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 120 m² and 240 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 240 m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Building Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date of Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rate of Occupation in buildings and squats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rate of ownership/ rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old rent (before 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New rent (after 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of residences (safety, equipment, comfort...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of the Building Façade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Land and morphological rearrangements</th>
<th>Lot splitting and merging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Density, building envelopes, setback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architectural styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planned and existing roads in 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physiognomy and skyline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Services and Facilities</th>
<th>Existing infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Road Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Garbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parking and valet parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dispensary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Socio-cultural centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Places of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Public” transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Public” spaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Usage, habits</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Social trajectory per sector</th>
<th>Origin of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-professional category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average household size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because of severe difficulties experienced during the data collection process, our final indicators have been limited to those described below:

### Indicators of fragmentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Real estate pressure</th>
<th>Number and type of real estate transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of construction permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real estate prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Land prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappearance of empty land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demolition of buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Land and morphological rearrangementst</td>
<td>Lot splitting and merging for new developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Density, building envelopes, setback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architectural styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planned roads in 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demolition of classified buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of building’s exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Services and facilities</td>
<td>Road and other networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Role and identity of the district</td>
<td>Building use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-collective infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious confession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. DATA COLLECTION SOURCES AND FORMS

Once having specified our objectives and selected our study frame, we decided to proceed with data collection using five sources of information:

- Interviews: moukhtars, citizens, key stakeholders, etc.
- Field Observations: notes, photographs, mapping, etc.
- Bibliographic research: books, magazines, journals, newspapers, etc.
- Administrative data: Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques (CNRS), Central Administration for Statistics (CAS), Société Libanaise de Développement et de Reconstruction (SOLIDERE), Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA), Ministry of Interior and Municipal Affairs (MOIN) through the Land Registry Office and the Civil Registry, Ministry of Education, Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), Beirut Municipality, Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut (OEA), Director General of Urban Planning (DGUP), Orient Institute, Private Real Estate Agencies (RAMCO and Abed Fahs), etc.
- Field Surveys: architectural, economic activities, household, academic institutions and community associations surveys.

Data collection was made in two forms:

- The empirical form, through field surveys and data collected at government and agencies. Some solicited public administrations and agencies released full information while other have provided incomplete data or did not deliver anything. In addition, a series of field surveys covering social, economic, architectural, etc. aspects were considered for collecting data for the project.
- The qualitative form, through interviews with residents, moukhtars and other key stakeholders in the area.

To this end, we dispatched official letters requiring information from relevant authorities and administrations, interviewed several stakeholders, designed specific questionnaires for household, socio-economic activities, academic institutions and community institutions. However, as previously said, we could not have access to all requested information and were obliged to drop the related indicators. Below is a list of the data that were successfully obtained, those partially obtained and a list of indicators that we had to drop.

4. DATA SUCCESSFULLY OBTAINED

For real estate pressure, the number of construction permits in Zokak el-Blat over the years 1998-2010 was obtained successfully from the Order of Engineers and Architects (OEA). Disappearance of empty land has been made visible by a map comparing built vs. un-built areas over time, based on a field survey in 2010 and older Cadastral maps.

For land and morphological rearrangements, we obtained data on density, building envelopes and setback, as well as architectural styles and the exterior quality of the building, from an architectural survey carried out by ALBA students after obtaining permission from Hezbollah, as well as 3D GIS-models from our cartographer. Physiognomy and skyline were later included in the density, building envelopes and setback.

Planned and existing roads were lined out according to our own updated maps and plans and maps by the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) dated 2004, provided to us by the CDR itself.

Services and facilities were lined out using existing Cadastral maps and maps from the CDR. Additionally; data from the architectural survey on public spaces was used.

Role and identity of the district comprised several different aspects. Building use and economic activities were recorded during the economic activities survey carried out by ALBA students and two MAJAL employees. Archeological sites were provided to us by the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA).

5. DATA PARTIALLY OBTAINED, ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

For real estate pressure, while we managed to obtain data from the Land Registry (Cadastre) on the number of real estate transactions carried out between 2005 and 2010, they could not narrow these statistics down to the neighborhood of Zokak el-Blat only. We were provided with Moussaytbeh and Zokak el-Blat combined. It is also important to note that many transactions are only recorded several years later or not at all, the latter being the case when parties register their transaction with a notary. Moreover, when people do register their transaction, many do not quote the real prices, in order to avoid taxes.

As far as the land and real estate prices are concerned, we initially tried to contact the municipal tax authorities, which should keep a yearly estimate of land and real estate prices in different areas, to base their taxes on. We did not manage to get insight into these data. We also did not get data from the Ministry of Finance on these prices, and even if we had, data is not always accurate because buyers and sellers seldom declare the true prices. As an alternative strategy, we interviewed several real estate developers and a real estate agent from the area, to get an idea of current prices in different zones of Zokak el-Blat. For older prices, we relied on estimates from the Lebanon Opportunities magazine dating back to 1998.

To get an idea of the demolition of buildings, we asked the Order of Engineers and Architects (OEA) to provide us with data (dates, lot numbers) about demolition permits issued over the past ten years. We did not obtain these data via that body, and went to the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) instead, where our request was finally rejected after having waited for five months. Requests at the municipality and the Higher Council for Urban Planning led us
back to the DGA. Eventually, we relied on a field survey updating a map from 2007 and comparing the up-to-date map to older versions showing of built vs. un-built areas, in order to get an idea of the amount of buildings demolished over the past years.

For the land and morphological rearrangements indicator, we included some information about lot splitting and merging in 2010 based on Cadastral records (the so-called “ifadet”) that we requested for lots where new projects were under construction. We could not identify all instances of lot rearrangements because there was insufficient budget to request the “ifade” for every lot number in Zokak el-Blat (there are hundreds).

For role and identity of the district, we could not identify all socio-collective infrastructure and places of worship because we were not allowed to interview subjects and locate all instances. The architectural and economic activities surveys identified as many as possible.

6. DROPPED INDICATORS

For real estate pressure, we did not manage to obtain the area of construction permits issued. We did not get full insight into the permits themselves because the municipal authorities did not allow consultation.

The municipal real estate tax rate was not provided to us by the authorities.

The state of residences (including apartment surface area, date of occupation, rate of occupation in buildings and squats, rate of ownership vs. rent, type of rent and quality of the residence) was to be determined in a larger socioeconomic survey that was planned in the area. Unfortunately, we ultimately did not succeed in obtaining permission from the area’s main political actor Hezbollah to go ahead with the survey.

For services and facilities, we were unable to collect data on places of worship and socio-cultural centers other than their location, if known, since we did not get permission to enter the locations themselves. The same goes to any information on social housing, since the socioeconomic survey could not be carried out.

The usage and habits indicator could not be researched because we did not carry out the socio-economic survey.

The same goes for social trajectory, including origin of the population, socio-professional category, level of education, religious confession, average household size, average age, population growth.

The initial indicator identity function of the district was integrated into the final indicator “role and identity of the district”; economic polarity was integrated into “economic activities”, while social mobility, including place of origin, destination and confession, had to be dropped because of lack of data.

For role and identity of the district, we could not identify religious confession since we did not carry out the socioeconomic survey.

Hence, circumstances forced us to severely constrain our inquiry. The next paragraph will explain these circumstances in more details.

7. CONCLUSION: MAIN ISSUES AT STAKE IN DATA COLLECTING PROCESSES IN LEBANON

7.1. LACK OF (RELIABLE) STATISTICAL DATA

As Verdeil (2005) noted in the context of a study of Beirut’s urban growth, there is a severe lack of statistical data in Lebanon. While Verdeil could resort to remote sensing techniques, our study requires socioeconomic, demographic data that cannot easily be retrieved. The last census in Lebanon took place in 1932. Moreover, while individuals are required to register in a population registry, many do so in their village of origin in which they might have never lived, and not in Beirut. Hence, data such as electoral lists (that are based on the population registries), while eventually accessible via a professor at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on mission at the Ministry of Interior, are not very useful in determining the demographic changes in a neighborhood in Beirut.

7.2. UNWILLINGNESS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS TO COLLABORATE

In general, public officials and institutions are not willing to share their data even when one presents an official letter from the university. Examples abound: the Central Administration for Statistics, the municipality, the Cadastre, etc.

7.3. UNWILLINGNESS OF PRIVATE OFFICIALS IN INSTITUTIONS TO COLLABORATE

Besides public administrations, private institutions are often unwilling to share any information. For example, political party Hezbollah did not allow us access to residents in Zokak el-Blat; hence our socioeconomic survey could not be carried out.

7.4. TIME LOSS IN TAKING APPOINTMENTS

People in general do not respond to emails and never call back, even though they say they will.

7.5. INFORMAL CONTACTS AND SNOWBALL-EFFECT

“It is customary … to say something about what is somewhat pretentiously called ‘methodology’. My field method could be summed up as meeting people”. (Willis, 1981). Research in Lebanon usually starts with contacting the right person. It is difficult to identify the expert who can provide you with what you are looking for. Hence, the first weeks are hardly productive. However, as you proceed, many people will refer you to their acquaintances and a snowball-effect will take place.
CHAPTER 3: SURVEY RESULTS

1. THE URBAN DIMENSION

The urban analysis in this chapter is based on the field work and surveys that were undertaken in Zokak el Blat, in addition to the study of different maps of the neighborhood throughout the years (1920-2011).

This section aims at analyzing the morphology of the urban fabric of Zokak El Blat: the road network, blocks, parcels and buildings and their evolution throughout the years, in order to deduct their impact on the growth and development of the neighborhood.

1.1. ROAD NETWORK

The road network is the set of different roads that cross the neighborhood. They differ in their width, length, function and orientation, all adapted to the complex context of Zokak El Blat’s district.

Based on the maps of Beirut since the 1920s, it is obvious that, besides the introduction of two major axes (the Fouad Chehab Avenue and the Ahmad Beyhum Avenue), the street pattern of Zokak El Blat did not witness major changes.

The following maps show that major changes occurred in 1977 after the construction of the two main axes, which was carried out at the end of the 1960s as part of the Ecochard plan and the Chehabist reforms of 1964.

On another level, we notice very minor changes in the rest of the street pattern; only some secondary and tertiary roads have been added to serve the primary roads that existed since the 1920s. In addition to that, it is obvious that a large amount of “dead-end” roads have been added in different places in the neighborhood, especially after 1991, which is the direct result of an increasing number of parcels in one block and the need for small roads to serve them (as we will see in the section about the blocks and parcels).

In 2010, more dead-end roads were added, and the primary and main roads were enlarged.

The road network map of Zokak El Blat is obviously not an aligned grid with organized roads distributed perpendicularly throughout the neighborhood, but rather a hazardous set of streets that were existent and/or added to serve blocks and parcels following uncertain and changing contexts on the site. However, it is obvious that the street pattern is made of primary, secondary and tertiary roads, distributed along the entire neighborhood.

Only in cases of ultimate functionalism and organization, a street pattern is accurately divided in a hierarchal and firm way. In Zokak EL Blat, the grid is not very firm, but it is easy to read the present street pattern, as it is obvious to distinguish the primary roads from the secondary and tertiary.
1.1.1. The roads

Zokak El Blat is a neighborhood located in the heart of the city, where no major intra-urban or national roads cross. It is articulated by a group of small urban roads that serve either directly the neighborhood or works as a connection with the adjacent neighborhood.

The main existing axis is the Fouad Chehab Avenue, with an East to West orientation, crossing the neighborhood from its Northern segment and dividing it into two major parts, the Northern one is owned and managed by SOLIDER. Another major axis is the Ahmad Beyhum Avenue or Salim Salam Avenue that is North-South oriented, traversing the neighborhood at its East to cut out a very small part of the neighborhood, the Eastern part from the rest.

Primary Roads

The primary roads are those that serve the entire district and connect it with its adjacent districts (Moussaytbeh, Bachoura and Minet El Hosn).

There are six primary roads that draw the main grid of the district:

• Roads with North-South direction

These cross the entire district, perpendicular to the Fouad Chehab Avenue and connecting it to Moussaytbeh (the Southern boundary of Zokak el Blat). They are the direct connection between Minet el Hosn and Moussaytbeh.

• Abdel Fattah Hamadeh road
• Patriarchate road that merges with the Amine Beyhum road towards the North.
• Mar Elias road that merges with Abdel Kader road towards the North.

• Roads with East-West direction

These roads connect Zokak El Blat to the Bachoura district from the East and to Moussaytbeh from the West.

• Rue Osman Ben Affan that marks the Southern borders of Zokak El Blat.

Secondary Roads

The secondary roads serve to connect primary roads, providing mobility inside Zokak El Blat’s district. They are smaller in width than the main roads and their length varies from one to another, depending on how many main roads they connect.

The spacing between the North-South oriented roads is slightly greater than the one between the East-West oriented roads, which explains the domination of North-South secondary roads, serving as connections for wider spacing between primary roads.

Among those roads are Khalil Sarkis road, Yousef Kassar road, Kasti road, Daoud road and Abdul Rahman Nahas road.

Tertiary Roads

The tertiary roads are not really differentiated from secondary ones. They serve as smaller connections between secondary roads.

1.2. BLOCKS AND PARCELS

The blocks in Zokak El Blat’s district have irregular shapes and differ from one to another, with a variety of sizes and proportions. A block takes its shape from the road network and differs according to the shape of the roads that border it. As we have previously seen, the road network is an irregular grid throughout the district, which explains the irregular shapes of the blocks. Throughout the years, as the road network did not change much, the blocks kept their shapes.

We notice the abundance of large-sized blocks, mainly those bordered by primary roads that are not very close to each other. This explains the use of “dead-end” roads in different places in the district to serve the parcels in those big blocks.

The parcels are the main component of the urban fabric dividing the district into small portions of land to be built on. Their shapes differ according to the road network, the operations of real estate developers, the merging of lots and the land use.

We notice that parcels are abundant in one block; and that mainly explains the introduction of a lot of dead-end roads that are meant to serve the enclosed parcels.

As for their shapes, we encounter rectangular parcels in some areas of the district, but mostly irregularly shaped parcels, none of them having a precise proportion: sometimes the long side of the parcel is on the roadside to optimize the penetration of light inside the building; other times the short side is on the roadside to optimize the number of parcels along the road.

On another note, many operations of real estate annexations have taken place as the following map shows us. Parcels or lots in different parts of the neighborhood have been merged to result in a bigger lot that allows bigger constructions.
Map 22: Real Estate Annexations after 2000
1.2.1. The disappearance of empty lots

With the increasing number of real estate transactions taking place in Zokak El Blat in the last 10 years, empty lots are disappearing to be replaced by buildings. In 2010, almost 45% of the empty lots that existed in 2000 have been replaced by buildings and 55% are still empty.

Moreover, we notice that there are a lot of empty spaces and plots that are too small to be built on; 85% have an area that does not exceed 200 square meters, and the remaining 25% are of an area between 200 and 249 square meters. This can serve as another indicator of the lack of planning and urban management that focuses only on real estate transactions. The residues are also the result of the addition of roads without a plan that considers the whole district, and especially the addition of dead-end roads to serve the big number of parcels in one block.

While there is a lack of public open spaces in Zokak El Blat, those empty zones, however small and residual, might serve as public spaces instead of being neglected and left for cars and garbage. They can introduce some greenery and small get-together places in a neighborhood that has become a place for high rise buildings and cars but not for people.
1.2.2. Residual Lots

When looking at the plots’ areas in Zokak el Blat, we noticed the presence of a large number of lands with an area of less than 100 m². These plots are residual and not buildable. This matter is more relevant within the Patriarchate area. The number of plots with an area inferior to 100 m² is 125 in the Patriarchate area and 4 in SOLIDERE area.

Patriarchate Sector

43% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 0 m² and 249 m²;

32% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 250 m² and 499 m²;

11% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 500 m² and 749 m²;

6% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 750 m² and 999 m²;

8% of the plots have area that is superior to 1.000 m².

SOLIDERE Sector

18% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 0 m² and 249 m²;

28% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 250 m² and 499 m²;

8% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 500 m² and 749 m²;

5% of the plots have an area that is comprised between 750 m² and 999 m²;

41% of the plots have an area that is superior to 1.000 m².

The presence of such plots is an indicator of land property fragmentation. It is the result of land splitting or streets and roads creation and therefore the lack of urban planning. Currently, they are either abandoned or occupied by cars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Patriarchate</th>
<th>SOLIDERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[0-249]</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[250-499]</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[500-749]</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[750-999]</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1000-1249]</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1250-1499]</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1500-1749]</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1750-1999]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2000-2249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2250-2499]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2500-2749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2750-2999]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3000-3249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3250-3499]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3500-3749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3750-3999]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4000-4249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4250-4499]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4500-4749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4750-4999]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5000-5249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5250-5499]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5500-5749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5750-5999]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6000-6249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6250-6499]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6500-6749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6750-6999]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7000-7249]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7250-7499]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7500-7749]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[8000-+]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>536</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Plots’ Areas in Zokak el Blat
Figure 1: Plots’ Areas in Patriarchate Sector

Figure 2: Plots’ Areas in SOLIDERE Sector

Map 24: Residual Lots
1.3. BUILDINGS

The Zokak El Blat neighborhood is fragmented and the architectural fabric is highly degraded, seldom renovated. The area occupied by buildings has considerably changed throughout the year which resulted in a different urban fabric and composition. Furthermore, the area is a mix of architectural styles and typologies, encompassing a wide variety of façade styles and materials.

1.3.1. Occupation/built-up area
The comparison of the maps shows us a change in the composition of the urban fabric of Zokak El Blat between 1945 and 2011.

Four major demolition operations of the urban fabric took place in Zokak el Blat: the destruction caused by the addition of the two major axes: Fouad Chehab and Ahmad Beyhum or Salim Salam Avenue (1964-1977), the destruction caused by the civil war (1975-1990), the destruction caused by the reconstruction process in SOLIDERE area and the destruction (1991-2003) caused by the land and real estate speculation (2003 – 2011).

1964-1977

Zokak el Blat lost a big part of its buildings with the addition of Fouad Chehab Avenue that divided Zokak el Blat into two parts causing the destruction of a great number of buildings. This process was repeated with the addition of the Ahmad Beyhum Avenue. A great number of the buildings was demolished on both sides of the added avenues. During this period, Zokak el Blat lost 36,918,50 m2 which is equivalent to 235 buildings.

1977 - 1991

Zokak El Blat has lost a great part of its built-up area, because of the civil war. During this period, the district lost 6,657,50 m2 which is equivalent to 48 buildings. Surprisingly, the major destruction occurred in the Patriarchate area.

1991-2003

Zokak el Blat’s urban fabric was tragically affected by the postwar reconstruction process. During this period, the demolished built-up area exceeded by far the one that happened during the civil war. Thus, Zokak el Blat lost 28,372 m2 which is equivalent to 151 buildings. The major destructions occurred in SOLIDERE area where larger buildings replaced the older ones. The Patriarchate’s urban fabric was left slightly intact.

2003-2011

The land and real estate speculation in Zokak el Blat increased the demand within the district and especially within the Patriarchate area. During this period, Zokak el Blat lost 4,941,50 m2 of its built-up area which is equivalent to 30 buildings. Most of those buildings are located in the southern neighborhood. The scarcity of empty lots oriented the demand towards the old degraded fabric. The destruction of the old fabric suited both the owners and the buyers. In fact, when they opt for the demolition, the buyers benefit from the additional exploitation ratios while the owners can get rid of their property issues and complexities. In the Patriarchate neighborhood, the urban fabric has changed to a greater extent, introducing new building patterns, which testifies the destruction of a great number of old buildings. The absence of planning explains the random composition of the urban fabric with a wide variety of building shapes today. It is very obvious that the new constructions are larger and there is no room for small built-up areas anymore.
1.3.2. Building Age

The building age varies across the neighborhood, which shows the mixture of styles we find in it, thus revealing the lack of planning and construction rules. The presence of new buildings from the past ten years shows us that the district has already entered a new phase and has become subject to land speculation and new real estate development.

According to the map, there is a high number of buildings (41%) that dates back to the Ottoman period (1820-1920) and the period that followed, the French Mandate (1920 till 1943), which leads to the conclusion that this neighborhood, encompassing such a great number of heritage buildings of the Ottoman and Mandate architectural style, dates back to that phase and has ever since endured a massive change in its built-up fabric that has been replaced by newer buildings.

A great number of buildings (25%) have been constructed in the post-Mandate period, between 1943 and 1975. The buildings that were constructed during the war represent only 10% of the entire urban fabric. The modern style has by then started appearing and continued after the war until the year 2000.

The new constructions in the contemporary period, between 2000 and 2011, occupy 9% of the urban fabric of the neighborhood, which is not a small number for ten years. The neighborhood is thus passing through a period of rapid development, as we had mentioned earlier.
1.3.3. Typology

Buildings represent 76% of the urban fabric. They are the main existing typology in the district, which marks a very urbanized area where individual houses count for less than 20% of the whole built fabric.

This is a sign of a lack of preservation of heritage buildings since there are very few individual houses left.
1.3.4. Building Use

Being a residential neighborhood, 45% of the buildings in Zokak El Blat are residential. Commerce is nevertheless entering the district, but the neighborhood preserves its main residential character. There is a very limited number, only four, of exclusively commercial buildings, but a high number, 33%, of mixed used buildings, where the building is mainly residential but has a commercial ground floor.

On another note, there are 15 institutional buildings and seven religious buildings, which is a considerably high number for a neighborhood like Zokak El Blat.

6% of the buildings are of mixed use: a residential, commercial and institutional combination.

The administrative buildings are found only in the Northern part, being part of the Beirut central district built by SOLIDERE after the war and encompassing the main political and administrative functions of the city (like the Sérail for example).
1.3.5. Building State

There is a noticeable variation between the states of the buildings all over the neighborhood; while some are in very good shape, a great number of buildings are in a degraded state. It is very clear that the buildings in the western part of Zokak El Blat are in better shape while the buildings in degraded state are concentrated in the center of the neighborhood. It is easy to conclude that the old buildings, dating from 1920 to 1943, also described as the historic and heritage buildings, are the ones in bad state (This is to be elaborated in the section about heritage buildings).
1.3.6. Building Heights

The buildings of 1 to 3 floors and those of 4 to 6 floors dominated the built-up fabric of Zokak El Blat in 1977 and 1991, covering around 64% of the whole neighborhood. With the new construction and the new speculation and real estate developments, buildings of 7 to even more than 10 floors started appearing in different corners of the district, especially after 1991. The very high rise buildings, of more than 13 floors, appear in the neighborhood today, as shows the 2011 map, mainly with the new real estate development in the Northern western part and eastern part.
1.3.7. Building Façade materials

The major part of the built-up fabric, almost 65%, has coated facades with prefabricated stones and marbles, a style that mainly defines the after mandate period of reconstruction and lasts till our days. The rest of the built-up fabric has natural stone facades that are sign of buildings of older period - the ottoman and the mandate period.
1.4. DEMOLITION OF LISTED BUILDING

Once listed, the buildings were not completely protected since, as mentioned earlier, there is an absence of a legal framework for the protection of heritage buildings.

The maps above show that unclassified buildings are those that were more likely to be demolished; 36% of the unclassified buildings were demolished in 2011 proving the absence of a protection strategy for heritage buildings.
1.5. STATE OF HERITAGE AND CLASSIFIED BUILDINGS

On another note, we observe a direct link between the buildings state and their age which reinforces the conclusion that historic buildings undergo serious deterioration problems and suffer from lack of maintenance and preservation. A great amount of buildings dating between 1820 and 1943 are in a degraded state (almost 14%) while others are in a bad or average state (almost 59%). The rest of the buildings are in good shape which can be the result of the reuse of those buildings, thus their rehabilitation, conservation and adaptation for new usage.

As for the classified buildings, the map indicates that the classification was not enough to protect the buildings; therefore 19% of the buildings undergo serious deterioration and are in a degraded state, 26% are in a bad state and 41% are in an average state, while the rest, only 14%, are in good state.

In conclusion, it is proved that the classification of the buildings is not enough for their preservation and that is mainly because of the absence of a whole protection strategy and a legal framework that dictates the protection of the buildings.
1.6. Skyline

The analysis of the morphology of the urban fabric of Zokak El Blat reveals to us the development of the district throughout the years. And this 3D map summarizes the fact that Zokak El Blat underwent serious changes since its very early years, which we see clearly between 1991 and 2011.

Map 44: Zokak el Blat Skyline in 1991

The neighborhood, with its irregular road network and diversified shapes of blocks and parcels, got more dense with the construction of new buildings especially in the last 10 years, where we notice the domination of buildings replacing low rise houses that existed previously, and the empty lots that existed in 1991 are almost all built on.

Map 45: Zokak el Blat Skyline in 2011
1.7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

1.7.1. Public Equipments

Zokak el Blat’s equipment in public services differs from one sector to another.

SOLIDERE Area

The northern part of Zokak el Blat district is characterized by the presence of big administrative buildings such as:

• The Grand Sérail that is the headquarters of the Lebanese Prime Minister;
• The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), a public body, that is enabled to carry out the reconstruction and development processes in Lebanon;
• The ESCWA Buildings representing the United Nations headquarter in Lebanon

Patriarchate Area

The southern part of Zokak el Blat is characterized by the presence of a large number of educational institutions.

Both areas lack of public spaces and parking facilities.
1.7.2. Upgrading of Public Services

Population growth in Zokak el Blat puts pressure on public services such as drinkable and waste water network, electricity network, etc.

In SOLIDERE area, the reconstruction plan envisaged the public services upgrading according to the needs, while the Patriarchate area, and within the framework of Beirut’s infrastructure upgrading project in 2002 launched by the CDR, benefited from the upgrading of its boundaries’ public services. In 2002, the CDR appointed Dar el Handasah (Nazih Taleb & Co) to undertake this task. The project’s objective addressed the urgent need to improve, repair and replace sections of Beirut’s infrastructure. The project, designed in three phases, was launched along many axes in Beirut city and affected the Patriarchate boundaries. It covered a 20 year infrastructure master plan and comprised the following upgrading works: Storm water network, sewage network, potable water network, power and telecommunications network, pavement works, sidewalks, street lighting, signing and marking, landscaping or other street amenities.

The public services upgrading did not affect the core of the Patriarchate sector. The lack of public services upgrading combined with the population growth within the district put pressure on the existing infrastructure and left the area in bad sanitary conditions.
1.7.3. Parking Facilities

Zokak el Blat’s parking facilities differ from one sector to another.

Within SOLIDERE area, all the buildings have their private parking facilities. Moreover, the area has 5 public parking areas.

Within the Patriarchate area, only the new developments are equipped with private parking facilities. To compensate this shortage, sector’s residents and visitors recourse to public parking areas, parkmeters spaces and sidewalk parking. The lack of parking facilities combined with the streets narrowness oblige users to opt for parking on the sidewalks which disturbs the pedestrian mobility. Furthermore, the parking scarcity increases the conflict between users.

Map 48: Parking Facilities
1.8. REAL ESTATE AND LAND MARKET

As mentioned above, we encountered several problems while collecting data. For real estate and land market data collection, we faced the following difficulties:

- Project developers were not willing to provide us with answers to all our questionnaire sections;
- The Ministry of Finance and namely the land register could not deliver us information on Zokak el Blat area, despite the fact that the study area is a land constituency. They provided us with monthly information on real estate transactions within Zokak el Blat and Moussaytbeh districts;
- The Order of Engineers and Architects “OEA” provided us with the list of construction permits that were delivered from 1997 till 2010.

In order to assess the market tendencies and dynamics, we relied on the information that we managed to collect from relevant authorities and administrations, our field observations, magazines and newspapers archives and interviews with project developers and experts in the field.


The land register established within the Ministry of Finance provided us with the following figures. These figures highlight land and real estate transactions within Zokak el Blat and Moussaytbeh. However, they do not provide us with plots’ number in order to extract data for our study area.

Table 2 Number of real estate transactions between 2005 - 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Sales to Foreigners</th>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Merging</th>
<th>Property Transfer</th>
<th>Demolition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11867</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Finance: Cadastre Register

A. Real Estate and Land Sales

Over seven years, 11,867 sales transactions were concluded. The above mentioned number covers land and real-estate transactions. We could not separate real-estate transactions from land transactions.

The average number is 1695.28 sales transactions per year.

The minimum number of transactions was recorded for the years 2005 and 2006. The recession in the market is due to the political and security instability that characterized these two years.

The number of transactions reached its peak in 2009 where 1953 transactions were recorded.
B. Sales to Foreigners

Over seven years, 531 sales to foreigners’ transactions were concluded.

The average number is 75.85 sales to foreigners’ transactions per year.

The minimum number of transactions was recorded in 2005.

The number of sales to foreigners’ transactions reached its peak in 2007 where 88 transactions were recorded within the area.

C. Subdivision Transactions

Over seven years, 15 subdivision transactions were concluded.

The average number is 2.14 subdivision transactions per year.

The minimum number of subdivision transactions was recorded in 2007 and 2010 where zero subdivision transactions were recorded.

The maximum number of subdivision transactions was recorded in 2005 where 9 subdivision transactions were recorded. After this date, the subdivision transactions decreased.

This diminution could be explained by the fact that the land properties are fragmented to a point that no more splitting transactions could be made.

D. Merging Transactions

Over seven years, 129 merging transactions were concluded.

The average number is 18.42 merging transactions per year.

The minimum number was 9 merging transactions recorded in 2009.

The number of merging transactions reached its peak in 2011 where 32 merging transactions were recorded.

This augmentation in the merging transactions could be explained in two ways:

• Property fragmentation has led to smaller plots;
• Projects’ developers are targeting high-income customers that demand larger apartments and more amenities within the building.
**E. Property transfer**

Over seven years, 8 property transfer transactions were concluded.

The average number is 1.14 property transfer transactions per year.

The minimum number of property transfer transactions was recorded in 2008, 2010 and 2011 where zero transactions were recorded.

The number of property transfer transactions reached its peak in 2009 where 5 transactions were recorded.

The lack of property transfer transactions combined with the age of buildings could explain that heirs, on a same plot, are waiting for a potential buyer in order to get rid of the succession formalities costs.

**F. Demolition Transactions**

Over seven years, 133 demolition transactions were concluded.

The average number is 19 demolition transactions per year.

The minimum number of demolition transactions was recorded in 2011 where 14 transactions were recorded.

The number of demolition transactions reached its peak in 2010 where 25 transactions were recorded.

The demolition is going at a fast pace and puts in danger the architectural heritage of Žokak el Blat.
1.8.2. Construction Permits

A. Construction Permits in Beirut

The construction permits in Zokak el-Blat in 2010 will be compared to the data below, listing construction permits for all of Beirut and Lebanon in 2010 and between 2002 and 2009.

**Evolution of Construction Permits in Beirut**

![Graph of construction permits in Beirut 2002-2010.](image)

*Figure 9 Construction Permits in Beirut 2002–2010.*


**Evolution of Construction Permits in Lebanon**

![Graph of construction permits in Lebanon 2002-2010.](image)

*Figure 10: Construction permits in Lebanon 2002–2010.*

The number of construction permits issued in Beirut has been relatively steady over the past ten years. What is striking, however, is the evolution in the area licensed. While this number is initially low, there seems to be a steady trend upwards starting in 2003, peaking sharply in 2008, to go back and drop downwards.

This means that there has been a sharp increase in the amount of built-up area over the past ten years, something that is indeed visible in Beirut’s skyline: the amount of high rises under construction is striking, to say the least.

Construction permit statistics in the rest of Lebanon shows a different picture, however: after starting at diverging points, the number of permits and areas licensed converge in 2007, and continue together in an upward curve until 2008, where we notice a small peak in areas licensed, after which both go downwards again.

From this, we can deduct that, contrary to the situation in Beirut, there has not been a sharp increase in built-up area per construction permit in the rest of Lebanon.

B. Construction Permits in Zokak el Blat between 1997 and 2010: Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut Figures

The Order of Engineers and Architects provided us with a list of construction permits delivered between 1997 and 2010. This list contains the plots’ numbers, the engineers’ and the owners’ names. However, we could not manage to get information about the built-up area, and the demolitions that occurred.

Table 3: Construction Permits in Zokak el Blat 1997 – 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zokak el Blat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Finance: Cadastre Register

Evolution of Construction Permits in Zokak el Blat

Figure 11: Evolution of Construction Permits 1997 – 2012
The observation of Zokak el Blat district shows differing development trends and issues within the two segmented areas. This is reflected in the issued construction permits that are unevenly distributed along the district’s two sectors. In this regard, this section examines the evolution in the number of construction permits over 15 years in Zokak el Blat’s entire district with an emphasis on SOLIDERE and the Patriarchate area.

Map 49: Construction permits between 2001 – 2010 (OEA Figures)
**Zokak el Blat**
The total number of construction permits is 62.
The average number of construction permits per year is 4.13.
The minimum number of development projects was recorded in 1999 where zero building permit was issued.
The number of development projects reached its peak in 2008 where 9 construction permits were delivered.
12 buildings are still under construction in the entire area of Zokak el Blat.

**SOLIDERE**
The Total number of construction permits is 15 which represents 24.19% of the total number of construction permits.
The average number of construction permits per year is 1.
The minimum number of development was recorded in years 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2010 where zero building permit was issued.
The number of development projects reached its peak in 1997 where 3 construction permits were delivered.
Only one building is still under construction.

**Patriarchate**
The total number of construction permits is 47 which represents 75.81% of the total number of construction permits.
The average number of construction permits per year is 3.13.
The minimum number of development projects was recorded in 1999 where zero building permit was issued.
The number of construction permits reached its peak in 2008 where 9 construction permits were delivered.
11 buildings are under construction.

The Table observation shows that 46.66% of the new constructions occurred between 1996 and 1998 while 53.34% of the constructions were spread over 12 years.

Most of the development projects are concentrated within the Patriarchate area that undergoes important changes in its urban fabric. In addition, those projects are mostly localized on the sector fringes along the major roads: 4 development projects are located along Salim Salam Avenue while 6 development projects are situated along Fouad Chehab Avenue in close proximity to SOLIDERE. It should be noted that, despite the nuisances caused by the traffic on major roads, there is still an increasing demand for housing near SOLIDERE area and downtown area.
1.9. REAL ESTATE AND LAND MARKET

1.9.1. New Projects Survey

A field survey of recently completed, planned and under construction real estate projects was carried out, where we collected information about new projects in Zokak el-Blat and contacted and interviewed as many developers as we could. The data below is based on this survey, complemented with information found online and in brochures.
**Planned, under construction and completed projects in Zokak el-Blat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name and developer</th>
<th>Information about the building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basbous Building, by Basbous</td>
<td>Lot 244, 10 floors residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GECC</td>
<td>Lot 622, 14 floors residential, apartments 520m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut 298, by GECC</td>
<td>Lot 298, 14 floors residential, apartments 230-410m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal View, by GECC</td>
<td>Lot 1089, 662-665, 14 floors residential, apartments 520m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Beirut Hills, by GECC and Moughir Sinjaba</td>
<td>Lot 689-692, 17 floors residential, two towers, apartments 400-700m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Al-Hout</td>
<td>Lot 824, 8 floors residential, apartments 100m2, $2050/m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Wazzan for Engineering and Contracting</td>
<td>Lot 624, 626-628, 631, 633-635, 14 floors residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland, La Citadelle, Solitaire by Binadar</td>
<td>Lot 610, 611, 1014, 14 floors residential, three buildings, apartments 210-250m2, $3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum Engineering Consultants</td>
<td>Lot 526, 12 floors residential, apartments 170m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisham Mneimneh</td>
<td>Lot 457, 7 and 17 floors residential, apartments 134-174m2, $2,000/m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Trois Palmes, by Khiami Group</td>
<td>Lot 966, 10 floors residential, apartments 200m2, $3,000/m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hani Mrad</td>
<td>Lot 591, 9 floors residential, apartments 215m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision 210, by Statumen</td>
<td>Lot 210, 12 floors residential, apartments 215, 222, 405m2, $4,000/m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sounboula 1, by Shaker Atriss &amp; Abdel Fattah Ahmed</td>
<td>Lot 894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sounboula 4, by Shaker Atriss &amp; Abdel Fattah Ahmed</td>
<td>Lot 577, 15 floors residential, apartments 150m2, $1,300/m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sounboula 7, by Shaker Atriss &amp; Abdel Fattah Ahmed</td>
<td>Lot 427, 13 floors residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sounboula 9, by Shaker Atriss &amp; Abdel Fattah Ahmed</td>
<td>Lot 927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Amira Building, by Sherri Real Estate Company</td>
<td>Lot 861-862, 10 floors residential, apartments 150m2, $1,400-$2,100/ m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 Zokak el-Blat, by Moughir Sinjaba</td>
<td>Lot 200, 11 floors residential, apartments 215-240 m2, $3,500/ m2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moughir Sinjaba</td>
<td>Lot 199, 11 floors residential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slogans and Advertisements Adopted by Projects’ Promoters

Big development projects adopt slogans that advertise for:

- Great panoramic view of downtown city, mountain and sea in one great location.
- Building design that meets the needs for peace, serenity and tranquility amidst Beirut whereas within the proximity to many major places and destination spots.
- Amenities within the building such as parking spaces, gardens, etc. within an over-congested area that lacks of parking spaces and green areas;

In our survey, we were able to work on a sample of seven new buildings. In fact, we managed to interview seven developers while the rest showed a reluctance to respond to our questionnaire.

The new buildings surveyed have on average 12 floors (median 12). Building amenities are not as luxurious as observed in other development projects in Ain el Mreisseh or Achrafieh. No building has a health club for example. Only two projects have a swimming pool. All have a generator and extra water, but this is considered standard in every new building in Beirut and does not constitute a distinguishing variable. Two buildings had extra parking facilities, one project came with a so-called Smart House application.

All buildings are residential developments with apartments. For all seven developers eventually interviewed, middle-income groups are most targeted, with two buildings targeting high-income as well, and two low-income.

The average apartment size for buildings surveyed, as per the provided information, is of 283 m² (median 215 m²). According to a local broker we interviewed, the average apartment size in most of the areas is 150m². Higher prices because of less liquidity following the financial crisis, as well as an oversupply of large apartments led to a demand for smaller apartments, at sizes such as 100 or 110 m².
New developments are generally not undertaken inside the district but are mostly localized on its fringes: along the major roads and Patriarchate. The proximity of SOLIDERE and Salim Salam and Fouad Chehab highways is seen as an advantage by the developers, because it enables fast access to Downtown and the airport as well as other parts of the city.

New developments have not yet penetrated the poorer areas. When analyzing the brochures and websites of new projects in Zokak el-Blat, it is clear that developers are not using the same type or amount of slogans that can be seen in advertisements for new buildings in Downtown and Ras Beirut/Achrafieh.

Regarding payment facilities, most developers give their clients the opportunity to pay in installments after an initial down payment. Some developers take installments directly, other process them through banks where buyers take loans. Most of them do not like to deal with banks; only one said he can be flexible about this. While all clients used their savings to buy the apartments or paid part of the sum, half of them used bank loans from local banks as well.

The occupation status of apartments is half permanent; half seasonal (in summer). All apartments are for sale only, although some new owners might rent them out afterwards. In all projects, apartments are bought for residential needs, while some can be rented out and treated as an investment or are bought for children.

In most developments, the majority of demand comes from Lebanese expatriates. In only one instance were apartments bought by foreigners, namely people from the Gulf. As for the origins of the buyers, developers name different areas: Zokak el-Blat itself from before the war, Shites from the South, expatriates from no specific sect, people from the Gulf, etc. It is difficult to conclude on one area of origin. Area of origin: 5 developers have clients from outside: the Gulf/expatriates (1), the South (2), or everywhere (2). Two have clients from Zokak el-Blat.

All developers named families as the main and only household composition of their clients.

Occupation: business, services, engineers, managers. A university education was cited as most common among buyers. Their occupation varies from white-collar jobs as professionals in the private and services sector in Europe and the Gulf (managers, engineers) to self-made entrepreneurs who have businesses in Africa. The average age is estimated at 40.

Before 2010

Around 1998, foreign investors (Gulf nationals and Lebanese expatriates) were returning to Lebanon. In 1998, there were 489 foreign ownership transactions, an increase of 111 over 1997, in all of Lebanon, mostly in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. At this time, foreign ownership was still restricted by law, before law 296 was issued in 2001. Saudi nationals were investing the most. Demand was mostly driven by Lebanese expatriates living in the Gulf, with Arab investors returning since 1998.

According to a survey conducted by Lebanon Opportunities in 1999, most local Lebanese at the time were looking for an apartment in a new building, measuring 100 to 200 square meters. Budgets cited by potential buyers were considered unrealistic by developers, while supply for apartments under $100,000 ran short and there was an oversupply in the range above $100,000. Most popular were apartments under US$60,000. Units over 200m2 and $175,000 were selling slower. Zokak el-Blat ranked second for demand on apartments, together with Mazraa, Sabra, Tareek el Jdideh, Basta and Burj Abi Haidar. ‘Demand is up in traditionally popular areas. The southern suburbs are experiencing fast population growth typical of poorer areas.’ However, for offices, storefronts, restaurants or hotels, Zokak el-Blat was not listed as being in demand. Many luxury apartments were left unsold, while small units were sold in record numbers before construction even started. This can be explained by the developers’ behavior at the end of the war: they invested a lot in residential properties in the city center at high prices that were rented to employees of big companies, hence driving up the prices. While by 1999 most companies had left, some landlords were still waiting for better times, not lowering their prices. Devel-

---

1 Return of the big spenders. Despite complex ownership laws, foreign investors are back in the market.” Lebanon Opportunities, May 1999, pp. 16-19.
3 Lebanon Opportunities, April 1997, p. 32; June 1997, p. 36.
operators of new apartments sometimes opted to rent out their properties, gaining 7 to 10% of the value of an old and 10 to 12% of the value of a new apartment yearly. After 9 to 10 years, a net profit can be gained, and the developer can still sell the apartment. On average, developers waited up to two years before they started renting. Rental prices in Beirut were generally unaffordable for most people, especially in the central areas. Compared to the massive construction taking place at the time, the rental market picked up only minimally, and in Achrafieh mostly, even though renting out apartments was considered as a sound investment since the change of the rental law (see section... on rental law).

The cost of most of the houses offered was over $50,000, while most of them were advertised at over $100,000. With salaries generally below $1,000 a month, this meant that there was a big gap between what people wanted and what people could afford. Buyers surveyed were generally between 20 and 39 years old and had an income of less than $2,000 a month. Most were couples looking for a home for life. Loans were more readily available than before at this time, by banks, developers and the Public Housing Institute, while instalments were an option as well. In 2001, the demand for apartments in Greater Beirut was beginning to recover. Surplus was declining, and inexperienced developers had left the market. The real market was for new and smaller apartments (135-160m²). Buyers were mostly middle-class two-income families with a household income of over $1,200 a month, and retired military servicemen.

1.9.2. Real Estate Land Prices

Lebanon has witnessed a real estate boom over the past ten years that was barely deterred by the global financial crisis, the continuing political turmoil and the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon (see Krijnen, 2010, who based this information on a press review and bank reports). Investors and tourists have been flocking to the country in large numbers, with a record number of visitors noted in 2009. Land and real estate prices had grown exponentially, with apartments in Downtown Beirut selling anywhere from $5,000 to $8,000 per square meter (Krijnen, 2010). Demand was high due to continuing investment from the Gulf and Lebanese expatriates, with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) growing annually (Krijnen, 2010).

Before 2010

From 1997 to 1998, official figures stated that prices of real estate units went up from $44,360 to $58,400 on average. One explanation is the wider availability of loans allowing people to buy more expensive residences. In 1998, 17,000 home loans were provided. Affordable neighborhoods were the congested side streets of old Beirut: Moussaytbeh, Basta and inner Barbour. A two-bedroom apartment could be found there for US$60,000, while main streets remained expensive, at US$600-700 per square meter. An increase in the development of small apartments was taking place because people had less capital to spend, loans were limited and developers wanted 30 to 50% in down payments. In 1999, developers were turning towards the pericentral areas of Beirut, to avoid paying SOLIDERE’s high rates and being tied to their regulations.

15 Lebanon Opportunities May 1999, p. 12-15. “More than 40,000 transactions registered last year. Is the $3 billion market gearing itself up?”

Figure 13: Real Estate Prices/m²-Example
An example comes from a developer that we interviewed. He bought a 200m² plot, with an allowed built-up area of 2,000m². His construction costs were $450/m². He paid $1,350,000 for the plot in 2008-2009, which comes down to $6,750/m². An apartment now costs $3,000/m². Deducting the construction costs (US$900,000) from his turnover from sales (US$6,000,000), we are still left with an enormous profit margin.

1.9.3. Speculation Process in Zokak el Blat

This part of the study looks at land and real estate prices tendencies in order to assess the speculation process within Zokak el Blat and therefore the gentrification process.

Following a field survey and information provided by D. Guillaume Boudisseau (RAMCO), we were able to develop two maps: the first on land prices and the second on real estate prices.

To facilitate the reading of data, the study area was divided into 6 sectors:

- SOLIDERE area where land prices and real estate prices exceed USD 4,000 per square meter;
- The north-western fringe where the real estate prices can reach SOLIDERE prices and land prices vary between USD 3,500 and USD 4,000/m²;
- The north-eastern fringe where land prices vary between USD 3,000 and USD 3,500/m² while real-estate prices vary between USD 3,500 and USD 4,000/m²;
- The school area is excluded from land speculation;
- The western part where land prices vary between USD 2,500 and USD 2,750/m² while real-estate prices vary between USD 3,000 and USD 3,500/m²;
- The southern part where land prices vary between USD 2,000 and USD 2,500/m² while real-estate prices are much higher in the section that represents the core of Zokak el Blat USD 2,500 – USD 2,750/m² than in the rest where real estate prices vary between USD 2,000 and USD 2,500/m².

Prices are particularly high within SOLIDERE area, on the fringes that lie near the city center along Fouad Chehab Avenue. This demonstrates that there is a very strong correlation between land and real estate prices and the distance from downtown. In addition to the location the price of land depends on the allowed built-up area.
2. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

At the beginning of the study, we decided to conduct an exhaustive survey on the district’s social fabric. To this end, we designed a questionnaire covering all the social aspects: age, gender, education level, place of birth, occupation, number of persons per household, etc. However, the political tension prevailing prevented us from carrying out the survey.

To overcome this issue, we decided to formulate an official request to the Ministry of the Interior to obtain information about registered people from Zokak el Blat as well as the electoral lists. Once more, due to the delicate situation prevailing in the country, we only managed to get the electoral list.

Therefore, we were constrained to rely on existing literatures such as “the Orient Institute” publications, the electoral lists and interviews with citizens and Moukhtars to conduct the analysis of Zokak el Blat’s social fabric.

2.1. ZOKAK EL BLAT SOCIAL FABRIC EVOLUTION

Since the beginning, demographic changes within the district have contributed to the change in its social landscape. From the 19th century and until the first half of the 20th century, the neighborhood had a heterogeneous nature in terms of confessional constitution. The majority of residents of Zokak el Blat were high-class intellectual Beirutis, working mainly in the tertiary sector in the city center and port in the region. The neighborhood’s population was mixed between Sunni and Christians (Maronites, Greek Catholics and Armenians). These families were the first to build houses and mansions in the neighborhood.

Migration to Beirut began in 1920 and was accentuated during the second half of the 20th century. The big working opportunities in the capital attracted migrants from all over Lebanon and even from neighboring countries like Syria. This wave of migration has contributed not only to the diversity in terms of sectarian composition but also in terms of income levels. With the increased attractiveness of residential neighborhoods, residences and palaces were surrounded by houses of the middle and working classes. The majority of migrants belonged to the Shiite unskilled working class employed in construction. Christian migrants were absorbed by the functions of the state, financial and commercial companies. As for the Armenians, they migrated to the area following the Armenian Genocide to join their fellow Armenians who had settled in the area around the Church of St. Nichan since the second half of the 19th century. Armenian families of the district belonged to the upper-middle class and managed businesses in downtown.

Between 1960 and 1975, more than half of the Lebanese population lived in Beirut and pericentral areas. Beirut area became congested especially within the absence of a planning policy to contain the population pressure. Congestion and nuisances that resulted had led some families in the neighborhood and especially Christian families to migrate to the eastern suburbs that were calmer and had a sectarian homogeneity.

At the beginning of the civil war, in 1975, Zokak el Blat was located on the eastern fringe of west Beirut and, close to the demarcation line. This situation enhanced Christian migration to East Beirut. In parallel, new Muslim migration flows toward the area occurred. These flows led to the radical transformation in the demographic structure of Zokak el Blat. The migration of Christians had allowed poor Kurdish and Shiite families to squat vacant Christian families’ residential units. The families’ displacement movements from one region to another did not happen in an arbitrary way but according to the will of political actors: they aimed at channeling the flow of migration to certain regions where they had the intention to develop or to extend their political influence. The massive displacement of Shiite families to the neighborhood induced an increase in demand for housing. This demand was satisfied by an additional real estate supply and the availability of empty houses and apartments to be squatted.

At the end of hostilities, the northern district of Zokak el Blat was annexed to SOLIDERE that had a different reconstruction, management and development dynamic. The proximity of Zokak el Blat to prestigious downtown and land speculation attracted many real estate developers to invest in the Patriarchate neighborhood and especially on the fringes.

2.2. CONFESSIONAL DISTRIBUTION

To trace the religious mosaic in Zokak el Blat, we relied on interviews with residents on the electoral lists and past studies of the neighborhood. Interviews with Zokak el Blat’s inhabitants gave us a great idea about the history of the social fabric, while electoral lists and studies provided us with some figures.
The confessional landscape in Beirut differs from one sector to another. The eastern sector is predominantly Christian while the west has a Muslim predominance.

In 2009, in Mouhafazat Beirut:

- 44% of the voters were Sunni;
- 15% were Shia;
- 10% were Armenian Orthodox
- 9% were Greek Orthodox
In the western sector, except for Zokak el Blat and Bachoura neighborhoods, the proportion of Sunnis is far greater than that of the Shiites.

In year 2009,

- 51% of the voters were Sunni;
- 39% were Shia;
- 5% were Armenian Orthodox

In year 2000,

- 48% of the voters were Sunni;
- 39% were Shiite
- 6% were Armenian

Between years 2000 and 2009, we notice a decrease of 1% of the Armenian voters. Shiite rate is still the same while the Sunni voters’ rate increased of 3%.

This variation in the voters’ rates could be explained as follows: on one hand, the Armenian communities’ birth is lesser than that of the Muslim community. On the other hand, this can be explained by the phenomenon of transfer citizenship of Sunni to Beirut civil registers and to counteract the Shiite presence in the neighborhood.
2.3. THE SHIITE AND SUNNITE COMPETITIVENESS ON TERRITORIAL APPROPRIATION

The demographic development of both Shiite and Sunni Muslim groups shows a remarkable increase in both population groups within the neighborhood.

Sunnis settled in Zokak el Blat because the neighborhood was their birthplace. As for the Shiites, they moved there because they were in search of employment or for security reasons or to rejoin family members who preceded them to the neighborhood (Orient Institute Book).

The Kurds were unable to improve their economic conditions while some Shiites were able to do so through the repatriation of capital from Gulf countries and Africa and the availability of education. Therefore, some Shiite groups invested in land and real estate within the district. Thus, most buildings in the eastern part are the property of the Shiites. Nevertheless, Other Shiites groups suffer from poverty.

The Shiite presence in Zokak el Blat was consolidated by the construction of a hussayniya on Rue Boutros Boustany. The Sunnis considered this location as a visible evidence of the desire of the Shiites to develop space control in order to become a majority and take over the space. (Orient Institute Book) They believe that this strengthens Hezbollah urban policy and allows them to control the space and keep an eye on the city center.

The conflict between Sunni and Shiite groups reveals a lack of integration of the Shiite population. Sunni groups consider that the expansion of the Shiite presence in the neighborhood through religious practices, lifestyle, etc. urges citizens to leave the Sunni neighborhood of Zokak el Blat.

2.4. WORSHIP PLACES

Zokak el Blat’s religious communities’ presence was supported by the building of worship places. The district worship places are listed below:

- Zokak el Blat Mosque (1860);
- Basta el Tahta Mosque (1865 south east);
- Moussaytbeh Mosque (south);
- Kantari Mosque (1904);
- Shiite Hussayniya (1982);
- Kantari St-Elias Church (1850 north west);
- Evangelical Church (1869);
- Annunciation Church;
- Patriarchate (1865);
- Orthodox Church on the hill of the Sérail, that no longer exists.

Map 54: Worship Places
2.5. CULTURAL FUNCTION

The district of Zokak el Blat is home to the Arab cultural renaissance. This renaissance was launched by Lebanese professionals, journalists and politicians. In fact, Zokak el Blat played a key role in the development of the reformists Arab thoughts of the 19th century. Intellectual associations shared the neighborhood’s social space regardless of their religions and beliefs.

Since the 19th century, Zokak el Blat was the residence of the Syrian-Lebanese intellectuals, Arab, Ottoman and Egyptian. Through the efforts of intellectuals, Zokak el Blat enjoyed an important cultural activity in terms of press and literature.

The cultural function development was mainly due to the presence of several prominent Arab intellectuals. Furthermore, the neighborhood’s bourgeoisie lifestyle constituted a key factor that enabled people to participate in regular literary salons. The local press contributed to the coverage of this intellectual activity and the social life of the neighborhood’s families.

Intellectual residents of the neighborhood of Zokak el Blat such as, Boutros Boustan, Khalil Sarkis, Abdel Kader Kabbani, Beyhum Hussein, etc., played a role in the cultural life in Lebanon and the Arab world. They wrote textbooks, published papers and drafted the texts laying the foundations of modern political thought and social reform.

2.5.1. Academic Institutions

During the nineteenth century, Zokak el Blat’s urban development was intimately linked to the growth in the number of schools and students that allowed the dissemination of literary thoughts.

The most important missionary institution in Zokak el Blat was “The Syrian Protestant College” that became later on the American University of Beirut. In the 1820s, this college was located in Zokak el Blat at the Sérail Hill and then moved to Ras Beirut in 1870. The protestant missionaries played an essential role in the development of the intellectual and cultural functions of the district.

In 1863, Boutros Boustany founded the National School or “Al-Madrasa Al-Wataniyya”. This institution was a preparatory school for the Syrian Protestant College and was known for its tolerance, diversity and quality of education. Boustany had recruited teachers with long experience who shared the same principles of tolerance and rejection of discrimination. Most teachers lived in Zokak el Blat and its surroundings, while the students were from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Istanbul, Greece and Lebanon. Some students later became teachers, publishers, journalists and councilors.

A few years later, Muslim religious academics and activists, known as “Ullamas”, founded the Society of Arts. In opposition to the Syrian Scientific Society, the new “Society of Arts” focused on arts and knowledge. The association interests’ focused mainly on media and charity (Makassed Association) while the funding for this association was provided by Muslim notables.

Nowadays, Zokak el Blat hosts a large number of academic and cultural institutions: Makassed, Global University, “Institut Supérieur des Etudes Islamique”, Orient Institute, Annunciation School, Greek Catholic Patriarchal School, City International School, Hariri High School, Al-Manieh School, St-Joseph de l’Apparition School, Lebanese Universal College, Lycée AbdelKader, etc.

To assess the educational system prevailing in Zokak el Blat, we had recourse to two sources of information: the Ministry of Education and our own survey.

The Ministry of Education Figures

The ministry of Education provided us with information on some of the existing academic institutions, regarding the number of students, the number of teachers, the tuition fees and the year of foundation.

### Table 4: Information on Zokak el Blat’s Academic Institutions – 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Institution</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Tuition Fees</th>
<th>Foundation Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dar Al-Hanan</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LBP 1,900,000.00</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Lebanon</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>LBP 1,900,000.00</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut Arab College</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>LBP 2,193,000.00</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek-Catholic Patriarchal School</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>LBP 3,245,000.00</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City International School</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>LBP 7,774,000.00</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St-Joseph de l’Apparition</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>LBP 2,775,365.00</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hariri High School</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>LBP 5,790,000.00</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Education, 2011

19 Islam religion official experts
The figures delivered by the ministry of Education do not provide us with information on students’ origins and religion. However, we can deduce from the tuition fees the class their students come from.

According to the Ministry of Education figures, Hariri High School is the most important school in students and teachers number despite the fact that the tuition fees reach 5,790,000 Lebanese Pounds. City International School is the most expensive institution while Dar el-Hanan and Green Lebanon are the less expensive ones and have the least number of students and teachers. Therefore, there is no correlation between the tuition fees and the number of students and this could be explained by the fact that parents seek good education level for their children.

**MAJAL Survey**

Our survey covered 4 schools in Zokak el Blat: Soeurs de St-Joseph de l’Apparition, Lycée Abdel Kader, Greek Catholic Patriarchal School and City International School. The questionnaire asked about the students’ place of residence, the type of school, the class that students come from, the previous function of the building currently hosting the school.

### Table 5 : Information on Academic Institutions -2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Institution</th>
<th>Students Origin</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Students’ Class</th>
<th>Previous Function of the Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St-Joseph de l’Apparition</td>
<td>Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Middle-Income</td>
<td>Demolished Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lycée Abdel Kader/Mission Laïque Française</td>
<td>Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Middle-Income and High Income</td>
<td>Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic Patriarchal School</td>
<td>Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Low-Income and Middle Income</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City International School</td>
<td>Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Middle-Income and High Income</td>
<td>Lycée Nichan Paladjian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MAJAL School Survey*

**Students’ Origin**

All the schools reviewed attract students from Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods. St-Joseph attracts students from Beirut in general, Southern Suburbs and Choueifat. Lycée Abdel Kader students come from Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods: 45% of the students are alumni’s children and they have mostly Shiites, Sunni Druze and a Christian minority. Greek Catholic Patriarchal school students are from Zokak el Blat and other neighborhoods mainly Tarik el Jdideh and Aramoun while the vast majority of City International School students is from Ras Beirut; 15% of their students are Christian.

**Type of School**

All the reviewed schools are private.

**Students Class**

St-Joseph students belong to middle income class while Lycée Abdel Kader’s students come from middle and high class background. The Greek Catholic Patriarchal School targets the low and middle income society while the City International School is reserved for middle to high income class.

**Previous Function of the building**

St-Joseph school was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century. The building was previously a palace belonging to Jeday Family; Lycée Abdel Kader was the residence of a French physician from 1885 to 1926. In 1986, the Hariri Foundation bought the property that continued to be ran by the French. Finally, the City International School was the French admiralty headquarters till 1946, then, it was turned into the Nichan Paladjian High School before becoming, in 2003, the City International School.

### 3. THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The focal points to address this dimension are based on identifying the economic attractiveness of the neighborhood. According to the exhaustive survey conducted in 2011, Zokak el Blat is a small economic market characterized by the presence of micro and small enterprises.

SOLIDERE and the Patriarchate areas have different economic dynamics: SOLIDERE is characterized by the presence of administrative, diplomatic and media activities, while the Patriarchate area is a small economic market characterized by the presence of micro and small local enterprises.
A priori, the choice was to divide the study area into two sectors: SOLIDERE and the Patriarchate. However, the field study identified within the Patriarchate’s urban fabric four areas: the heart where the genesis of the district took place, the school area, Salim Salam and the Shiite areas.

The Patriarchate area’s subdivision is based on a simple logic assuming a functioning coherence. The division serves only as a starting point for reading and understanding the urban context and may be modified in the recommendations process.

This section begins with a comparison between the north (SOLIDERE Area) and the south (Patriarchate Area) to later focus on the Patriarchate area.

### 3.1. ECONOMIC UNITS OCCUPATION

#### 3.1.1 Occupation Status

527 economic units were surveyed in Zokak el Blat. They are spatially distributed as follows: 486 units in the Patriarchate Area and 41 in SOLIDERE.

418 were occupied while 109 were vacant.

**Patriarchate area**

78.40% of the economic units are occupied while 21.60% are vacant.

63.52% of the occupied economic activities are located along Salim Salam Avenue and in the Shiite district located to the west of the same avenue.

60% of the vacant units are located in the Shiite district.

**SOLIDERE AREA**

90.24% of the economic units are occupied while 9.76% are vacant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupied</th>
<th>SOLIDERE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011

![Figure 17: Economic Units occupation Status](image-url)
3.1.2. Legal Status

The 418 economic units’ legal status is divided as follows: 100 owned, 281 rented; 5 Wakf; 1 squatted and 31 did not provide us with a clear answer.

Patriarchate Area

24.67% of the occupied units are owned by the private sector while 68.24% are rented out.

SOLIDERE Area

16.21% of the occupied units are the ownership of the private sector while 56.76% of them are rented out.

For more accuracy on the legal status, we highlighted the property and the rent type.

---

Footnote: 20 Property belonging to religious community

Table 7: Economic Units Legal Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Wakf</th>
<th>Squat</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey

Figure 18: Economic units Legal Status
### 3.1.3. Property Type

The 100 owned economic units property type is divided as follows:

- **25 co-ownership properties and 75 individual properties.**

**Patriarchate Area**

77.66% of the owned economic units are individual properties while 22.34% are co-ownership properties. The existence of co-ownership properties in this area could be explained by the existence of several heirs on the same plot.

**SOLIDERE Area**

66.66% of the owned economic units are co-ownership properties while 33.34% are individual properties.

### Table 8: Economic Units Property Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Co-Ownership</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey*

### Figure 19: Economic Units Property Type
3.1.4. Rent Type

The 281 rented out economic units rent type is divided as follows:

114 old law\(^1\) and 167 New Law\(^2\)

**Patriarchate Area**

40% of the rented economic units are leased according the old rental law while 60% of them are leased according to the new rental law.

**SOLIDERE Area**

33.33% of the rented economic united are leased according to the old rental law while 66.67% of them are leased according to the new rental law.

---

\(^1\) For units rented out before 1992
\(^2\) For units rented out after 1992
3.2. Economic Units Categories of Activities

3.2.1. Economic Units Functions

Zokak el Blat’s economic market is characterized by a predominant commercial function:

303 Commercial Units, 43 industrial units, 54 services units, 3 administrative units and 15 did not provide us with clear information about their activities.

Patriarchate Area

74.80% of the economic units are commercial; the services occupy the second position with 11.54% while the industry constitutes 10.24% of the units.

SOLIDERE Area

48.65% of the economic units are commercial; the services occupy the second position with 27.03% while the industry constitutes 10.82% of the units.

Table 10: Economic Units Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Administrative</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey
Map 59: Economic Units Functions
3.2.2. Categories of Economic Activities

Table 11: Categories of Economic Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Patriarchate</th>
<th>SOLIDERE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft Shops</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petroleum Station</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Materials</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry &amp; Metal Works</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Drink</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embassy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookshop</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing &amp; Shoes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and Editing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agencies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles repairing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Institute</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking and Exchange</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011

More than 20 categories of activities were identified in Zokak el Blat’s district. The most important activities are those that serve directly local consumers. The main economic activities are:

84 Food and Beverage, 62 clothing and shoes, 46 entertainment, 41 Restaurants, 23 vehicles repairing, 23 handicraft and antique shops.

Patriarchate Area

We noticed in this area the predominance of proximity activities such as: Food and Beverage (21.52%), Clothing and Shoes (16.01%), small restaurants and snacks (9.97%), vehicles repairing (6.03%) and Beauty institutes (4.99%). Handicraft and antique shops constitute 6.03% of the economic market; Those shops are mainly located on the district’s fringes along Salim Salam avenue.

SOLIDERE Area

This area is characterized by the presence of large scale businesses that would attract consumers from outside the area: Entertainment (21.62%), Embassies (16.21%), travel agencies (13.51%), etc.
3.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

3.3.1. Economic Units Surface

When looking at the economic units surface table, we notice the predominance of businesses with an area <20 m².

In fact, 195 of the economic units have a surface <20m², 117 units have a surface comprised between 20m² and 50m² while only 90 units have an area >50m².

However, this situation cannot be generalized in both areas of the district.

**Patriarchate Area**

50.91% of the businesses have an area that is inferior to 20m², 29.92% have an area that is comprised between 20m² and 50m² and 15.48% units have a surface that is superior to 50m².

**SOLIDERE Area**

Unlike the Patriarchate area, 83.78% of the economic units have a surface that is above 50m² while 8.10% have an area that is comprised between 20m² and 50m². Finally, 2.7% have a surface that is inferior to 20 m².
3.3.2. Economic Units State

The economic unit status varies between Good, Medium, Bad and Degraded. Among 418 economic units, we could identify the following:

The state of 21 economic units could not be defined because those businesses were closed when we conducted the survey. 111 units were in a good state, 159 in a medium state, 95 in bad state and 32 in a degraded state.

This situation does not prevail all over Zokak el Blat it differs between the Patriarchate area and SOLIDERE area.

Patriarchate Area

20.47% of the economic units are in a good state, 40.68% are of medium conditions, and 24.93% are in bad state while 10.06% are in a degraded state. Most of the degraded units are located within the Shiite area while most of the units in bad conditions are located on the western side of Salim Salam avenue.

SOLIDERE Area

89.19% of the economic units are in good conditions while 10.81% of the economic units are in a medium state.
3.4. LABOR MARKET

According to the survey conducted in 2011, Zokak el Blat’s labor market offers approximately 331 jobs spread over 325 economic units. This section provides an overview about the labor market structure: The number of employees, the size of businesses, the labor force gender distribution, confessional distribution, education level, place of residence and place of birth.

3.4.1. Employment Rate

418 economic units offer 331 jobs unevenly distributed along Zokak el Blat’s district.

**Patriarchate Area**

316 employees work in 381 economic units. This indicates that the average number of employees per unit is 1.20.

**SOLIDERE Area**

The labor force survey results in SOLIDERE area are not accurate because most of the businesses were reluctant to offer information about the businesses’ sizes and employment rate.

Therefore, we will not interpret the survey results for SOLIDERE’s labor market.

3.4.2. Size of Businesses

As previously said, most of the economic units are small businesses. Among 418 economic units 248 employ one person, 53 employ two persons, 13 employ 3 persons, etc.

**Patriarchate Area**

62.20% of the businesses employ one person, 13.38% provide work for two, and 3.15% have 3 employees.

This confirms that the Patriarchate area’s economic market is a small one composed of micro and small businesses.

---

**Table 14: Employment Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Nb of Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011

**Table 15: Size of Businesses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011
3.4.3. Labor force Gender and Age Distribution

Zokak el Blat’s economic market ensures employment for 331 persons. Jobs are unevenly distributed among males and females: 276 males and 55 females.

The labor force age range varies between 16 and 80 years.

The average age for the whole Zokak el Blat labor force is of 40.38 years.

The average age for female labor force is 34.18 while the average age for male labor force is 41.62 years.

Patriarchate Area

In the Patriarchate area, 316 persons are employed. Jobs are distributed among males and females as follows: 265 males and 51 females.

The average age for the Patriarchate labor force is 40.24 years.

The average age for female labor force is 33.39 years and the average age for male labor force is 41.56 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16: Labor Force Gender and Age Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patriarchate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey

Figure 28: Labor Force Gender and Age Distribution
3.4.5. Labor Force Confessional Distribution

Zokak el Blat’s labor force confessional distribution is spread as follows:

285 Muslims, 14 Christians, 2 Druzes and 30 persons refused to give us information about their confession.

Patriarchate Area

87.65% of the labor force is Muslim, 2.22% are Christian and 0.63% is Druze. It is worth noting that 9.50% of the surveyed employees refused to give us information about their confession.

3.4.6. Labor force Education Level

Table 18: Labor force Education Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illiterate</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The labor force education level could determine the labor force skills. Among 331 employees 4 are illiterate, 68 have a primary education, 71 reached the intermediate education level, 55 went till the secondary level and 11 chose technical education while 52 reached the university education level.

Patriarchate Area

1.27% is illiterate, 20.57% went to primary school, 22.47% stopped their education at the intermediate level, 16.46% achieved their secondary level and 3.16% chose technical education while 14.24% reached the university education level. 21.84% of the surveyed employees refused to provide us with their education level.

3.4.7. Labor Force Place of Residence

Table 19: Labor Force Place of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aramoun</th>
<th>Beirut</th>
<th>Southern Suburb</th>
<th>Mount Lebanon</th>
<th>Zokak el Blat</th>
<th>Jbeil</th>
<th>Saida</th>
<th>Bourj Hammoud</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011
Zokak el Blat’s labor market attracts in addition to local labor force residing in the area, a workforce living outside the district.

148 persons live in Zokak el Blat while the rest are distributed as follows:

11 in Aramoun, 100 in Beirut, 38 in Southern suburb, 3 in Mount Lebanon, 3 in Jbeil, 1 in Bourj Hammoud and one in Saida.

**Patriarchate area**

The Patriarchate area’s workforce is distributed as follows:

3.16% in Aramoun, 28.48 in Beirut, 12.03% in Southern suburb, 0.95% in Mount Lebanon, 46.84% in Zokak el Blat, 0.95% in Jbeil, 0.32% in Saida and Bourj Hammoud and 6.96% of the interviewed labor force did not provide us with their residence address.

3.4.8. Labor Force Place of Birth

**Table 20: Labor Force Place of Birth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southern Suburb</th>
<th>Beirut Lebanon</th>
<th>North Lebanon</th>
<th>Mount Lebanon</th>
<th>South Lebanon</th>
<th>Armenia</th>
<th>Bekaa</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Zokak el Blat</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011
Zokak el Blat’s labor market attracts in addition to labor force whose place of Birth is Zokak el Blat, a workforce coming from outside the district.

28 persons are from Zokak el Blat while the rest are distributed as follows:

3 from Beirut’s Southern suburb, 82 from Beirut, 20 from North Lebanon, 8 from Mount Lebanon, 151 from South Lebanon, one from Armenia, 4 from the Bekaa and seven from Syria.

**Patriarchate area**

The Patriarchate area’s workforce place of Birth is distributed as follows:

1.58% from Mount Lebanon, 47.15% from Beirut’s Southern suburb, 23.10% from Beirut, 6.01% from North Lebanon, 0.95% from Mount Lebanon, 44.62% from South Lebanon, 0.32% from Armenia, 2.53% from Saida, 0.63% from the Bekaa, 1.27% from Syria and 0.63% from Kurdistan; 8.86% from Zokak el Blat and 8.54% refused to provide us with information on their place of Birth.

### 3.5. ZOKAK EL BLAT’S MARKET CUSTOMERS

As we have already mentioned, Zokak el Blat’s economic market is small. This section highlights the price categories and the customers’ origin.

#### 3.5.1. Customers’ Origin

Zokak el Blat’s economic market attracts mainly local customers coming from Zokak el Blat. The district Customers’ origin is distributed as follows:

153 from Zokak el Blat’s area only, 165 from Zokak el Blat and outside and 10 from outside Zokak el Blat. 90 units refused to give us information on their customers’ origin.

**Patriarchate Area**

The Patriarchate area customers’ origin is distributed as follows:

40.16% from Zokak el Blat only, 38.58% from Zokak el Blat and outside, 2.62% from outside Zokak el Blat and 18.64% refused to provide us with information on their customers’ origin.
3.5.2. Price categories

Zokak el Blat’s economic market targets mainly low and middle income customers. Price categories are distributed as follows:

93 are low, 227 are medium, 33 are high and 65 economic activities did not provide us with any idea about their price categories.

Patriarchate Area

The patriarchate price categories are distributed as follows:

24.14% are low, 58.52% are medium, 4.98% are high and 12.36 did not give us any idea about their price categories.

Table 22: Price Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarche</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAJAL Economic Units Survey, 2011

Figure 34: Price Categories
Map 63: Economic Units Price categories
CHAPTER 4: SYNTHESIS

Based on the surveys’ results interpretation, the spatial analysis and the hypotheses formulated in the methodological approach, the present chapter represents the findings interpretation, synthesis, recommendations and Conclusion for Zokak el Blat.

1. GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification is a term meaning the reoccupation of the town centers by the upper classes (Brunet, 1993). We also refer to gentrification as a consequence of the rehabilitation of older neighborhoods near downtown. (Theys & Emelianoff, 2001). Moreover, the term gentrification is applicable to urban spaces that have been abandoned for a certain period of time but, thanks to their geographical location and to their architectural heritage, found a certain value. These spaces become accessible only for wealthy households.

Gentrification is one of the key concepts used to interpret and explain urban (re)development in the late 20th and early 21st century, commonly referred to as the ‘neoliberal era’. In the context of increasing globalization, a redefinition of the urban scale has occurred, a ‘new urbanism’ (Smith, 2002), resulting in a generalization of gentrification as urban policy in the United States and Europe, and enormous urban growth in the Global South. The city of Beirut, situated at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, has experienced its own variant of this new urbanism, that was manifested in rapid changes in the built environment, an uncontrolled urban sprawl and a fast-paced demolition of low- and middle-income low-rise buildings to be replaced with (luxury) high-rises (see also Ross and Jamil, forthcoming).

1.1. GENTRIFICATION IN BEIRUT

Where in the literature most often renovation is mentioned as an aspect of gentrification, in Beirut the process is nearly—if not completely—new built (see also Ross and Jamil, forthcoming). It usually starts with the demolition of low-rise buildings, whether they have been abandoned, or are inhabited by squatters, owners and tenants alike. Older buildings are simply not profitable when a 20-story tower can replace them, even if they are in good shape. The rent-gap is enormous (Smith, 1987). Moreover, these buildings have amenities corresponding to the demands or taste of the new class (Ross and Jamil) including health clubs, drivers’ rooms and landscaped gardening. Developers hail from Lebanon and the Gulf region mostly and the majority of capital invested is of global origin, an indicator of gentrification (see also Smith, 2002).

Demand for new property in Beirut is in general generated by an upper-class consisting of Gulf residents and Lebanese expatriates, and to a lesser extent by highly-skilled local professionals (Krijnen, 2010). They buy their properties using excess oil liquidity and capital made while working abroad (mostly in West Africa and the Gulf Region).

Moreover, public-private partnerships as described by Smith (2002) are not occurring on a large scale; high-rises are built mostly—if not all—as private developments. Public subsidies to real estate developers are not taking the usual forms but do exist in a different way: the construction code has been adapted in several ways to facilitate real estate developments. It has to be noted, however, that public actors themselves have a vested interest in gentrification: they often own land. Public and private spheres are not easily separable in Lebanon (Krijnen and Fawaz, 2010; Krijnen, 2010).

Gentrification in Beirut is influenced by the political situation of the country. In stable times, real estate prices soar, while in periods of conflict housing becomes more affordable, although real estate development continues as many developers count on future stable times to make their projects profitable (Ross and Jamil, forthcoming).

Smith (2002) signals an outward diffusion of gentrification, where the process spreads to areas outside the urban center. In Beirut, areas outside the city center are becoming more expensive, especially the pericentral areas that are the focus of our study. It has to be noted that it is difficult to speak of a gentrified Downtown: the city center has not merely been gentrified; it has been taken over completely by private interests.

Another observation by Smith (2002) is the sectored generalization of gentrification: it spreads from housing to the spheres of recreation, production and consumption. In Beirut, this trend is visible up to a certain level: many leisure activities have become high-income directed and more exclusive: shopping malls, restaurants and hypermarkets.

To sum it up, gentrification involves a social, physical and economic change that manifests itself differently among different contexts. In every context, these changes need to be explained: where does it take place, where does it not take place, why in those areas, who is involved, and when does it happen, when does it not happen (Hamnett, 1991)?

MAIJAL proposes to use the following definition, adapted to research in Beirut but still representing the core ideas behind the concept:

Gentrification is a process during which high-income dwellers move into low-income neighborhoods, economically and physically displacing the original residents and economic activities. In Beirut, real estate developers move in first, acquiring and demolishing low-rise, low-income properties and replacing them with luxury residential skyscrapers, thus economically and physically displacing low and middle-income residents. Moreover, an increase in prices surrounding new developments lead to physical and exclusionary displacement as well. Government agents support these developments by not acting or by enacting legislation in favor of high-rise development.
1.1.1. Gentrification in Zokak el Blat

From a land perspective, Zokak el Blat’s space is changing continuously. The district’s proximity to Beirut Central district prompts many developers and investors to buying the neighborhood houses in order to replace them with high rise buildings. These new development projects target new customers with high purchasing level. The presence of aging and poorly maintained houses that are occupied by large poor families attest the continuous precariousness and insecurity in the neighborhood. The poor evicted population seeking homeownership does not have the means to invest in the pericentral areas and is forced to leave Beirut’s agglomeration to exurban areas where prices are more affordable. This phenomenon is at the origin of a socio-spatial segmentation, favoring a concentration of the wealthiest people in the neighborhood.

The district’s degraded appeal favors a true neighborhood speculation from developers. This gentrification process occurs particularly at the Northern neighborhood fringe along Fouad Chehab Avenue.

In parallel to this gentrification process, poor residents continue to live in the neighborhood. However, real estate prices in the neighborhood do not correspond at all to the purchasing disadvantaged residents of the neighborhood. In addition, the Northern fringe saturation would favor the gentrification process spread to other parts of the neighborhood. However, some areas of the district would resist this process. Would this threaten the middle-class socio-professional categories often forced, for financial reasons, to migrate to suburbs? Local and central authorities do not have the means and a clear policy to maintain the social mix.

2. URBAN HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The studies tackling the conservation of built heritage in Beirut have almost failed to protect heritage buildings. Project developers rather prefer demolishing old buildings and houses than preserving and renovating them in order to benefit from the additional exploitation ratio and optimize their return on investment. However, despite the weak legal and regulatory framework and state measures to preserve the heritage, we noticed in Zokak el Blat the presence of an old fabric that survived both demolition and renovation. This section highlights the factors that preserved some buildings from demolition.

2.1. PROPERTY CO-OWNERSHIP

In Zokak el Blat, old buildings are jointly the property of multi-owners. The law divides a property into 2,400 shares that are distributed among successors. These regulations may create a very complex situation after two, three or four generations when the house becomes the property of a dozen or a hundred people. This factor can have a double effect on historic buildings. On one hand, any decision about the future use of the property requires the approval of each joint owner. Moreover, the high real estate value prevents most of the time a co-owner from buying the rest of the shares which often generates conflicts among heirs. On another hand, successors seek to get rid of the co-ownership by selling it to anyone who can afford the market price without caring about its fate.

2.2. OBsolescence of the Old Rent Law

The former Lebanese rent law, aiming at ensuring social stability through protecting tenants, dates from the Second World War. In this law, owners can terminate the contract for two causes: the personal use of the residential unit or its demolition. In both cases, the owner is assumed to compensate the tenant with an amount between 30% and 50% of the estimated value of the real estate property. If tenants do not agree with the amount offered in compensation, they can initiate legal action. If the owner manages to empty the building, he generally opts for demolition because it allows him to benefit from the differential exploitation ratios and therefore is more efficient economically than the renovation.

Many economic and residential units in Zokak el Blat are rented out according to the old rental law. Since a great number of owners cannot afford tenants’ compensations, many old buildings are still temporarily resisting demolition while awaiting a wealthy real estate developer to buy the property and compensate both the tenants and the owner.

2.3. Change in the Heritage Building Function

Change in the historical buildings’ function may promote their rehabilitation and their physical conservation. However, those measures would contribute to the social fabric transformation. Restored buildings can host public institutions, non-governmental organizations, research centers, museums, schools, etc. Moreover, renovated building can have a commercial use. Thus, some old houses could be transformed into restaurants or motels or hotels or international enterprises. Although such measures were taken in other pericentral districts such as Gemmayzeh, they were source of nuisances for local residents. Applying such measures in Zokak el Blat should respect the district’s unique identity and particularities.

3. Fragmentation

A search for literature on urban fragmentation yielded many articles on gated communities, an aspect of urban fragmentation. Regional differences abound, but most researchers contend that a gated community is a residential gated development, whether it is an apartment block or a neighborhood within a city including formerly public streets (Low, 2007).

Gated communities are but one aspect of urban fragmentation, as Coy (2006) argues. Studying Latin American cities, he notices that wealthy residents live their daily lives in a network of interconnected fragments of the city, including shopping malls, entertainment areas and business districts. In this sense, urban fragmentation is a process of increasing socio-spatial differentiation. Islands of wealth pop-up in an ocean of poverty, excluding poor citizens, while certain other informal areas become ‘no-go’ for wealthier residents. Urban fragmentation hence works both ways: it creates separate spaces for rich and poor alike.
The manifestations of urban fragmentation can be found in Beirut. However, in addition to socio-spatial fragments, the city is divided along political-sectarian lines. Hence, while many new residential projects in Zokak el-Blat resemble gated communities (they are guarded, gated and self-contained, often having their own water and electricity supply), they are planted in the middle of an urban fabric that is territorially politicized.

3.1. SIGNIFICANCE

Gated communities limit public accessibility, a socio-cultural quality of urban life (Coy, 2006). Moreover, municipalities are required to deal with increasing demands for infrastructure and services by the residents of the new luxury developments. This represents a continuing strain on natural resources as well, as noted by Gandy (2008) for the case of Mumbai where wealthy apartment blocks install illegal pumps to get extra water, or have their own source and underground tanks, as is the case in Beirut, leading the irreversible saline incursion in coastal areas.

However, and most importantly in the context of Beirut, it is the risk of civil conflict that comes with its increasing economic, social and political fragmentation. As contact between different groups of people diminishes and the number of people who feel left out increases, the recurrence of civil strife is a real risk.

3.2. EXPLANATION AND CAUSES IN ZOKAK EL BLAT

While Beirut has arguably always been a fragmented city, the sheer scale of urban change and fragmentation that we are witnessing today is new. Urban elites have been increasingly exposed to a globalized lifestyle, whether via media in Lebanon or lifestyles witnessed while working abroad. We hypothesize that globalization together with insecurity about Lebanon’s political future leads to increasing urban fragmentation in the city.

Urban fragmentation is very obvious in Zokak el Blat. It is manifested through physical segmentation, political division and socioeconomic disparities.

3.2.1. Zokak el Blat’s Spatial Division

Zokak el Blat’s space is physically fragmented by large infrastructures: Fouad Chehab Avenue and Salim Salam Avenue. They constitute barriers preventing the connection between the district’s segments. Fouad Chehab Avenue reinforces the separation between the Northern (SOLIDERE) and the Southern parts (Patriarchate), while Salim Salam Avenue isolates the Eastern part of the Patriarchate area from the Western part.

The spatial division is enhanced by the chaotic urban development, heritage demolition and the proliferation of high rise buildings that has a negative impact on the remaining traditional fabric. In addition, the spatial division creates, within the same area, discontinuous fragments with heterogeneous typo-morphology and lost identity. The anarchy in the urban development produces a big amount of residual plots and dead ends.

3.2.2. Zokak el Blat’s Political Division

Political division is reflected through territory appropriation competition between the different political parties. Political parties are fighting to take over the territory: flags, banners, leaders’ posters, religious events, etc. are invading Zokak el Blat. This state reinforces social division between the different religious communities and prevents communication between social groups. The political division affects negatively the neighborhood management and strengthens territorial fragmentation.

The opposition of private urbanism to public urbanism and the lack of coordination between them promote fragmentation.

3.2.3. Zokak el Blat’s Social Division

Socioeconomic disparities reinforce the contrasts within the district. In addition, the gap is not only huge between the North and the South but also within the Patriarchate sector itself. Indeed, the population living on the fringes, especially on large road infrastructure, belongs to the upper middle class and upper class, while the middle and the poor class share the heart of the neighborhood. The large rent gap and high profit-margin that can be obtained by demolishing older buildings on large lots or merging lots accounts for the proliferation of high rises in ancient urban fabric. Public authorities are too weak to intervene, and alliances between politicians and real estate developers prevent any attempts of reform.

It is worth noting that the lack of public spaces within the district reinforces the social fragmentation since it prevents contact between different social groups.

The political segmentation combined with the social division and spatial fragmentation increases the precariousness within the district and threatens the social cohesion.
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Zokak el Blat’s district is the projection of a territory of contrasts and antagonisms. It is characterized by a dislocated urban space. The current district is composed of two main territories: the first one suffering from the lack of planning while the second one was subject to a particular reconstruction plan led by the private company SOLIDERE but not “recognized” by its inhabitants. Disparities are not only noticeable between the North and the South of the district but within the same space of the Patriarchate sector.

In this regard, spatial planning in Zokak el Blat faces considerable challenges such as territory fragmentation, social and political divide, heritage destruction, loss of identity, the limits of traditional planning practices that mainly address the design and spatial forms and structures, lack of cooperation between various stakeholders, deficiency at the institutional level, etc. Overcoming these constraints and difficulties require an integrated approach of territory management. The development strategy of the area should develop synergies with the city of Beirut and all its pericentral areas. Meet residents and users needs does not mean isolating Zokak el Blat from the rest of the territory. Thus, the project must fit into an overall plan for urban development and avoid making from the neighborhood an element of spatial and social segregation.

Our recommendations are oriented toward an integrated development strategy takes into account Zokak el Blat territory priorities and constraints. These recommendations identify tools and actions to revitalize and reconquer the urban space, to recover its role of satellite district, to benefit from its proximity to Beirut downtown, to ensure the integration of all social groups to community system and therefore to revitalize Zokak el Blat district.

4.1. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The social development strategy should meet the community needs. It is based on solidarity, equity, participation, fighting against social exclusion, improving the citizens living conditions, etc. Achieving these targets is possible through:

Introduction of a participatory approach and dialogue enhancement

Residents’ active participation is essential for Zokak el Blat the development process. It indeed encourages that people become real players in the local scene.

Thus, the introduction of participatory approach involves and mobilizes all the stakeholders, promotes equity, the integration of all groups, and the citizenship concept while avoiding social exclusion and a two speed growth within the same district. The existence of a multiplicity of actors promotes conflicts. It is urgent to enhance territorial dialogue between social groups in order to ensure the participation, the involvement and the project appropriation by various stakeholders.

Reinforcement of the district cultural function

The social development strategy should seek the enhancement of the cultural function of district Zokak el Blat improves the lives of people and allows the opening up of the district. The cultural function development target is reached through improving the education systems, organizing cultural events, highlighting on the figures that marked the cultural history of Zokak el Blat. Reinforcing the cultural identity promotes Zokak el Blat revitalization and gives the neighborhood a vocation that distinguishes it from other pericentral districts.

4.2. ECONOMIC LEVEL

The economic development strategy should revitalize the economic sector while capitalizing on the district’s assets to create new local jobs and enhance the district’s competitive advantages. The economic development policy should target the neighborhood poor and middle classes while promoting small and medium enterprises. Therefore, this strategy should integrate vulnerable and marginalized social groups, contribute to poverty eradication and promote social equity.

The district patrimonial character combined to its cultural function is Zokak el Blat main asset. Capitalizing on this asset could promote the cultural tourism within the neighborhood and make from it a destination for tourist. Promoting cultural tourism within the district is made possible through organizing guided tours retracing the district’s heritage and cultural trails and making from the district an outdoor museum for heritage. The enhancement of the cultural function can create jobs within the district and increase its attractiveness and contribute to its opening up to the rest of the city. In parallel, series of economic activities related to tourism can support the development of this new district vocation, such as, restaurants, cafés, souvenir shops, motels, bed and breakfast, etc. Moreover, economic activities, especially in Patriarchate sector, attract mainly the district’s residents. In this regard, it is essential to diversify and improve the products supply in order to increase the district attractiveness.

The success of the promotion of cultural tourism depends on the involvement Zokak el Blat various social groups’ mainly vulnerable and marginalized people such as women, disabled, etc. Furthermore, the economic development strategy should provide programs that aim at labor force building up skills.

It should be noted that planners must be careful that this new district vocation does not interfere with the identity and soul of the neighborhood. Therefore, the development of the tourist function requires vigilance. Indeed, tourism can have a negative impact on heritage and social fabric and generate conflicts that are difficult to manage. Thus, it is essential to avoid supplying products reserved for tourists without respecting customs and traditions of the inhabitants. In this regard, we must emphasize the authenticity of the environment and conserve the neighborhood initial functions as a place of residence, work, study, entertainment, etc.
4.3. URBAN PLANNING LEVEL

Zokak el Blat urban planning strategy must ensure the reinforcement of the neighborhood functions and identity. Indeed, the district Zokak el Blat benefits from an attractive location (near downtown Beirut, Connection to major roads) giving its land and real estate sector an economic value. However, the absence of an adequate legal and institutional framework creates conflict between supporters of the rehabilitation of existing buildings and property developers. In this regard, setting up an urban planning strategy for Zokak el Blat should include both the heritage conservation and the spatial planning issues.

4.3.1. Heritage Conservation

Cultural heritage conservation requires the establishment of an urban renewal policy. This policy involves improving heritage buildings conditions, public spaces and the creation of public facilities equipment. It should ensure a mix of urban functions (economic and residential) as well as a mix of different population groups.

Heritage buildings conditions improvement

The uncontrolled urban development has resulted in the emergence of important precarious areas within Zokak el Blat. Degradation of the architectural fabric as well as the proliferation of wasteland areas led to the deterioration of the urban planning and socio-economic conditions. To remedy this, the public and local authorities should develop an integrated approach of the heritage buildings conservation policy. This heritage conservation policy should set the following targets:

- Rehabilitate the existing degraded buildings while putting in place an emergency plan for the conservation of historic buildings;
- Respect the identity and the authenticity of the district in all its components;
- Create a cultural center for heritage conservation that would organize exhibitions, working sessions, animations, debates, etc.;

The rehabilitation of the existing built fabric should emphasize the neighborhood residential function and ensure the preservation of existing social fabric. The aim of such policy is to provide better housing conditions while allowing people to stay in their neighborhoods and prevent gentrification, the migration of local residents and the heritage destruction.

The renovation of existing urban fabric could generate the gentrification process. This is reflected in a soaring property prices, massive real estate transactions and the migration of poor and middle classes in favor of the wealthy class and thus in major segregation and a loss of social capital and identity. To counter this phenomenon, the structure and the comfort of housing should meet the local population needs and the urban renewal must avoid turning the neighborhood into a museum.

4.3.2. Spatial Planning

The uncontrolled and anarchic urban development in Zokak el Blat area urges concerned authorities at both, local and national levels to collaborate in order to proceed to improving the district spatial planning. This measure requires the following steps:

- Revision of the outdated master in order to reconsider the exploitation ratios according to the territory identity and vocation;
- Benefit from the district’s location in order to reconnect it with down town and the other pericentral areas;
- Accelerate the strategic planning process and establish an observation unit within the municipality of Beirut to monitor the urban development and collect and centralize all the database regarding pericentral districts;

The area of Zokak el Blat is experiencing significant deficit in public facilities equipment. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the mesh of these equipments in accordance with the following priorities:

- The creation of sporting facilities;
- The creation of cultural centers;
- The development of childcare facilities.

Public Spaces Conditions Improvement

Renovation of public spaces allows Zokak el Blat residents to reclaim public space. It protects users such as pedestrians and cyclists through the creation of public spaces, the enlargement of sidewalks or installing mechanisms to reduce vehicle speeds in residential neighborhoods and schools sector.

Strategic priorities for public space conditions improvement are:

- The re-appropriation of public spaces by residents;
- Benefit from the existence of residual plots in order to transform them into green public spaces;
- The safety in the development of recreational areas;
- The creation and maintenance of green spaces;
- The creation of spaces of conviviality all over the district and namely at the entrances;

Public Facilities Equipment Creation

The creation of public facilities equipments plays a vital role in the quality of life and the creation of social cohesion.

The creation of public facilities equipments plays a vital role in the quality of life and the creation of social cohesion.
• Embellish the district and remove all sectarian and political representations

4.4. GOVERNANCE LEVEL

The development strategy for Zokak el Blat district can never achieve its objectives without a municipal development strategy. In fact, local authority should collaborate with all concerned authorities in order to ensure the sustainability of Zokak el Blat revitalization process. The success of such project requires the following measures at the governance level:

• Improve the governance through reinforcing local authorities;
• Enhance the coordination process between SOLIDERE and the Patriarchate area in order to reduce the gap and create a synergy between both spaces;
• Improve the skills of local authorities’ staff in order to improve the urban management;
• Enhance transparency procedures, accountability to local population;
• Foster foreign partnerships with other cities in order to exchange experience and benefit from technical and financial support.

To conclude, the realization of such recommendations requires setting up a City Strategic planning that would lay the foundations of the city development strategy. The city development strategy would constitute a monitoring chart since it identifies the goals and priorities in the city. This report is a profile of the district. It cannot forecast the space development tendencies. The second report envisaged within two years would allow us to make comparisons between both observation periods and get an overview of the district’s development dynamics.
REFERENCES

ATKINSON, R. (1999). MEASURING GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT IN GREATER LONDON.


GEBHART, HANS; SACK, DOROTHEE; BODENSTEIN, RALPH; FRITZ, ANDREA; HANSEN, JENS; HILLENKAMP, BERNHARD; KOGLER, OLIVER; MOLLENHAUER, ANNE; STOLEIS, FRIEDERIKE (2005). HISTORY, SPACE AND CONFLICT IN BEIRUT – THE QUARTER OF ZOKAK EL BLAT. BEIRUTER TEXTE UND STUDIEN (BTS), 97, ORIENT INSTITUTE.


KRJNEN, MARIEKE (2010). FACILITATING REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN BEIRUT: A PECULIAR CASE OF NEOLIBERAL PUBLIC POLICY. MASTER’S THESIS, CENTER FOR ARAB AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT.


ROSS AND JAMIL (FORTHCOMING). WAITING FOR WAR (AND OTHER STRATEGIES TO STOP GENTRIFICATION): THE CASE OF RAS BEIRUT. TO BE SUBMITTED TO URBAN STUDIES.