

IMAGINATION 3

Suitable Cultural Institutions

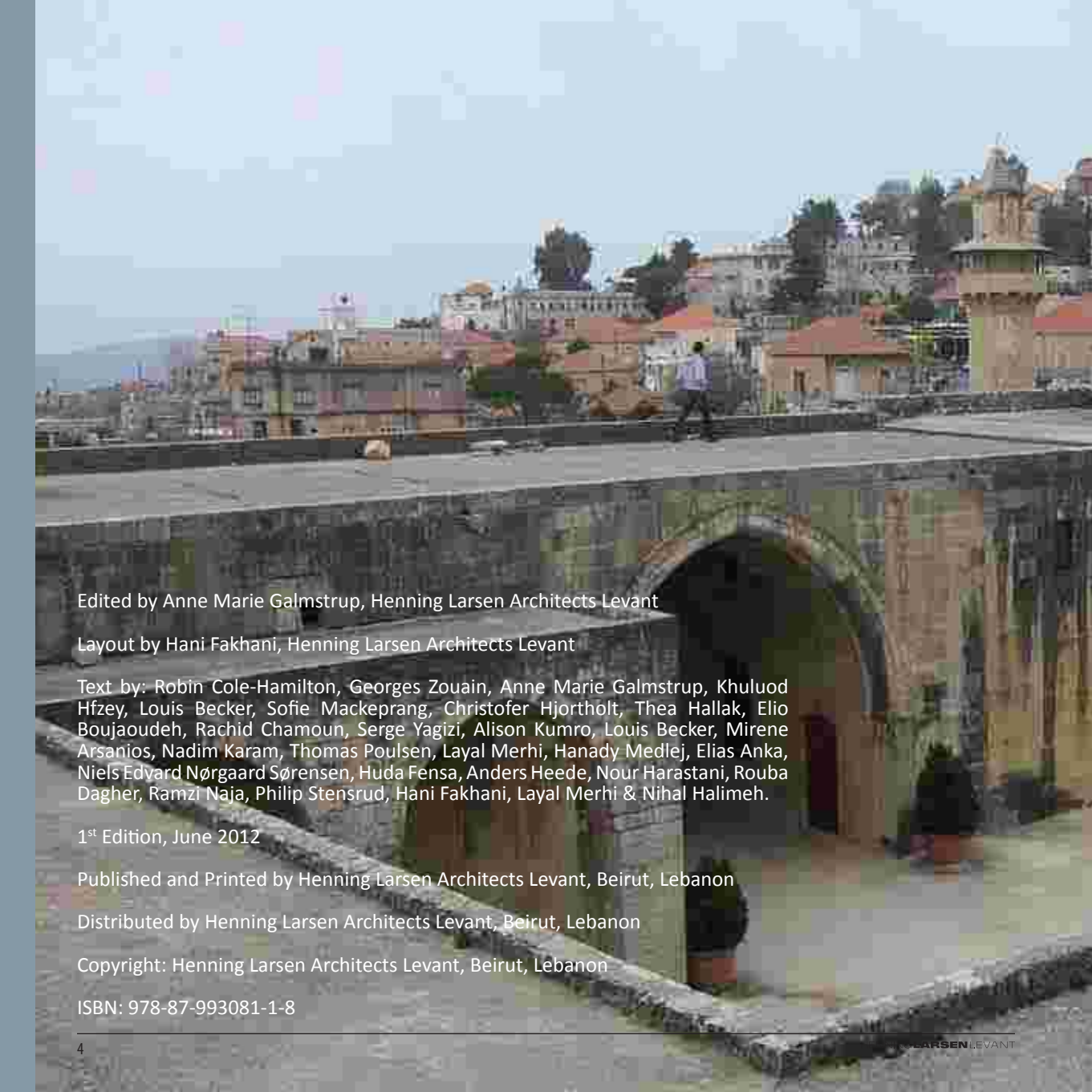
Imagine the synergy between Cultural Institutions and encouraging Civil Society.

Beirut, February 2012



IMAGINATION 3

The IMAGINATION schools are collaborations between invited schools of architecture and Henning Larsen Architects Levant. IMAGINATION 3 was a two-week workshop and symposium in Beirut, Lebanon for 35 architecture students and 8 tutors from Beirut, Damascus and Copenhagen. 60 participants were involved in the creation of the school and came from 5 different Learning Environments, 7 different Disciplines, 9 different Nationalities and even more cultures...



Edited by Anne Marie Galmstrup, Henning Larsen Architects Levant

Layout by Hani Fakhani, Henning Larsen Architects Levant

Text by: Robin Cole-Hamilton, Georges Zouain, Anne Marie Galmstrup, Khuluod Hfzey, Louis Becker, Sofie Mackeprang, Christofer Hjortholt, Thea Hallak, Elio Boujaoudeh, Rachid Chamoun, Serge Yagizi, Alison Kumro, Louis Becker, Mirene Arsanios, Nadim Karam, Thomas Poulsen, Layal Merhi, Hanady Medlej, Elias Anka, Niels Edvard Nørgaard Sørensen, Huda Fensa, Anders Heede, Nour Harastani, Rouba Dagher, Ramzi Naja, Philip Stensrud, Hani Fakhani, Layal Merhi & Nihal Halimeh.

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A photograph of a park scene. In the foreground, several people are silhouetted against a bright, overexposed background. They appear to be walking or standing on a paved path. The background shows a large, bright area, possibly a fountain or a large reflecting pool, surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The lighting is high-contrast, creating deep shadows and bright highlights.

FOREWORDS

By Robin Cole-Hamilton, Cultural Projects, London

It is very apt that this architectural symposium and workshop exploring a relationship between cultural institutions and civil society should have been held in Beirut.

This is a city of many cultures and many perspectives: one of confident, forceful modernity as well as nostalgia and memories; defined by multiple deep-rooted identities facing up to each other as much as to the world outside; both pragmatic and passionate; very much part of the Arab world yet also very European. The mirror that Beirut holds up is multi-faceted, each fragment reflecting back to the viewer a subtly different picture of a rapidly-changing whole. Like quicksilver in its resistance to simple categorisation, Beirut can be many cities at the same time.

This then formed an ideal setting for a learning process that was meant to throw up more questions than answers. What is a “cultural institution”, after all? What, indeed, do we mean by “culture”? How should we define “civil society”? And what does this then say about the responsibilities of architects shaping the built environment? The Imagination workshop challenged its students to look afresh at the world and at themselves. It created a space for them to step outside the conventions and comfort of the classroom or work experience, and to consider the meaning and purpose of what they do. In other words - to imagine.

There were no right or wrong answers, no certainties, no pass marks to be reached, just the value of having made the shared journey, having learned and having contributed. With participants coming together from three different countries, and speakers and facilitators from yet more, there was no shortage of different viewpoints. And Beirut, itself a place of deep meanings and questions, provided the perfect context and inspiration.



By Georges Zouain, GAIA-Heritage, Beirut

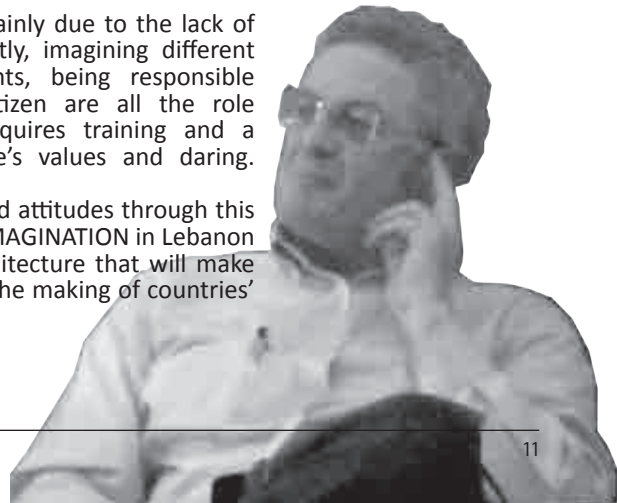
At GAIA-heritage, we have always privileged a continuous relationship between the academic world and our projects in the fields of cultural heritage, the arts and creativity. Research is a key component of the way we function and, as a small consulting firm, we perform best through innovative ideas and quality delivery – we must excel or we die. Because of this, we feel very close to the Danish way of thinking and of acting and, when Henning Larsen invited us to take part in their IMAGINATION exercise, we immediately accepted. The result has exceeded our expectations.

Architecture, the cities, and culture and creativity are intertwined in a way that is not always taught in architecture schools where students are concentrating on design projects and some structure and materials know-how. Seldom are they trained to read the city or the environment in which their future work will be inserted, to understand impact of functions or take these into consideration, to think about and plan public space. This is particularly true in our region because of lack of time and the strong demand that existed until recently for rapid architecture conception of commercial projects of all kinds.

This is now changing because of the financial crisis, but past trends take time to fade away: the example of Beirut, the destruction of its built heritage and of the quality of life that existed in its different parts, caused by excessive speculation on land, will not be stopped easily and once the decision-makers and the investors feel the pressure of the market changes, it will be too late. Beirut will suffocate and the city will cease to be what its inhabitants dreamt of. Real estate prices will at best cease growing, the return on investment in housing will go down, services and amenities (power, facilities, and parking space) will become scarce, and public services will remain below needs.

This is already visible in several parts of Beirut and is mainly due to the lack of IMAGINATION: reading the city and its spaces differently, imagining different types of uses for space and returns on investments, being responsible vis-à-vis civil society and acting as a responsible citizen are all the role of architects and urban-planners. But to imagine requires training and a change of thinking patterns; it requires changing one's values and daring.

The changes we have seen in the participants thinking and attitudes through this very short exercise has amply proven the need for more IMAGINATION in Lebanon and a more open and comprehensive curriculum in architecture that will make students more aware of their social and political roles in the making of countries' futures.



By Anne Marie Galmstrup, Henning Larsen Architects Levant, Beirut / Copenhagen

As an architect living and working in various cultures one is curious to learn the specifics of a place which naturally set your own background in perspective. It is due to a number of intense cross cultural experiences over the years that the IMAGINATION schools emerged with the wish to share these experiences with students of architecture from the Middle East and Europe.

In our profession the interest for cultural and educational projects in the Middle East has increased the last decade - possibly as a reflection of the regions young demography. So, if you believe that architecture is about providing suitable settings for people and goes beyond aesthetics, then the outset for any project should start with understanding a place and its future users.

The aim of the IMAGINATION schools is to create a neutral platform for cross cultural and cross disciplinary dialogue among students of architecture and to encourage knowledge sharing within our profession. It is a forum outside academia and practice where no one is evaluated and given the opportunity to do things together as a team. The learning philosophy is process orientated, less solution orientated, and encourage open-ended discussions and ideas which challenge our assumptions and encourage participation within our profession.

The theme for the school in Beirut was cultural institutions and their synergy with civil society. Cultural institutions are good examples of how architecture can play a role in how we engage with each other and they can have a significant influence on a city's character and the development of the specific society.

Working with Beirut's complex and privatized city structure generated diverse discussions of what a cultural institution means for a city's development, its inhabitant's social life and self-understanding. After two weeks of exploring together, maybe due to the complexity of Beirut which is overwhelming to most of us, it was interesting to see no radical ideas proposed but rather "clean up" or unifying strategies proposed? And was it the immense privatization, or a city experienced in constant movement, which made the teams work with only urban spaces as cultural institution?

I am still curious about the intangible in architecture and curiosity is maybe the best thing for me about the Imagination schools.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Entrance to St. Joseph Crypt
in Monot, Beirut where
Imagination 3 took place.





IMABISTIO





INTRODUCTION

AIM: WHAT IS IMAGINATION?

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but Imagination."

Albert Einstein.

IMAGINATION is an independent platform aiming for cross-cultural dialogue between architectural students from various cultural - and learning environments seeking to explore a present challenge in the MENA region.

The aim for IMAGINATION is developing projects together cross-culturally. The objective is to create an informal forum for students from different cultures, disciplines & learning environments who will work together, discuss their ideas and exchange their experiences concerning architecture, education and life in general.

The IMAGINATION schools are combined symposium and workshops. The aim is to explore and enhance awareness of a specific contemporary challenge in our physical surroundings. Through the work, wishes and ideas for future improvement will be materialized in the form of words, drawings and physical installations.

The school in Beirut was the third in a series of student schools. The first IMAGINATION school was held in Damascus, Syria in 2008 under the theme "Damascus Identity" and ran for two weeks with 26 students and 6 tutors from Damascus University, Syria, Berlin TU, Germany and Aalborg University, Denmark. The second IMAGINATION event was held in autumn 2009 as a three week workshop on Prototype Schools with students from Damascus University.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
The first Imagination school on
City Identity in Damascus 2008.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
The second Imagination
workshop on Prototype Schools
in Damascus 2009.



THEME: SUITABLE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

Suitable Cultural Institutions - Imagine the synergy between cultural institutions and encouraging civil society seen from the built environments point of view.

Culture can be described as shared values and patterns of behavior that characterizes different social groups and communities. Cultural institutions are elements within a society that are perceived to be important and valued among its members for their own identity. Cultural institutions are typically associated with public creative entities such as museums, theatres and music venues but it can also be historical sites, cafés, streets, festivals etc.

Seen from the built environment point of view, the physical urban planning and design of cultural institutions influences the usage as well as the immediate surroundings and a community's identity. The challenge, for the profession, is naturally protection of existing heritage and historical sites. But the challenge is also development of existing abandoned build fabric and introduction of new cultural elements to accommodate the city's demand and facilitate the growing needs in a suitable and sustainable way. We believe the challenge for the architectural profession is to how physical urban planning and design of cultural institutions can add value to a historical rich city such as Beirut. Not from a visual subjective viewpoint but how, or if, architecture can enrich local identities and encourage civil society believing architecture is more than aesthetics.

If civil society is voluntary social relationships and culture is shared values and patterns of behavior then we ask how today's institutions can be part of enriching local cultures and encourage civil society. We ask what a social space for a civil society could be in Beirut. Is it a neutral space with no identity or a space for non-formal activity or maybe an equal place where you learn from others and which you feel part of?

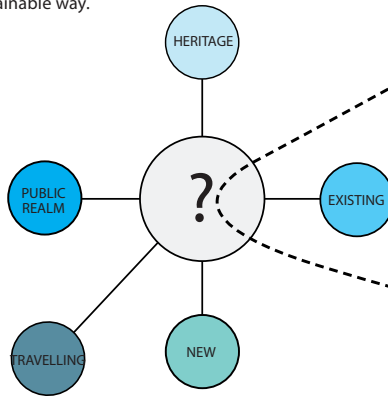
DRAWING RIGHT:
Diagram of the theme Suitable
Cultural Institutions.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Culture can be described as shared values and patterns of behavior that characterize different social groups and communities. Cultural institutions are elements within a society that are perceived to be important and valued among its members for their own identity.

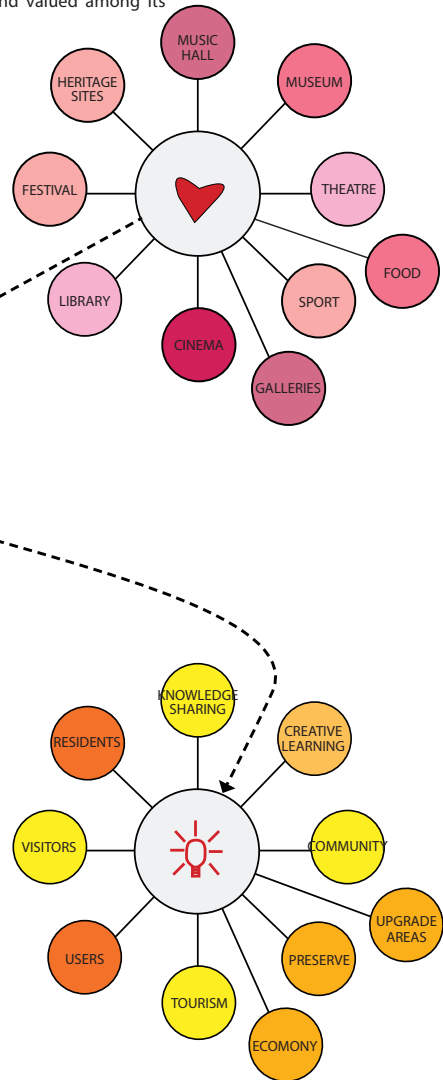
BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The challenge, for the profession, is naturally protection of existing heritage and historical sites. But the challenge is also development of existing abandoned built fabric and introduction of new cultural elements to accommodate the city's demand and facilitate the growing needs in a suitable and sustainable way.



THE INTANGIBLE

Seen from the built environment's point of view, the physical design and planning of cultural institutions influence an institution's usage as well as the local community. We believe the challenge for the architectural profession is to understand how physical design and planning can add value to historical rich cities. Not from a visual subjective viewpoint but how, or if, architecture can enrich local identities and encourage civil society believing architecture is more than aesthetics.



PROGRAM: TWO WEEKS IN FEBRUARY

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

IMAGINATION 3 was held over two weeks in February 2012 and was divided into two parts consisting of a 4 day symposium followed by a 10 days workshop.

The symposium was a combination of Walks, Talks & Sketch assignments in order to learn various views on the city and get to know Beirut and each other. The IMAGINATION 3 started with guided walks in and around Beirut and a sketch assignment to draw the “intangible” Beirut. This was followed by a symposium day where invited speakers gave their views on cultural institutions and its synergy with civil society which helped to kick-start the discussions. The speakers and moderators included 11 practicing architects, artists, curators and professors from Beirut, London and Copenhagen. The symposium was open to the public with around 80 people attending.

The students were then divided into 5 teams of 7 students from different universities, where they explored and discussed particulars and potentials together based on the tutors outlined topics. Half-way through the workshop was an informal presentation where analysis and ideas was tested on the other student teams.

The last days were the outcome from the workshop team findings represented in physical installations to summarize the two weeks process. The workshop teams were guided by eight tutors from Beirut, London and Copenhagen.

The students’ observations and thoughts were showcased at a public opening at the St. Joseph Crypt in Beirut on the last day of the workshop with around 140 people visiting.

SCHEDULE RIGHT:
Overall program of the
Imagination 3 school.

SYMPOSIUM, 13th - 16th February 2012

Monday	13 th February	Walks: Inside Beirut		
Tuesday	14 th February	Walks: Outside Beirut		
Wednesday	15 th February	Sketch Assignment	Pin-up & Discussion	
Thursday	16 th February	Presentations of Workshops & Allocation	Symposium Talks	

WORKSHOP, 17th – 25th February 2012

Friday	17 th February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	
Saturday	18 th February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	
Sunday	19 th February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	
Monday	20 th February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	Pin-up & Discussion
Tuesday	21 st February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	Film Evening
Wednesday	22 nd February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	Storytelling Evening
Thursday	23 rd February	Workshop teams	Workshop teams	
Friday	24 th February	Workshop teams	Exhibition opens	After party
Saturday	25 th February	Clean-up	Evaluation & Goodbyes	

13 MONDAY	14 TUESDAY	15 WEDNESDAY	16 THURSDAY	17 FRIDAY	18 SATURDAY
WALKS	WALKS	SKETCH	TALKS	WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP
OUTSIDE BEIRUT	INSIDE BEIRUT	THROUGH & ACROSS BEIRUT	SUMPOSIUM	EXPLORE + ANALYSE + TEST	EXPLORE + ANALYSE + TEST
<p>9.15 MEET @ AUB main entrance, Bliss</p> <p><i>Guided walks in Beirut to get to know the city from different viewpoints.</i></p> <p>9.30 Walk 1: Ras Beirut & the Hamra district. Guide: Maha Nasrallah, AUB</p> <p>13.00 MEET @ Solidere, Riad El Sohl statue.</p> <p><i>The group divide into two groups and follow one of the guides.</i></p> <p>Walk 2: Zokak El-Blat, The 19th Century Intellectual Beirut. Guide: Serge Yazigi, ALBA</p> <p>Walk 3: The Representative Beirut. Guide: Jesper Berg</p>	<p>8.00 BUS LEAVES from SAIFI URBAN</p> <p><i>Bus with Students and Tutors drive us to sights outside Beirut.</i></p> <p>10.30 Beit Eddine Guide: students</p> <p>12.30 Communal Lunch</p> <p>14.00 Deir EL Qamar</p> <p>20.00 BUS LEAVES from the Sea Castle in Saida.</p> <p>20.00 GATHERING @ HLA house for Tutors, Guides and Symposium speakers</p>	<p>9.00 BRIEFING @ THE CRYPT</p> <p>SKETCH : THROUGH BEIRUT</p> <p><i>Illustrate the INTANGIBLE of the city. In mixed teams of 4 will students be sent out on a walking /sketching trip through Beirut, starting from the National Museum ending at the Water front.</i></p> <p>19.00 PIN-UP & CRIT @ THE CRYPT</p>	<p>9.00 PRESENTATION OF WORKSHOP TEAMS</p> <p><i>Tutors present their workshop and Students allocate into teams.</i></p> <p>Team 1: Chadi Saroufim, ALBA Team 2: Abdul-Halim Jabr, AUB Team 3: Elie Harfouche & Chantal El Hayek, LAU Team 4: Hogni Hansen & Michael Droob, KA & Point Team 5: Tom Hay & Ingela Larsson, KA & HLA</p> <p>12.00 Mobilization of team workshop space.</p> <p>15.00 SYMPOSIUM @ THE CRYPT</p> <p>Welcome & Introduction. Talk 1: Cultural Institutions Past and Prospects. The Academic Viewpoint. Talk 2: Cultural Amenities & Civil Society. The Practitioners Viewpoint Talk 3: Public Art & Public Realm. The Practitioners Viewpoint</p>	<p>9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY</p> <p>19.00 TUTOR MEETING @ THE CRYPT</p>	<p>9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY</p> <p>13.00 TUTOR MEETING @ THE CRYPT</p>

19 SUNDAY	20 MONDAY	21 TUESDAY	22 WEDNESDAY	23 THURSDAY	24 FRIDAY	25 SATURDAY
WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP	EXHIBITION	
EXPLORE + ANALYSE + TEST	EXPLORE + ANALYSE + TEST	EXHIBITION CONSTRUCTION	EXHIBITION CONSTRUCTION	EXHIBITION CONSTRUCTION	EXHIBITION CONSTRUCTION	EVALUATION & CLEAN-UP
9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	9.00 BRIEFING BY TUTORS @ THE	10.00 Clean-up of exhibition space
WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY	WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY	WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY	WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY	WORKSHOP TEAMS ALL DAY		School Evaluation
Carpet team in Hamra						Exchange of Contacts & Clean-up of exhibition space Goodbye
Carpet team in Hamra						Trip to Byblos
					16.00 OPENING OF EXHIBITION @THE CRYPT <i>Students & Tuors available to</i>	
18.00 WORKSHOP SPACE CLOSED	18.00 Mid- critic @ THE CRYPT	19.00 FILM NIGHT @THE CRYPT	STORYTELLING EVENING @THE CRYPT		19.00 "AFTERPARTY" @THE CRYPT, Monat Street.	
		<i>Lebanon and Beirut from the Stories</i>	<i>Lebanon and Beirut from the Stories</i>			



PART 1 - SYMPOSIUM



1.0 WALKS

The IMAGINATION 3 was kick-started with two days of walks in and around Beirut. The city walks was guided by three local architects in order to experience Beirut through different viewpoints and get to know each other. The second day we had a bus which took us to Beit El Dine, Deir El Qamar and Saida where the Lebanese students guided the foreign students.



PHOTO LEFT:
Guides walks inside Beirut,
Sanayeh Garden.

Huda Fensa

Architecture is for people and about people and the variety of people's cultures made the discussions richer due to the differences and similarities, Thinking & designing with them was the biggest challenge. Thanks for the opportunity :)

Khuloud Hefzy

Imagination was a chance to speak myself out. And share thoughts, impressions, activities and even feelings, with different friends of different cultures in different places .. to end up creating a unique "collage" of feelings and memories that carried Beirut in every little detail of it ..





PHOTO RIGHT:
Map showing cities visited on
the bus trip outside Beirut.

PHOTO LEFT:
Map showing areas visited on
walks inside Beirut



BEIRUT

**BEIT EL DIN &
DEIR EL QAMAR**

SAIDA

RAS BEIRUT

Guided walk by Maha Nasrallah

By Khuluod Hfzey

On Monday 13th of February, at 9:30am, all of Imagination3 workshop participants met for the first time at the main gate of AUB in Bliss.st, to start the first walk In al Hamra district which lies directly on the West of Downtown Beirut.

After a short Introduction we started our tour guided by Ms Maha Nasrallah of American Beirut University. As we made our way we saw many of typical historical houses which are two levels buildings with a traditional façade. Then midrise buildings took a place on the street , most of them were built when al Hamra was the center of intellectual activity in Beirut during the 1960s and 1970s, when it was known for its cinemas, theaters and cafes frequented by famous writers, poets, artists and tourists. Today it is a commercial district that hosts number of stores, hotels, furnished apartments , opening pubs, bars, and public cafes, many private banks, multiple major newspapers, universities and many Lebanese government ministries.

During our walk we went into multiple places such as residential buildings, old abandoned cinemas, furniture gallery, church and the entrance of France bank at the end of al Hamra .st, then we continued passing al Sanayeh garden towards Riyadh al sulh square where we would start our next walk. We all noticed that al Hamra street is dynamic, busy and full of life area, people usually walk there which is not very common in Beirut. all of the students agreed that al Hamra walk was a multi-layered experience that takes in all periods of its tumultuous history and its vibrant present.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Building facade in Hamra.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Walk in Ras Beirut with Ms.
Maha Nasrallah.

PHOTO LEFT:
Inside the Interdesign furniture
gallery in Hamra.





ZOKAK EL-BLAT

Guided walk by Serge Yazigi

By Sofie Mackeprang

Knowing a city exceeds knowing its size and it's demographics. You may read a book on its history or watch a film on its people and so feel you have learned a little piece of maybe-truth about its essence. But really knowing a city takes time. And hard work.

We spend two weeks i Beirut, and so I don't pretend to really know much, but we sure did our best! The first couple of days in a new city always seem to bring about a heavy, almost blinding, Blasé. On the second day of the workshop we went on a guided afternoon walk through Zokak El-Blat.

As I sit here, back in Copenhagen, I remember that walk only vaguely. It was hot, and I was thirsty. We walked uphill. We were told to stay together since this area is known to be less secure than where we had been to, so far. Maybe for this reason, or maybe there was something else in the air. A strange tension that stayed with me for the rest of my time in Beirut.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Guided walk with Mr. Serge
Yazigi in Zokak El Blat.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Old Palaces in Zokak EL-Blat.

PHOTO LEFT:
Briefing by Mr. Serge Yazigi.





REPRESENTATIVE BEIRUT

Guided walk by Jesper Berg
By Christofer Hjortholt

On our afternoon walk with Jesper Berg, in Beirut's Downtown, it became clear to us that this part of the city is very privatized. In downtown, the facades have been cleaned up and trees are staged almost artificial. Streets and sidewalks in downtown are beautifully plated and some streets are only for pedestrians, a rare sight in Beirut, where otherwise the car has the first priority. One of the buildings we stopped at was the UN Building that is relatively transparent and shaped like a portal, but even in its architecture is very open and inviting the reality is something else. The area around the building is occupied by concrete barrier and armed security. We also stopped at a plaza on the edge of downtown, this part has almost no residents, the apartments here is the second homes of foreigners, who only use them occasionally. Downtown, no more contains vibrancy and the special charm that you find in other parts of the city, and it is a shame.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Briefing by Mr. Jesper Berg.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
The restored Grand Serail with
new landscape plaza in front.

PHOTO LEFT:
The new built UN building.





BEIT EL DIN & SAIDA

By Thea Hallak

Second day of workshop: second encounter. All of us are in the bus: destination Beit El Din. It was then that the Lebanese people discovered that they were going to be the tour guides for this day and no one else. We, Lebanese, were unprepared. We panicked for a while but Wikipedia saved us. When we got there we started throwing information from here and there hoping they were right. We then got hold of the brochure and found out we had a lot of misconceptions, even Wikipedia.

All of us together started commenting on what is there, things us Lebanese never think about because they are impregnated in our history. With the Syrian group we looked at the similar things we have in the architecture: many features are borrowed from the damascene architecture. The Haman (bath) was an important stop in the visit for we started comparing the different types of it, the Roman, the Turkish, etc. The perforated ceiling grabbed the attention of many of us, especially the Danish people. They trying to make sense of it, try finding a pattern to the perforations which some of the Lebanese found absurd and explained the randomness with the following argument: "It is a rather intuitive way of building".

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Visit to Deir El Qamar.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Visit to the Beit El Din Palace.

PHOTO LEFT:
Beit El Din Palace's open
Courtyard.





After we dissected the palace, every corner of it, we left to visit Saida. Along the way, we stopped in Deir El Qamar, The City of Princes (La cité des Emirs). We looked at the Baz Palace and went on the roof of it. Here again, the roof, its accessibility and how it overlooks the architecture and the city around it fascinated us. We then started walking around the tiny streets between the houses. It felt the houses were all connected together through those alleys: there is no ultimate private there, maybe semi-private.

We then left to Saida where we first had some lunch. Interesting conversations and comments on what we had seen earlier emerged. Some of them were urban, but most of them cultural. After lunch we naturally got divided into smaller groups and we started wandering in the Souks of Saida, going from alley to alley, getting lost in the labyrinth. We thought it would also be interesting to test the limits, stretch them. We started climbing stairs to overlook the density of the souk from the roof; sometimes we ended up in people's houses. Some locals invited us in for a cup of coffee. At first, both the Danish and the Syrian students were scared to take photo, walk a step too much into the residents' privacy. However, the sense of curiosity ruled over.

This outing was a great start for all of us to discuss, exchange what we already had in mind and what we noted down during the day. It was as interesting for the Lebanese group because we usually do not reflect upon what we see, we take it for granted, and this was a pause for us to stop, to look, to see, to appreciate the tiny detail that were once irrelevant.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
The Sea Castle and Old Souq
in Saida.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Entrance to the old souq in
Saida.

PHOTO LEFT:
View over Dier El Qamar.





Alexandre El Khoury
A dialogue with architects from abroad, the best way to discover your own city, its intangible, a melting pot of imagination.

Ingela Larsson

A workshop like "imagination" with participants from several universities, professions and nationalities, religious beliefs and political positions, establishes that whatever we think is the differences; cultural differences, differences in gender and differences in working methods, is nothing to all that we have in common.

Rania Nouaihad

Being hesitant in the first place to work with students from different educational backgrounds turned out to be the most wonderful experience i have achieved.

This workshop gave us the importance of acknowledging team spirit and appreciating other's opinions and points of views in order to reach our target in the end. It was delightful event that is worth of repeating it over again



NIHAL HALIMEH

This workshop taught me to look at the intangible behind everything.

It is the essence of teamwork. It is the spirit guiding the human behavior. It is the principal tool in composing a space; and the core of every culture on this planet.

Sofie Mackeprang

I don't know that makes a cultural institution, and much less what makes it sustainable. I still feel uncertain of what makes people meet in Beirut. Or at just meet all. I can't really explain the connection between the district of Hamra and a dark 2x2x3m box, build in sticks, covered with cardboard, containing a stack of 20 plastic chairs and one out-of-order light bulb, dangling uselessly from the ceiling. But IMAGINE that we talked about it. You and I. You could perhaps explain to me what Hamra is like, and I would tell you what a plastic chair is to me.

Tom

best thing in imagination:
Fast forwarding getting to know people.



1.1 SKETCH

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

The objective of the communal sketch assignment for the whole group was through drawing to kick start communication and not be afraid of exposing ideas to each other from the start.

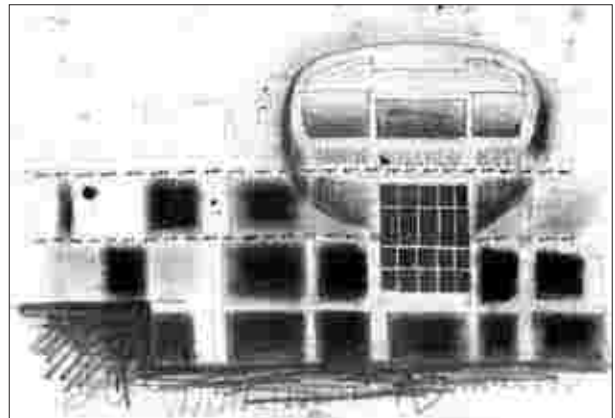
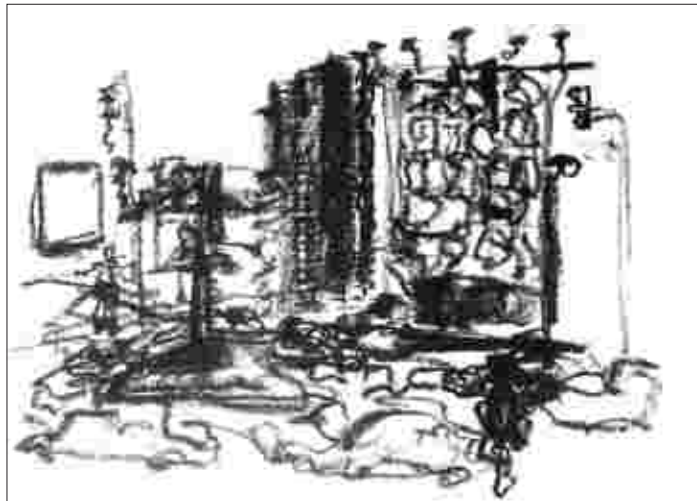
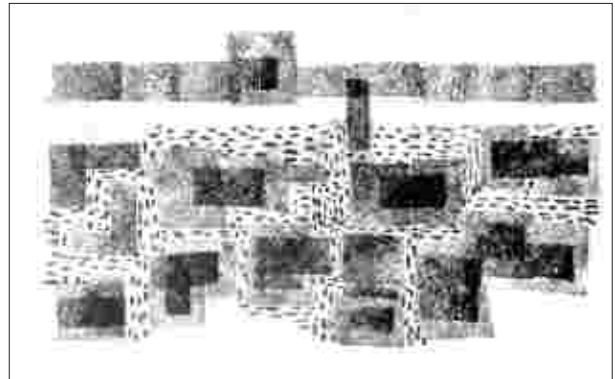
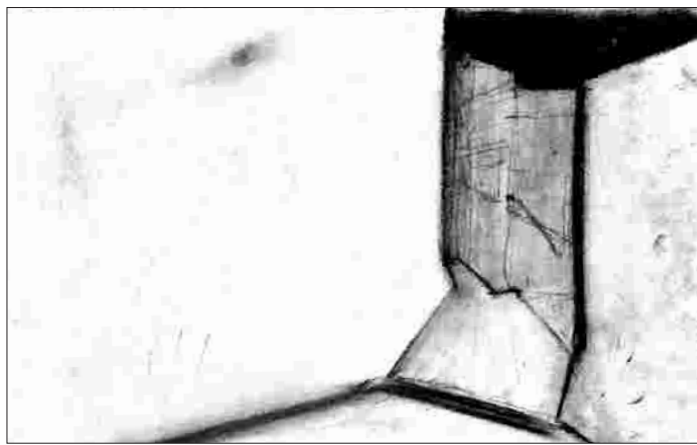
The students were briefed and given two rules to follow for the assignment – to use **CHARCOAL** and illustrate the **INTANGIBLE** of Beirut. In mixed teams of 4 they made a journey through Beirut North / South starting from the National Museum to the waterfront.

The same evening was all drawings pinned-up making a beautiful collage of initial impressions filling the main room at the St. Joseph Crypt. Instead of the typical individual critique was each team asked to make one statement of what they learned from the assignment. This started an intense collective discussion among students, tutors and invited cultural experts with much emphasis on what actually the intangible in architecture is?

PHOTO RIGHT:
Samples of student sketches
showing the intangible Beirut.



PHOTO LEFT:
Discussions about what is
the intangible architecture of
Beirut?



INTANGIBLE SKETCH WALK

By Elio Boujaoudeh

The Subject, Intangible: « Unable to be touched or grasped; not having physical

The Assignment, sketching what does not have a physical presence in the city.

The city, Beirut from the center to the waterfront, Beirut the city of motion, flows and objects.

The challenge, capturing the impressions of forms in motion from pedestrians and cars on the street to cranes dancing over the city skyline and transforming it to a static image, a sketch.

The added value: Learning and understanding the intangible through the different layers intersecting to create the physical aspect of a city.

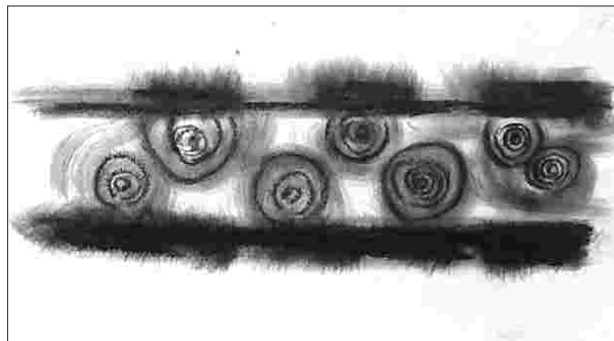
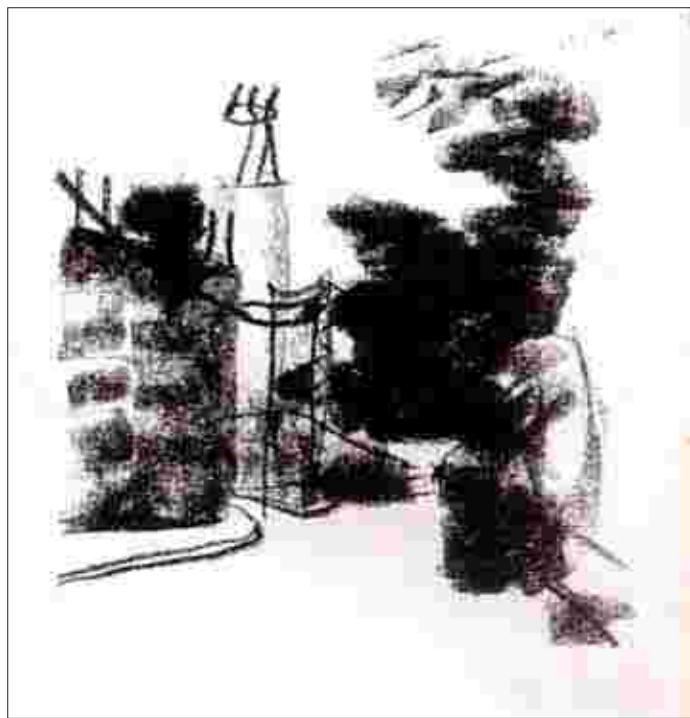
After presenting the subject of illustrating the intangible of the city many questions rush to mind, what's the intangible? How can we capture such an immaterial aspect of a city, any city and what if that city is Beirut!

We start our tour walk divided into small groups in the defined perimeter from the center to the waterfront. The route there and back passes through some highly contrasted urban territory, from the old city fabric to the visible signs of gentrification and urban renewal.

The drawing stops lasted about 30 minutes each and we were encouraged to do several sketches using only black pencils and charcoal .There was not enough time to achieve very much in a drawing but it demonstrated that the seemingly every day and mundane, if studied closely, could be a rich subject and reveals the city as an organic, ever-changing and developing entity.

We tend to see in a narrow cone of vision, but as we walked around with the intangible question in mind, we try to be aware of a much wider frame of vision. Allow the random to feature, to frame a view. Investigate and think hard about what we are looking at. Start to compose it in our mind, try to be sensitive to it, sense the intangible. »

PHOTO RIGHT:
Samples of student sketches
showing the intangible Beirut.



PIN-UP & EVALUATION

By Hani Fakhani & Huda Fensa

We were gathered that morning at the crypt and Anne Marie and the tutors had explained the vague assignment then we were given the tools.. This assignment was sketching the intangible of Beirut and the tools were a charcoal finger and 5 sheets of white cardboards and we set off..

Every group chose a path to take in the city of Beirut.. It was an interesting experience, trying to find out what the intangible could be.. The thing that draw my attention was what the other nationalities defined as intangible and what they saw in the soul of Beirut.. Every nationality had its point of view and a way in drawing... but the exiting part in the whole assignment was the discussions that happened during the walk and afterward back at the crypt. All the drawings were pinned up on the walls of the hall and everybody sat down with loaded minds with lots of questions, may be some answers, but for sure a lot of confusion. The tutors raised more question and the participants were busy trying to formulate some sentences to help them sharing their impressions, feelings and opinions to define what they saw as the intangible of Beirut city.

Some were taken by the motion of the cars and the dominating highways and how Beirut is shredded by them, other were astonished by the absence of pedestrians.. Some were charmed of the diversity of the spaces and the presence of a lot of hidden spaces and secret gardens and the orange trees, some were surprised by the presence of the war and its black aura and some could smell the city. We had a very intense discussion that there were a lot of balls in the air.

The unforgettable thing was said by one of the tutor "Robin" that he was so encouraging for me in particular " there is no right or wrong.. It's you who can decide, it's how each one of you can feel the city.. You and only you will choose and define what the intangible is..

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Mr. Robin Cole-Hamilton and participants discussing the sketches of the intangible in the city.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
The teams talk about their sketch interpretations of the intangible Beirut before the communal discussion.



Satanay Kaghadou

My experiences during the IMAGINATION 3 workshop has many similarities to the story telling evening we participated in. The story we had come across, "what's the color of the sea" has many analogies to my workshop experience. In particular, the range of diverse cultural backgrounds, societal origins, and different ways of thinking were utilized to meet our objectives during this exciting workshop.

During the course of the workshop, some of us knew exactly what to do, others were unsure and hesitant at first and some of us had a "know-it-all" mentality. Simultaneously, others found in every corner something new and interesting, but eventually each one of us gained tremendous insight and broadened our understandings.

Perhaps IMAGINATION 3 wasn't just about providing an architectural project in the literal sense, it was way more; it's about the process of interacting with your colleagues in a professional environment and improving interpersonal communication skills.

With that said, I would like to thank the individuals who made this opportunity a reality and express my sincere appreciation.

Marie-jo Tabet

If it was not for the workshop and the group experience, i would not have used the public space as a place of gathering and meeting new people and using all the place potential in the variety of activities that contain it.



Hana Itani

Imagination school gave me the opportunity of meeting new people, making new friendships and adding new values, it opened to me doors towards other cultures and societies.



Carole Dib

'I walked in Beirut as if it is the first time...I saw my homeland colored with a new twist : the views of architecture students from different backgrounds and nationalities. That's when I surprisingly understood Beirut through a whole different perspective...'



1.2 TALKS

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

The symposium day brought together 11 invited speakers and moderators to give their views on cultural institutions and its synergy with civil society.

The speakers came from different disciplines and cultures and included practicing architects, artists, curators and professors from Beirut, London and Copenhagen.

The symposium was organized by disciplines with the first session being professors from each of the participating Lebanese universities talking from a historic viewpoint and followed by practitioners sharing their experience of practicing in the field. The last session was the artists who turned all previous perception upside down by responding to space rather than analyzing or producing.

The symposium was open to the public with around 80 people attending.



PHOTO LEFT:
Public invitation for the
symposium.

Welcome & Introduction:

Anne Marie Galmstrup, hennng Larsen Architects Levant & Georges Zouain, GAIA Heritage

Session 1: The Academic Viewpoint, Cultural Institutions Past and Prospects

Talk 1	Rachid Chamoun, LAU	The History of Cultural Institutions in Beirut
Talk 2	Serge Yagizi, ALBA	Cultural Institutions in the City
Moderator	Robert Saliba, AUB	

- Could or should introduction of cultural institutions strengthen a local community's identity?
- Could or should heritage sites and cultural institutions connect the city?
- Should there be a balance of preservation, re-use of existing abandoned built fabric, and introduction of contemporary design elements in historical cities?
- Are there lessons from the past we have forgotten today?

Session 2: The Practitioners Viewpoint, Cultural Amenities & Civil Society

Talk 3	Georges Zouain, GAIA Heritage	The Global Role of Cultural Amenities
Talk 4	Robin Ciole-Hamilton, Cultural Projects	Civil Society
Talk 5	Louis Becker, Henning Larsen Architects	Cultural Amenities
Moderator	Elie Harfouche, LAU	

- Questioning global concepts or trends vs. regional and local realities - what are the regional and international trends of cultural institution vs. Beirut's need today?
- Is there a synergy between users of cultural institutions, professional users, independent visitors and the local community?
- Is there a balance of "traditional" vs. contemporary cultural institutions?
- What is a cultural institution that inspires creative and cultural learning?

Session 3: The Practitioners Viewpoint, Public Art & Public Realm

Talk 6	Mirene Arsanios, 98weeks	Establishing as Cultural Institution
Talk 7	Nadim Karam, Atelier Hapsitus	Public Art & Public Realm
Talk 8	Thomas Poulsen, FOS	Social Design
Moderator	Joseph Tarrab	

- What is the synergy between the Public Realm and Public Art?
- Is there a balance of "Visual" vs. Interactive Public Art?
- What role does public art play for cultural institutions?

SESSION 1: CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS PAST & PROSPECTS

Talk 1. The History of Cultural Institutions in Beirut By Rachid Chamoun, LAU

The presentation illustrated a concise historical background of the Lebanon¹ starting with the Babylonian Empire 604-562BC to the French Mandate 1922, as a state in the custody of many and diverse cultures and civilizations through history, and then as an independent nation. The significance of this historical review is to investigate and analyze the social and spatial transformation provoked by the diverse civilizations and cultural proximities. The presentation unfolded Lebanon's national and regional geopolitical identity; going through a critical transformation and being stretched between two cultural extremes: The Western / Mediterranean and The Arabian / Middle Eastern cultures presenting itself through multi layers of civilizations through history. It becomes necessary to understand the cultural background of the country as a whole and the multilayered local characteristics and cultural identities:

Middle Eastern: one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the area comprising the countries of southwest Asia and northeast Africa. **Arabia:** one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the area comprising the peninsula of southwest Asia between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. **Mediterranean:** one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the great cultures that have surrounded it; linking European with Arabian and Middle Eastern cultures. Furthermore, the presentation recaptured and redefined the composite cultural identity of the citizens and the city Beirut. Hence, the citizens of Beirut are confused, they are seeking the preservation of a particular pre-war public image, space and character; in particular they are attempting to physically live an urban memory and consider Beirut a city that has been removed from the proximities of memory. Others consider the development of Beirut Central District into the finest city center in the Middle East is one of the most ambitious post war reconstruction and urban regeneration ventures of our time. Yes, indeed, Beirut is being reconstituted in the fashion of an elaborate stage set with a particular theme; the city looks old and eclectic but its reality is much more brutal. The citizens of Beirut realize that simply combining new and old buildings along with archaeological digs creates a false sense of cultural diversity since they are all catering to a particular upper class bracket of society. "A Lebanese architect fears that the renovated heart of the city will belong only to foreign firms, rich Lebanese returned from exile, then, we will have a Beirut without Beiruters!"

The presentation concluded to perceive the Middle East and Lebanon experiencing a recur set of geopolitical transformation. The reality of this situation is my concern that we will no longer recognize each other's' cultural differences and similarities. It is my hope that Lebanon and Beirut remain independent, morally rooted and culturally sustainable.



Layers of Time
Babylonian Empire (604-562 BC)

- ▶ **Assyrian Empire (664 - 605 BC)**
- ▶ **Persian Empire (550 - 330 BC)**
- ▶ **Mauryan Empire (320 AD)**
- ▶ **Eastern Roman Empire (285 AD)**
- ▶ **The Islamic World (622 - 750 AD)**
- ▶ **Latin Crusader States (1099 - 1291 AD)**
- ▶ **Ottoman Empire (1291 - 1918 AD)**
- ▶ **French Mandate (1920)**

Source: *World History: The Basics* (2010), Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved. © 2010 Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved. All rights reserved.

During this layer, the political geography spread east to encompass Syria, Jordan, Palestine and crossroads linking the Mediterranean Basin with

At different periods of its history, Lebanon has come under the impact of diverse set of cultures, to include but not limited to: Canaanites & Amorites, Egyptians-Hittites, Assyrians- Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans and French. Despite foreign domination, Lebanon survived with an identity all its own.

Middle Eastern: one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the area comprising the countries of southwest Asia and northeast Africa.

Arabia: one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the area comprising the peninsula of southwest Asia between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Mediterranean: one thinks of a specific place and perhaps of the great cultures that have surrounded it. Usually individuals who identify themselves as "Mediterranean" refer to the region surrounding the Mediterranean Sea where some of the most ancient civilizations flourished linking European with Arabian and Middle Eastern cultures.

How would I define my cultural identity: Middle Eastern, Arabian, Mediterranean? is a composite question of a diverse human nature, radiating in various directions and magnitudes defining a wide range of multi layered socio-geographic impacts and proximities. The slides of both [Self-Portrait](#) and [Fertile Crescent maps](#) represent an ethnographic exhibition of the various civilizations and cultures that Lebanon has been influenced by.

Beirut is destined to civil and uncivil violence and subjugated to rapid reconstruction

The citizens of Beirut are confused, they are seeking the preservation of a particular pre-war public image, space and character; in particular they are attempting to physically live an urban memory and consider Beirut a city that has been removed from the proximities of memory. Others consider the development of Beirut Central District into the finest city center in the Middle East is one of the most ambitious post war reconstruction and urban regeneration ventures of our time?

Talk 2. Culture VS/ Reconstruction?

By Serge Yagizi, ALBA

During Beirut's reconstruction process, culture was not much accounted for, as most efforts and investments were channeled on infrastructure's rehabilitation. Knowing that Culture is not an amenity, especially in the case of post-war cities where it can play a major role in the pacification process and the reshaping of new civility, Culture can also be used as a lever to enhance the economical potential of a city, increasing its competitiveness as well as quality of life.

As it is well known, economic development is stimulated by factors related to the way of life (tolerance and diversity), quality of services, leisure activities, and last but not least: the possibility of a city to generate Culture. And generating culture is not to be confused with – or limited to- cafés and restaurants sprawl, whatever the impression of dynamism or lively neighborhoods it can procure.

Spontaneous cultural activities did emerge in the past decades, but far from reaching the level of allowing Beirut recapture its leading role as regional cultural capital. The synergy that characterized the development of urban fabric in Beirut along with Culture emergence (as “Nahda” –Arab literature renaissance- overlaps with the development of Zokak El Blat neighborhood; and “Modern cultural revolution” in Lebanon overlaps with the development of Hamra s' neighborhood) is still missing in the reshaping of our capital, more than twenty years after fighting's' ending.

Beirut is about to face the challenge of having to reconsider its cultural politic through not only the provision of few attractive cultural facilities and the support of cultural events, but also through stimulating artists - as well as local population - to re-appropriate the City in its diversity and complexity. And Culture could turn out to be the best vehicle for that.

Investing in Culture should be brought back to top priorities. Stakes involved are beyond Culture itself, it is rather about the City's role , it's Identity, as well as strengthening its immunity to overcome potential new crises. Is in it what Reconstruction is all about?

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Mr. Serge Yagizi's
presentation.



Culture in the city

cultural institutions

IMAGINATION

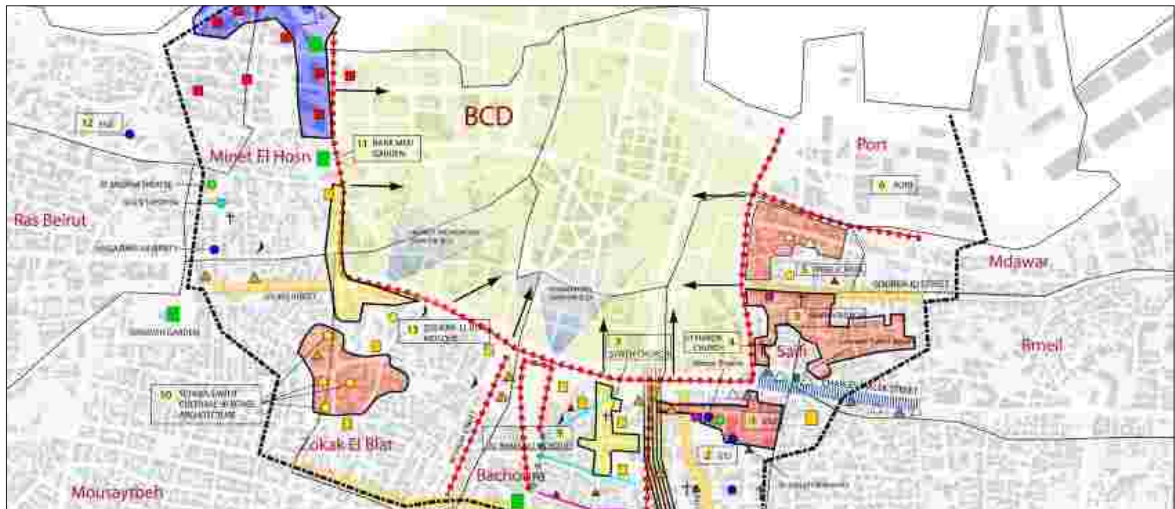
Academic View Point, Cultural Institutions Past and Prospects

- Cities built / regenerated without culture become fragile. Culture is an engine for sustainable development, especially if it is in synergy with the local specificities : tangible and intangible heritage (mainly identity related issues)
- Culture in a city should not be confused with “night life”. It is not only based on consumption logic (and/or mainly reserved to tourist) , but rather production logic
- Cities tend more and more to capitalize on Culture in order to enhance/modify the Image and increase competitiveness.

- Cultural event or main cultural facility can help shedding light on existing Culture(s) or on the area's characteristics*. It becomes therefore a leverage to sustain a urban renewal strategy.

- Cultural manifestations are a result of synergies between the creative class-economy & political will and vision built on large consensus & the participation of the inhabitants
- The role of the public sector is essential as it can channel the development (or even better stimulate its ignition)

Cities tend more and more to consider Culture as an investment rather than a subvention



Session 1, Discussion. Cultural Institutions Past and Prospects

Moderated by Robert Saliba, AUB

By Alison Kumro, GAIA Heritage

The first discussion addressed production of culture in Beirut. Many agreed that Beirut has never been a city that looks back at the past; it has always been a place where creativity and modern thinking lead to the production of culture. However, the production process is no longer happening and this is dangerous for the cultural life of the city. Mr. Joseph Tarrab was very vocal on this topic, and he argued that the true loss in the war was not the physical infrastructure and buildings, it was the “intangible.” Before the war, downtown Beirut was a mixture of urban functions and this provided the soul of the city. The interaction of Beirutis, as well as artists, writers, and other creative thinkers on a daily basis led to the production of culture in the city. Tarrab stated that the reconstruction has gone against this spirit and has turned the Beirut Central District (BCD) into a “ghetto of the rich.” Now, many Beirutis do not feel welcome in the BCD.

The students were engrossed by Tarrab’s animated perspective of the history of the downtown area and the effects of the reconstruction. One audience member inquired about the physical manifestations of culture in the past Beirut, while another asked how the intellectual life has changed spatially over the years. Tarrab explained that this intangible culture of dialog, discussion, and chance meetings took place in cafes, which served as physical manifestations of the culture. He added that now this lifestyle has moved to Hamra, away from places such as Place des Canons and Bab Idriss.

The final topic of the discussion was selective memory and how it shapes one’s thinking and values. One Lebanese student spoke about how her grandmother romanticizes the old Beirut and argued that there is no shame in being selective in memory; everyone is entitled to their own interpretations of the past. Professor Robert Saliba followed on this point by agreeing that different generations have different memories and therefore mixed ways of thinking about Beirut. Each generation seeks to reconstruct the past through their present needs and values, and it is this mix of unshared values that create friction within Beirut.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Intense debate between panel
and participants about Cultural
Institutions Past & Prospects
in Beirut.



SESSION 2:

CULTURAL AMENITIES & CIVIL SOCIETY

Talk 3. Making Heritage & Culture Work

By Georges Zouain, GAIA Heritage

Imagination is important in all projects we conceive and most of the time, imagining, seeing things differently, helps the client better understand his current needs and grasp all the potential of the project as he first saw it.

This is exemplified in two projects GAIA-heritage has conducted in museums and at centers: in Salalah, Oman where the client wanted a small exhibition to present the beauty of the country to the visitors of Salalah, and in Lebanon where the client thought of a traditional cultural centre. In the first case, we ended up with a comprehensive museum on the history of the country and on its seafaring and important contribution to sea navigation together with the training of carpenters in model making of traditional boats and the re-launching of the interest of the youth of Oman in sailing.

In the second case, the project changed dramatically to become a multipurpose arts centre with music and performing arts spaces, cinemas, a blackbox and exhibition, production and training spaces open to the city and accessible to all. The keys for the success in these projects have been to think about their relation to and role in society, and the continuous harmonization of the project with available human and financial resources to ensure their sustainability.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Georges Zouain's
presentation.



MAKING HERITAGE & CULTURE WORK THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS

OLUFSEN, S. / ZAVAIN (2014) HERITAGE

MODELS IN THE MAKING



HOW? THE ECONOMIST PERSPECTIVE

Heritage is a commodity that, if well understood,

- ✦ Generates resources & creates employment
- ✦ Intensifies local production
- ✦ Develops traditional know-how
- ✦ Introduces new technologies & innovations
- ✦ Trains staff

• The museum is part of a larger process

NOT A MONUMENT



CONCLUSION

- The role of a museum is not determined by
 • tradition and history alone
 • economic objectives
 • and (at least) by societal needs
- The museum is a social space
 • where communities, visitors
 • and
 • opportunities and the past

NEW OBJECTS ADDED



Talk 4. Civil Society

By Robin Cole-Hamilton, Cultural Projects

In considering how the cultural institutions of tomorrow might strengthen civil society, there is no simple universal definition of civil society to start from, therefore no off-the-peg means to enhance it. From a national perspective, civil society can be seen as providing an essential counterbalance to the powers of government and business (the traditional establishment), and in doing so promoting a more stable, just and healthy society. In this model, civil society is defined by the **capacity of ordinary people** to shape the daily lives and future prospects of themselves and others; organisations such as NGOs and non-profits are merely the tools to achieve this. Civil society is, or should be, all about people: diverse, inclusive, empathic, empowering.

The old archetype of a cultural institution, such as Berlin's Alte Nationagalerie, was founded by the establishment on its own terms. It was created by those with power for the people, not by them or with them. That was the spirit of that age. Yet 120 years later, the Guggenheim Bilbao perpetuated the very same archetype. Dramatically different and modern in form, and a powerful economic engine for the region, it was still the product of decisions by a small political, commercial and cultural elite. And the huge success of Bilbao has encouraged other new me-too cultural projects to make an iconic building their first point of focus.

In fact, if cultural institutions such as museums are indeed to foster a more robust civil society, their initial thinking cannot be on a building, nor even on any treasures for display. Instead it must be on ordinary people, and on the transformative journey the institution can enable them to take for themselves. Cultural institutions are where people can find their own meaning and value, where identity can be explored, where awareness, empathy, pride and responsibility can be discovered and practised. People can add their own voices to the narrative, find safe space for learning and debate, make a contribution. All essential ingredients for developing individuals, communities, active citizenship and a strong civil society.

And when building a new cultural institution the entire project process offers a platform on which to build community ownership and participation, not just the end product. The architect's vision and responsibility must then become greater than simply a building and must embrace the interests of civil society as a whole.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Robin Cole-
Hamilton's presentation.



- ### designing for civil society outcomes
- Cultural connection, recognition of place, context
 - Shared ownership of the thinking, process, voice
 - Inclusive, accessible, regular
 - Prompting ideas, questions, dialogue
 - “Safe” space for learning, discussion and debate
 - Places to hang out - social
 - Opportunities to contribute
 - Making people part of the subject story
 - Good for young people (not just children)
-

- ### cultural institutions = civil society?
- One element in a much bigger process
 - Holding a mirror up to ourselves and our world = awareness, empathy, pride, responsibility, capability
 - “A tool for self-expression, self-recognition”
 - “Where people find meaning and value”
 - Agent of community well-being
 - Shared, cohesive space
 - Generational
 - Participative
 - Contemplative
-
-

- ### you...
- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Visionary | | Ego-free |
| Impresario | | Collaborator |
| Respectful | | Including |
| Attuned | | Mentoring |
| Connecting | Articulating | Learning |
| Empowering | Creating | Nurturing |
| Leading | | Dogged |
-

Talk 5. Cultural projects as generators/sparks for developing civil society.

By Louis Becker, Henning Larsen Architects

I presented two cultural projects in very different cultures and settings. Both projects had a goal beyond being the physical framing of cultural activities.

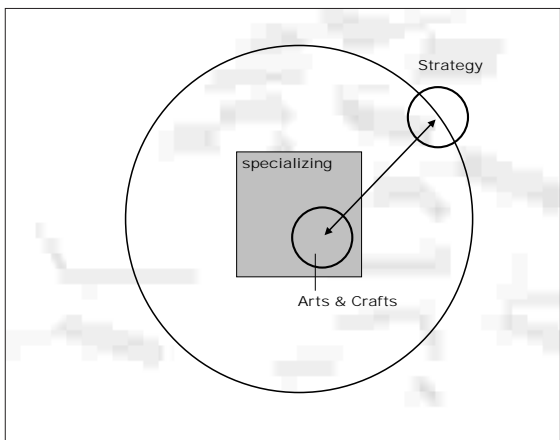
In Reykjavik, Iceland we have designed the Harpa Concert and Conference Centre. The project has a national importance as a cultural venue for different types of music, a destination for Icelandic people and also tourists and in Reykjavik an urban generator for developing the East Harbour area. The Icelandic climate is extreme. From endless summer days to dark, cold winters with a very limited daylight. To create a project that invites people in, acts like a beacon in the dark season, the project capitalizes these extremes in the design by introducing a facade concept that captures the light in the summer for the events and light up the city in the winter.

The surrounding area in Reykjavik has started a regeneration process with new projects that together with the harbour project will be another city district in the capital of Iceland.

The Palacio de Congresos, Lanzarote was won in an international competition. Our concept was to create a cultural facility that attracts all kinds of different users. From the keen sportsman at the ironman games to the classic opera lover. The position of the building is in the outskirts of Arrecife near the coast separated from the centre by a beautiful bay. The project design has a clear reference to the volcanic landscape of Lanzarote with sculptural volumes separated by notches. By night the notches light up like the hot lava in the black landscape of the island. The needed flexibility of the facility creates a stage of possibilities to be utilized by different activities. The concept of having one building creating all these different opportunities demands a prioritized design approach where the inclusion of activities is more important than optimizing for one function.

For the island it means a focal point for culture and big venues situated in the capital, visible from most important roads and from the water. A clear statement of a vision for Lanzarote as a destination not just for tourists but also for the whole of Spain.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Louis Becker's
presentation.



Session 2, Discussion. Cultural Amenities & Civil Societies.

Moderated by Elie Harfouche, LAU
By Alison Kumro, GAIA Heritage

The second discussion centered on museums as cultural institutions and how they have changed over the years. Originally, access to museums was restricted to a very select group; it was only around the mid-19th century that they began to open up to the general public. Today, museums and art centers are becoming objects; many urban decision-makers see them as tools for attracting international recognition and tourism. The success of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain played a large part in instigating the use of museums for urban economic development. Mr. Georges Zouain stressed the fact that the success of the Bilbao case depended heavily on the investments that were poured into the city, particularly in infrastructure (airports, roads, bridges, etc) and real estate around the old harbor. Although many cities have attempted to emulate the success of Bilbao, these attempts have largely failed.

Participants discussed new trends emerging in museology, which are changing the way societies relate to and are involved in their museums. One such trend is museums that are located in public areas. Professor Abdul-Halim Jabr pointed to the Public Museum of Moscow Metro History, which is integrated into one of the Moscow metro stations, as an example. Such cultural institutions are not only accessible to everyone, they also give people the chance to interact with them more regularly. Another emerging trend is community museums, which receive greater influence from the community, allowing a society to make a statement about itself, or as Professor Jabr described it, "culture in the hands of the people." The discussion ended with an audience member commenting that it would be very hard for Lebanon to produce a community museum when the country is still lacking a unified history book.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Participants listening carefully
to the talks on Cultural
Amenities and Civil Society.



SESSION 3: PUBLIC ART & PUBLIC REALM

Talk 6. Establishing a Cultural Institution

By Mirene Arsanios, 98weeks

98weeks research project. Mar Mkeyel (Nahr), Chalhoub bldg (ground floor), Members: Mirene Arsanios, Marwa Arsanios / Founding year 2007. 98weeks is a cultural association and an artists organization founded by Marwa Arsanios and Mirene Arsanios in 2007. It is conceived as a research project that shifts its attention to a new topic every 98 weeks. The first research topic is spatial practices. The research develops and is carried through methods combining theory and practice, thinking through artistic experiences and practices, and testing new theoretical modes of inquiry as a way to generate knowledge. Since its inception, 98weeks focuses on process-based forms of artistic activities such as reading groups, workshops (Beirut every other day), and talks/events (The Magazine Talks; Arab Spring Talks). These working modalities act hand in hand with research topics, such as Beirut's urban space, or more recently, 98weeks current research on historical arts and culture magazines from the Middle East. All of 98weeks activities is posted on the blog: www.98weeks.blogspot.com

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Ms. Mirene
Arsanios' presentation.



BEIRUT EVERY OTHER DAY

Beirut every-other-day is a series of workshops inviting internationally known artists to work and reflect on the urban space of Beirut together with young Lebanese, regional and international artists/students coming from various disciplines. One of the main concerns is to bring new insights in the way Beirut is perceived and lived. Each workshop will be focusing on a different problematic inspired by the practice of the leading artists.

AUS summer



WORKSHOP II:

AS LONG AS I AM WALKING WITH FRANCIS ADYS and ELIARTEMIO MEDINA
15-17 December 08



Talk 7. Public Art & Public Realm

By Nadim Karam, Atelier Hapsitus

“Mockery, childishness or neo-terrorism, no work of architecture lends itself to laughter, contrary to sculpture it can frighten, seriously disturb, or sometimes even raise a smile, but joy is never part of the edifice. Just what will become of our cities, these concentrations of real estate inertia?”

Paul Virillio – for urban Art, June 5, 2006

Our interventions of public art in cities have the mission to create nodes of energy, provoking in the citizen a moment of joyous curiosity and diverting him from the constraints of his daily routine.

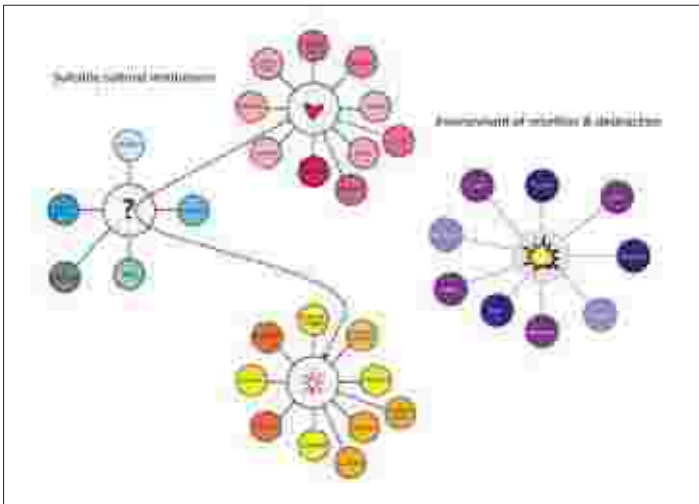
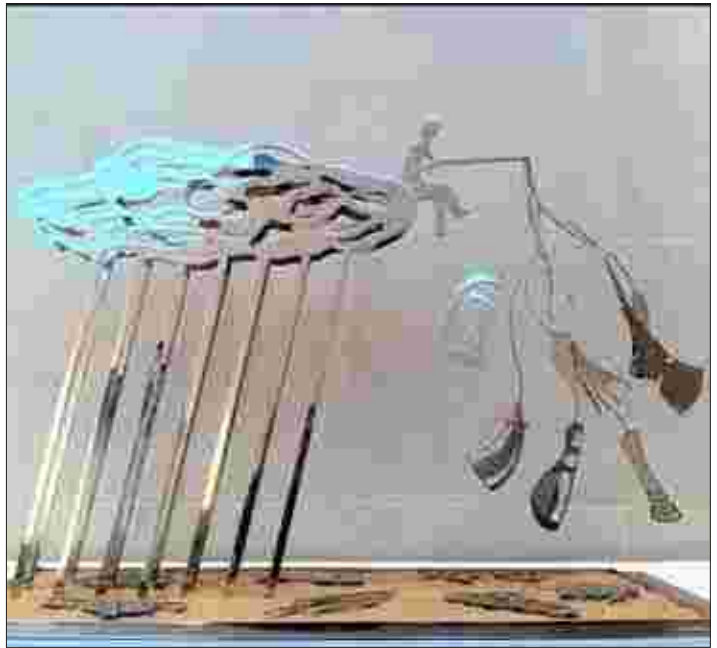
The process towards an urban art intervention involves reaching an understanding of the site, the place, the context, and the characteristics of memories of the place, so that the works become a part of the city and are adopted as such.

The outcome of the art installation is usually based on stories and dreams, which accumulate layers through the individual interpretations of city dwellers. These stories, or dreams, are so important, especially in a region where upheavals, wars, revolutions and terrorism mainly happen in public spaces. It is the responsibility of an accumulation of creative minds to counteract this by giving a hundred times more energy to attempt to redress the situation, and bring a minimum of joy to the city. If the public, and the actions in public spaces are not civil then the private space becomes unsafe and are invaded by the deterioration of public space, which means the deterioration of common human values.

Two recent projects that I am working on for Dubai and Amman illustrate different strategies employed for addressing and improving public spaces. I introduced “the Cloud of Dubai”, an elevated platform serving as a public garden in the sky, conceived to counteract the general exclusivity of private spaces in high rise buildings in the city.

The “Dialogue of the Hills” of Amman, a series of community gardens on the seven hills of the city has the objective of unifying and creating more communication between the different hill communities.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Nadim Karam's
presentation.



Talk 8. Social Design

By Thomas Poulsen, FOS

I work within the art practice a frame that is not a religion, its not design,

Its not democracy, art is evolution a metabolism.

Making art is a language not within the object but from it, a language, which we don't speak, but sensations that arise between the artwork and the viewer or the group it's happening within or around.

Just like the any space we sit in is giving us a sense a feeling which does not exist in the space and not in us but both places at the same time.

This feeling is a vital part of our social life that accurse between nature and architecture, us and design and between these part art has its life in and around these spaces - The difference between art and design is that art works with possibilities design and architecture works with solutions.

And its in-between these themes my interest lays my work witch I call Social Design. Social Design is using architecture and design as frames to create situation and within this space objects, sculptures or events can happen like a layered cake.

IT ALL HAS ITS SCALE every idea has its scale, which gives them a place and a direction and order, and also defining witch parts should talk to each other this order lies inside scale.

I was asked to include the institution in this txt. What is this thing this is this entity! Its easy to use feelings its like a reflection within the body hate fear lust and needs. It's harder to use once head witch is the rules of the social culture we have today. We need to keep being reminded of this part witch only exists in the head, otherwise we move again into our body. What the parent does for the development of the individual in the child, the institutions is the development of the culture the identity of our sociality.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Slides from Mr. Thomas
Poulsen's presentation.



Session 3, Discussion. Public Art & Public Realm.

Moderated by Joseph Tarrab
By Alison Kumro, GAIA Heritage

Moderator Mr. Joseph Tarrab summed up the presentations on public art and the public realm by explaining that each speaker had presented their own way of making sense of spaces in the city. From giving meaning to public spaces, to bringing beauty, pleasure, and humor to them, the speakers had provided a diverse set of perspectives of how to approach public spaces.

For the final discussion, students were asked to give their thoughts on the past few days. One student commented that the walks, sketches, and presentations had helped her better understand the complex themes and issues that are present in the urban history of Beirut. Reactions proved to be mixed, as one student disagreed and stated she felt more confused than ever, and that the ideas presented in the talks had added to the overwhelming mixture of questions.

Others commented on the benefit of the multidisciplinary nature of the symposium. One student said he found it interesting to hear the perspectives of artists, heritage and culture specialists, and other practitioners outside the architecture field.

PHOTO RIGHT:
The participants listening
concentrated to the Public Art
& Public Realm.



1.3 COMMUNAL EVENTS

STORYTELLING EVENING

By Loyal Merhi

Stories, poems, songs, and laughter flooded the Crypt for hours. Nadia Touma from Dar Al-Ombuz was responsible for telling a story in Arabic which we would later realize most of us understood because of the tone and expression. From there, the evening quickly unfolded into a series of readings and chants from all the languages that conquered this workshop. We heard Irish tales, Arabic stories, Danish poems, Norwegian chants, Syrian songs, Lebanese fairytales and more. Every event would motivate a response in a different language to the point that we cried of laughter and would most definitely all recognize Lebanese Arabic, Syrian Arabic, Danish, Norwegian, Irish, Scottish, or French whether we hear it in a song, story, or conversation.

By Hani Fakhani

Wednesday, two days before the exhibition the atmosphere was intense. All the teams were busy making final decisions on designing their exhibitions, and working hard on illustrating their findings and ideas.

This evening the main space changed atmosphere. we had "the story telling evening" with four hours of singing, chanting, story telling from all languages, laughter, having fun, and getting to know the humor and fun side of the all participants.

It was such a fantastic evening not only because it was a great work break and ice breaker, but more because the work atmosphere became afterward fun and relaxed, and that was exactly what we needed to move with high spirits to the last two busy days of constructing the exhibition.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Ms. Nadia Touma, founder of Dar Ombuz, reading a beautiful story about Beirut titled: Sho Laon Al Bahr ~ What colour is the Sea?

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Huda, Satanay, Jonna, Elias, and Elio making a team reading of 1001 night story in Arabic.



FILM EVENING

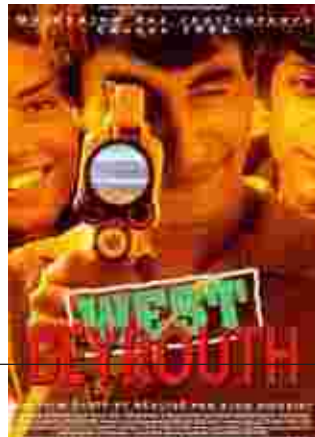
By Hanady Medlej

WEST BEIRUT: The Intangible Of a city's Past

When the Lebanese writer Ziad Dolueirj made his directorial debut in the French Lebanese-Belgian-Norwegian co-production WEST BEIRUT in the late 90s, he displayed a partitioned Beirut along a Muslim/Christian line and the adventure of three adolescents playing cross over and roaming the war torn Olive quarter. But what he did not know is that a decade and a half later it will also be the subject of another international cultural based gathering, only this time in the midst of a united post-civil war Beirut and the protagonists' adventures in the city was slightly different than Tarek's, Omar's and May's, even though it had the same teen spirited edge.

Film Night offered, For the Lebanese as much as for the Foreigners a lucrative yet instructive layer towards understanding Beirut, from its past to its present giving the essential platform to discuss the possibility of improving its future: Lucrative in the sense of giving us the opportunity to bond in the classical popcorn, dark room projection and laughter movie ambiance, and instructive in the sense of giving us a biased nonpolitical view of the Lebanese civil war that had an enormous impact on Beirut, its typology, structure, architecture, the people residing in it, their mentality and their way of dealing with the remains (reminders of the past) and the new, oblivious to its precedent.

Having that said, the film night, and West Beirut in particular, was in fact the most efficient way to "touch" the intangible of Beirut's past without having to tip toe around the socio political complex issues using lingerie as a safe passage as foreseen in the movie.



Niels Edvard Nørgaard Sørensen

My best experience during the Imagination school.

Walking the streets of Beirut as a foreigner you immediately notice the lack of space for pedestrians, and the general fact, that cars rule the streets. People don't walk, they drive.

You might find a pedestrian crossing, zebra stripes, but this will not do you any good. Nobody knows what they are for; Parking? Racing stripes? Somebody spilled paint?

The good thing, however, is that one becomes very aware of the "body in space", when afraid of getting hit by a car. You simply start to notice everything around you, like a newborn baby.

"OMG a square tree!!!" "What is this, Mars?" "and orange trees!" "sooo cute, don't you think?"

And the green dumpsters! Everywhere! In teams of four. So important, that they even have their own parkinglots, displacing half the sidewalk. Add a sticky sweet smell to it. Ahhh, everybody knows them, everybody goes there, it's nice.

Overall I became a super sensitive person for two weeks straight. Maybe also due to the fact, that a local girl named Almaza seduced me every night.

My best experience during the Imagination School: Going back to Copenhagen, viewing the city with a completely new set of eyes. And, I've got 30 new friends on facebook! (I don't have facebook, but it happened to someone I know).





PART 2 – WORKSHOP



2.0 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

The students were mixed into 5 workshop teams of 7 students from different universities and working together for 10 days. The first days was predominantly exploring the city, discussed particulars and potentials together in the teams based on the tutors outlined topics. Half-way through the workshop was an informal presentation where analysis and ideas was tested on the other student teams. The last days were the findings during the week summarized and represented in physical installations as a part conclusion of the process.

The 5 workshop teams were guided by eight tutors from Beirut and Copenhagen. Each of the tutor teams had prepared a specific topic based on the overall theme. The tutors presented the topics to the students in the morning of the symposium day where after the students allocated into the teams.

The allocation of the students was self organised among the students. A large sheet indicated horizontally the 5 workshop teams and vertically number of students from each university available. Everyone, except the students, left the workspace and 45 min later a full sheet had been negotiated between the students and the workshop could start.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Self-organized studnet team
allocation.



2.1 TEAM 1

City Culture through the unplanned nightlife; the entertainment zone from District//S to the Beirut River.

The workshop will aim to study the development of bars, cafes, restaurants, galleries and performance spaces occupying older vernacular buildings that were developed without planning that is usually common in formal urban entertainment districts. From SOLIDERE's east limit with the District//S to Beirut's northern entrance at the Beirut River.



PHOTOS LEFT:
Slides from tutor Mr. Chadi Saroufim's presentation of the workshop theme for team 1.

Tutor: Chadi Saroufim

The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

Students

Anne Sophie Luel, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

Elias Anka, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

Elio Abou Jaoude, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

Niels Edvard, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

Nihal Halime, Lebanese American University, School of Architecture & Design, Beirut

Rania Nouaihed, American University Beirut, Faculty of Landscape, Beirut

Satanay Kaghadou, Architectural Student, Damascus



Elio Abou Jaoude

Niels Edvard

Elias Anka

Anne Sofie

Rania Nouaihed

Nihal Halime

Satanay Kahgadou

Process

By Elias Anka

Our team was formed as follows: One Syrian, two Danish and four Lebanese. The process of getting to know each other and breaking the ice didn't take much time and effort which was really convenient and a necessary catalyst to start sharing ideas, suggestions and solutions without hesitation.

Hence, discovering Beirut as a team and specifically Mar Mkhahl was a whole new interesting experience as I was led to notice elements of the city I've never been aware of: the city's urban planning, the connections between one street and another, the diversity of small shops and businesses and their irrational disposition one next to the other as you can spot a garage, a florist and a coffin shop coexisting harmoniously on the ground floor of a random residential building..

Discovering new secret places was the highlight of every walk and the common sense of peacefulness, tranquillity and serenity as we take shelter in a coffee place having a hot drink sharing experiences and key moments while it's pouring heavily made it all one great adventure.

Brainstorming was an everyday necessary morning ritual to knit our thoughts all together, plan the day, and recapture key moments of the one before..

The real challenge though was cooperating with the different point of views, working methods and assignment approaches. Seven teammates, seven minds, seven imaginations. How to deal with a package full of rich creative ideas? How to narrow it down to cultural institutions? What to keep? How to present it in a smart interesting way? How to link our assignment with other teams?

That wasn't an obvious task and sometimes we'd feel as if we're not heading anywhere, as if we're not certain what we're doing but at the end of the day, we'd look back and notice that it's all part of the experience, working with people with different cultural background, noting differences and similarities, making new friends ... It's all part of the workshop.

DRAWING RIGHT, LEFT:
Things of interest in the
Gemmayze and Mar Mikael
area.

DRAWING RIGHT, RIGHT TOP:
Research area Gemmayze and
Mar Mikael.

PHOTO RIGHT, RIGHT DOWN:
Reference photos and mapping
of two of the items of interest
in Mar Mikael.

Things of interest

Open entrances



Squared trees



Staircases



Colored buildings



Zebra stripes



Pubs & Bars



Trash cans



Art galleries



Orange trees



Graffiti



Gas stations



Secret places



Findings

By Niels Edvard Nørgaard Sørensen

Cars are great. Beirut is great.

Along the Beirut river is a wide sidewalk. You can't get to it by foot, and it is very dangerous to park on the highway. So why is the sidewalk there? We don't know.

In Gemmayze there are a lot of pups, bars and restaurants. It's easy money basically. People can go there by car, have fun, get drunk, and leave by car.

In Mar Mikhael there are a lot of old empty courtyard-houses, and former workshops slowly being turned into one big entertainment zone like Gemmayze.

This is what we saw during our walks in the area. We choose to register things in Mar Mikhael that we personally found interesting, in hopes of understanding the area better. After examining our maps, we started to question the quality of the entertainment zone.

What happened to the quiet courtyards with the orange trees that someone once planted?

Where are the beautifully paved, public squares that people cherish?

Where is the water? The ocean?

Where are the kids and the elderly people?

The playgrounds?

Why move the mechanic and the hairdresser to fit in a new restaurant? Professions that create diversity and life in the area.

We choose three sites perpendicular on the main street in Mar Mikhael:

A large scale lot by the seaside highway where a large mall is being build. Here we reintroduce the water element; a large fish tank towards the road. Linking the harbor and highway with Mar Mikhael.

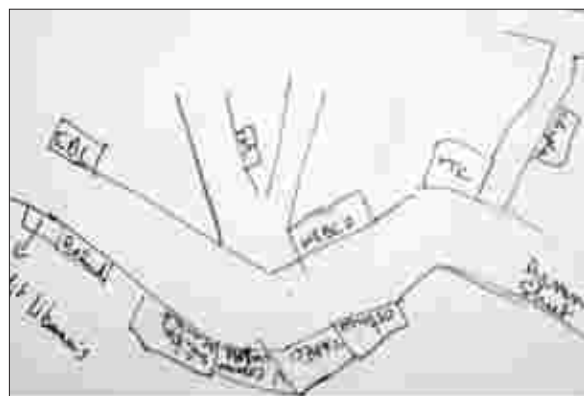
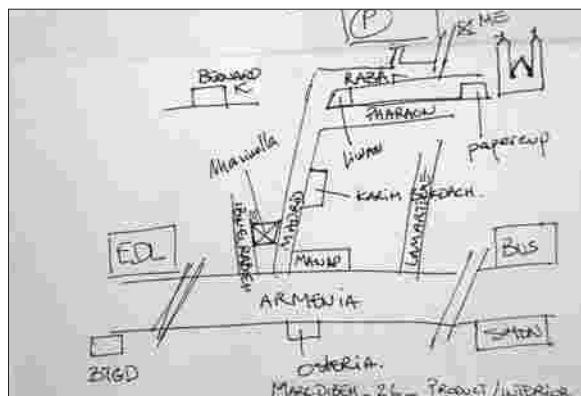
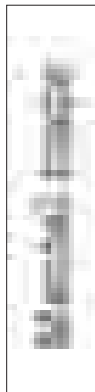
A medium scale site on a curve on the main street, a gas-station. Paving the site with mosaic, planting trees, opening a bookshop in to levels. Creating a meeting point and moving the gas-station to the highway.

A small scale site in an old courtyard house. Creating a home for elderly people and a place for people to meet across generations.

But how can we change it?

DRAWING RIGHT TOP:
Mental maps made by people living in the area.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Team members drawing a collective mental map of the area.





DRAWING LEFT:
Team 1 collective mental map
drawing of Mar Mikael.

DRAWING RIGHT TOP:
Ideas for linking the city and
harbour by introducing a large
fish tank along the highway.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Site for the proposed combined
Aquarium, Playground, Parking
and Mall project.



Aquarium, Playground, Parking, Mall



DRAWING LEFT TOP:
Ideas for creating a meeting point at an existing gas station by paving the site with mosaics, planting square orange trees and opening a bookshop.

DRAWING RIGHT TOP:
Ideas for an old peoples home in an old courtyard house and creating a place to meet across generations.

Public Square, Bookshop, Toilets, Tiled Floors, Trees

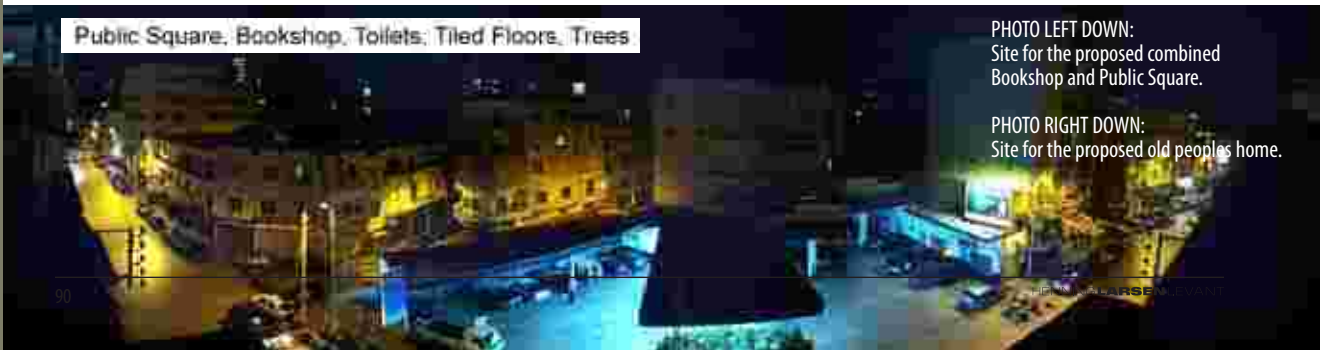
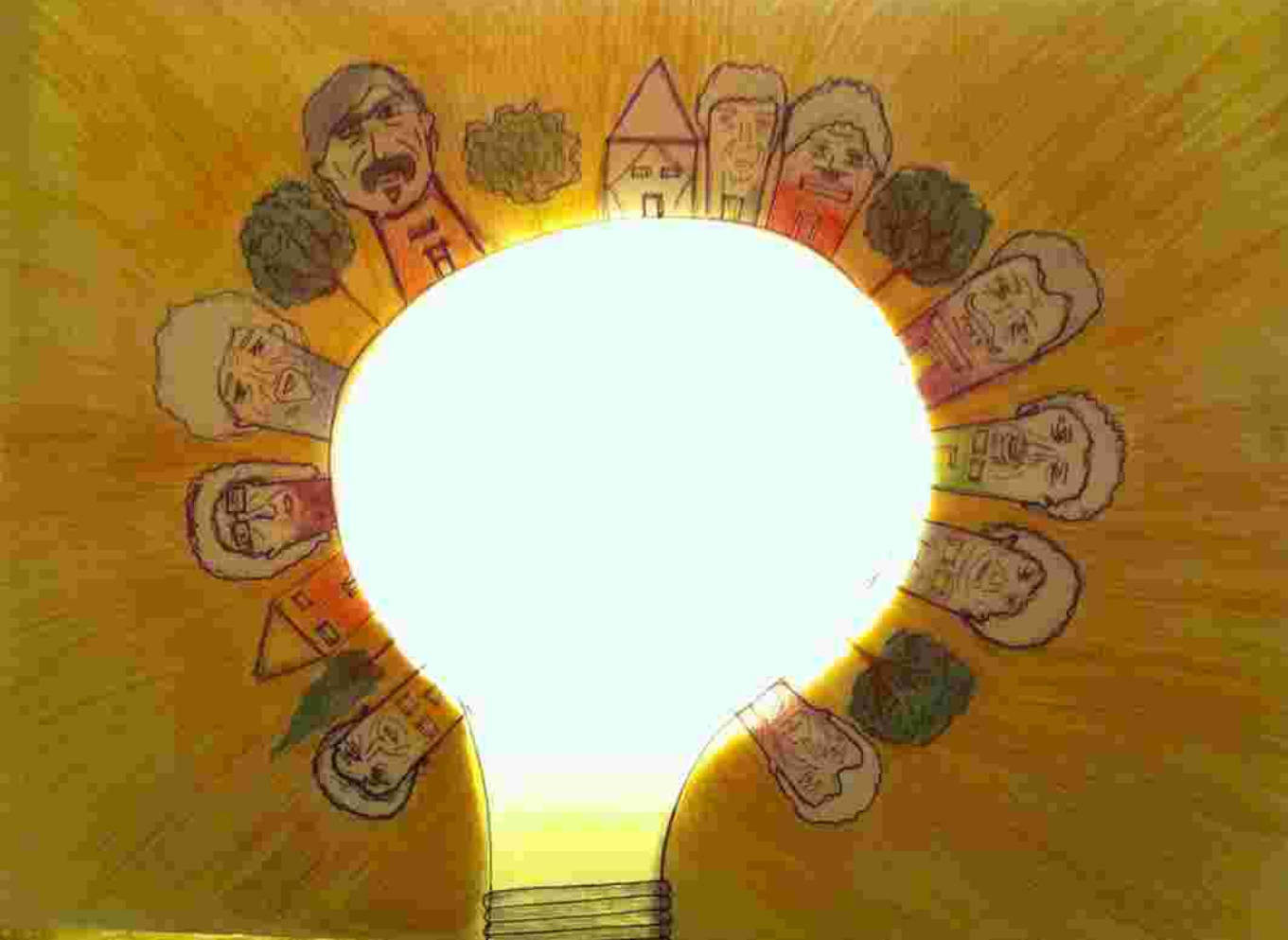


PHOTO LEFT DOWN:
Site for the proposed combined Bookshop and Public Square.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Site for the proposed old peoples home.

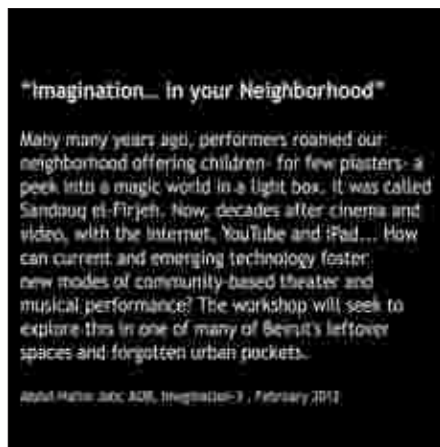


Home for Elderly People, Courtyard, Fountain

2.2 TEAM 2

Imagination in your neighbourhood

Many many years ago, performers roamed the city offering children- for few piasters- a peek into a magic world in a light box. It was called Sandouq el-Firjeh. Now, decades after cinema and video, with the Internet, YouTube and iPad... How can current and emerging technology foster new modes of community-based theater and musical performance? The workshop will seek to explore this in one of many of Beirut's leftover spaces and forgotten urban pockets. [Research keywords: صندوق الفرجة , street performance, mobile theater, bandstand, stage, Dar Onboz, Maktabat al-Sabil, 98weeks, Teatro Del Mondo...]



PHOTOS LEFT:
Slides from tutor Mr. Abdul-Halim Jabr's presentation of the workshop theme for team 2.

Tutor: Abdul-Halim Jabr
American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut.

Students

Anders Heede, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Hana Itani, American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Joanna Halal, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Marie-joe Tabet, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Nouha Ayoub, Architectural Student, Damascus
Rona Koobayssi, School of Architecture & Design, Beirut
Sofie Castler, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen



Abdul-Halim Jabr

Marie-joe Tabet

Rona Koobayssi

Jonna Halal

Sofie Castler

Ahders Heede

Nouha Ayoub

Hana Itani

Process & Findings

By Anders Heede

Is it about the activity or the place?

Testing the public space

Once upon a time, 7 strangers from the four corners of the world met at imaginary school in Beirut. As they roamed the city and discovered its secrets, they came up with a curious game to bring together people of different ages and habits.

They decided to let a beautiful Carpet take them away on a tour around the city. For the trip, they brought an old Kanoon -a brass hearth- filled with memories and stories. The Kanoon gathers people around the “fire” and brings memories up.

It started as a rainy and cloudy day, but as soon as the sun came out, the beautiful Carpet took the 7 to the Corniche, a precious and very popular street by the sea. The beautiful Carpet offered a picnic on the ground and the Kanoon offered fire for roasting marshmallows.

At first there were no smiles between the people at the Corniche, and no one came near the 7 at the beautiful Carpet. But suddenly a bread salesman on a bicycle came by, and didn't doubt a minute where to stop. . . of course next to the happy group.

When the smell of roasted marshmallows began to spread, passing people began to be more curious. Some observed from the distance, and some came near without talking. Some discussed what was happening, but few made contact.

A little girl in red tasted for the first time in her life a roasted marshmallow, and it was even better than her lollypop. . . she threw it away. At the same time a family stood few steps away wondering if the 7 were performing voodoo or black magic. Why does it seem so strange to do picnic at the Courniche? It is a place for everyone, and the 7 enjoyed their gathering as it was the most normal thing to do. The Corniche was welcoming for everyone, especially for seven strangers on the Carpet.

Later that afternoon, the beautiful Carpet took the 7 further to a sidewalk at Hamra Street. This place was very crowded, but all people did was walk, and walk, and walk. . . Here the beautiful Carpet again offered a picnic on the ground.

The Kanoon offered heating for a nice cup of Turkish coffee and for roasting chestnuts. A couple of guys immediately joined the group on the beautiful Carpet. As the smell of coffee spread around, so did the storytelling across the group.

PHOTO RIGHT:

Team 2 with their carpet and kanoon performing one of their experiment when an old lady decided to have some rest on the carpet with them.



Nice porcelain cups and saucers were passed around, like a hinge between people who offered their time to be together with strangers. The unfriendly and crowded side of Hamra was turned into a cozy place of resting.

In the middle of this crowded commercial area of Beirut, a gathering of people of different nationalities and religions was created in a peaceful way. The language was difficult to understand, but it didn't matter. New friendships were formed.

Passing people and strangers passed through the narrow space. Some found it awkward, but acceptable, and few stopped for a second just to imagine the moment.

On a concrete island in the middle of heavy traffic in Sassine, the beautiful Carpet landed with the 7. They started to enjoy how it was possible to be out on the sidewalks of Beirut. Of course the Kanoon again offered the gathering fire.

Because of the earlier trips of the streets of Beirut, the 7 felt much more comfortable about being out, and they no more noticed the noisy traffic around them. They didn't either notice the attention from passing strangers.

Between a lot of interested visitors around the beautiful Carpet an Old Lady came. She had a marshmallow for the first time of her life and she enjoyed it a lot. The 7 invited her to join them at the Carpet, but she doubted her ability to sit on the ground.

After enjoying the marshmallow picnic on the traffic island, the Old Lady started to explain what the 7 were doing. She felt at home and enjoyed the company. She started to tell her story. . .

Gefinor story!

Corniche Story!

Finally, on a rainy day, the beautiful Carpet and the Kanoon retired to a living room. But the 7 continued to keep them in their memories. And, they travelled back home, each carrying a new story.

Once upon a time. . .

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Experiments on Hamra street.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Roasting marshmallows and offering coffee to people passing by.





PHOTOS RIGHT & LEFT:
Team2 making mid-workshop
presentation for the other
teams.





KEYWORDS

Sesine
Religion question
Island for pedestrians crossing
Old lady, Grand ma

Speed
Intimate space
Smells
Under eye level
Narrow space

Tourist lady
Hogni + Mikael
Breadmann
Black Magic
Good joke
Girl in red
Daily star

Carsound
Sound of the city
Hamra street
Sesine
Gefinor
Corniche



PHOTOS RIGHT:
Experiments on the Corniche.

PHOTOS LEFT:
Experiments on Sassine square.



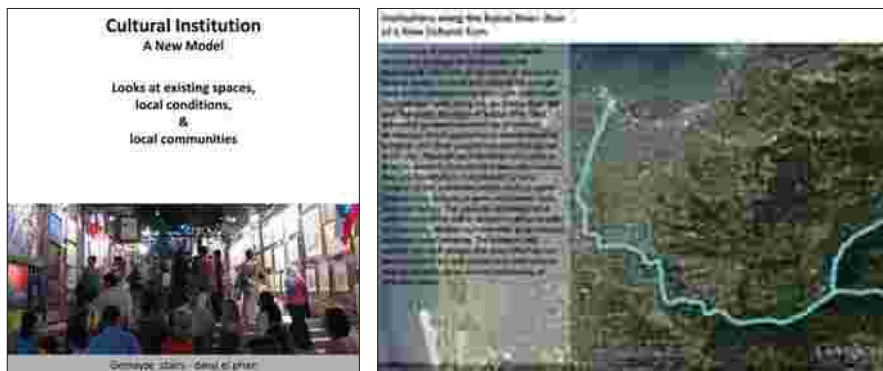
يا حيث الوعد الأول... والحب الأول...
يا حيث كلنا الشعر...
وختناه باكين السخيل...
يا أهلي لولادة أهدانا النصر...
من قبي ملام أنت وقت...
لا يوجد قلبك شيء، بعينه شيء، حملك شيء...
أنت ختصيت الأعمار...
يا حقل اللؤلؤ...
يا ميناء العشق...
لماذا لا لتغير الآن...
يا حبيبتى...
يا قللى...
يا أحلامى...
يا أوزلي الشغوية...
عاشا نكلم يا بلوت...
يا بنت الدنيا يا بيوت...



2.3 TEAM 3

Cultural institutions along the Beirut River

The absence of planning in Beirut has always resulted in a collage of spontaneous and fragmented urbanisms in the midst of which very distinct modes of social and cultural life emerge. Such urban scenarios came into sight in the inner city and even more along the periphery. Over the past few years, the edges of Beirut River have witnessed an unprecedented rise in cultural institutions which appropriated vacant industrial buildings and other unused and deserted spaces in the city. Although such developments tend to draw on western schemes for urban regeneration, they are nonetheless championed by some random locally embedded urban catalysts which contextualize projects in terms of location, type, user, and design. The research examines those cultural interstices which operate under principles of temporary, flexible and reversible programming and provisional planning. The students will explore one such prospective space that has not been exploited yet and experiment with suitable and sustainable urban devices functioning at different scales.



PHOTOS LEFT:
Slides from tutors Chantal El-Hayek & Elie Harfouche's presentation of the workshop theme for team 3.

Tutors

Chantal El-Hayek and Elie Harfouche
Lebanese American University, Urban Planning Institute, Beirut

Students

Alexander Khoury, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Carole Dib, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Chirstofer Hjortholt, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Erlend Lindstad, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Normin AL-Halash, American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Nour Harasrani, Architectural Student, Damascus
Ruba Dagher, American University Beirut, Faculty of Landscape, Beirut



Elie Harfouche

Chantal El-Hayek

Erlend Lindstad

Alexander Khoury

Chirstofer Hjotholt

Ruba Dagher

Carole Dib

Nour Harastani

Process and findings

By Nour Harastani and Rouba Dagher

Beirut River has always had a negative undertone as an unplanned and undeveloped area. In our research, we had the opportunity to 'reverse' that prejudice by exploring its other side. Over the past few years, the edges of the River underwent a first-time rise in cultural institutions which occupied vacant industrial buildings and other unemployed spaces in the city.

In our excursions at the workshop, we examined different locations along the River from its northern tip that merges with the Mediterranean Sea to the site at Anater Zbeide, a cultural heritage spot which fairly defines the end of the urban part in the south east. We experienced two types of cultural institutions; the permanent ones that take advantage of the built environment (for instance art galleries like Ashkal Alwan, Beirut Art Center, Art Lounge, Sfeir-Semler Gallery) and other temporary interstices which are less noticeable but have huge potential for development through flexible and reversible programming. One such type of informal cultural expression is the wall where thoughts have been translated into graffiti on that vertical plane; another is the Sunday Market at Jisr el Wati. We were also intrigued by some random locally embedded urban catalysts created by individuals along the River and the adjacent highway (like some tiny stairs built by users in interstitial green spaces).

Exploration strategy:

First we started by exploring the River through its different typologies, and through the different areas defined by the six bridges that cross it: Charles Helou, Armenia, Yerevan, Jisr el Wati, Furn el Chebak and Jisr el Basha, connecting Beirut with its suburbs and seven municipalities from north to south east.

The team split into two groups, each exploring one side of the river and then crossing to the other side via one of the links. The second group would be doing the opposite sides. It was always intriguing as we walked on one side to imagine what is on the other side. Through group discussions at the crypt, we shared our findings.

Site visit:

Three days of walking along the River from Jisr El Basha to Quarantina informed us about the different urban and exurban sites along the edges _ the inhabited and the deserted ones. We summarized our journey in sequences:

- *The green zone* _ a buffer zone around Jisr El Basha area. It is abandoned and isolated.

DRAWING RIGHT:
Mapping of the the areas
around the river.



- *The sidewalk* along the highway where one would experience a free cultural expression created by pedestrians. The site rather exposes itself more to the motorists than to the pedestrian_ a phenomenon very common to all Beirutis. That stretch covers two zones out of seven. Its main attraction is the Graffiti Art that covers almost the entire wall.

- *The industrial areas* which are being converted into art spaces_ a Western approach and a rather convenient way of recycling old built work. We had the chance to visit four institutions, each having its own characteristics. 'Ashkal Alwan', for instance, is an interior public space that focuses on the production process and providing a work space for making art, yet always seeking users and visitors. On the other hand, 'Beirut Art Center' is more about exhibitions and consumption of art and culture. 'Art Lounge' accommodates a different type of space which combines leisure and culture. It caters for a lounge and a place for eating and drinking. 'Sfeir Semler' gallery is a prototypical art gallery with a panoramic view of Beirut.

- *The Sunday Market* (Souk el Ahad) which seems like a large empty space under the bridge when it is visited on a Saturday or any week day turns into a busy and extremely crowded spot on a Sunday morning. This type of space attracts a particular crowd of people that do not frequent places like the art galleries in Quarantina.

Cultural trail:

As individuals from different backgrounds, we had diverse readings of those sequences. Each one of us was aware of a set of elements, problems, and ideas that were influenced by the character of the place. Each one of us embraced a unique approach to identify and characterize 'Lebanese culture' and its complex constituents. The discussions of those definitions were at the basis of our project proposal. Below are some points and definitions that were discussed:

- The four types of **sequences** had different users, characters, and cultural types. The user may pass through two sequences without perceiving the opportunities hidden in those places.

- Type of **users**: The cultural institutions are attractive to a limited number of people who use their cars for commuting and attending an event or an exhibition. Some of the institutions are trying to market their place in order to reach more users. This contrasts with the Sunday Market which is a more accessible place but does not attract art lovers. It is visited by relatively poor communities who seek out cheap merchandise. Making those different types of users connect was a major concern for us.

DRAWING RIGHT, LEFT:
Ideas for River sequences.

PHOTOS RIGHT, RIGHT:

1. Anataer Zbeide
2. Graffiti on the highway
3. "Ashkal Alwan" interior
4. Market during the week.
5. Market on Sundays

Keywords:

The following keywords informed the production process:

- Graffiti as cultural expression and as tool for communicating needs
- River versus built environment
- Defined and random users of space
- Fluid versus static
- Landmarks
- Safety
- Parking spaces
- Connected versus disconnected
- Inclusion versus exclusion
- Reversible programming
- Diverse public
- Crossing culture versus gathering culture
- Framing
- Folding and unfolding spaces



- 'Ashkal Alwan' represented for us a good model of a cultural institution that introduces an interior public space versus privatizing an exterior public space. It was pleasing for us to see all the common materials that are used in streets (like paving) to be employed inside so that the interior of the building becomes an extension of the public terrain outside. In our definition it was a foldable public space_ one that operates inside out.

- We had to think about **motorist** versus **pedestrian** and how each **explores the city and culture in the city**. The Lebanese use their cars as the main transportation device and spend a lot of time on highways driving at a low speed due to heavy traffic. The low speed signified for us a similar chance for someone to explore inside his/her car what pedestrians get to discover as they freely walk. In a car though you are contained and you are not free to stop or change route or even direction of your gaze. You are also limited to the frame of the car window.

- We looked at **the river** as a tool (partly natural, partly man-built) linking all the sequences and connecting to the static built environment.

- **Safety** for a Lebanese means a private space. For foreigners, the notion of safety is very much tied with the characteristics and qualities of spaces and the nature of the crowd in them.

- **Culture** is defined by values of a society and the activities they engage.

- The Lebanese culture is more of a 'crossing' culture than a 'gathering' one. We focused on this theme in our proposal.

- The human scale compared to the river scale was puzzling and challenging for us. It was a question of how to "humanize" those different spaces.

- Injecting Culture along the river to create some sort of continuity with the existing cultural institutions and to make the different parts capable of regenerating through time was a major goal.

- The built environment encourages the users to exploit the cultural institutions; the 'built environment – civil society – cultural institutions' rule is reversible. One encourages and feeds into the other.

- Mixed-use and diverse programming in Lebanese culture will make the space work better since it allows users to exploit multiple functions co-existing in a place. This will attract more users to cultural places.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 3 preparing the
installation for their exhibition.



Our product:

INSTALLATION :

Inspired by the large geometrical window openings separating the inside of the cultural institutions from the outside, the idea was to create a 1:1 scale installation that shares the sequence of our experiences at the River and its various urban and exurban sites. The installation proposes a multifunctional structure. It can be implemented and adapted to different situations along the River. It has the quality of a flexible and provisional cultural institution which can serve as a stand for trading at the Sunday Market, an exhibition booth by the arty River wall, or a shelter in the deserted green spaces. Most importantly it can fold in and out to become a map for the site highlighting the nascent spaces.

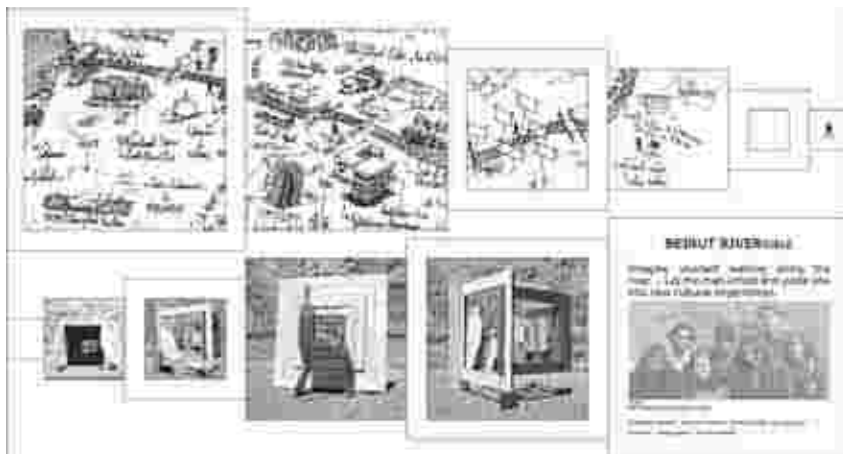
BOOKLET:

The projected map designed and incorporated in a handy booklet is the translation of our perception of culture along the Beirut River that we opted to share with the public. It tells a story that is a crossbreed between students from different backgrounds. Imagine yourself walking along the River, let the map unfold and guide you into new cultural experiences.

PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
The unfolding map installation
at the exhibition.



PHOTO LEFT & RIGHT DOWN:
The unfolded map booklet.



2.4 TEAM 4

The Cultural institution as public space exchanging with the layers of the city.

The goal of the project is to examine the urban corner, for its spatial meaning and thereby unfold a public cultural institution in one to one.



PHOTOS LEFT:
Slides from tutors Mr. Høgni Hansen and Mr. Michael Droob's presentation of the workshop theme for team 4.

Tutors: Høgni Hansen and Michael Droob
The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture and Point, Copenhagen.

Students

Hanady Medles, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

Houda Fansa, Architectural Student, Damascus

Joy Younan, American University Beirut, Faculty of Landscape, Beirut

Kim Akiki, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

Layal Merhi, School of Architecture & Design, Beirut

Sidsel Sander, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

Thea Hallak, American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut



Joy Younan

Kim Akiki

Thea Hallak

Høgni Hansen

Layal Merhi

Huda Fensa

Hanady Medles

Michael Droob

Sofie Mackprang

Process

By Hanady Medlej

The goal of our project was to examine the urban corner, for its spatial meaning and thereby unfold a public cultural institution in one to one. So after having formed a mixed international group based on the “Curniture” theme we proceeded with the guidance of our tutors Høgni Hansen & Michael Droob from the XXL scale to the XS: we started out by pointing out the main big regions in Beirut that are candidates for debate and cultural exchange, then we got dispatched into small groups to scout three of the areas coming back with different photos of different corners, developing by then a sense of attachment and naming them according to the stories they seem to tell, after that, each of the group members chose one of his own corners to remake it as a 3d model of photo collages (what we liked to call “Mollages”) : the idea was to see how this usual unnoticed corner could unfold into a magical space communicating an idea, a feelin, a statement. Let’s say that the results were very expressive!

Getting to the second phase of our workshop, we decided on narrowing down the corners and choosing one completely different corner which we decided upon as a group and we immediately started experimenting on site each on his own idea of a cultural institution: getting people to slow down and ask us what we were doing, identifying some ready-mades in the site, adding some features, observing and making events, and even blowing soap bubbles in the middle of the crowded street.

Having Captured the corner’s intangible elements and spirit we were then able to produce in the exhibition space a 1:1 abstract model of our corner, projecting the street activity, the ambient sounds and creating therefore and interchangeable space that represents the different layers of the city and that could become later on a platform for many numerous Cultural institutions



PHOTO RIGHT TOP:
Examples of corners of interest
in Beirut - the “communicator”
and the “transprotable” garden.

PHOTO RIGHT DOWN:
Making of the collage models
= Mollages.

PHOTO LEFT:
Searching for interesting
corners in Beirut.





PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 4 on site, a corner in Burj
Hammoud, identifying ready-
mades.

PHOTO LEFT:
The Mollages - Physical models
of of corners.





Findings

By Loyal Merhi

Interested in corners, curtains, and street furniture in Beirut, our team performed the research process by studying various corners, their value, character, and qualities. We understood these corners as, in a way, representations of the neighborhoods or areas, and hence the city. As a result, we chose to build a corner in 1/1 as a cultural symbol for Beirut. The corner was complete with its form and spaces, its visual texture, the furniture or accessories that characterized it, and its relationship to the ground surface. Items collected from garbage bins were added, including a worn down pair of shoes and an unused bra. The “urban platform” varied the experience in relation to the corner, and the installation’s placement in the exhibition was intended to mimic the existing situation.

PHOTO RIGHT:
1/1 corner installation at the
showcase.



PHOTO LEFT, LEFT:
Inside the corner installation.

PHOTO LEFT, RIGHT:
Team members explaining the
installation at the showcase.



2.5 TEAM 5

Buildings as Civic Infrastructure

The workshop will examine the built fabric of Beirut, to inform a discussion and develop design ideas regarding what kind of 'cultural institutions' would work with the various building typologies found. Can in fact building use be associated with building type?



PHOTOS LEFT:
Slides from tutors Mr. Tom Hay and Ms. Ingela Larsson's presentation of the workshop theme for team 5.

Tutors

Tom Hay, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Ingela Larsson, Practicing Architect, Henning Larsen Architects, Copenhagen

Students

Azza Hajjar, American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut
Khoulood Hfzey, Architectural Student, Damascus
Philip Stensrud, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Ramzi Naja, Lebanese American University, School of Architecture & Design, Beirut
Rita Abou Samra, American University Beirut, Faculty of Landscape, Beirut
Sofie Mackprang, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen
Walid Matter, The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut



Azza Hajjar

Khouloud Hefzy



Walid Mattar



Rita Abou Samra



Sofie Mackprang



Tom Hay



Ramzi Naja



Ingela Larsson



Philip Stensrud

Process

by Ramzi Naja

The eight days spent researching and constructing were loaded with layers and layers of process. Our team started with light discussions targeting typologies in Hamra and their potential reuse via the study of the relationship between them and the functions they may host.

The first move was to go to the area and walk its streets, picking up feelings and observations, photographing types and events. Soon the team would collectively decide to go beyond typologies and address urban issues characteristic of Hamra, targeting a definition of what the culture institution may be there.

Over the first few days we would walk through the site time and again, first in groups, then alone, then in pairs again where interests crossed paths. Eventually the group was recollected observing the shelter, the sign, and the urban pocket as the cultural institutions of Hamra. While Sofie and Khuluod had a coffee at Café Younes and benefited from local artists' thoughts on culture, Philip and I had a sandwich at Marrouche, one of, if not the oldest sandwich joint in the country, assessing its shelter's significance towards its classification as a cultural institution.

All through the idea of the ground floor urban carpet guided our thoughts, being an inspiration in our mapping, or as we called it, our 'collective memory' of Hamra. We then created a shelter of strings mimicking the concept of a shelter we had grown fascinated by.

The installation itself came along almost inadvertently, where the room we built boldly raised questions pertaining to the shelter, the pocket, the sign, but also the entrance, the enclosure, the passages, the connection, and the number of members required to constitute a cultural institution.

The process is left open ended with a cup carrying pens attached to the exterior of our room, asking people to write their own questions on their way out. What are yours?

PHOTO RIGHT:
3D map installation of the
teams collective memory of
Hamra.



Findings

by Philip Stensrud

What is a suitable cultural institution in Beirut in 2012? – A rather overwhelming task to resolve in just 10 days. Nevertheless it was an assignment that challenged us and pushed us to use our own experiences and backgrounds in new ways and see if or how we could combine them to give a collective answer.

In the end our group decided not to give a precise definition, but to leave our answer open. The reason for this was not failure to produce, but rather our desire to share what we felt had been the most valuable output of the project - our common thoughts, experiences and discussions. This was perhaps a surprising way to end the project on our behalf, since we started our process and based much of our work on very precise facts. But in a way that sum up the purpose of the workshop. Facts are not always as straightforward as we tend to believe.

There is in a way a Lebanese, a Syrian and Scandinavian way to register and process facts, but as we experienced, that is no hindrance to share and develop new idées and perceptions. At least not as long as there is a framework that allow us to have an open discussion.



PHOTO RIGHT:
Making of the physical 1/1
installation.

PHOTO LEFT, LEFT:
Discussing and searching
for facts about a cultural
institution in Hamra.

PHOTO LEFT, RIGHT:
Team 5 corner at the mid-way
team presentation.





PHOTO LEFT:
The Shelter - a 1/1 installation
of a cultural institution in the
cultural institution.

PHOTO RIGHT, TOP:
Inside the shelter.

PHOTO RIGHT, DOWN:
Visitors were invited to write
their thoughts on the shelter
walls.





Høgni Hansen & Michael Droob

CORNERS

By Manuel de Solá-Morales

The corners of the city reveal to us, in diverse forms and situations, this condition of place of encounter, of superstition and of conflict.

The corner brings about the coincidence of different people. Physical intersection is as important as social interchange.

In this they are smaller-scale models of social interaction that the good city as a whole not only recognizes, but also encourages.

REFLECTION

Then finally the cultural institution became a mental image in the individual mind - the city corner as an intangible cultural institution.

It could be a specific corner or it could be any corner in the city.

The corner captures something to remember or something to imagine! It is both past and future.

TESTIMONIAL

Being a part of Imagination is an environment full of people from different cultures, with many perceptions of the same reality.

To make this work you have to use your imagination.

Imagination makes you grow.

Chantal El Hayek

It was compelling for me the consensus reached at the end of the workshop among Beirutis and the Syrian and Europeans visitors (revealed through the discussions engaged, the work presented, and the various processes employed by the groups) that the best means of operation on a city like Beirut demands a lot of imagination and looking at the intangible (what the workshop called for at the start) and a minimum of radicalism as the Lebanese capital has always resisted extreme planning and favored more natural and unrestrained growth informed by locally rooted social and cultural patterns.

Thea Hallak

the way, curious discussions start to occur about Lebanon, Syria, Denmark, most of them resulting from the previous day's tour around the city.





PART 3 – SHOWCASE



3.0 SHARING FINDINGS

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

The students' observations and thoughts were showcased at a public opening at the St. Joseph Crypt in Beirut on the last day of the workshop with more than 140 friends, colleagues and family members attending.

The 5 teams had now for a week worked in each of their separate corners in the workspace which had transformed the space into an intimate laboratory of thoughts and ideas. An informal presentation was held half-way through the week, where analysis and ideas was shared and tested on the other student teams, but now was the time to share with the public.

The findings now had to be summarized and represented in physical installations as a conclusion of the last week's process. The teams had to move out of their corners and coordinate with the other teams putting together an exhibition in the main space of St. Joseph Crypt.

PHOTO RIGHT:
The entrance of St. Joseph
Crypt just before opening of the
exhibition to the public.



PHOTO LEFT:
Welcome to the exhibition.

INMAGISTIO



PROCESS & PRODUCTION

By Hani Fakhani

Two days before the exhibition opening none of the group had produced anything to show in the sharing findings exhibition.

I could feel how all the participants went quiet in their teams trying to take some decisions, it was very challenging that they had only two day to install the exhibition, but that was not the only hard part of it, but the fact that the findings were not always tangible fine information. They were a mixed of none finished texts, open ended researches, different reflections of the workshop experience and experiments, and even a lot of different personal feelings and perceptions . The question of what to do? was dominating the atmosphere for a while.

I do not think that any of the teams were clear and having a specifically designed products before they already started producing them the other day, whether it is one to one physical model, big "questioning" installation, long strips of photos telling the story of the experiments, or even a very small 10 by 10 small booklet.

They started to produce as they had no time to loss and kept taking more decisions as they were going. Decisions of what to do exactly, how to do it, and how to put their different feelings and perceptions in one group product.

It was a very unique active two days of physically collages of the findings, information , experiences, intangibles, personal feelings, and the participants different perceptions into one big exhibition room.



PHOTO LEFT:
Building up the exhibition space.

PHOTO RIGHT:
The final exhibition space.

SHOWCASE EVENING

By Nihal Halimeh

After one week and four days of working and exploring, after all the discussions and the field trips, a new space is born. A space where all the joints meet to define a platform of imagination composed of different ideas and backgrounds. This platform's constitution is to create a cultural dialogue between architecture and culture, between nature and human, between different opposing entities. This space is composed of different ideas that have been materialized to form different physical installations and reach different approaches.

When you first enter the exhibition room, you find a street element that is emerged in a private space. Afterwards, you experience the entrance through passing by the huge corner that resembles the different corners you find between the streets. As you walk further inside, you see a private closed space standing in the middle of the room that is surrounded by natural orange trees and different colorful drawings. By the end of the exhibition you pass by the maze that takes you into a completely different world.

All these private and public physical installations that are materialized in this exhibition room have been integrated into the visitor's minds and souls to keep a cultural touch on each one.

The exhibition was a cultural institution in itself. It allowed the intangible spirit to touch the visitor's creative and cultural sides that some did not know existed.





PHOTO LEFT:
Team 4, coner installation
forming the entrance of the
exhibition space.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 5, shelter installation in
the exhibition space.





PHOTO LEFT:
Team 1, installations where
the imaginative 2D drawings
become 3D installations ties
together by oranges with
written thoughts.



PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 4, display of the Mollages.







PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 5, sketch map installation
of Hamra.

PHOTO LEFT TOP:
Team 4, final corner installation.



PHOTO LEFT DOWN:
Close-up of team 4 Mollage.





PHOTO RIGHT:
Team 3, unfolding map
installation of the Beirut River
Cultural Trail.

PHOTO LEFT, TOP
Team 2, close-up of filmstrip
story illustrating the
experiments with the carpet at
various locaton in Beirut.



PHOTO LEFT, DOWN:
Team 2, with their carpet and
kanoon offering marshmallows
and coffee at the exhibition.





PHOTO LEFT, TOP
Picture story of activities during
the two-weeks school where
shown in the front room of the
exhibition space.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Participants and guests explore
the five teams findings.



PHOTO LEFT, DOWN:
Image from the showcase
evening.



3.1 EVALUATION

By Anne Marie Galmstrup

The exhibition was dismantled and the items divided between the universities. Email addresses and photos were exchanged and finally everyone gathered in the on the blanket in the main space to evaluate.

It had been an intense two weeks of speed learning. All senses had been exposed to both new colleagues and a new environment. The many communal discussions were hard and internal vocabularies across cultures had to be established to focus discussions.

There had been much confusion trying to think solutions for the theme while at the same time trying to get a grip of the complex city of Beirut. Without the fixed product requirement at the start it was hard but somehow the last days, making the physical installations together, more fell into place and the idea of an open-ended process seemed less frightening.

What was the intangible and why deal with such a sensitive subject in such a raw and chaotic city? Did we find the result of the “suitable cultural institution and its synergy with civil society”? Maybe not a solution, but we had explored the complexity and diversity of the city through eachothers perspectives, which we had to respond to and curiously shared ideas with. Maybe we where actually our selves the cultural institution?

The open-ended process work in teams with colleagues from different learning environments and cultures had proven hard but been an eye-opener. Measuring success for a school like this is difficult - but maybe it is not really about success but what we as individuals learned from a journey with others.

After the evaluation all students drove to Byblos to enjoy a last day together.

PHOTO RIGHT:
Group evaluation on the last day.



Layal Merhi – Personal Statement

For me this workshop was an experiment in the deeper meaning of architecture. We went out discovering Beirut, taking it apart corner by corner, piece by piece, in search of what makes it function the way it does. The way we dismantled the layers of complexity of the city was only possible with a widely multinational group, which ignited the outstanding atmosphere that engulfed the twelve days of learning, producing, and inspiring.

Azza Najjar

Through IMAGINATION, and thanks to this new exposure to other cultures or even to our own sub-cultures, I earned a new view of my own city. But beyond that, talking with others in this workshop brought many insights that I now hold dearly. All in all, I'd say that these days were a delectable exercise for the mind; a discovery of new horizons, of different visions and of ways in which boundaries can bend!



Ramzi Naja – Team5 A sentence does not do this workshop justice. The dynamic was beautiful, the atmosphere was continuously stimulating, and the experience was second to none. We spend two weeks with students and tutors from completely different backgrounds in mixed groups observing and studying the city and its culture from (eventually) one unified view point. I particularly enjoyed collaborating with students from across cultures, from merely strolling down Hamra Street to intricately constructing a space. The process was amazing and the overall product was truly outstanding, not physically, but rather in terms of intellectual development. The workshop was a true success as a study of Beirut's structure and a debate on *suitable cultural institutions*.

Hani Fakhani

Through the imagination workshop, I'm more convinced that the activities that we do is not important by itself but it's more important because of the discussions that is resulted between the participants and between the participant and himself.

And I have learned that the search for the right questions is the main and most important part in the long trip to reach the part of getting valuable answers.



PARTICIPANTS

The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

1. Alexandre Khoury
2. Carole Dib
3. Elias Anka
4. Elio Boujaoudeh
5. Hanady Medlej
6. Joanna Hallal
7. Kim Akiki
8. Marie-Joe Tabet
9. Walid Matar

American University Beirut, Faculty of Architecture, Beirut

10. Azza Najjar
11. Nermin al Halaseh
12. Thea Hallak

American University Beirut, Faculty of Landscape, Beirut

13. Hana Itani
14. Joy Yonan
15. Rania Nouaihed
16. Rita Abou Samra
17. Rouba Dagher

Lebanese American University, School of Architecture & Design, Beirut

18. Layal Merhi
19. Nihal Halimeh
20. Ramzi Naja
21. Rona Koobaissy

Architectural Student, Damascus

22. Houda Fansa
23. Khuluod Hfzey
24. Nouha Ayoub
25. Nour Harastani
26. Satanay Kaghadou

PHOTO RIGHT:
Imagination 3 group photo.

The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

27. Anders Heede
28. Anne Sofie Iuel
29. Christofer Hjortholt
30. Erlend Lindstad
31. Niels Edvard Nørgaard Sørensen
32. Philip Stensrud
33. Sidsel Sander
34. Sofie Castler
35. Sofie Mackeprang



Walks

- 36. George Arbid, AUB
- 37. Maha Nasrallah, AUB
- 38. Serge Yagizi, ALBA (and Talks)
- 39. Jesper Berg

Talks

- 40. Rachid Chamoun, LAU
- 41. Robert Saliba, AUB
- 42. Robin Cole-Hamilton, Cultural Projects
- 43. Louis Becker, Henning Larsen Architects
- 44. Mirene Arsanios, 98 weeks
- 45. Nadim Karam, Atelier Hapsitus
- 46. Thomas Poulsen, FOS
- 47. Joseph Tarrab
- 48. Nadia Touma, Dar Al-Ombuz

Tutors

- 49. Chadi Saroufim, ALBA
- 50. Abdul-Halim Jabr, AUB
- 51. Elie Harfouche, LAU
- 52. Chantal El Hayek, LAU
- 53. Høgni Hansen, The Art Academy
- 54. Michael Droob, Point
- 55. Tom Hay, The Art Academy
- 56. Ingela Larsson, Henning Larsen Architects

Symposium Co-Organiser

- 57. George Zouain, GAIA Heritage (and Talks)
- 58. Alison Kumro, GAIA Heritage

Initiator & Organiser

- 59. Anne Marie Galmstrup, Henning Larsen Architects Levant
- 60. Hani Fakhani, Henning Larsen Architects Levant

PHOTO RIGHT:
Imagination 3 group photo.

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Abdul-Halim Jabr
Elie Harfouche
Chantal El Hayek
Høgni Hansen
Michael Droob
Tom Hay
Ingela Larsson
Howayda Al-Harithy
George Khayat
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George Zouain

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HENNING **LARSEN** LEVANT



