BEIRUT'S CIVIL WAR HOTEL DISTRICT:
PRESEVING THE WORLD'S FIRST HIGH-RISE URBAN BATTLEFIELD

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In memory of my father, who taught me to seek the origins of things
Abstract

My thesis aims at preserving a historic event in Beirut through the proposal of a historic district. The event in question is the Battle of the Hotels, a 5-month urban battle that took place within and around the historic luxury hotel district in the Minet El Husn neighborhood of Beirut at the beginning of the 15-year Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). The battle opposed the left-wing pro-Palestinian Lebanese National Movement against the right-wing Christian-nationalist Phalanges Party. The battle is worth commemorating, and therefore preserving, for its instrumental role in shaping the urban rift that divided the city of Beirut during the Lebanese civil war, violently affecting the lives of all Lebanese citizens for a period of 13 years. Lebanese society shares a violent history that could, if considered a common heritage, be part of its postwar nation-building identity and inspire socio-political reform. The Battle of the Hotels’ significance also lies in its status as the first high-rise urban battle in the world.

As a global historic event, the battle deserves to be commemorated as a peace-building historic district, protesting urban warfare and civil war as the current most common methods for conducting war.

The American practice of mapping Civil War battlefields as part of preserving national military parks was relevant to me for its potential efficacy in representing battles to fellow citizens without the vilification of a particular faction, and the use of similar symbols to qualify military events, movements and positions related to both factions. Mapping is also interesting for its spatial visualization qualities, as it offers the option to compare historic and current urban configurations. In order to determine the boundaries of a potential Battle of the Hotels Historic District, I gathered and listed the chronological events of the battle from several sources and positioned them on a map of Beirut. The urban battlefield map I created contains new kinds of symbols specifically related to urban battlefields.

Beyond its symbolic meanings, the battle of the hotels was first and foremost an architectural and geographical phenomenon, fueled by the spatial qualities the buildings in Beirut offered and the military strategies envisioned within and around them. The transformation of urban areas into historic objects requires new experimental preservation methodologies in Lebanon, not only because the country lacks traditional historic districting laws, but also because the current post-memory generation, which has been de-schooled in the history of the civil war, does not yet recognize its possible historical significance. They do not know that the Battle of the Hotels is the first high-rise urban battlefield in the world or the event that directly led to the East-West division of Beirut during the civil war. I therefore propose a new method for setting into motion the creation of a historic district by drawing and carving the map of the district directly on the places from which the militias fought and the public spaces in the city that witnessed the events. The balconies of the Holiday Inn, once sandbagged for sniper posts, now become viewing posts for a generation to confront and historically contextualize its post-memory condition.
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To my family, for their unbound support.
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<th>Acronyms and Abbreviations</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADF: Arab Deterrent Forces</td>
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<td>APSAD: Association pour la Protection des Sites et Anciennes Demeures au Liban (French acronym for the Association for the Protection of Sites and Old Buildings in Lebanon)</td>
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<td>BCD: Beirut Central District</td>
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<td>BotH: Battle of the Hotels</td>
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<td>CDR: Council for Development and Reconstruction</td>
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<td>DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine</td>
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<td>ISF: Internal Security Forces</td>
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<td>LNM: Lebanese National Movement</td>
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<td>MOBA: Military Operations in Built-Up Areas</td>
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<td>MOSLBA: Military Operations in Selected Lebanese Built-Up Areas</td>
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<td>MOUT: Military Operations in Urban Terrain</td>
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<td>PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine</td>
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<td>PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
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<td>PLA: Palestinian Liberation Army</td>
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<td>RER: Real Estate Registry</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOLIDERE: Société Libanaise de Development et de Reconstruction (French acronym for the Lebanese Company for Development and Reconstruction)</td>
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<td>SSNP: Syrian Social National Party</td>
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“Architecture is a human activity “par excellence”, indissolubly tied to the destiny of man, mirror of his accord and/or disaccord with the world.”
Roberto Secchi (“An Architecture of Hope” in André Wogenscky, Raisons Profondes de la Forme, 2000)

“I am not telling in order to remember. On the contrary, I am doing so to make sure that I've forgotten. Or at least, to make sure that I've forgotten some things, that they were erased from my memory. When I am certain that I've forgotten, I attempt to remember what it is that I've forgotten... This way I reinvent what I had forgotten on the basis that I have in fact remembered it.”
Rabih Mroue (Old House, 2006)

“A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.”
I. Introduction: Preparing for Battle

1.1 Event as Place-Maker

In Beirut, when someone uses the expression “the events” (Al Hawadeth), there is an unspoken understanding that they actually mean “the Lebanese Civil War”. It is appropriate, then, that in wanting to preserve the Civil War, one seeks methods and means to preserve the complexity and ephemeral nature of its events.

Can a series of sequential and consequential events, which took place in a city decades ago, reify the boundaries of a historic district? And can this time and movement-based boundary support and inform the preservation of buildings within it?

The events I am interested in preserving are part of the “Battle of the Hotels”, a 5-month urban battle that took place within and around a historic hotel district in the Minet El Husn neighborhood of Beirut at the beginning of the 15-year Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). Renowned Lebanese Historian Samir Kassir dedicated a section of his book *The War of Lebanon* (“La Guerre du Liban”) to the battle, which he called *The Battle of the Grand Hotels* (“La Bataille des Grands hotels”) in the chapter *Towards the total war* (“Vers la guerre totale”). It is the subject of the section “Military Escalation” in the chapter entitled “Reform by Arms (1975-1976)” of *History of Modern Lebanon* by historian Fawwaz Traboulsi. It is also the second chapter in British military journalist Major Edgar O’Balance’s (rather imprecise) *Civil War in Lebanon: 1975-1990*. Perhaps the most enthralling historical account of the Battle of the Hotels is a

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1 (Kassir, La Guerre du Liban: De la dissension nationale au conflit regional 1994), 129
2 (Traboulsi 2007)
3 O’Ballance has mistaken the Murr tower for the Rizk Tower, Black Saturday for Black Sunday and, based on a few cross-checks, his dates are not very precise.
4 (O’Ballance 1998)
1979 report commissioned by the U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory entitled “Military Operations in Selected Lebanese Built-Up Areas, 1975-1978”\(^5\), which details “The Hotel District” as a major case study for MOBA because of its buildings’ “American design Influence”, i.e. its high-rise nature. Studying Military Operations in Built up Areas (MOBA) became a major concern of the U.S. Army during the Cold War, as it saw its West German Territory was under constant threat, that it might have to conduct urban war in the USSR, and that urban warfare was imminent in an increasingly urbanized world.

Lebanese and foreign historians, as well as military researchers agree that the Battle of the Hotels is a significant episode of the Lebanese civil war because of its military outcomes and symbolic meaning. Between October 1975 and March 1976, the battle opposed the Right-wing Christian (Maronite) nationalist Phalangist Party led by Pierre Gemayel and its allies in the Lebanese Front\(^6\) against the left-wing pro-Palestinian Lebanese National Movement\(^7\) (LNM) headed by Kamal Junblat (the Druze leader of the Progressive Socialist Party) and various Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Militias\(^8\). By mid-battle, the Lebanese Army splintered and joined each warring faction. The battle allowed the Right-wing to maintain the 26-floor Holiday-Inn hotel as a major stronghold dominating the city. The close of the battle was an important military breakthrough of the Left, instrumental in creating the urban rift of

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\(^5\) (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979)

\(^6\) The Lebanese Front was led by Suleiman Franjieh, Charbil Qassis (President of the Maronite Brotherhoods), Pierre Gemayel, Camille Chamoun, Charles Malik, Edouard Honein (MP and secretary-general of the Front) and Fouad Bustani (historian and former president of the Lebanese University). (Traboulsi 2007), 271

\(^7\) The Lebanese National Movement was an alliance of Leftist and Nationalist Parties: the Progressive Socialist Party (headed by Kamal Junblatt), the Lebanese Communist Party (general secretary Nicolas Hawi, then George Hawi), the radical leftist Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon (general secretary Muhsin Ibrahim, later general secretary), the SNSP (Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party, represented by Abdallah Saadeh and Inaam Raad), the Independent Nasserite Movement (al-Murabitoun, headed by Ibrahim Qulaylat), the Popular Nasserite Organization of Mustafa Saad, the Nasserite Arab Socialist Union of Abd al-Rahim Murad and a number including Albert Mansour, Ousama Fakhoury and Samir Franjiyeh. (Traboulsi 2007), 271

\(^8\) Fatah or the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, As-Saiqa the Syrian Pro-Palestinian Militia, the PFLP Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the DFLP Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

\(^9\) The army split based on confessional and ideological stances. The Lebanese Arab Army supported the Left, while the Army of Free Lebanon and ISF Internal Security Forces supported the Right.
Beirut between Christian Right-Wing dominated East and Left-Wing Dominated West Beirut. The invasion of the hotels also led to a series of other military urban operations in Beirut and its suburbs, scarred the image of Lebanon as “The Cosmopolitan Metropolis of the Arabs”\textsuperscript{10}, attacked its flourishing services-based economy, and damaged many buildings. The militias engaged in combat by invading hotels (as well as strategic towers) and firing rockets and bullets at each other from buildings in and around the hotel district. The hotels defined a battlefield context, where spatial warfare jargon such as command posts came to represent buildings previously occupied by tourists, employees and visitors of hotels. Furthermore, urban battles are distinctive in that each of their events plasticizes (manipulates, transforms, destroys) the urban fabric and leaves its mark on buildings. Each hole produced by a sniper from the inside or by a shell from the outside is an index for a specific event.

Around the same time as the battle, in the 1970s, architect and theoretician Bernard Tschumi advanced the notions that “there is no architecture without events”\textsuperscript{11}. Tschumi proposed that events gave meaning and character to existing architecture in a series of postcards entitled “Advertisements for Architecture”\textsuperscript{12}, of which two in particular are especially relevant in regards to the Battle of the Hotels. The first reads: “To really appreciate architecture, you may even need to commit a murder.” This statement is accompanied by a photograph of a silhouette in mid-air, which has seemingly been thrown out of a building by a character standing at a window with open arms. This action/event eerily relates to the defenestration that occurred during the Battle of the Hotels as opposing fighters clashed inside towers, literally appreciating the deadly qualities that high-rise architecture offered. The significance of the buildings of the battle lie in the “actions [they] witness” as much as in their physicality. The second postcard is of the decaying state of the Villa Savoye’s courtyard, under which a caption reads:

\textsuperscript{10} (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 345
\textsuperscript{11} He later designed projects such as the Parc de La Villette (1982-1999) on the basis that events informed and transformed their architecture. (Architects, Bernard Tschumi n.d.)
\textsuperscript{12} (Bernard Tschumi Architects n.d.)
“Architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. Where it negates itself by transgressing the limits that history has set for it.” In that sense, the buildings of the Battle of the Hotels are examples of an architecture that has backfired against its original program and context of inception as luxury spaces for leisure and work, as its usage as tools for warfare has challenged and transgressed the optimism and progress bolstered by its modern architects. This transgression has always fascinated me, and discovering photographs of the damaged Holiday Inn in the archives of its architect Andre Wogenscky has been a fascinating confirmation of his knowledge about the destruction of an architecture he, as a modernist, had seen as the ultimate expression of progress.
1.1 Event as Place-Maker

Figure 1: Bernard Tschumi, Advertisements for Architecture, 1976-77

The event as an opportunity for realizing the full potential of architecture.

To really appreciate architecture, you may even need to commit a murder.

Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls. Murder in the Street differs from Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love. Radically.

The most architectural thing about this building is the state of decay in which it is.

Architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. Where it negates itself by transgressing the limits that history has set for it.
1.1 Event as Place-Maker

Figure 2: Holiday Inn, Post-Battle, Wogenscky Archive, St Remy Les Chevreuse

André Wogensky, architect of the Holiday Inn, was aware of the fate of his building in Beirut. I found an envelope of photographs in his personal archive containing photos of his hotel, in ruin.
The Battle of the Hotels was a traumatic episode of the civil war, which the Lebanese government was eager to overcome from as early as the reconstruction efforts during the fighting-lull of 1977. The civil war would go on for a harrowing 13 years. The hotels’ post-battle desolation was so wearing that the association of these buildings with the war has been purposefully forgotten in different ways: the buildings of the battle of the hotels have been either completely restored or destroyed, erasing the traces of their past, or remain as shelled relics awaiting restoration or demolition amidst current-day ownership battles.

This thesis will argue that the Battle of the Hotels is such a significant Lebanese Civil War event (as a major breakthrough battle) and World event (as the first high-rise urban battle in the world), that it is worthy of having the area where it took place preserved. I will propose that the most appropriate way of doing so is by designating it as a historic district. Of course, this is easier said than done, for a couple of reasons:

First, the boundaries of the Battle of the Hotels stretch across two distinct zones in Beirut: one whose preservation is under municipal law (West of Fakhreddine Avenue) and one who falls within the BCD (Beirut Central District, East of Fakhreddine Avenue). The latter has become, after the war, the privatized city center that obeys the planning laws of SOLIDERE (French acronym for the Lebanese Company for Development and Reconstruction, Société Libanaise de Developpement et de Reconstruction). Furthermore, Lebanese law has yet to rigorously protect historic buildings, let alone historic districts, while SOLIDERE has not expressed interest in preserving the Battle of the Hotels, demolishing a few of its landmarks such as the Normandy Hotel. (see 3.1 Post-War Reconstruction).

Second, the traumatic events of the civil war have yet to be addressed by the government or its political parties, even though the war ended 27 years ago. This “state-sponsored amnesia” was fore-fronted by the 1991 amnesty granted to all civil war criminals, who have either been integrated in the government and the army or immigrated as soon as the war was over. The very political elite that rules the country
today, names such as Amine Gemayel, Nabih Berri, Walid Junblatt, Samir Geagea and the current Lebanese president Michel Aoun, are all too familiar to the war generation for their involvement in the civil war. These leaders’ (and their parties’) interest to censor the writing of history is especially evident in school curriculums, where the civil war is not even mentioned, raising a post-war generation which is unaware of the crimes committed by the ruling class today. Political parties have fostered a culture of forgetfulness rather than reconciliation, urging their partisans to “turn the page”\(^\text{13}\) on the civil war. Efforts in remembering the war, although they begin with the parties’ denouncing of its horrors come to a halt when details are discussed: they are hampered with justifications and denial, as well as “a [refusal] to acknowledge the plights of other sects and communities that suffered at their hands.” The Lebanese have adapted to a post-war society whose trauma has been built upon rather than resolved. In silence, families have mourned their 120,000 dead\(^\text{14}\), cared for their 150,000 handicapped, and still await their 17,000 disappeared\(^\text{15}\).

This thesis does not focus on offering planning solutions for Beirut, nor does it pretend to resolve the deeply engrained post-traumatic stress endured and practiced by the war-generation and inherited by the children of the war generation (which I am a part of). The scope of this Master’s thesis will “simply” deal with precisely mapping the Battle of the Hotels, based on a transparent and referential gathering of diverse accounts (narratives) of its detailed events. My thesis also proposes in-situ objects for the commemoration of the battle of the hotels, as a launch pad for the project of the “Battle of the Hotels Historic District”.

\(^{13}\) (Mawad 2014)

\(^{14}\) This number is disputed. While “120,000” is the number mention by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1 in 2006, Pierre Akiki brings the death toll to less than 50,000 according to a study by the Lebanon Renaissance Foundation entitled “Casualties of War”. The Lebanese NGO “Memory for the Future” estimates the death toll at 200,000.

\(^{15}\) (Act for the Disappeared n.d.)
This introduction covers my methodology for drawing the map of the battle of the hotels, as well as the theoretical grounding for drawing a map. The second chapter covers the historical and geopolitical context that culminated into the Battle of Hotels. The third chapter narrates the Battle of the Hotel’s events and its repercussions during the war. The fourth chapter focuses on Post-War preservation in Beirut and the fifth details my proposal for reifying the Battle of the Hotels. My thesis concludes with a reflection on war preservation in Beirut and its significance to the post-war generation.

1.2 To Preserve a Battlefield

The commemoration of battlefields is an ancient practice, which first occurred with the construction of on-site monuments such as the Greek *tropaion* (trophy), a tree-like pole on which the armor of a dead foe is hung after their defeat in a battle. The *tropaion* is positioned at the turning point of a battle, becoming a sacred shrine and military monument. It is unsure if civilians visited the *tropaion* in pilgrimage, but the monument remained on site until a following military campaign, and replaced by those who perpetuated the cycle of war. *Tropaion* were erected by ancient Greek, Roman, Persian and Celtic armies.16

The earliest account of civilians visiting a battlefield is the 1815 Battle of Waterloo after which visitors immediately and spontaneously flocked.17 “Battlefield tourism” (a branch of “thanatourism” or “grief tourism”) as an active, capitalized institutional practice involving the protection of a battlefield from development was born from the American practice of preserving Civil War battle sites by creating national military cemeteries and national military parks. “The idea of preserving an entire battlefield was a new concept and virtually a singular American practice, which began when Congress established the

16 (Hurschmann n.d.)
17 holding their breath with perfumed handkerchiefs from the smell of cadavers. (Mercer 1870)
Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park in 1890.” Chickamauga-Chattanooga maps were drawn and set the example for the rest of the battlefields to be preserved in the coming years. As of the late 1800s, Americans developed a Civil War tourism industry, complete with “organized tours, maps and guides to the battlefields of the American Civil War” especially to sites which were accessible by train from major East-Coast centers. Drawing maps for visitors to orient themselves in the vast fields and educate themselves about the proceedings of the battles became common practice, and started following a set of rules that have been preserved over the years.

The fact that the American example commemorated the Civil War specifically through the making of maps interests me. The map leveled the playing field between both camps and represented both sides with similar symbols, only distinguished by their color. The maps identified the movements, positions and places related to each of the warring factions, allowing for the observation of the battle as a phenomenon, as an event in space. The map as a distancing tool allows for a critical reading of the battle rather than an emotional one, which does not vilify some and idolize others.

In contrast, the reason for the protection of national military parks arise from the need of the government to reconcile the North and the South of the divided United States. According to the National Register guide, the motivations behind preserving American battlefields are: first “to memorialize the bravery and self-sacrifice of the men fallen in battle”. Second they are used “as scenes of national reconciliation” between former foes and third as a tourism strategy promoted by railroads in the 19th Century. Fourth “battlefields were also saved for their unique role as schools for military study” and fifth they “help maintain a consciousness of the past that is essential for the development of a coherent cultural identity.”

19 (Akerman 2016)
20 (Andrus 1992-1999), 3
The declared intention of preserving the Chickamauga-Chattanooga civil war battlefield, in the designation report, is “for the purpose of preserving and suitably marking for historical and professional military study the fields of some of the most remarkable maneuvers and most brilliant fighting in the [Civil] war.” In other words, since battlefield conservation will benefit military research, the men did not die in vain.

I find these motivations disturbing. I am very critical of them, as they seem to stem from a reconciliatory discourse that glorifies the practice of war. In contrast, the motivation in the European World War 2 battlefields of Somme and Ypres, which have been studied by tourism experts, are that battlefield tours “offer opportunities for validation, for a personal marking of and reflection on the scale and horror of death and an attempt to (however tentatively) grasp the reasoning behind and the logistical challenges which facilitate the conduct of war. They also reveal how the act of commemoration – the personal and collective remembrance – is driven by a moral obligation” (to the dead).

My intention in drawing a map of the battle and of preserving the battle of the hotels is to demonstrate the horrors of war and its irreparable urban and psychological destruction. Battlefield preservation is particularly important in Beirut because the urban landscape validates the historical events of a war that still lacks a public narrative. As a result, this war threatens to flare up again at any moment: on one hand, its perpetrators occupy today the highest government posts and it is not in their interest to remind the Lebanese people of their role in the civil war. On the other hand, sectarian and ideological tensions are still high among Lebanese, who have struggled to define their identity since the French mandate drew the country’s borders in 1932. When the civil war ended, those Lebanese who had survived all knew what it meant to have their lives stolen from them by militias and governed by

22 (Dunkley, Morgan and Westwood 2011)
warlords for 15 years. Remembering a history of violence that once bound all the Lebanese together can be instrumental in constructing a common national identity.

My aim is to cause a questioning of loyalties in Beirut today, to bring awareness to a history still bleeding into the present. I would also like to bring to light the profiteering of militias and corporations which have benefited from the war and are today protected by the veil of neoliberalism: As Samir Khalaf and Philip Khoury declared in the preface of their publication “Recovering Beirut”: “[...] the task of reconstruction will require more than physical rehabilitation, economic development and political reform. More compelling and problematic is the need to restructure basic loyalties. Only by doing so can we begin to transform the geography of fear into genuine though guarded forms of coexistence.”

My preservation proposal for the battle of the hotels differs from battlefield tourism in that the people it is aimed for are not tourists who are visiting a faraway empty field; they are inhabitants of the city it took place within. Many of them have lived through the battle, while many of those who have not, are familiar with the area and the event. Therefore, the preservation proposal differs from a classical battlefield preservation project in that it resembles historic districting too. Its map relates to building fiches, its events are highly documented by chronological accounts and by photographs, and it spaces are frequented by people everyday, allowing for the design of creative interactive markers. The preservation of its buildings is indispensable for grasping the event’s vistas. Furthermore, the buildings themselves have become unlikely monuments whose significance lies in the events they have allowed to occur rather than on the architectural style they convey. In that sense my proposal rethinks the basis for the preservation of architecture and neighborhoods in Beirut.

23 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), XV
Practices in Experimental Preservation\textsuperscript{24} have been on my mind for this project as well, as the object of preservation is “testing the potential of an urban battle as heritage and challenges conventions of preserving heritage in the city”. Furthermore, the fact that the Battle of the Hotels has been institutionally unrecognizable, due to the government’s reluctance to publish a public account of the civil war, has made its preservation all the more interesting, revealing historical biases of sources outside governmental propaganda, and opening up the source of data to a multitude of narratives.

My preservation proposal consists of three consecutive and connected phases. The first phase aims, foremost, at producing a document that has not yet been made: a map of the Battle of the Hotels. On this map, I will draw a potential boundary for a historic district to be preserved based on the events of the battle of the hotels. This map can be used for an on-site tour, whose transcript is written in Appendix 4. Making a map gives value to the intangible dimension of the Battle of the Hotels, which are its ephemeral events. The second phase aims at installing this boundary map in different locations in situ, integrating it in building elements and street furniture as a means to start a public conversation on preserving the Battle of the Hotels and its buildings: \textit{tropaion} with no victors or defeated, but with a map carved upon them. These installations will be permanent art pieces owned either by the building owner or by the municipality. Making a physical object is a kind of activism in favor of the preservation of the physical space of the Holiday Inn. The third phase imagines the safeguarding of the buildings, view corridors and streets of the area of the Battle of the hotels as an enforceable historic district project.

For the scope of this thesis, I am producing a map of the battle, determining the boundary of the district, as well as producing a prototype for the in-situ installation.

\textsuperscript{24} (Otero-Pailos 2016)
1.3 Mapping the Urban Battlefield: Research Methodology and Literature Review

Drawing the map of an urban battle for preservation borrows methodologies from two sources: Battlefield Preservation and Urban Historic Districting.

As we have seen in the previous section, Americans were the first to institutionalize battlefield tourism and establish Civil War Battlefield maps to lead tours across them. In that sense, it would be interesting to utilize this oldest, most tested methodology for one of the most recent kinds of war occurring in the world today, especially that Americans were definitely part of the equation at the Battle of the Hotels, as we shall see next.

The maps for these American battlefields follow certain methodologies that have been well gathered by the American National Register’s Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering America’s Historic Battlefields. The methodologies of battlefield designation involve drawing/identifying the boundaries of a battle according to the movement, positions and places the warring factions utilize during its events. An essential part of Battlefield preservation involves research on the event of the battle itself, in the form of historic battle maps, press articles and reports, and accounts from fighters or inhabitants of the area during the battle. However, it would be erroneous to limit the battle’s context to its immediate time and space, as “the significance of battles cannot be understood in a vacuum”; therefore, a significant portion of my thesis involves historical research on the events which lead to the battle and those which will hopefully lead to its preservation.

My methodology for drawing a map started with researching historical maps of Beirut that had a fair amount of details. I have found a few which have been especially useful for understanding the morphology of the area around the port of Beirut in the 20th Century, such as the 1936 map by the

26 (Andrus 1992-1999), 6
Bureau Topographique des Troupes Francaises du Levant, the 1964 “Beyrouth Ville” map by the Lebanese Army (Directorate of Geographic Affairs “Direction des Affaires Geographiques”) and the “Bayrut”1978 map by the Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic/Topographic Center, Washington DC, which was especially helpful for its detailed buildings legend.

I also took interest in the schematic maps of the Battle of the Hotels, published in 1977 by the AlSayyad publishing house’s Center for Research, Studies and Archives in the first volume of the publication “The Lebanon War Report” (Wathiqat ‘Harb Lubnan). They often represented the hotel district divided into two colored zones of territories: the left-wing occupied the magenta zones and the right-wing the blue zones. The report had gathered them from foreign and local sources, and included an annotated birds’ eye view of the “Hotel District Battles”, emphasizing the three-dimensionality of such an urban battle.

The historic maps of Beirut shed light on the drastic changes in the urban fabric in Beirut and the many landmarks which have been demolished through the years, especially in the center of town (see 4.1 Post-War Reconstruction). The battle maps have been very helpful in understanding the evolution of the demarcation lines, as the common narrative usually reduces the division of Beirut between East and West and rarely mentions how this boundary came to be drawn. Uncovering the history of the city through these maps has been an enriching and sometimes traumatic experience, as I have discovered that much of what was considered to be a landmark before the war has been demolished to make room “reconstruction” through a new plan.

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27 Sourced from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library
28 Sourced from Al Mashriq, (Maps of Beirut from 1964 - 68 n.d.)
29 Sourced from Al Mashriq (Maps - DMA Map of Beirut 1978 1:12,500 n.d.)
30 (Dar AlSayyad Center for Research 1977)
The next step was to produce my own detailed 1975-76 vector base map. Finding a precise 1975 vector map of Beirut with all its buildings was a challenge. I have had to combine two maps: the Maacaron Computer Training Center procured me with Autocad tracings of a pre-war cadastral map of Beirut, but it excluded the BCD. I traced the BCD section from Dr Heiko Schmid’s map entitled “Demolition and preservation in downtown Beirut 1975–1998.” As for the heights of these buildings, they were deduced from historic photographs and building surveys and drawings when available.

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31 Maacaron Computer Training Center, Adma, Lebanon.
32 (Schmid 2006)
1.3 Urban Battlefield Research Methodology and Literature Review

Figure 3: The Battle of the Hotels Maps (Report of the Lebanese War, Wathiqat ‘Harb Lubnan, Volume 1, Dar Assayad, Lebanon, p 225-227) Maps prepared by David Baroudy.

Eve of the Battle of the Hotels, October 1975
1.3 Urban Battlefield Research Methodology and Literature Review

Figure 4: The Battle of the Hotels Maps (Report of the Lebanese War, Wathiqat ‘Harb Lubnan, Volume 1, Dar Assayad, Lebanon, p 225-227) Maps prepared by David Baroudy.
1.3 Urban Battlefield Research Methodology and Literature Review

Figure 5: Beirut Historical Maps

The Battle of the Hotels and the Souks of Beirut, mid-December 1975

The Battle of the Hotels and the Souks of Beirut, mid-December 1975

Definitive demarcation line from April 1976 to 1990 (END of CW)
Mapping the Battle of the Hotels involved teasing out the spatial data which corresponds and correlates to the events of the Battle of the Hotels, identifying and locating which buildings were involved and representing the events attached to these buildings on a historical map using a variety of conventional battlefield symbols as well as developing new symbols specific to urban battles. I extracted the data of the Battle of the Hotels from three sources:

First, a report entitled “Military Operations in Select Lebanese Built Up Areas”\(^{33}\). This once classified report was prepared in 1979 by the US Army Human Engineering Laboratory, as a case study for Military Operations in Built-Up Areas (MOBA, later called MOUT\(^{34}\)) in response to the increased urbanization of modern military conflict. During the cold war, military analysts in the US and Europe were asked to research urban warfare in order to prepare for the possibility of a “large-scale European conflict”\(^{35}\). This particular report, commissioned by the United States Defense Department and the State Department\(^{36}\), prepared by a research think tank team that later joined Abbot and Associates, details several urban battles at the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, including the one that took place at the Hotel District. After giving a brief summary of the battle, the report presents its combatants, weapons, tactics and weapon’ effects. In its appendix B, in a section entitled “Military Chronology of the Civil War”\(^{37}\), the report narrates a day-by-day summary of the Lebanese Civil war before 1979.

The report seems to be biased, as it gathered its information from military leaders from the Lebanese Army that split during the civil war to support the Phalanges. Among the mentioned interviewees was Colonel Antoine Barakat, who was then the “Lebanese military attaché in Washington D.C.”\(^{38}\) and

\(^{33}\) (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979)  
\(^{34}\) MOUT Military Operations on Urban Terrain  
\(^{35}\) (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), ix  
\(^{36}\) (P. Jureidini 2017)  
\(^{37}\) (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), B1  
\(^{38}\) (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), x
previously the commander of the Army of Free Lebanon\textsuperscript{39}, a Christian faction which split from the Lebanese Army. Jean-Claude Samaha, former major in the Lebanese Army is also mentioned, as well as Adonis Nehme (who is today the political advisor of Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces\textsuperscript{40}). Other anonymous Lebanese military officers were interviewed, and I find out from a phone call to Paul Jureidini, one of the authors, that leaders of the PLO, which he was personally acquainted to from his student years at the American University of Beirut, were also interviewed but refrained from disclosing their names. Interviews were conducted by way of a questionnaire and interviewees were shown photographs to recall specific events. The report acknowledges it is missing “medical data and information on the Palestinian and Leftist Forces.”\textsuperscript{41}Indeed the report even contains classist suppositions such as the inability of the left to topple the Holiday-Inn because of the unfamiliarity of “lower-class” left-wing fighters with high-rise buildings, as opposed to the “higher-class” right-wing fighters.

The idea of using Beirut as a case study came from the aforementioned author, Lebanese-American Paul A. Jureidini. The preface of the document mentions that Jureidini thought Beirut “may hold some major lessons for the United States” because it “diverged from his expectations in some important ways.”\textsuperscript{42} In other words, the unexpected duration of the Battle in comparison to the meager number of combatants compelled Jureidini to study this kind of battle more carefully. Beirut was also considered as a good urban case study, since it combined the street layout of an old French city with 4-5 story sandstone buildings and newer construction which modified the skyline and was “American Inspired […], with 30-40 story hotels, office buildings and housing complexes.”\textsuperscript{43} In short, Beirut would be a good case study

\textsuperscript{39} Founded in January 1976 and reintegrated in the Lebanese Army in March 1977, in exception of its southern garrison which became an ally of Israel as the South Lebanese Army.
\textsuperscript{40} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), x
\textsuperscript{41} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), xi
\textsuperscript{42} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), ix
\textsuperscript{43} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), 3
for urban warfare in case of a war with the USSR or in case of an urban attack on a US major city. The MOBA analysis concluded that an intimate knowledge of the urban fabric is the ultimate advantage in urban warfare, and therefore, foreign armies have an immediate disadvantage in conducting warfare in cities.44

I am aware that the methodology for my map and the MOBA documents I am sourcing my information from are both United States Military research documents. I did not intend for my research methodology to be US centric: I found the MOBA document by coincidence, while conducting online research. As for the American standards for drawing a battlefield map, they are the most accessible, clearest documents I have found with regards to drawing a battlefield map. This testifies to American war culture, which has been institutionalized in a variety of organizations such as the “American Battlefield Protection Program” or the “US Army Engineering Laboratory”. I plan to subvert the usage of US based methodologies by producing a document that denounces America’s obsession with warfare and its involvement in proxy wars, and in the case of the Battle of the Hotels, providing weapons to both sides during the conflict.

My second source will be two publications by Art Historian and photographer Gregory Buchackjian. The first is his dissertation entitled Abandoned Buildings of Beirut: Wars and Urban Mutations 1860-2015 ("Habitats abandonnés de Beyrouth Guerres et mutations de l’Espace Urbain 1860-2015")45 and which he published in June 2016. In its first chapter Disputed Space: the Battle of the hotels ("L’Espace Disputé: La Bataille des Hotels")46, Buchakjian’s impressive research details “the story” of the battle,

44 My theory is that this researched helped advance drone technology as a means of destroying the enemy from a distance. Who knows what the Battle of the Hotels would have looked like had drone technology been available in 1975.

45 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016)
46 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016),47
complete with a 4-phase chronology he extracted and interpreted from a variety of opposed newspapers of the time.\textsuperscript{47} He then gives detailed descriptions and histories of the major buildings involved in the Battle of the Hotels. The final couple of subchapters belonging to the Battle of the Hotels are entitled Living, Abandoning and Occupying the grand hotels (“Habiter, abandonner et occuper les grands hotels”) and The Hotel, besieged citadel, battlefield (“L’hotel, citadelle assiegée, champ de bataille”): these sections shed light of the multiple uses of the hotels during and after warfare. The second publication of Buchakjian which had the Battle of the Hotels as a subject is an article entitled Last Nights at the Holiday Inn (“Dernieres Nuits au Holiday”), which he wrote in 2015 as part of a colloquium at the Saint Joseph University in Beirut. This article narrates accounts from the Holiday Inn hotel during the battle, detailing it remained in the hands of a few Phalangist militia fighters. The article also recounts the end of the Battle, when the hotel was finally conquered by the Mourabitoun left-wing militia. What I would reproach this dissertation and article is that although its accounts are rich in details, its structure does not connect chronology with spatial data, and does not offer clear visual references. The events of the battle have not been systematized in a way that I could use directly to produce a map.

The third reference would be personal accounts from individuals who have lived and witnessed the battle first hand, either as spectators or actors. These individuals have been helpful in providing first-hand experience and in relaying information that was not propagated in newspapers and related to the civilian experience of the Battle of the Hotels. I am in contact with Pierre Sabbagh, a civilian who witnessed the battle of the hotels when he was 15 years old and procured me with valuable insight on the operations of Phalangists in Wadi Abu Jmil. My second source is a Mr Tarazi, hotel owner who

\textsuperscript{47} Annahar Newspaper (center-right), Assafir Newspaper (left)
escaped from the battle a couple of times. My third source is from a former Phalanges fighter, Assaad Chaftari, who was called upon to guard the Holiday Inn for a few days.

These accounts feed into my mapping, as I created a detailed chronological database of events, which I translated into military terms. I input this information into my map with the use of symbols and chronological numbering. Extruding this map using 3d software is the next step in achieving a more accurate, height-based perspective (more mapping details in section 3.23).

My proposal for a historic district boundary is based on the Battle of the hotels Military map and on the current map of Beirut. By overlaying both maps, and by reducing the battle of the Hotel’s boundary based on all vistas and buildings which were lost in the 42 years after the battle, I achieve the boundary for the Battle of the Hotels which remains. Is this the boundary I will be proposing to preserve? What elements of the urban landscape am I proposing to preserve within this boundary? How is my boundary political and how does it address the current conflicts in Beirut’s urban space? And how will I be exhibiting my map as a first step for the proposal of a historic district? Before addressing these questions, the study of any historic district supposes an understanding of the circumstances (Antebellum) which led to its characteristic features (its significant events), during the war (Bellum) and to be aware of the context in which its preservation is proposed (Post-Bellum).
II. Antebellum: The Golden Age of Segregation

The historical context of 20th century Beirut gives us a clearer picture on the social, economic and political fabric of the Hotel District and the immediate geopolitical context that lead to the Battle of the Hotels.

2.1 The Origins of Sectarian Beirut

The rise of the services sector in Lebanon had its origins with the import-export business with the West in the 19th Century. Since the 1830s, the Ottoman port of Beirut was a compelling node to market and distribute the goods produced by the European industrial revolution due to its eastern Mediterranean location between Europe and inland Arabia. European merchants started visiting the city, prompting their governments to build consulates, welcoming the western visitor to Beirut with open arms. However, trading with Europe segregated those who knew foreign languages (mainly Christians, educated in Jesuit schools and the St Joseph University) from those who did not (mainly Muslim educated in the Arabic language and whose youth was often drafted into the Ottoman military).

Hence, socio-economic tensions in Beirut find their root in the modernization of the city itself. In

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48 The development of commerce in the port of Beirut began with the 1838 Balta-Liman agreement between the British and Ottoman Empire, which facilitated trade with the market-yearning, industrial-revolutionized West by “organizing and reducing taxation”. This benefited those who dealt with import-export, and were mainly Christian Beirut families educated in foreign languages. This suffered great loss on those, mainly Muslims, who “dealt primarily with local crafts” and could not compete with European merchandise. Beirut, from its advantage of being at sea, unlike the inner regions whose caravan trade dwindled, “was transformed into an important urban and economic city center and one of the foremost harbors for the whole region of Syria”, if not surpassing them all. It is also around that time that the Wali (governor) Ibrahim Pasha made Beirut the administrative center of the Syrian region. See Zachs p41-42

49 This has roots in Ottoman language policies.
addition, imported goods weakened the industry sector, and fostered a rural exodus that took its toll on the already insufficient agricultural sector and created alarming economic segregation in the city.\textsuperscript{50}

Beirut’s population grew from 6000 to 120,000 in the nineteenth century and the Christian community led Beirut in wealth and numbers, which became “the first city in the region of Syria with a Christian majority.”\textsuperscript{51} This comes as a direct consequence to the Christian rural exodus from Mount Lebanon with the 1850s decline of the silk industry and the 1860 civil wars\textsuperscript{52} (the latter highlighting the longue-durée of sectarian conflict in Lebanon). The growing urban bourgeoisie saw itself as modern,\textsuperscript{53} civilized and patriotic, while looking to the west as a model. Naturally, this excluded a large part of society and created a growing socio-economic gap between the Lebanese people, which maintained itself well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century with the advent of the French mandate and the creation of Lebanon as an independent entity based on its unique status with the west.

After about four-hundred years of Ottoman rule, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire post-World War 1 saw the League of Nations impose a French Mandate of Class A on Lebanon in 1922. The mandate is “framed in agreement with the native authorities and shall take into account the rights, interests, and wishes of all the population inhabiting the said territory and […] facilitate[s] the progressive development of Syria and the Lebanon as independent States. The Mandatory shall, as far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy.”\textsuperscript{54} For twenty years, French authorities ruled in the form of military presence, the judicial system (drafting of laws, among them the law of antiquities\textsuperscript{55} that protects all objects and architecture produced earlier than 1700 A.D.) as well as “organizing the

\textsuperscript{50} “In 1868, the American Consul in Beirut wrote ‘Everyone in Syria prefers to be merchant [rather] than farmer or a manufacturer.’”\textsuperscript{50} However, the largest portion of society belonged to the “lowest stratum”, those who earned daily wages or were unemployed. (Zachs 2005), 41
\textsuperscript{51} (Zachs 2005), 46
\textsuperscript{52} The first civil war to take place in Lebanon opposed Christian and Druze populations in Mount Lebanon, over a conflict of land stewardship and ownership.
\textsuperscript{53} the concept of “tamaddun”
\textsuperscript{54} (League of Nations 1922), Article 1
\textsuperscript{55} (League of Nations 1922), Article 14
administration, developing local resources, and carrying out permanent public works.” 56 The French authorities drew Lebanon’s current borders in 192657, “[opting] to create a new independent Lebanon out of Syria because [...] they had decided that the territory possessed a distinct historical identity, in particular its largely Christian population”58. After the League of Nations was dissolved, Lebanon gained its independence (somewhat by force59) on November 22nd 1943. Since then, the country’s political stability rests on a delicate sectarian quota system, where all religious groups are represented proportionally within the government and the president, prime minister and speaker of parliament have to be, respectively, Maronite, Sunni and Shiite.

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948, and the Palestinian exodus to Lebanon would threaten this Christian majority from then on. The ancient territory bound as the new nation of Lebanon embarked upon nation-building efforts set within a politically, socially and religiously charged post-colonial context, whose blooming neoliberal laissez-faire economy rested solely on the tertiary sector. The next two sections will discuss Beirut’s 20th century hotel district, starting with the Ottoman era and ending at the modern era, before 1975.

56 (League of Nations 1922), Article 15  
57 (with the creation of a republic and constitution)  
58 (Aburish 1989), 201  
59 Lebanese leaders Bechara El Khoury (the first post-independence Lebanese President), Riad El Solh (assigned prime minister), Pierre Gemayel, Camille Chamoun and Adel Osseiran were locked in the Rashaya castle by French authorities.
2.2 The Port of Beirut and its Ottoman and Colonial Hotels
Figure 6: Beirut Port Hotels, 1936 Map

Pre-Independence/SEAPORT Hotels
Ottoman Rule (1516-1918) and French Mandate (1923-1946)

[1] Hotel St Georges, 1936, Foirrier Lotte Bordes
[2] New Royal Hotel (19th C)
[3] Bassoul (19th C)
[5] Normandy, 1940, R. Elias

1936, The Jewish National and University Library
2.2 The Port of Beirut and its Ottoman and Colonial Hotels

Figure 7: View of port and hotels. May 7 1965, Normandy and Bellevue from Starco rooftop. Bottom: New Royal and Bassoul roof. , Charles W. Cushman Photograph Collection Indiana University Archives / Digital Library Program
2.2 The Port of Beirut and its Ottoman and Colonial Hotels

The exponential growth of Ottoman Beirut since the 1830s is attributed to its decade-long invasion by the Egyptian army of Ibrahim Pasha, who made it the capital of the State ("wilayet") of Sidon and ordered improvements on its coastal infrastructure. He commissioned "the enlargement and cleaning of [its] port, the establishment of a quarantine area to the east of the ports [...], the extension of a viaduct from Dog River (Nahr El Kalb), north of Beirut, and the attraction of trade and consular representation in the city." The urban population doubled in these ten years, prompting construction outside of the old city walls. A growing hotel industry developed on the coast, west of the port, between the Zeitouneh quarter and Minet El Husn Bay. "Graceful hotels, 'locandas', casinos (with their terrace-cafés, patisserie, and Levantine dragomen) were built and managed first by Greeks, Maltese, Italians and then eventually by native Lebanese [...]. The most legendary were the Hotel de l'Europe (1849), the caravanserai Khan Antun Bey (1860), the Hotel Bellevue (1849, later Hotel Bassoul), the Grand Hotel d'Orient (owned by Bassoul) and the Hotel des Voyageurs (later Hotel de l'Univers), as well as the Hotel-Pension Victoria, the German Hotel Deutscher Hof, Casino Alphonse and the Continental Hotel. The "recreational center" of Beirut was built around these Hotels with many cafes and restaurants. Eventually a seaside promenade planted with palm tree was created, turning the Minet El Husn Boulevard into the Avenue des Francais, "the favorite promenade of Beirut's citizens".

This seaside hotel district was especially fostered by the worldwide development of bourgeois tourism by sea due to the improvements in nautical engineering: "If a voyage to the east had lost some of its romanticism, it also gained in comfort because of the new liners put into service on the cruise ship..."
routes. [...] Beirut became a regular port of call on bourgeois itineraries, the mid-point of a typical Mediterranean cruise.”

By the 1930s, the first French Mandate “colonial modern” hotels such as the St George, Normandy and the New Royal were built. The St George was built to the west of the other hotels upon the shore, dominating the Minet El Husn Peninsula and St George’s Bay, while the New Royal was built at the small Zeitouneh Peninsula and the Normandy replaced the Continental Hotel.

Beirut’s exponential economic growth carried-on in the first three quarters of the 20th century, albeit amidst regional turmoil. Geopolitics shifted trading routes to Lebanon’s advantage: as the French mandate to Lebanon came to an end in 1943, the state of Israel saw its beginning in 1948, divorcing the region with the port of Haifa, to the advantage of the port of Beirut. Although the resulting Palestinian exodus meant the absorption of refugees, it also contributed to the prosperity of Lebanon, with the import of many Palestinian businesses and minds. In addition, the 1950s saw the rise of socialist regimes in the Arab world and an influx of immigrant seeking Lebanon’s free economy. Furthermore, Lebanon saw some of the first petrodollar investments of Gulf Countries such as Kuwait, majorly in the form of real estate. Aside from private investment, the public sector was also active in expanding its major infrastructure projects, starting with the Beirut Airport.

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66 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 305. For more info on the tourism industry in the first decades of the 20th Century, see (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003) “Tourism and Cosmopolitanism”, 304
67 namely the foundation of Intra Bank in 1951 by the Palestinian Youssef Beidas, major mastermind behind the 1956 banking secrecy law ( (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 9). Intra Bank became the largest financial institution in the country until its collapse in 1966.
68 Syria’s 1949 and 1954 coups d’états alternated between military and republican regimes and in 1958 the merger with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic was supported by the Soviet Union. Iraq also had a Socialist coup d’état in 1958.
2.3 The Airport and its Modernist and International hotels

Figure 8: Beirut Airport Hotels, 1978 Map

Post-Independence/AIRPORT Hotels
(Lebanese modern and International chains)
2.3 The Airport and its Modernist and International hotels

Figure 9: View of Airport Hotels, May 7 1965, from the St George Bay (St George with AirFrance Sign) and Phoenicia, Alcazar, Palm Beach, St George from Starco rooftop, Charles W. Cushman Photograph Collection Indiana University Archives / Digital Library Program
2.3 The Airport and its Modernist and International hotels

One of the earliest and most important infrastructure projects of post-independence Lebanon is the Beirut International Airport, built in 1952. By 1967, it received 39 major International airlines and over one million three-hundred passengers, despite “the political, economic and social disturbances consequent to the Arab-Israeli war.” The increasing accessibility of travel with commercial flights by Lebanon’s very own Middle East Airlines – Air Liban (which had been in operation since 1946) and with flights from other major international airlines such as AirFrance and Pan Am, made Beirut a major tourism destination. In fact, advertisements and newsreels such as those produced by British Pathé portrayed Lebanon as a land of contrasts where “free enterprise flourishes, modern roads cover the country. Luxury buildings and hotels have sprung up. One of the main objects of both is tourism: 30% of the national income is derived from visitors, including Jewish people”. The last statement in particular accentuates the hotel industry’s cosmopolitanism, unconcerned with the tumultuous regional politics.

With tourists flocking to Beirut from the 1950s onwards, the Minet El Husn district developed into a luxury hotel sector, complemented with nightclubs, restaurants and furnished apartments (which often housed call-girls, in buildings such as the Carthage) in an area known as Zeitouneh. By the 1950s, medium-scale establishments such as the Palm Beach Hotel (1951), Excelsior (1954) and Alcazar (1958) were open, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, large scale international chain hotels opened, such as the Phoenicia Intercontinental (1956-1962), the Hotel Vendome (1964), the St Charles Center’s Holiday-Inn (1968-1974) and the Hilton Hotel (1972- never officially opened).

Hotels were directly linked to international airlines: Air France advertised its airline with a sign at the St George’s pool, and later opened shop in the brand-new Holiday Inn’s lobby. The Pan Am airline owned the Intercontinental hotel chain and is a shareholder of the Société des Grands Hotels du Levant which

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69 (La Revue Francaise 1968),54  
70 (Lebanon - Extra! 1969)
owns the Phoenicia and bought the Hotel Vendome from the Société Hôtelière Fakhoury in 1974. Pan Am staff stayed at the Phoenicia Intercontinental during layovers, and the airline’s office even moved to the hotel district during the ceasefire of the battle of the hotels, since its Riad El Solh downtown Beirut headquarters were in jeopardy.

Until 1975, the area was shaping into a high-rise economic center: a hundred meters up the hill from the Holiday Inn, the Murr Tower was being built at a record pace of one floor per day; its thick load-bearing walls were able to support an elevator-style scaffolding system. Furthermore, a project for a World Trade center in the plot adjacent to the Holiday Inn was also underway. Designed by Wogenscky and Hindie, the same architects as the St Charles Center, its owners had purchased the land from the College La Salle, who moved their campus outside Beirut.

2.4 Residential and Hotel Beirut: Cohabitation and Tourism in and around the Hotel District

The religious diversity of the neighborhoods adjacent to Minet El Husn and the non-residential, transit-nature of the Hotel District would explain why this area became contested from the very early phases of the Lebanese Civil War. These were wealthy and middle-class multi-sectarian zones, which militias were adamant on “claiming” as their own.

From as early as the expansion of Beirut beyond its intramural boundaries in the 1830s and the development of trade, the creation of neighborhoods generally joined members of the same religious communities. Generally, Christian neighborhoods were formed to the East of the old town while Muslim Neighborhoods formed at its South (which would later lead to the confessional divide of the city during

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71 (Khoury 1983)
72 (L’Orient le Jour 1975)
73 in Mansourieh, calling it the College Mont LaSalle.
the civil war.) 74 “The western suburbs of the [old] city – Ain Mraisse, Ras Beirut, and Mar-Elias – Remained fairly open and attracted heterogeneous groups.”75 This coexistence is perhaps the extension of the cosmopolitanism of the early hotel district to the west of the old city and port.

In fact, the residential neighborhoods of Kantari (South-West), Ain-Mreiseh (West), Wadi Abu Jmil (South-East) and Zeitouneh (East), which surrounded the hotel district of Minet el Husn, were all mixed districts, containing residents belonging to different religious affiliations. The neighborhood of Ain Mreiseh was developed by the fishermen of Beirut, and later flourished thanks to the extension of the American University of Beirut towards the sea in the 1950s. The American University of Beirut (previously the Syrian Protestant College) was founded in Ras-Beirut in 1866 and not only attracted a student body from all confessional backgrounds, but served the entire region. Katari was the bourgeois neighborhood of Beirut, grouping palaces by the prominent Sunni Daouk family, Sunni Abdel Razzak/El Solh76 families and Druz Jounblat family. It also houses the Haigazian Armenian University77 and the First Armenian evangelical Church. Zeitouneh was the entertainment quarter in the east of the hotel district and became known for housing its female escorts due to the nearby bars and hotels. Wadi Abu Jmil was the Jewish quarter of Beirut, scattered with beautiful villas and home to Beirut’s Maghen Abraham synagogue. However, “even among residents of these mixed areas, sectarian consciousness was strong, though such loyalties were subordinated by personal affinities or socioeconomic cleavages in many cases.”78 Nevertheless, the Christian nationalist Phalangist party opened an office over the Melki ice-cream shop in Wadi Abu Jmil, supervising their Fourth Sector of Beirut (supposedly the areas of Minet El

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74 (Calame, Esther and Woods 2009.), 39 from (Salaam 2000)
75 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 245
76 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 132
77 “founded on October 17, 1955, by the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE) and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) as a liberal arts college to assist in the preparation of teachers and pastors.” (Haigazian University History n.d.)
78 (Calame, Esther and Woods 2009.), 39
Husn, Zeitouneh and Wadi Abu Jmil) which spanned towards the east of the port, where their main headquarters was located.

As for the Minet El Husn hotel district, it was the center of glamorous Beirut with its restaurants, nightclubs, ballrooms and pools (see Appendix 2 Building Fiches for additional details). It epitomized the lifestyle of luxury and leisure available for the enjoyment of tourists and only a minority of Lebanese. In parallel, the hotel district hosted the very characters that shaped the geopolitics of the Arab world and led to the destabilization of Lebanon and eventually to the Battle of the Hotels itself. The St George hotel bar was especially frequented by “spies, politicians, businessmen, journalists, diplomats and oil sheikhs [who] treated the bar at the hotel as an informal club and information exchange.”

Infamous Intelligence agents such as Kim Philby and CIA agents plotted arms deals and political coups from within these hotels. This center of “international intrigue” was the subject of a few European sub-Bond action films, Only When I Larf (1968), Rebus (1969), Where The Spies Are (1966) and Secret Agent Fireball (1965), with overarching themes of sex and spies. This undoubtedly excited the young Phalangist militia fighters to invade and conquer these hotels as their own. They were now the main protagonists of a world to which they were once only the distant background.

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79 (Aburish 1989), Introduction
2.4 Residential and Hotel Beirut: Cohabitation and Tourism in and around the Hotel District

Figure 10: Neighborhood Map
2.5 Planning and social disparities

Beirut’s “Golden Age”, a term often used to characterize the prosperity of Lebanon’s pre-war economy, was in full throttle by the 1960s, distinguished by a growing tourism industry and real estate investments from the Arab World. However, the riches it reaped left out the majority of the population: the suburbs of Beirut were an expression of the major social inequities: while the hotel district boasted worldwide luxury tourism and bourgeois leisure, “a belt of misery accumulated in [Beirut’s [southern Muslim and eastern Christian] suburbs].” Informal settlements such as Nabaa and Karantina east of the Hotel District were low income, industrial labor neighborhood plagued with sectarian divides. “A study conducted in the mid-seventies indicates that in 1973-74 about 54 percent of the population could still be classified as poor or relatively poor, 25 percent as middle class and the remaining 21 percent as well to do and very rich.” This was the social reality of Beirut before the break of the Civil war.

Social inequities and the poor conditions of the suburbs were a major concern for most masterplans of Beirut. The first post-mandate Master Plan for the city was proposed as early as 1944 by French architect Michel Ecochard. It had to be revised a few years later with the arrival of Palestinian refugees and the creation of refugee camps all around the city. The 1952 Beirut Plan by Egli was approved by the government, and became definitive in 1954. The Ministry of Planning was created around that time, but struggled financially and was not able to produce any tangible planning contribution. 1960 saw unsuccessful attempts at regional planning, unable to curb rural migration and resolve the issues of the ailing population. The Executive Board of Major Projects for the city of Beirut (“Conseil Executif des

80 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 12
81 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 12
82 (Makdisi and Sadaka 2003)Makdisi and Sadaka, 8
83 Sabra, Shatila and Burj El Brajneh in the southernsn Suburbs, Karantina and Tel El Zaatar North and North East. They were administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near East.
84 except for its production, in 1970, of the most accurate demographic statistics of the city to date , (Ministry of Planning 1970)
Grands Projets de la ville de Beyrouth”) was created that same year to implement Fouad Chehab’s infrastructure projects, which, unfortunately did not yield any social housing but included buildings such as the Tripoli Fair (1962-), the Penitentiary complex of Roumieh (1960-), the Central Bank (1963-1964), the Artisans House (1963-1965), the Lebanese University (1967-1969), the Ministry of Defense and the Electricity of Lebanon headquarters (1968) as well as improving road networks. The Ministry of Planning was overshadowed by the Directorate General of Urban Planning and the Higher Council for Urban Planning, created in 1963 through decree 13472. The latter acts as the advisory body to the President and “approves the plans and regulations for building laws and approves requests for high-rise buildings and large projects.” The St Charles Center’s Holiday Inn (design studies 1965-1968, execution 1968-1974), the Phoenicia’s 20 floor annex (1968) and the Murr tower (1975) were direct results of this decree. Architect and Planner AbdulHalim Jabr adds that “Chehab era planners wanted to cut wide streets in traditional neighborhoods to allow quick and potent policing (remember the Arab World was brewing with post-independence revolutions)”90. Since wide streets meant tall buildings... the failure of modernist urban planning in Beirut was the fertile ground for an urban battle.

The Battle of the Hotels started with the invasion of these towers. It would shatter the hotel district and divide Beirut along the sectarian lines it had already psychologically drawn centuries ago. Multisectarian and leisure neighborhoods found themselves at the cannon’s mouth. Indeed, as Sherry Simon proposes in her book “Cities in translation”, “cities flourish on sites that are places of encounter [incontri] – where

85 1958 to 1964, known for his political moderation and various reforms.
86 A large architectural ensemble designed by Oscar Niemeyer to revitalize the city of Tripoli and encourage the decentralization of Beirut. Unfortunately, it was never completed due to political handicaps.
87 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 254
88 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 254
89 Infrastructure building persisted ahead of Chehab’s era, in fact the tunnel adjacent to the Holiday Inn is one of the projects administered by the Executive Board of Major Projects (Created in 1960 as an effort in mitigating the failure of “attempts at regional planning in order to curb rural migration” (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 253) and was completed around 1973.
90 Email dated 5-3-2017
rivers converge, where mountains slope towards the sea, where populations meet to trade.” 91 They often, for the same reasons, turn into cities of clashes (scontri). While Simon was talking about Trieste here, the same can be said of Beirut.

91 (Simon 2012), 57
2.5 Planning and social disparities

Figure 11: The Beirut World Trade Center, Project by Andre Wogenscky and Maurice Hendié, adjacent to the St Charles Center to the West (former College La Salle)
2.5 Planning and Social Disparities

Figure 12: View from the East looking towards the Hotels and the Murr Tower.
III. Bellum : The Battle of the Hotels

3.1 The beginning(s) of the Lebanese Civil War

Beirut’s status as a regional and international crossroad was a double-edged sword that led to its simultaneous prosperity and demise. In parallel to the development of the bustling luxury tourism in Beirut’s Hotel District, social disparities and political tensions between left-wing and right-wing groups grew from the “structural fragility of the Lebanese state, confessional polarization, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, the hegemony of Syria and the Israeli interests in [destabilizing the country]”92. On a larger scale, the political conflict was an enactment of the cold war on the Lebanese territory, as Russia supported the pro-Palestinian left-wing parties (who also had the communist intellectuals Christians and Muslims on their side) and the Americans supported the Christian right-wing, all the while keeping ties with the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

The turbulence of regional geopolitics induced by the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the expulsion of about 750,000 Palestinians, with 100,000 ending up in the newly independent Lebanon, significantly shifted the quota of Muslims to Christians in the country. It also marginalized rural (Shiite) communities that lived in the south of Lebanon, near the border to Israel: the Arab world’s newfound enemy state. Regional tensions ran high, as a prelude to the civil war occurred in 1958 when Lebanese President Camille Chamoun called for US troop support against the looming threat of International Communism that the Lebanese left-wing parties constituted.93 Palestinian refugee camps sprang up

92 (Kassir, La Guerre du Liban: De la dissension nationale au conflit régional 1994), 9
93 The left asked for the inclusion of Lebanon in the United Arab Republic formed by Syria and Egypt
across Lebanon\textsuperscript{94} and Beirut’s suburbs\textsuperscript{95} and refugees nearly tripled in numbers by the mid-1970s\textsuperscript{96}.

Furthermore, the armed Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), expelled from the Royal Kingdom of Jordan in 1970\textsuperscript{97}, had moved to Lebanon by the mid-60s, conducting attacks on Israel from the south of Lebanon in accordance to the Cairo Agreement of 1969\textsuperscript{98}. Unlike in Jordan, the Palestinians found political support in Lebanon through Kamal Junblat, the leader of the Lebanese Communist Party. The late 1960s shook the country’s so far secure “Golden Age”: the lost 1967 Arab-Israeli\textsuperscript{99} war established Lebanon as an enemy of Israel (although Lebanon may or may have not participated with the deployment of two aircrafts). The 1969 bombing of the Beirut Airport by the Israeli Army sent a clear message against the PLO and its supporters in Lebanon, the former having declared their official presence in Lebanon since sending their press communiqués from Beirut in 1967\textsuperscript{100}. The Phalanges, a Christian political party, fearful of a Muslim dominance\textsuperscript{101} and sensing its threat of sovereignty of Lebanon’s Christians, start acquiring arms from eastern Europe and Israel. Karim Bakradouni, a long-time member of the Phalangist Party recalls how every Christian household was encouraged to purchase guns from the party. The latter would buy these guns from Bulgaria for 200 LBP, sell them to households

\textsuperscript{94} In the South of Lebanon: Ain El Hilweh (1948) and Mieh Mieh (1954) in Saida. El Buss (1948), Beddawi (1955), Burj el-Shemali (1955) and Rashidieh (1963) in Tyre. In the North of Lebanon: Nahr El Bared in Tripoli (1949). In the Bekaa valley: Wavel in Baalbeck (1949) (Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon n.d.)

\textsuperscript{95} In Beirut: Burj al-Brajneh (1948), Shatila (1949), Tall al-Zaatar, Jisr al-Basha, Mar Elias (1952) and Dbayeh (1956). (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 473 and (Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon n.d.)

\textsuperscript{96} (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 479

\textsuperscript{97} (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 477

\textsuperscript{98} First under jurisdiction of the Lebanese army, then post Arab-Israeli war, guerilla operations of “fedayeen” recruited by Fatah from refugee camps. (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 473 The 1969 Cairo Accord and 1973 Melkart Accord further reinforced the Lebanese Government’s support for the Palestinian armed forces in Lebanon. (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), 1.

\textsuperscript{99} Also-known-as the “Six-Days War”, it saw a great defeat of the United Arab Republic (or Egypt), Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon(?) against Israel over the Sinai Peninsula. In 1970, Arab Nationalists mourned the UAR president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s sudden death. The 1973 Yom Kippur war and the camp David accords in 1978 would prompt lasting peace agreements between Egypt and Israel.

\textsuperscript{100} (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 473

\textsuperscript{101} especially with the rise of protests reclaiming non-sectarian elections which would destabilize the 6/5 Christian /Muslim quota in parliament.
for 300 LBP, and with every 2 guns sold, they purchased one for the party. As early as the 1970s, when the Phalangist Party began training its youth against the PLO’s militarized presence, the Lebanese Army participated in funneling arms from the Beirut port and Airport towards the Phalangists. Indeed, the army’s goal in protecting the sovereignty of Lebanon was under strain: it had to defend Lebanon from foreign intervention. Was the PLO presence in Lebanon a foreign intervention? While the left-wing considered Palestinian activities in Lebanon a right to defend themselves against a common enemy, the Right saw them as invaders ready to conquer a piece of Lebanon to make up for a country they had lost.

Several minor altercations between the Phalangists and PLO would lead to a shooting outside a suburban church where the founder of the Phalangist party Pierre Gemayel was dedicating a new church, in which four were killed, two of them Phalangists. Retaliation came later in the day: the Bus Massacre of Ain Al Rummaneh, where the Christian Militia opened fire on a civilian bus transporting Palestinians to the Tal Al Zaatar camp, killing 27. These incidents on April 13th 1975 would mark the symbolic beginning of the Lebanese civil war in Beirut.

The urban aspect of this war is crucial in understanding the dynamics of combat and the logics of appropriation of the Hotel District and its adjacent neighborhoods by militias. As remarked by Kassir, “The fronts of this war did not form in the countryside, outside of the cities, nor was the urban population a simple spectator or victim of a clash between military units that was forcibly imposed on it. The war began as a battle of neighborhood against neighborhood [...].”

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102 Karim Baqradouni in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
103 “Veteran and high rank officer in a militia” in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
104 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 511
105 In Sidon, “the prologue of the war” was the fatal wounding of Maarouf Saad (former Nasserite deputy in Saida) by a Lebanese Army bullet, while at the forefront of a fishermen protest opposing “the award of a concession to a large fishing company” in late February 1975. (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 510
106 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 511
At the very beginning of the war, from April to October 1975, fighting spread around the city in the form of bombings, firing automatic weapons and rockets, sniping and setting fire to property. From then on, each episode of violence was a retaliation to a previous attack. The destruction of property was understood by the US MOBA report, to be a military strategy used by the leftists against the right-wing Phalangists in particular, however, looting became common practice of both militias. On April 17th, the residential Rizk Tower, located 2.3 km south-west of the hotel District, was the first high-rise building to be used as a sniper’s post. An “unidentified” group disrupted the ceasefire pronounced the day before and fired towards west Beirut from this 40-story building near the St George Hospital in Ashrafieh. Consequently, a group of “seven armed men” attempted to “overtake” the Rizk Tower, but were stopped and killed by the Phalangists.

The first 4 month of the war, the Army refrained from being directly involved in the conflict with orders from the prime minister Rachid Karameh. According to colonel Johnny Abdo of the Lebanese Army Intelligence, “there were reports from the army stating that if it were to intervene, given the political climate, the Army would divide and disintegrate due to the confessional affiliation of all Lebanese, including members of the army.”

At the end of June, neighborhoods in the suburbs south and south-east of the hotel district, were involved in intense combat which already drew demarcation lines between Dikwaneh and Tal El Zaatar, Ayn al-Rummaneh and Chiyah. The fighting was relatively far (3km) from the Hotel District, until it spread to the north, reaching the old city center, siege of the parliament, the banks and the commercial

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107 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979)
108 “Palestinians are concentrating on destroying Phalangist property since that is ‘what hurts the Phalangists most’ “ (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), B-3
109 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), B-3
110 Johnny Abdo in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
111 (Kassir, La Guerre du Liban: De la dissension nationale au conflit regional 1994), 131
markets. Looting ensued. On September 17, the old souks were burned to the ground. Just west of the old souks was the coastal hotel district, renowned for its aged establishments and fresh with new hotels such as the Holiday Inn (1974) and the Hilton, still unopened. The fight was clearly heading towards the hotel district, as their position was strategic and their riches beyond measure. But citizens and tourists alike were in denial of the hotels being under any plausible threat, and resumed their activities in the district. According to the Military Operations in Selected Lebanese Built-Up Area report, the militias were not very organized at the beginning of the Civil war, which made the militias steer clear from the Hotel District at the beginning of the Battle:

“When the conflict broke out, neither side was well armed or well manned. Nor had either side recruited professional officers or NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers). These became available later on, when the Lebanese army disintegrated and when units of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Lebanon. This manpower shortage explains in part why the hotels […] suffered minimal damage during the spring and summer of 1975. It also must be noted that both the Holiday Inn and the Phoenicia were owned by Persian Gulf interests, and that both parties were loath to inflict greater damage on these structures and risk the wrath of the sheikdoms of the Gulf. The St Georges itself, however, was owned by a Lebanese Christian family. “

In September 1975, sensing the lurking of militias around the hotel district (and his palace in Kantari, overlooking the district), former prime minister Takieddine El Solh organized a meeting at the Holiday Inn with 9 militia leaders. He convinced them to declare the hotels a “no man’s land”, and all agreed, on absurdly amicable “first-name basis” terms, that the hotel district must be preserved from the conflict:

“An understanding was reached to meet on regular basis and guarantee the implementation of the

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112 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 514 and (Kassir, La Guerre du Liban: De la dissension nationale au conflit regional 1994), 131
113 Army leaders which train troupes and are most visible to the personel
114 Military wing of the PLO, controlled Syria since the the 1964 Arab Word Summit
115 “with the exception of the St George Hotel” might be an error: mistaken for the St George Hospital
116 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), 7
The following chapter narrates the key events of the Battle of the Hotels. The mapping exercise and its corresponding spreadsheet follow this chapter in the format of a distributable brochure.

3.21 Phase A: October-November 1975

3.211. Hamra to Kantari

The Battle of the Hotels started on October 22 1975 with the attempted seizure of the Lebanese Central Bank by the Phalangists east of the LNM-controlled Hamra neighborhood, south of the Junblatt palace of Kantari. The Phalangists tried to enter west-Beirut to take control over the Central Bank and the American University of Beirut to the north-west. The Phalangists used Haigazian University as their base to penetrate the area. However, in a heavy round of fighting, they were pushed away by the LNM to Kantari, where fighting continued.

As fighting intensified, the Phalangists were pushed away further to their Sector 4 office across Fakhreddine Avenue north-east in Wadi Abou Jmil.

On the 25th of October, subgroups of the LNM made up of commandos of the Nasserite leader Ibrahim Koleilat (later leader of the Mourabitoun), as well as members of the Saiqa (pro-Syrian Palestinian organization) and the Democratic Front (DFLP) of Nayef Hawatmeh occupied the Murr Tower on the North-West corner of Spears Street and Fakhreddine Avenue. They loomed over all Christian-held East Beirut and Kantari. An exchange of fire between Rizk Tower in Ashrafieh to the South-East and Burj El Murr proved unfruitful for the Phalangists. They temporarily retaliated in the residential buildings of Kantari.

117 (Aburish 1989), 203-204
118 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 51
Wadi Abu Jmil and Mina El Husn further north and set up “flying roadblocks to kidnap people.” On the 27th, they decided to relocate to the other highest tower near the Murr Tower: the Holiday Inn.

“A few military experts believe that the presence of the Lebanese Central Bank in the area close to the Holiday Inn Hotel was an important factor for the insistent fight of both parties to control the hotel. Political analyst Younes Audi, who was a fighter with the Fatah (PLO) movement and participated in the Battle of the Hotels explained that “the goal of this Battle was, in the first place to protect the Central Bank in Hamra and consequently to fend off the Christian forces towards the port and gain control over the Phalanges headquarter near Starco in central Beirut.” He explains that this battle was fought along three axes: the Junblat Palace’s slope near Hamra street, the seaside near Ain Mreiseh and the Kantari neighborhood from the south.”

The beginning of the battle blocked the Phalanges from Hamra Street, and invaded the tallest tower in Beirut, establishing a powerful offensive on south of the Hotels.

3.2.12 Invading the Hotels

It took only a few Phalangist militants to enter the Holiday Inn Hotel on October 27th, 1975. Three fighters entered the lobby to ask for cigarettes from the bookstore. It had about 200 guests at the time the militias entered it and they remained trapped until the ceasefire a couple of days later. The Phoenicia was also taken over by the Phalangists, and the St George Hotel was invaded by the “Free Tigres”, a militia headed by right-wing Camille Chamoun, the former president of Lebanon, who arrived by boat on the afternoon of the same day. Phalangists gained a key advantage, as the Holiday Inn’s views had no rival and the Phoenicia and St George could protect it from potential offensives from the north. The west of the Holiday Inn was clear of towers and the east was considered the Phalangists’

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119 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), B-7
120 (Atwi 2013)
121 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 65
122 On the 29th the “Tigres” were replaced by Phalangists in the St George Hotel.
Sector 4 territory. Attacking from the south façade of the Holiday Inn, militants occupying the tower’s top floors\textsuperscript{123} “fired recoilless rifles and machine guns” at the Murr tower, which in turn fired “heavy machine guns, mortars and snipers” onto Kantari and the Hotel District. The next day, Phalanges laid down “a ring of fire” around the Murr tower to prevent the supply of ammunitions. In response, the LNM besieged the hotels, firing “jeep-mounted artillery”. The Holiday Inn was “repeatedly hit by rocket fire and mortar fire.”\textsuperscript{124} Its floors were incinerated day after day, as rocket grenades bust through its concrete walls and set fire to the furniture.

On October 29\textsuperscript{th}, Prime Minister Rachid Karameh called for a ceasefire, since, the day before, an armed group fired at the parliament building killing two, including Pierre Gemayel’s bodyguard\textsuperscript{125}. The army circulated on the same day to evacuate hotel guests and personnel, since more than 200 of them had been trapped in the Holiday Inn since October 27\textsuperscript{th}\textsuperscript{126}. According to a bird’s eye view illustration of the Battle of the Hotels drawn by Newsweek\textsuperscript{127}, foreigners were evacuated from the site of the Battle of the Hotels straight to the airport (which still functioned during the Two Year War), by way of convoys on the express General DeGaulle seaside road. A Security Committee was formed by Karameh after the first ceasefire in the Battle of the Hotels on October 29\textsuperscript{th}. Acting as the minister of defense at the time, Karameh charged the army of protecting public buildings, international roads and detached 300 to serve the Internal Security Forces\textsuperscript{128} (ISF).

On November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the LNM took over the Palm Beach and Martinez hotels and fired at the St George, Phoenicia and Holiday Inn from the west. Another ceasefire was arranged on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} on November \textsuperscript{129} for

\textsuperscript{122} (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 65
\textsuperscript{123} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), B-8
\textsuperscript{124} (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016)
\textsuperscript{125} (O’Ballance 1998), 28
\textsuperscript{126} (Steele and Proffitt 1975)
\textsuperscript{127} (Steele and Proffitt 1975)
\textsuperscript{128} National Police and Security Force of Lebanon, maintaining order within the country
\textsuperscript{129} (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), 5
guests to pick up their belongings. According to the former owner of the Alcazar Hotel, he was evacuated to the Palm Beach on that day through the Alcazar’s back alleys. When he and his wife reached the Palm Beach, they realized that it was used as the LNM’s headquarters. The next day, the Hotel District regained its calm for about a month, as Karameh asked the militias to step down from the towers. The Phalanges agreed as long as the LNM retreated from the Murr tower. The towers and hotels were supposedly handed over to the Internal Security Forces and the army, but even these organisms could not be trusted to be neutral anymore: on November 6th, the Prime Minister lost trust in the army when he discovered that the army general Hanna Mitri claimed a cargo docked at the Aquamarina port in Jounieh to be safe, when it transported weapons destined for the Christian Militia.

3.22 Phase B: December 1975

3.221 Black Saturday: December 6th, 1975

Seemingly, for over a month, combats had come to a halt and activity resumed in unravaged areas of the Hotel District and the central district, with only a few sporadic exchanges of fire and kidnappings in the city. On December 6th, the leader of the Phalangists Pierre Gemayel visited Damascus in an effort of reconciliation. While in a meeting with the Syrian President Hafez El Assad, the leaders receive alarming news from Beirut: In an incontrollable frenzy of violence, instigated by the killing of 4 Phalangist members on that morning, the fighters of the Phalangist party went on a killing spree and murdered, on the basis of their Identity Card, about 300 Muslims and “non-Lebanese” civilians in the vicinity of the Phalangist headquarters at the port and city center. The flash massacre occurred in an hour and a half, picking people up from busy Beirut streets. Phalangists set up checkpoints, most notably one at the

130 (O’Ballance 1998), 28
131 (Tarazi 2017)
132 Accounts differ on whether elements of the Phalanges remained in the Holiday Inn (O’Ballance 1998) and elements of the PLO remained in the Murr Tower (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979).
Normandy Hotel. “It was the first instance of Identity Card killings on a mass scale.” Many Muslim dockers working at the port of Beirut perished that day. The Phalanges leaders assured that the situation was out of their control, and that they never intended for such a massacre to occur. The opposition, on the other hand, insists that it was a deliberate strategy in order to disrupt the peace negotiations about to occur in Syria.

Officially, one Phalangist fighter carried the burden of this massacre: the violence that day was incited by Joseph Saadeh, the father of one of the Phalangist victims who, had his other son murdered 3 months prior, on September 3rd, while on a Rally Paper car trail between Mount Lebanon and the central Beqaa Plateau. In an interview on French television, Saadeh, who is questioned about his confessional autobiography entitled *Victim and Executioner* (“Victime et Bourreau”), repeats three times: “Do you know which jungle we lived in?” He continues on saying “No justice, No police, No army ...nothing. Going out of the house, not knowing whether you’d come back...” Black Saturday marks 2 months of the start of the Battle of the hotels. Only a deep insecurity felt in “being Christian” and loss of hope in the nation could lead to such an instinct: kill or be killed. Perhaps the beginning of the Battle of the Hotels added to the sense of chaos and instability in the city, as these major landmarks of prosperity had fallen victim to the wrath of war.

**3.222 First step in “Liberating” or Losing the Fourth Sector**

According to George Hawi, the leader of the Lebanese communist party at the time, the LNM had two options, because “they had to, inevitably, respond to Black Saturday” to appease their militants. The

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133 David Hearst in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
134 Karim Bakradouni, Michel Samaha and George Hawi in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
135 Elie Saadeh and his friends were murdered on the Zahle-Ain Toura- Dhour Shoueir road on the Emmol curb above Zahleh. From Michel Samaha in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
136 (Saadeh 1989)
LNM could either retaliate with a similar massacre against Christians or conduct a military/political offensive. Hawi saw a military tour de force to be more appropriate, and planned to “Liberate the Fourth Sector” from the Phalangists, which would result in opening an entrance to the port of Beirut which was until then under the complete control of the Right. Hawi credits himself for mapping the demarcation line which would separate East and West Beirut throughout the 15 years of the Lebanese civil war: “I took a pen to the map on the wall and I drew a line from Martyrs Square to the Port.”

The LNM’s offensive starts on December 8th, two days after Black Saturday. Led by the Mourabitoun militia, the Left reoccupy the Murr Tower, and take over Riad El Soloh Place and Place de L’Etoile in the city-center, blocking the Secteur 4 Office’s south-east exit.

Coming in from the Ain Mreiseh neighborhood adjacent to Minet El Husn in Coastal West Beirut, the LNM are able to dislodge the Internal Security Forces – stationed since the ceasefire - from the St George and Phoenicia while occupying the Alcazar and Excelsior. On December 9th, the LNM encircle the Phoenicia and fire RPG, B7 and B10 rockets onto it. The Phoenicia burns, holding 60 in captivity, and the next day, it is the Hotels St George’s turn to burn too. The Phalanges fire at the Left-invaded buildings from the Holiday Inn, which has become their only stronghold in the Hotel District, attacked on all sides. Joe Eddeh, president of the Lebanese Forces Veterans describes the importance of the Holiday Inn after these events: “After the fall of the hotel district, and the retreat from the area of Haigazian, Kantari and the Murr Tower, the “Holiday Inn” became our most important resistance fort ("قلعة صمود") for the defense of residential Christian neighborhoods in the zone once called the Sector 4, which included the Phalanges Command Post ("القيادة المركزية") at the time.”

137 George Hawi in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
138 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 53
139 (Atwi 2013)
On the 15th of December, a ceasefire was again pronounced and the army was tasked to clear out all militias from all hotels, starting with those at the coast such as the Normandy and Hilton occupied by the Phalangists, and the St George and Phoenicia under Mourabitoun control, the Holiday Inn under the Phalangists and the Murr tower under the LNM. Militias were replaced by Internal Security Forces but the ceasefire would not last long. Sensing the increased power of the Left, which started gaining support from the PLO, the Phalangists created the Lebanese Forces Organization to coordinate the Lebanese Front’s political parties and militias.

3.23 Phase C: January 1976

3.231 Increased Pressure in the New Year

In January 1976, in the early mornings of the 10th, after taking a holiday break, militias reassumed their positions from before the ceasefire and the LNM’s offensive to penetrate the Holiday Inn intensified, using fires and car bombs to attack the Phalangists. Using an RPG rocket, members of the Arab Socialist Movement destroyed an ISF vehicle which was supposedly shooting at them at the Hotel Martinez. “The Army was progressively taking on the responsibilities of Internal Security Forces under the direct command of the Presidency” who, as he was mandated to be a Christian Maronite, leaned towards helping the Phalanges. The division of the army was the reason the civil war lasted so long, as there was no military organism powerful enough within the country to keep the peace between both factions. The civil war its for the rest of the conflict. The first public manifestation the division of the army occurred during the battle of the hotels.

The Right take post near the Normandy hotel. The combats are especially violent and snipers at the Holiday Inn, Murr tower and Hilton terrorize the population. However, the media turns its eyes away from the Hotel District to cover two harrowing massacres taking place concurrently with the Battle of

140 Fawaz Traboulsi in (Issaoui 2002), vol.3.
the Hotels. On the 18th of January at the Qarantina refugee camp, the Phalangists kill close to a thousand Palestinians. Its retaliation occurs on the 20th of January in the Christian coastal village of Damour, where the LNM murder around 350 inhabitants, clearing their way to the South of Lebanon.

3.24 Phase D: March 1976

3.241 Final Round

In March 1976, there were only half a dozen militants “holding all of the Holiday Inn”. “Two elements [were stationed] at the 2nd floor, two at the 24th floor and two at the entrance.”¹⁴¹ This meager number of Right-wing fighters protecting the Holiday Inn could be due to their reliance on their supporters in the Lebanese Army and ISF. It could also be a sign of lack of discipline: indeed, most of these fighters were in their twenties and were perhaps more interested in looting the city center than in obeying orders by their commanders. But perhaps the most compelling reason for the meager number of fighters at the Holiday Inn is that they were self-sufficient. Indeed, the MOSLBA document

Tensions resumed after a failed attempt at a Coup d’Etat by General Aziz Ahdab, who proclaimed himself commander of Beirut. In the night of the 15th, the Left launched their final and successful offensive on the Holiday Inn. On the 16th at dawn, the LNM positioned themselves at the base of the Murr tower and fired rockets onto the Holiday Inn. Apparently, throughout the conflict, “the Murr Tower escaped 155mm fire because it was owned by an influential Christian who contributed financially to both sides and thereby “insured” his building.”¹⁴²

On the 21st, the LNM were finally able to penetrate the Hotel’s lobby with the aid of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. They timed the offensive to coincide with the commemoration of the defeat of the Karamé Battle in Jordan. Positioned at the St Vincent school south of the Holiday Inn, they

¹⁴¹ (Buchakjian, Dernières nuits au Holiday Inn 2014), 23. Interview with Chahine Fayad, former Phalangist member, on July 24th 2013.
¹⁴² (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), 8
fired 106mm shells and destroyed their opponent’s heavy weaponry parked at the ground floor as well as the cinder blocks protecting the lobby. Dr Samir Sabbagh, member of the executive committee of the Mourabitoun, said they had to change strategy since setting the Holiday Inn on fire was not effective anymore. After the offense on the lobby, the Mourabitoun fighters were able to enter and “comb” (تشميش) the hotel fully from any Right-wing elements. Most of the Phalangists were able to escape, but 2 snipers and a fighter remained. The Mourabitoun had 5 casualties from this offensive, among them “the field commander Omar Mekdashi, who was killed by a sniper still hidden within the hotel after its capturing. The snipers were thrown from the top of the Holiday Inn when they were found.”

Heavy firing ensued on the Holiday Inn from the Phalangists to recuperate the hotel, but they ended up retreating to the Hilton and Normandy. From March 24th to 29th, the LNM encircled these “last bastions of the Fourth Sector” and were able to push out all Phalangist elements to the port, to the location of their party’s main headquarters. The permanent demarcation line took shape from then on and, as George Hawi intended, ran from the port, south to Bechara El Khoury and the Damascus Road. The demarcation line had checkpoints all along it (conducting ID based killings and kidnappings throughout the civil war) and created “no man’s lands” in its vicinity, guarded by snipers which shot at anything that moved. It would separate the city between predominantly Muslim West Beirut and predominantly Christian East Beirut for the rest of the civil war.

3.3 The Close and Political Outcome of the Battle of the Hotels

I recently spoke to Paul Jureidini, the author of the MOSLBA document and a military strategist and researcher, and he agrees that the Battle of the Hotels is the 1st Highrise Urban Warfare in the world. He tells me that the main lessons learned from the battle of the hotels was that highrises could be defended by a 1:10 ratio, that it only took a handful of men to dominate the city. Indeed there was only

143 (Atwi 2013)
a dozen of people stationed at the Holiday Inn throughout the battle, but they were able to push back any offense. The availability of food supplies as well as water and electricity made the battle last and its defenders invincible (they could bring up artillery to the last floor, unlike the unfinished Murr tower). The study concluded that attackers were always at a disadvantage in urban warfare, and that the familiarity defenders to the city was always to their advantage.

In a 2013 article published by the Deutsche Welle news agency, Joe Eddeh, President of Lebanese Forces Veterans stated that “[...] the fall of the “Holiday Inn” meant the fall of all streets and neighborhoods inhabited by Christians.” 144 He clarifies that the alliance between Palestinian and Left-wing forces made advances to the east after the fall of the Holiday Inn Hotel, towards the souks, where there were many casualties, then the fighting stabilized when it reached the port of Beirut, Allenby and Foch Streets. “The fall of the Holiday Inn was a great financial, military and psychological loss for us. Politically, the Lebanese government lost its standing (ھيبة) and its political resolve (قرار سياسي) and the decision-making switched to the hands of Christian political parties in east Beirut and the Palestinian groups and their allies in west Beirut, hence the collapse of the State.” 145 Although the left-wing seemingly won the Battle of the Hotels, both camps were esteemed as winner: the endurance of the Phalanges in the Holiday Inn was a source of pride and the division of Beirut would benefit both parties’ control equally.

The Battle of the Hotels would shatter the symbols of “Beirut’s glamour and success” 146. It is not until the civil war attacked the services sector, which was the pride and means of subsistence of the Lebanese economy, that the conflict reached a flashpoint of no return. Furthermore, the provocative images of

144 (Atwi 2013)
145 (Atwi 2013)
146 Lebanon days of Tragedy, 80
the hotels burning and being invaded meant the propagation of this battle’s accounts all around the world.

The rest of the year 1976 would see the solidification of the demarcation line, as well as the atrocious Tal El Zaatar massacre in August 1976. The appointment of a new President Elias Sarkis in September 1976 and Syrian intervention in October 1976 would bring a seeming halt to the conflict with the deployment of 30,000 troups of the – mostly Syrian- Arab Deterrent Forces, a peacekeeping army founded by the Arab League’s Riyadh Summit on October 17th and 18th 1976. The optimistic media rushed to call the period between 1975 and 1976 “The Two Year War” 147. It had resulted in at least 8,400 victims in Military Operations in Built-Up Areas, 2000 of them during the Battle of the Hotels148 and had displaced a large portion of the Lebanese population, affecting the neighborhood around the hotel district among all others. The ‘Two-Year War’, was among the most violent periods of the Lebanese Civil war and is described as being largely an “urban phenomenon”.149, eventually dividing the territory, with militias acting as urban planning authorities within the boundaries of their respective territories.

147 (Tueni 1977)In the introduction to a booklet published in 1977 by the Annahar newspaper entitled “The Two Year War: 1975-1976”, the editor in chief, the late Ghassan Tueni writes: “It is not yet the time to write history. When you are writing down the history of the war, you always ask yourself: Is it over? Then, if it was over, then to whom?. Who was it victor?” It is a premonitory stance, as the war would surely continue thirteen years more. With the current political players recycled from the warlords of the civil war, some might argue that it is still not over.
148 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), A-2
149 (N. Yassin 2011)
BATTLE OF THE HOTELS
A 04 / 26 October 1975 / A new front opens in the residential district of Kantari / Published in Wathikat Harb Lubnan / Dar Al Massira / 1978

Caption reads: A new front opens in the residential neighbourhood of Kantari.

A 04 / 26 October 1975 / Kantari / Published in Lebanon Shot Twice by Zaven Koukoundjian / Dar Al Nahar / 2003

Caption reads: Battling through luxurious apartments.
Caption reads: Next to the Phoenicia Hotel a shell adds to the destruction.

Caption reads: The militia of The Kataeb tries in vain to maintain its presence in the Hotel District.
1- The Phoenicia burns...under the protection of the Internal Security Forces.

2- Mourabitoun forces with Grad Missiles.

3- The house of a sniper burns.

4- A Mourabitoun fighter protecting the St. Georges.

5- A foreign correspondent, a fighter and The St. Georges.

6- Forces in assault.

7- Allied forces in The Alcazar

8- Hunting for the Hilton's sniper.

9- Bombing...

Caption reads: Burj El Murr, they built it for peace and war settled in it.

Caption reads: Beirut is getting ready to burn.
Captions read:

1- The dragon slays St. Georges: The St. Georges Hotel, standing on the spot where, as legend has it, St. George slew the dragon, stares black-faced and black-eyed at the destruction around it.

2- The annex that was to have been: from the unfinished annex of the St. Georges Hotel, leftist militiamen help fan the fire that is consuming Beirut.

Captions read:

1- The business of Civil War: in the battle for the Starco business centre, Phalangists defend the street that dips under the building to lead to Zeitouneh.

2- Under siege: Mourabitoun militiamen tighten the noose around Starco.
The fighting to control the area of the Hotels will be without mercy. There would be no prisoners and no mercy for the vanquished.
Caption reads: We are back oh beautiful world of the hotels: heavy weaponry in front of the St. George's Hotel before the fire consumes it.
Caption: The forces of the Progressive Socialist Party moments after having taken over The Phoenixia.

Caption: Map representing the Hotel area where the most important battles took place representing the areas in grey (Wadi Abu Jmeel, Rue De France, Arlequin, Burj Al Murr, Clemenceau, Spears, Kantari, the entire hotel area - except The Holiday Inn) being the zone that the Allied forces cleansed and invaded during the fighting.

Caption: The Power Of The People Not The Power Of The Hotels.
Title reads: "Militia Men Withdraw from the Hotels and the Damascus Road and the Army Patrols Today in the Isolating Areas"

Caption reads: "Fire erupts in the new building of The Phoenixia that was hit by shells yesterday afternoon."
1- Starco center as it appeared last afternoon riddled with bullet holes and bombs.

2- Same for the adjoining building to The Starco on the George Pinot Street.

3- Phalangist fighter entering The Alliance School.

4- On the corner of The Alliance School.

5- A barricade in the entrance of The Phoenicia Hotel.

6- Fighters from the Lebanese National Movement in the Phoenicia

7- In front of the elevators.

1- In front of The Palm Beach: The Mourabitoun celebrating the withdrawal last afternoon.

2- Vehicles of the Internal Security Forces on Avenue Des Francois getting ready to advance into the zone of the hotels.

3- Phalangist fighter entering The Alliance School.

4- On the corner of The Alliance School.

5- A barricade in the entrance of The Phoenicia Hotel.

6- Fighters from the Lebanese National Movement in the Phoenicia

7- In front of the elevators.
Caption: The ruins of The Phoenicia.

Title: the Fascists In Lebanon: From The Defeat Of The Hotels To The Massacres Of Ghouarneh And Sabnih
Caption: Phalangist fighters in the Holiday Inn hotel and their adversaries who took cover in the Phoenicia. During lulls, fighters used the hotel facilities - for instance picking out a tune for a photographer.

Caption: The St. Georges bar attracted a new clientele.
Title: With the fighters in the Hotel District: one more step... into Saifi.

Caption: The destruction the Phalangists left behind while retreating facing the forces of the National Movement.
Caption: The Lebanese Forces’ lines in the hotel district gradually collapsed. The Holiday Inn was overrun by Joint Forces on March 21, and the Normandy Hotel and Hilton Hotel then fell. The winners posed near enemy bodies. There was no mercy for losers.

Caption: Blackened hulks - all that remained of luxury hotels which once symbolized Beirut’s glamour and success. Incendiary rounds and tracers poured in the Holiday Inn, setting fires which gutted several stories; the Saint-Georges was completely razed by fire, and speedboats destroyed in the marina.
Caption: The opulent chandeliers were still installed. The Holiday Inn hotel fell to the hands of the National forces on the 21st of March 1976.

Caption: The Holiday Inn in the hands of the "Islamic progressives".
Caption: The Holiday Inn sniper fell naked from the 22nd floor...do not ask what happened to him nor what he has done...there he is!

Caption: Body of Rightist fighter dragged through Beirut.

Caption: Body of dead Christian Phalangist being dragged away from Holiday Inn by victorious Muslim fighters.
"An Era Crumbles With The Expulsion Of The Isolationists"

Caption: These pictures were captured by the photographers of Ila al Amam Youssef and Jaber in the Hotel District last week and they, in addition to others, give us a clear image of the ethnic and confessional hatred that has overwhelmed the isolationist and confessional forces.

The first image: a man who was dragged by the Phalangists from his feet and who was left under the wheels of this car.

The second image: the remains of the corpse of a man who was burned alive because of his belonging to a different religion and class than the ones to which belong the isolationist forces.

The third image: they burst the eyes of this man then hung him.

Pictures by: Youssef Jaber perhaps because his name refers to a particular confession.
28 November 1976 / A view of the unfinished Hilton with the Holiday Inn in the background / Published in Lebanon Shot Twice by Zaven Koukoundjian / Dar An Nahar / 2003
Legend: Construction of a new hotel, Hilton Hotel, is halted.

1976 / Young girls waterskiing in the St. Georges Bay / Liban: Vie Et Mort Sans Legende by Stavro / Published by Stavro Jabra / 1982
On 21 March 1976, the Murabitoun destroyed the symbol of fascist treason and took an oath of continuing the journey at whatever cost - Ibrahim Koleilat.

Maria Chakhtoura writes: The 21 March the Murabitoun (independent Nasserists) have demolished the symbol of fascist treason and have given the oath of continuing the struggle. It is a citation of Ibrahim Koleilat, the head of the organization. This poster represents a Nasserist fighter with an armband on which the organization's name is mentioned. He is demolishing with the butt of his gun one of the grand hotels in Beirut. This signifies for the Palestino progressist forces the destruction of capitalism, thus of the fascism against which they fight. This poster was conceived for the first anniversary of the battle of the grand hotels between the forces of the Lebanese Front and the Palestino-progressists by the Secretary of Information of the Independent Nasserist movement.
3.4 Displacement to and from the Hotel District

Throughout the conflict, whether before, during or after the Battle of the Hotels, the hotel district and its surrounding residential neighborhoods witnessed a displacement and replacement of population, as had most of the Lebanese territory. At the beginning of the conflict, The “Two Year War” had alone displaced approximately 22% of the country’s population. Many who had fled conflict and/or lost their homes ended up purchasing or squatting permanent residences (buildings and houses) and transient establishments (hotels, beach resorts) previously occupied by privileged and middle-class populations in Beirut which had left the country or settled in a “safer”, more confessionally homogeneous neighborhood. “Almost two-thirds of the Lebanese population has been displaced at one point or the other, sometimes permanently.”

As the Battle of the Hotels in its four phases drew boundaries between the LNM controlled neighborhoods and the Phalangist controlled neighborhoods, Beirut saw the migration of Christian populations of the Kantari and Ain Mreisseh neighborhoods towards the East of the Battle of the hotels and of Muslim populations of Central Beirut towards its West, almost decimating the coexistence which had characterized the neighborhoods adjacent to the hotel districts. During the “Two Year War” an estimated 75,000 Christians moved from West to East Beirut, while an estimated 120,000 moved from East to West.

After the Battle of the Hotels ended in March 1976, many Christians, who had been “protected” within the Phalangist’s fourth sector comprising of the Wadi Abou Jmil and Zeitouneh neighborhoods, fled while they could. Pierre Sabbagh, a former resident of the area, tells of the survival of his family:

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150 “589,680”, Maha Yahya in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 157
151 Maha Yahya in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 159
152 Maha Yahya in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 159
“One day in March, we took shelter in our building’s basement after the Mourabitoun took the Holiday Inn. After a few hours, some people were presumably returning home. We knew later that a massacre of Christians by the Muslim Militia had occurred on a corner street nearby and that Phalanges militants were rescuing their families from the neighborhood. We went upstairs and a few hours later, we found out that our neighbors, who did not have connections, were all killed when the Battle of the Hotels ended. My family was threatened by a bunch of drunk militia men from the Saiqa brigade. I was held at knife point, asked to confess I was a militant, when I never participated in the battle. An acquaintance, whom I do not recall the name of, saved us. I used to play water-polo with him at the YMCA. He was sixteen at the time and came to our rescue, he was part of the Mourabitoun militia but the Saiqa thugs would not listen to him. He called his commander. They secured the building with tanks and cars and we got out of there. We have nothing left from this house. I have no baby pictures. We lost it all. We fled to Amman then Damascus but soon returned to Beirut.”

As for the majorly Jewish population of the neighborhoods of Wadi Abu Jmil and Zeitouneh, mentioned in section 1.34, it had started immigrating since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Tensions and Jewish exodus to Israel and Christian urban centers such as Jounieh and Dekwaneh north of Beirut intensified after the LNM took the fourth district with the end of the Battle of the Hotels in March 1976. Anti-Jewish sentiment and Jewish immigration grew with the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, especially in 1982 with the lynching of a young Jewish man charged of managing properties in Wadi Abu Jmil. The population decreased from 5000 to a few dozens. Some Jews sold their homes to displaced Muslims who could afford them. The Jewish homes which were abandoned were looted and later squatted by those fleeing the south from the Israeli invasions.

As for the hotels, they were heavily looted during and after the battle of the hotels. Their furniture, branded objects and cutlery were sold in the makeshift markets of Beirut. After the LNM had gained

153 Originally named after the Jewish family Zeitoun, which own many lands in the area. (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016)
154 (Mustafa 2014)
155 (Mustafa 2014)
control of the entire hotel district, the buildings were guarded by military forces, squatted by refugees, or even used by their owners in creative ways. The Holiday Inn was abandoned. The St George was defended by the Syrian Arab Deterrent Forces, and was later turned into a Syrian Army base according to the Hotel’s website\textsuperscript{156}. In the late 70s, the Phoenicia’s burnt out exterior was used as the set of a film by German director Volker Schlondorff entitled \textit{Circle of Deceit} ("Die Fälschung"), which featured explosions from the balconies of the Phoenicia that might have actually damaged the balconies. The Phoenicia was also used as an emergency storage facility for the functioning St George Yacht club boats. The Alcazar was turned into an atelier for oriental artefacts including damascene woodwork and lighting features. The Normandy was taken over by squatters, who invaded its basement\textsuperscript{157} as well as its upper floors. The Hilton, although it had

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{(St George Hotel Beirut, Rise and Fall n.d.)}  
\textsuperscript{157} Maha Yahya in \textit{(Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 137}
3.4 Displacement to and From the Hotel District

Figure 14: German director Volker Schlondorff’s Circle of Deceit ("Die Fälschung") Shot outside the Phoenicia, St George, and a “set” of the Holiday
3.4 Displacement to and from the Hotel District

Figure 15: Annahar March 1st 1976

1608 damaged rooms of 4 hotels are out of service. The Holiday Inn has limited losses, the Hilton starts its repair works, the Phoenicia is open to restoration and the St George might be destroyed and rebuilt
3.5 Premature Plans for Reconstruction: 1977

For most, the arrival of the Arab Deterrent Forces was understood as the end of the civil war. Full of optimism, in 1977, a first masterplan was drawn that envisioned postwar Beirut with the Hotel District as the centerpiece of a waterfront redevelopment that included new cultural facilities.

The end of the “Two-year war” would witness an immediate effort to preserve what was left of the center of the city, which was the most badly damaged zone in Beirut and included some of the hotels. In order to do so, the new government established the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), an independent advisory body, trustworthy of international funding, able to create and implement a masterplan for restoration and reconstruction of the damaged center of downtown Beirut as “a strong image to be used as a symbol for national unity.” President Elias Sarkis and Prime Minister Salim El Hoss established the CDR with Decree 5 dated January 31st 1977, “enjoying financial and administrative independence”, tasked in the planning and administration of the reconstruction of what was now called the “Central Business District”. The decree attached the CDR to the Council of Ministers, which allowed for a more fast-track process, and abolished the Ministry of Planning, which since its inception in 1959, had very limited agency. The CDR became the “executive arm of the Prime Minister’s office” in terms of urban development, therefore answering to the orders of Salim El Hoss.

The CDR prepared a master plan for reconstruction in consultation with the Paris Urbanism Workshop - Atelier Parisien d’Urbanisme (APUR), under the direction of Pierre-Yves Ligen (with Nicolas Politis and Luc Tessier on the team). The APUR was, at the time, affected by European planning’s “preference for

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158 Tabet in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 91
159 Maronite, succeeding to Suleiman Frangieh from September 1976 to September 1982
160 Sunni, appointed by Sarkis in December 1976
161 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 255
162 (The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) & United Nations Human Settlements 2014)
163 (Masboungi 2001), 22
rehabilitation of existing heritage, preservation of ancient tissue and protection of Historic centers.” A “joint public-private” approach to preservation proposed that less damaged buildings be restored by individual building owners, while the more damaged parts “would be reconstructed by small-scale real estate corporations.” These corporations would be 75% by real estate owners and 25% by the government, a proposition addressed forwarded in the pre-war Greater Beirut Plan of 1964 (see 1.35 Planning and Social Disparities). The seeds for neoliberal preservation were being sowed since the first reconstruction plan, which would finally take shape in the 90s in the post-war period.

By June 1977, the Ministry of Public Works, headed by Amin Bizri, a former associate to modernist planner Ecochard, had conducted a building survey in the city center with APUR and “a million square yards of the downtown area have been opened to those who wish to return and make repairs.”

Already, the reconstruction plan, which involves an area of 385,000 square yards, envisaged the clearing out of many buildings deemed unfit for a modern city center, according to a June 1977 interview with the New York Times:

“We hope to restore the city's historic value and give it new life,” Public Works Minister Amin Bizri asserted. As he spoke of the plan, he acknowledged that the prewar city was overcrowded and badly planned. The presidential palace (or Saray at the east of the Battle of the Hotels site), the four churches and four mosques in the area were damaged but can be saved, he said. Space around them will be cleared to enhance their sites. New archeological ruins have been found in the war rubble and will be preserved as historical monuments. A search is continuing for the remains of a Roman law school believed to have been situated in this area.

According to the map of the APUR plan, its preservation/reconstruction strategy is based on the maintenance/restructuring of blocks (“ilot ou parcelle manitenue/a restructurer”), the preservation of

164 (Al-Asad and Musa 2001), 6
165 (Al-Asad and Musa 2001), 5
166 (Howe 1977)
167 (Howe 1977)
individual buildings (“édifice ou batiment a preserver”), the preservation of facades (as the plan shows some very thick black lines aligning streets such as Omar Daouk), and the respect/redrawing of alignments of blocks on the street (“alignement a respecter”, “implantation indicative”, “principaux alignements constatés”). The plan does not mention preservation in the shape of a historic district (“secteur sauvegardé”), although the concept had been introduced more than a decade before in France by the « Malraux » law of August 4th 1962168. Therefore, the hotel district was never considered as an ensemble to be preserved: although most of its elements are within the boundary of the plan, and are contained within “blocks to be maintained” including the Holiday Inn, Phoenicia, St George, Alcazar, the Hilton and Normandy, they are not indicated as “buildings for preservation”. Clusters of buildings are preserved in the vicinity of the Grand Serail and North and East of the Place de l’Etoile, and although they are not associated to a historic district-type boundary, they are surrounded by pedestrian streets, signifying their new leisurely role in the city. Also in the APUR plan, the bay of St George is transformed into a pedestrian promenade with gardens (“jardin, plantation, promenade”, in very dark green, easily confused with black, with bubble edges), “recovered from the sea beyond Avenue des Francais”169, where the Normandy landfill had started to take shape during the Two-Year war. The shape of this promenade swells up inland to include the plot of the Christian Cemetary170. On the street level, adjacent to this pedestrian promenade, another series of gardens are placed in front of the Hilton and Normandy hotels, the two instrumental buildings in the final phase of the Battle of the Hotels, not specifically considered as “buildings for preservation”. Two north-south streets cut through the urban fabric of the Zaitouneh neighborhood, connecting Omar Daouk Street to the new seafront road, perhaps in an attempt to rid the area of its shady rental apartment buildings which housed prostitutes.

168 (DRAC Alsace n.d.)
169 Jad Tabet in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 92
170 What has happened to it? Was it pillaged after the end of the battle of the hotels?
3.5 Premature Plans for Reconstructions

Figure 16: APUR Conditions of the Built Environment ("Etat du Domaine Bati"), 1977

My guess is buildings which only have outlines are in the worst condition.
3.5 Premature Plans for Reconstructions

Figure 17: the 1977 APUR Planning scheme announces individual landmarks

APUR Planning Scheme

[0] Khan Antoun Bey (no longer)
[1] St George
[2] New Royal (no longer)
[3] Bassoul (no longer)
[4] Bellevue (no longer)
[5] Normandie
[6] St George Annex
[8] Palm Beach
[9] Excelsior
[10] Alcazar
[12] Holiday Inn
[14] Officers Club
[15] St Elias Church
In addition, the zone East of Allenby Street adjacent to the port at the west is restructured: two new rectangular edifices could be the proposed site for “a palace for congresses and culture—something the old city center lacked—is to be built on the seafront to keep the downtown area alive at night.”

171 (Howe 1977)
The CDR was able to raise the money needed for the reconstruction: “In 1978, $454 million was committed by the CDR for road repairs, housing, transportation, and the rebuilding of Beirut International Airport”. 172 To aid the CDR’s reconstruction efforts, municipalities were also given prerogatives in ordering preservation and reconstruction. In 1977’s Decree N. 118, whose Article 74 states that the Municipal Council’s President has acquired “many housing related prerogatives, including authorizing housing construction and issuing housing permits, destroying dilapidated buildings and ordering their rehabilitation, and more broadly, ensuring the application of the construction law, notably those provisions related to the settlement of building violations.” 173 The same article mentions that “if the buyer of real property fails to register the sale contract at the Real Estate Registry during the prescribed period of ten years the buyer legally loses his right to register the transfer of ownership at the RER.” This will affect the statuses of many abandoned buildings 10 years later (see 2.6).

Life went on in the Hotel District despite the division of the city: “During the war, the area near the waterfront was full of bars and restaurants, protected by the Syrian Deterrent Force. That is, until the Islamist wave dominated Beirut since the 1982 Israeli invasion, causing most bars there to be closed down and replaced by mosques and prayer halls”. 174 In fact, the St George was reopened as early as May 2nd 1977, and hosted celebrities such as the 1971 Lebanese Miss Universe Georgina Rizk and her PLO husband Ali Hassan Saleme, as well as international singer Julio Iglesias. The owner Michel Nader spent half a million dollars on its restoration, but kept a bullet-pocked wall behind the bar “so people can remember and talk about what madness the civil war was.” 175 A couple of days later, the Palm Beach

172 (Irani 1991) from (Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) n.d.)
173 (The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) & United Nations Human Settlements 2014), 19
174 (Mustafa 2014)
175 (Prager 1977) from (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 81
Hotel reopened, as well as a couple restaurants on Phenicie Street\textsuperscript{176}. Even the banks in Riad El Solh had resumed their operations\textsuperscript{177}.

However, after a period of precarious calm, tensions boiled up again. Kamal Jumblat, leader of the LNM was assassinated in March 1977 and in February 1978, an altercation involving a Syrian ADF checkpoint in East Beirut resulted in the “100 days war”, where East Beirut’s Ashrafieh hill was bombarded by the Arab Deterrent Forces ADF. In the meantime, in March 1978, Israel invaded the South of Lebanon in “Operation Litani” in retaliation to the PLO’s attacks in Israel. All plans for reconstruction were halted, and what the Lebanese thought was a “two-year war” turned into a fifteen-year conflict which saw the killing of more than a hundred thousand individuals, the injury of a hundred thousand, the disappearance of an estimated seventeen thousand, the displacement of almost a million within Lebanon and the immigration of a quarter of a million.

A few years before the end of the war in 1990, another lull in fighting would start the implementation of a new reconstruction plan, built upon the 1977 one. Localized preservation and mass demolition saw its seeds planted in Beirut in the 80’s.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{normandy_garbage_dump.png}
\caption{Normandy Garbage Dump}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{176} (La rue de Phenicie Renait 1977)\textsuperscript{177} from (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 81
\textsuperscript{177} (Prager 1977) from (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 81
3.6 Clearing out the Debris: The Beginnings of a Developers' Dream in 1982
Figure 18: The Normandy garbage dump, L'Orient Le Jour (9 April 1977)
3.6 Clearing out the Debris: The Beginnings of a Developers’ Dream in 1982

Figure 19: The landfill, decimating the Avenue des Fancais, and whose concrete guardrail is visible here. Taken in 1983-84 by French Soldier.
3.6 Clearing out the Debris: The Beginnings of a Developers’ Dream in 1982

Figure 20: Google Street View. Normandy was demolished but the Ghandour building next to it survives.
3.6 Clearing out the Debris: The Beginnings of a Developers’ Dream in 1982

1982 and 1983 were decisive and contradictory years during the war, as the first witnessed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the second saw another lull in fighting and a premature real estate boom. In June 1982, the Israeli Army bombarded West Beirut daily until the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and most of the PLO were evacuated from Beirut. Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Lebanese Forces was elected president and killed three weeks later, on September 14th. The killing of Bashir Gemayel gave Israel carte blanche on the invasion of the city, which became “the first Arab capital to be subjected to Israeli occupation.”178 Two days later, the Israeli Army supervised the Sabra and Chatila Palestinian Camp Massacres by the Lebanese Forces, who killed thousands in retaliation to the assassination of Bashir, who, as it turns out, was not killed by a Palestinian, but by a Christian member of the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP)179.

It was during these dire circumstances that a wealthy Lebanese entrepreneur called Rafiq al-Hariri first expressed (official) interest in taking in charge the rehabilitation of downtown Beirut. Hariri, who had become a billionaire by heading Saudi Oger, the construction company the Saudi Arabian Royal Family hired for most of its projects since January 1978, offered “to finance the clearing of the rubble from the streets downtown. He also offered to reface building facades on Rue Maarad”180 under his newly established Oger Liban Engineering Services Company, and according to the APUR 1977 plan which “had to be updated to accommodate later war-damage incurred by Beirut’s Central District”181.

178 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 516
179 Bashir Gemayel was killed with a bomb by young SSNP member Habib Shartouny for having “sold his country to Israel” (Diab 2012)
180 (Kassir, Beirut [Histoire de Beyrouth] 2003), 530
181 (Saliba 2003), 47
Simultaneously, when Amine Gemayel took the presidency after Bashir’s death in September 1982, during the Israeli invasion, his government commissioned a second master plan (the 1977 APUR one being the first), this time of Metropolitan Beirut, developed by a French-Lebanese team in collaboration with the Institut d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme de la région Île-de-France IAURIF. Since the government was now head by a prominent member of the right-wing Phalanges, “the political authorities which emanated from it were predisposed, or at least were not averse, to an urban strategy predicated on demolishing and pulverizing all relics of the war or regions and features presumed responsible for it.”

The government was also open to financing the reconstruction through wealthy private enterprise, especially that, at that time “the CDR could raise only $571 million of the $15 billion necessary for the rebuilding of Lebanon’s infrastructure.”

Hence begins what Jad Tabet, architect and urbanist, calls the “bulldozing mentality”: sites occupied by Palestinian Refugees and squatter “settlements” in the suburbs adjacent to Beirut and its central district, were to be razed. The previously mentioned registration law, which allows squatters to claim unregistered lands, certainly reinforces the urgency of such demolitions, especially with the precarious and long-winded nature of the civil war. And despite debates among architects and urbanists at the time contesting the destruction of Beirut’s buildings along with the sweeping of the rubble, “political and economic choices became poignantly clear: urban planning of the seventies was emptied of its liberal and humanist content and sacrificed to real estate speculation.”

A more radical vision by private entities “[profiting] from the lack of government controls,” sought to “clean up” the BCD by way of “unsanctioned dynamiting”, only stopping in 1984 when fighting resumed.

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182 Tabet, in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 92
183 (Irani 1991) from (Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) n.d.)
184 Son of Antoun Tabet, local architect of the St George hotel
185 Tabet, in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 92
186 Tabet, in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 93
187 (Fricke 2005), 167
Perhaps the clearing of downtown Beirut was also a way to limit fighting within it: wartime urban fabric was perceived a weaponry for military operations and historic fabric offered militias a landscape of shields and platforms on which to conduct their attacks. However, this hypothesis might not ring true, as the demolitions were accompanied with localized preservation efforts: “During a truce period in 1983, the contracting firm Oger Liban initiated the first rehabilitation attempt. It conducted an architectural survey of surviving areas in the Etoile area and began repairing its elevations”, before fighting in the center resumed in 1984. This rehabilitation effort, focused exclusively on buildings of the Ottoman and Mandate periods, which the previous APUR plan had focused on (perhaps a post-colonial French influence?), cushioned the destruction of so many other buildings. I find this extremely problematic, as only certain buildings of the colonial past of the city was deemed worthy of preservation.

In Central Beirut, about a hundred buildings were demolished by 1983 by Oger Liban, and about forty more by 1991. Within the boundary of the Battle of the Hotels, half a dozen buildings were demolished by 1983 and a couple dozen by the end of the civil war in 1991. By 1987, many of the houses which have been abandoned for more than 10 years had lost their owners (from lack of RER funds or immigration), and many were occupied by squatters by then.

The major demolition zones before the end of the war were mainly on either side of Martyrs Square and West of the port at the Avenue des Francais, including most of Khan Antun Bey, the Ottoman Inn (mentioned in 1.32 The Port of Beirut and its Ottoman and Colonial Hotels).

With the exception of the Normandy Hotel, which was squatted by refugees from the Israeli invaded South and had a garbage dump and permanently stationed Mourabitoun checkpoint at its street front, most of the hotels had grand plans for reopening, in months’ time. Little did they know that the

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188 (Schmid 2006)
189 (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 707
190 (Khoury 1983)
1982-1983 fighting lull was another mirage and that the Civil War would last another 8 years. Israeli occupation continued until a temporary peace agreement with Israel was signed by Lebanese President Amine Gemayel\textsuperscript{191} on May 17\textsuperscript{th} 1983.\textsuperscript{192} It lasted a few months until its dissolution in March of 1984. Israel withdrew by September 1983, but maintained its occupation of the south of Lebanon until the year 2000.

\textsuperscript{191} Uncle of Bachir Gemayel
\textsuperscript{192} With the United States as a third Party
4.11 BCD Demolition
Figure 21: Heiko Schmid, 1998
By 1998, 80% of the BCD buildings were demolished and the Fosch Allenby Etoile streets were conserved.
IV. Postbellum: Reconstruction vs Preservation

The civil war “ended” with the constitutional election of the new president Elias Hrawi and his settling in the Presidential Palace after General Michel Aoun’s expulsion in October 1990. It “ended” geopolitically with the dissolving of the east-west demarcation line in the fall of 1990, which, by the end of the war, had become a boundary between two States within Lebanon and was called the Green Line, a no-man’s land where vegetation grew. The war also, “ended” with the dissolving of all militias in March 1991 (except for Hezbollah, which remained an armed Resistance against Israel) and the August 1991 Amnesty law, supported by political elites, which pardoned all political and wartime crimes prior to March 1991. The quotes around the word “ended” are intentional here, as they underline a bitter truth: the perpetrators and militia leaders of the civil war have recycled themselves into mainstream politics, in an endless cycle of greed and corruption. The origin of this post-war corruption is one of the biggest land hauls modern history, perpetrated by SOLIDERE, the real Estate company of the soon-to-be prime-minister Rafiq Hariri disguised as the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (BCD). Half of

193 The “end” of the Lebanese Civil War was a process over a period of two years rather than a single event: In 1989, the Taif Agreement or National Reconciliation Accord was the first successful peace-agreement in 15 years. Signed on 22 October 1989 and ratified by the Lebanese parliament on 5 November 1989. The Taif Agreement organized by the Arab League reunited all surviving leaders of the 1972 parliament, installing a Syrian “mandate” over the country and balancing parliamentary quotas 50:50 between Muslims and Christians, as well as enhancing the power of the country’s (Sunni) Prime Minister over the (Maronite) President. These Parliament Members elected a new President, René Mouawad, assassinated on November 22nd 1989 after his election, was replaced by Elias Hrawi, in office from November 24th 1989 to November 23rd 1998. On October 13th 1990, the Syrian army, in collaboration with the reappointed “1972” parliament, the newly elected president, and the United States government, were successful in toppling the “unconstitutional” and self-declared war-time President Michel Aoun in a military offensive on the Presidential Palace and Ministry of Defense. Aoun sought exile in France, until 2005, when he returned to Lebanon to head the Free Patriotic Movement. At the time of this thesis’ publication, he has been elected the President of Lebanon.
194 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 256
195 (de Clerck 2012)
the boundaries of the Battle of the Hotels fell within this district, resulting in the demolition of many buildings within it.

4.1 The 90s: Demolishing Neighborhoods and Preserving Landmarks

The 90s post-war reconstruction builds upon the 1977 and 1983 reconstruction plans of Beirut, failing to consider the hotel district as an official boundary to be preserved.

The hotel district and its adjacent neighborhoods have not seen street-fighting since the end of the 5-month Battle of the Hotels in 1976. Instead, the destruction of the district’s urban fabric took a different form: the area east of Fakhreddine avenue and the adjacent city center to the east saw a progressive demolition of structures in Martyrs Square, the port area, and Wadi Abu Jmil which started during the fighting lull of 1982. By the end of the civil war196, close to 100197 buildings had been demolished by Oger Liban in Beirut’s Central District, including some which took part in the Battle of the Hotels such as the Byblos Hotel and the sector four Phalangist headquarters. But, the worst was yet to come: by 1998, “In order to make room for a new (post-)modern reconstruction, about 80% of the buildings in the downtown area were quickly demolished [by Oger Liban and since 1994 SOLIDERE]—even if they could have been renovated.”198 The debris from these demolitions were piled up in the landfill used as West Beirut’s garbage dump throughout the war, and which was called “The Normandy Dump”, in reference to the Normandy Hotel in front of it. As an exchange for these services, which were executed, since 1992, by the OGER Liban and since 1994 by the Hariri-founded SOLIDERE, the government “gifted” the landfill (291,800 square meters199) to the latter private company. The reclaimed land was to become the new waterfront city of the future, complete with ultra-lux skyscrapers and a “public” park (what that

197 (Schmid 2006), Figure 1, 371
198 (Schmid 2006), 366
199 (Solidere n.d.)
entails in a privatized city will be discussed in 3.12 with the Zaitunay Bay Project). As a buffer for these overwhelming demolitions, the post-war plans did propose the preservation of a few buildings, some in clusters (conservation areas) and some as individual landmarks.

4.11 BCD Demolition

Since the lull of 1983, the government has turned a blind-eye to the demolitions of central Beirut, as the real estate mogul Rafic Hariri (owner of Oger Liban, see 2.6) who had financed them was respected in political circles, and alleviated a financial and legal burden which the bankrupt Lebanese Government was eager to get rid of: “by the end of the war in 1991, nearly 100,000 claimants clamored for legal priority to a mere 1,630 parcels of land.” Hariri, who has had a foot in politics as a representative of the Saudis since the 1980s (culminating in his crucial role in the 1989 Taif Peace Accord), proposed to resolve the ownership crisis by amending the 1977 CDR legislation (see section 2.4) with law 117, passed on December 7th 1991. The amendments allowed a private company to expropriate the BCD with the support of the CDR and distribute shares of the company to the individual owners of the lands. SOLIDERE, founded by Hariri in May 1994, was naturally the only contender for the bid, and proceeded to liquidate the city. Thousands of “landowners received 65% of the total number of SOLIDERE shares, with an estimated value of $1.2 billion”, effectively dispossessing about 2,600 families, paying them a fraction of their land’s worth, sometimes as low at 15%. The remaining 35% of the shares would be sold to the Lebanese, and Rafik Hariri himself bought the majority of these remaining shares. The public and landowners had absolutely no say in the fate of their properties, since corruption had facilitated the disregard for public rights: After President Hrawi appointed Hariri as prime minister in 1992, the latter

200 (Fricke 2005), 167
201 The meeting, which took place in the Saudi Arabian town of Taif, received the blessing of Saudi Arabia and the United States as well as Syria and Russia, as it was the time Gorbachev sought to end the cold war. The left had significantly weakened in Lebanon since Gorbachev was in power in Russia.
202 (Fricke 2005), 167
made the former head of his OGER Liban engineering group, Fadel al-Shalak, the director of the Council for Development and Reconstruction which was to execute the new Beirut Central District Plan. By that time, the government had enhanced the power of the CDR by handing it over all effective infrastructure-building organisms such as the Development Commission of the International Airport, the Harbor Commission, the Executive Council Projects of the city of Beirut, and the Executive Council of major projects.203

The bulldozing which took place in downtown Beirut since 1983 might have been directly aimed at displacing squatters in buildings as “war induced migration gave rise to issues of property rights.” 204 The Lebanese Government established the Ministry of the Displaced and the Central Fund for the Displaced (CFD) in 1993.

The demolition, preservation and new construction of the Beirut Central District was executed according to post-war plans commissioned by Hariri, which built upon the 1977 APUR plan (see 2.5) and 1983 IAURIF plan in preserving the Ottoman and French mandate core of the city and replacing everything else with new construction, eradicating many historic blocks by new highways and superstructures. Much of the APUR plan’s suggestions for façade preservation, “block maintenance”, “respect for alignments”, and even some building preservation recommendations were discarded in the new 1991 plan. Commissioned by Hariri even before he became Prime minister or established SOLIDERE, the 1991 plan included grandiose schemes which likened the new waterfront and its artificial island (built upon the Normandy landfill) to the Manhattan Business District skyline and the widening of Martyrs Square to a Lebanese Champs Elysees205, clearing the vista to the sea. It has one concern: to catch up with global business trends after 15 years of slumber. This controversial 1991 plan, designed by Beirut-based mega-

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203 (Reconstruction n.d.)
204 Maha Yahya, in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), 137
205 Hashem Sarkis, in (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), p118-119
engineering firm Dar Al Handasah with the Direction of architect Henri Eddé, but mainly controlled by Rafik Hariri himself (who was after all a contractor), only preserved 110 buildings out of the thousands remaining in 1991.

Amazingly, this first post-war plan does include and preserve the St Charles Center, the Phoenicia hotel the Alcazar Hotel, the St George Hotel and its annex West of Fakhreddine Avenue. This is perhaps the will of Henri Eddé, who was, himself a modernist architect. SOLIDERE had good reason to desire appropriating these hotels as well (See 3.112 for Hariri’s involvement with Phoenicia). East of Fakhreddine, the Starco Center, the Hilton and the Murr Tower were preserved, but the Normandy Hotel, the Officers Club, the Sector Four Phalanges Headquarter and the Byblos Hotel are replaced with new construction. A new street grid was proposed east of Fakhreddine Avenue on the seafront, which had differed from the conserved grid of the APUR plan.

The 1991 plan, approved by the Council of Ministers in 1992, began its implementation by way of the destruction of the historic souks of Beirut, as well as the buildings surrounding Martyrs square, especially during a holiday weekend in 1992, generating a public uproar. This prompted the proposal of a second plan in 1994, in consultation with the French engineering firm Sato et Associés where 300 buildings were to be preserved, including maintaining the scale of the original Martyrs Square. It also proposed high-rise developments as “gateways to the BCD” which means they would be concentrated at the peripheries of its boundary, namely east of Fakhreddine street, where the Officer’s Club, the Christian Cemetery, and Hotel Byblos once stood. Furthermore, the SOLIDERE 1992-1994 Master Plan proposed a “Hotel District” in the former Zeitouneh neighborhood: “Sector B, the Hotel District, is a high-density area planned to accommodate a broad mix of commercial, office and residential uses, together with a limited number of prominent hotels. It is intended as the natural extension of what
constituted the hotel and entertainment hub of the capital before the war. This new district is in keeping with the scale of the hotel area situated on its western edge.”206

This statement is a pretense of preservation, which romanticizes the historic program of the neighborhood to erect a replica of Miami in Beirut. Also, it uses the Holiday Inn as a precedent for the demolition of low-scale historic buildings and the building of towers.

This adjusted plan, although deemed more acceptable since it was regarded as a kind of public cooperation unheard of for 20 years, did not slow down the pace of demolition: Wadi Abu Jmil, with its beautiful mansions, had to be destroyed to rid it of squatters. Even its original owners who remained were not allowed to keep their homes. Horrible accounts of eviction are told by Ayman Baalbaki, a former resident of Wadi Abu Jmil:

“There even were people who had properties in the area who did not sell [to SOLIDERE]. Some refused to leave their homes without receiving certain sums, but their conditions were not fulfilled. Later, these peoples’ properties collapsed as a result of the demolitions nearby, and a number of people died as a result.”

Years ago, Baalbaki personally witnessed another incident, when a delegate from SOLIDERE came to evict a building in the area. The owner refused and offered to restore it in accordance with the specifications the company followed, but using another company of his choice. SOLIDERE refused so he decided to file a complaint with the public prosecution. But right there, the SOLIDERE delegate called powerful judges and instructed them on the phone to ignore the man, according to Baalbaki.207

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206 (Saliba 2003), 189
207 (Mustafa 2014)
During this round of destruction from 1994 to 1998, the Officers club was destroyed\textsuperscript{208}, as well as the iconic Normandy Hotel, and most of the historic fabric of Wadi Abu Jmil and Zaitouneh. Also, according to the 1994 plan, the bay of the Saint George Hotel was sealed off with a wave breaker and marina belonging to SOLIDERE and the reclaimed land was seamlessly attached to the existing (and reconfigured) city. The demolition of the Normandy hotel especially shows a disregard to the heritage of war, as this buildings had become the site of a major checkpoint of both warring during and after the battle of the hotels.

\textsuperscript{208} The Officers Club might have been heavily damaged by a huge 1982 explosion. (Buchakjian, Dissertation 2016), 57
4.11 BCD Demolition
Figure 22: 1991 Dar Al Handasa BCD Masterplan (redrawn from “Beirut Reborn” by Christelle Al Ayli - Faisal Annab - Mahmoud Bou Kanaan - Batoul Yassine)
4.11 BCD Demolition
Figure 23: Solidere Masterplan (from 1994-)
4.12 BCD Preservation: boundaries and individual landmarks

As a buffer to the demolition of 80% of the Beirut Central District, SOLIDERE planned the preservation of 110 buildings in the 1992 plan, which after public protest, increased to 300 in the 1994 plan. The 1992 plan, “strongly established the identity of Foch-Allenby and Etoile as the new historic core” (Saliba 2003), 49 as well as preserving individual buildings around the BCD, especially the public and religious buildings, such as the St Elias Church. The Synagogue, Churches and Mosques of the BCD have been protected by the religious factions in Lebanon, thanks to their ever-growing political power (Lebanon is still a sectarian state par excellence). Other conserved buildings are those that were recuperated by their owners. Indeed SOLIDERE gave a timeframe when building owners could step in to claim their properties. This is when the buildings of the Battle of the Hotels that remain were saved: the Starco Center and the Murr Tower. An interesting case is that of the Murr Tower, the building which started the Battle of the Hotels. Since its owners were not interested in reclaiming it and its bearing walls would be very costly (not to mention dangerous) to destroy, SOLIDERE has been forced to keep it. It remains a “wasteful relic” (Saliba 2003), 49, one of the very few in Downtown Beirut. SOLIDERE have, unusually, tried to propose rehabilitation projects for it, but its inconvenient design makes it difficult to adapt to today’s residential or office requirements.

209 (Saliba 2003), 49
210 According to the Lebanese Jewish Community Council, there are over 2000 Jewish people living in Lebanon today.
211 Conversation with Marwan Ghandour
4.12 BCD Preservation: boundaries and individual landmarks

Figure 24: Solidere Conservation Plan

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Conservation of Archeological Context

**Note 4.3**

**Roman Baths Garden**
At the base of the Serafi Hill, the Roman baths site has been restored and landscaped with a terraced garden surrounded by an open area for cultural activities (fig. 4.12).

**Souks of Beirut**
West of the Foch–Allenby area, the late Ottoman souk district is being redeveloped as a mixed-use contemporary shopping and leisure area. The design recreates the historic open space pattern. Preserved heritage buildings, such as the Magdiya Mosque, are being restored and will be integrated into the new fabric of the area. The famed Khan Antoun Bey will be reconstructed with a modern interpretation and will serve as a department store. Archeological finds, such as the Phoenician–Persian site and recently recovered sections of the medieval city wall, will be preserved and enhanced through landscaping (fig. 4.11).

**Hadigat as Samah (Garden of Forgiveness)**
Located between Maarad Street and the Martyrs’ Square axis, this archeological park, the object of an international design competition, will be landscaped around such major features as the Cardo Maximus and the venerated Sayyid al Noorina (Our Lady of the Light) shrine. Delineated by a number of mosques and churches, this open area will also assume the role of a multi-confessional space (fig. 4.10).
As for the largest sections for preservation, they are located within preservation boundaries which come in two types. The first type, a “Conservation Area Boundary”\(^{212}\), was drawn around the Grand Serail, Place de l’Etoile, Allenby and Foch streets. Most of the buildings within this boundary have been restored and preserved by SOLIDERE. Those within it which have, for a reason or another, been destroyed were replaced by low density (24 to 40 meters high) buildings. The second type is called a “Traditional Neighborhood Boundary”. Two of these were drawn around Wadi Abu Jmil (in which we can find the St Elias Church of the Battle of the Hotels event) and Saifi, but more than half of the buildings within these boundaries were razed. It seems, in both of these types, that the boundaries were drawn “a posteriori” to the demolishing of many structures. It is the result of plans prior to 1994 taking effect before the consultation of the public. Had SOLIDERE developed a transparency with the citizens of Beirut from its inception, the erasure of so many significant buildings could have been avoided, especially with regards to all the modern heritage, which was completely disregarded by the masterplan. Perfectly structurally viable landmarks such as the Rivoli theater north of Martyrs Square were instantly imploded to make way for a masterplan that was never about the memory of the people of Beirut, but rather about creating a luxurious haven for investors. It is to be expected from a privately-owned city, whose expert planners and architects are, after all, at the mercy of the investors.

Understanding the preservation strategies of Solidere as non-inclusive top-down approach has made me aware of the necessity of an intermediary phase of discussion with the public between the time of the original proposal for the boundary and its actual implementation. This is why my project imagines exposing the map of the battle to the public in different ways in order to gain feedback.

\(^{212}\) (Saliba 2003), 52
4.13 Preservation outside the BCD

In the rest of the capital, outside the BCD, the government commissioned 3 different organisms to develop 3 preservation plans, each one discrediting the one previous to it, leading to the failure of preservation in Beirut and the domination of real-estate development companies over the built environment (following the example of SOLIDERE).

The 1st survey, commissioned by the Ministry of Culture in 1996, was by the NGO APSAD (French acronym for the Association for the Protection of Sites and Old Buildings in Lebanon). It created a comprehensive listing of 1090 buildings, “focused on the architectural value of buildings” 213, published it in the local news, drafted a preservation law with the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU 1997: 8) and placed moratoriums (temporary suspensions) on demolition permits for listed buildings 214. This sudden listing of private property generated an uproar by proprietors, as preservation had never been practiced in the “laissez-faire” state of Lebanon and its benefits never fully explained to the locals (it is not clear if the DGU 1997:8 provided benefits for owners or developers in the form of tax credits).

Building owners only saw the listing of their property as a disadvantage: real estate was often the only remaining valuable asset for the post-war population. The real estate boom and spike in prices of land generated by the postwar economy and the gentrification of the BCD by SOLIDERE, was an opportunity. A committee of Property Owners contested APSAD’s plan, proposing the government (still rising under post-war deficit) buy their property. This was not an option, prompting the commission of a second plan.

213 (Bekdache and Saksouk-Sasso 2009)
4.13: Preservation outside the BCD
Figure 25: DGU plan 1997 (Source: Abdul Halim Jabr)

RED: buildings we recommend to be listed out of the full APSAD inventory.

BLUE: parcels where red buildings are, and other parcels where modern buildings from 1940-1965 are located—those have not fulfilled the full development potential according to subsequent zoning regulations.

YELLOW: parcels adjacent to BLUE zone where full development is achieved, and hence can benefit from some beautification measures.

ORANGE: parcels that are served well by infrastructure, where Transfer of development Rights can be received from BLUE areas.
4.13: Preservation outside the BCD
Figure 26: Khatib and Alami plan, 1999

Conservation Of The Architectural Heritage Of Beirut CBD Belt
Status in 1998
Source: K&A

Ranking Count
- Type A: 35 Houses
- Type B: 127 Houses
- Type C: 49 Houses
- Type D: 154 Houses
- Type E: 88 Houses
- TOTAL: 463 Houses

Ranking Definition
- Type A: Landmark buildings with historic value, preserved and/or reconstructed architectural values contributing to the cultural heritage of Lebanon
- Type B: Buildings possessing high architectural values, illustrating a type, period, or method of construction, requiring financial support for preservation
- Type C: Buildings with similar characteristics to Type B but not fully damaged or do not need extensive or substantial financial support for preservation
- Type D: Buildings with specific features, illustrating period and method of construction, requiring financial support for up-grading
- Type E: Buildings that are aesthetically weak, ugly and do not contribute much to historic and architectural environment

Scale: 1:7000
In 1997, the 2nd plan was created by a group of architects and engineers (Hana Alameddin, Fadlallah Dagher, Habib Debs, AbdulHalim Jabr and Wissam Jabr) and was commissioned by the Directorate General of Urban Planning (under the Ministry of Works). Since this report delisted more than half (571) of the buildings originally listed by APSAD, this created a discretization of the practice of preservation in general by the local population. A committee of “listed” building owners accused APSAD of being “amateurs of archaeology”\textsuperscript{215} and of robbing the middle-class of its property rights (a stance encouraged by developers). Even in this second listing, it seems reasonable benefits to the owners were no put forth. The disadvantages of being listed still outweighed the advantages. Owners began demolishing their own homes in order to render them ineligible for listing.

The 3rd plan, produced in 1999 by the multinational architecture and engineering plan Khatib and Alami and supervised by the Council of Development and Reconstruction (also known as the SOLIDERE Planners). This final survey reduced the number of these protected buildings in half by classifying buildings in the following categories:

“A: historical buildings, linked to historical figures, featuring special architectural and artistic qualities, generally in good shape and requiring a minimum of restoration work

B: buildings not linked to specific historical periods but featuring high architectural standards or a distinct structural build

C: are the category B buildings except that those buildings suffered significant damage caused by disrepair or war

\textsuperscript{215} (Bekdache and Saksouk-Sasso 2009)
D: buildings with no significant historical value and not linked to a specific period but which feature distinctive architectural elements: 161 buildings

E: buildings with no historical or architectural value for the following reasons:

- for being less than 50-60 years old
- not following traditional architecture criteria
- the original architecture/design was fundamentally changed/altered
- considerably altered by the introduction/use of new materials
- are dangerous to live in or in the vicinity of, due to flawed structure
- are too expensive to maintain in shape."

A committee for advising on the rehabilitation of the 279 A, B and C buildings collapsed after few meetings. Buildings in categories D and E were given the green light for demolition. In light of this 1999 classification, all buildings in the Hotel District built before 1939-1949 can be demolished, legally, simply because of their age. This makes the St George Hotel the only building in the Battle of the Hotels District officially protected. The survival of the rest of these hotels, almost 20 years after this classification, is a testament to the value of these hotels beyond their “officially” recognized worth.

Buildings of the western half of the Battle’s area (west of Fakhreddine Avenue) remained in private ownership of the companies and individuals which had built them. The St George started its renovation works in 1996 as soon as the Syrian Army withdrew from the building. However, complication arose when its owners realized the hotel was in the way of SOLIDERE’s new Marina. It became difficult to

216 (Association for the Protection of Lebanese Heritage n.d.) and (Dagher and Jabr 2014)
217 (Bekdache and Saksouk-Sasso 2009)
218 (St George Hotel n.d.)
obtain a reconstruction license, as SOLIDERE had blocked it, since the owners of St George refused to sell their property.

This contrasts with the Phoenicia hotel’s cooperation with Rafik Hariri, as its’ reconstruction contract was signed in Rafik Hariri’s office, the year he had become Prime Minister in 1992. The Phoenicia was restored in the 90s by the Societe des Grands Hotels du Liban (chaired by Mazen Salha) and the Grand Metropolitan Hotels (which bought Pan Am/InterContinental’s shares). The Palm Beach Hotel was also restored in the 90s. The owners of the Alcazar Hotel sold their property in November 1998 to the HSBC bank, who modified its architecture.

The Holiday Inn and the Excelsior Hotels’ fates remain uncertain. In the 90s and early 2000s they were only guarded by individual superintendents, and many photographers and artists were able to visit them by climbing fences and sneaking in. Today, this is impossible. To access the Holiday Inn, one would need a name-specific permit from the Ministry of Defense.
4.21 The 2000s and 2010s
Figure 27: The hotels and the new Towers
4.21 The 2000s and 2010s

Figure 28: Beirut Terraces Interior Rendering, Herzog et DeMeuron
Advertising the abandonment of the Holiday Inn

What if you could enjoy total privacy...
4.2 The 2000s and 2010s

4.21 BCD

By the year 2000, the new masterplan’s waterfront and its road networks were all implemented. All demolitions planned by SOLIDERE were completed and the city waited for new development to sprout up. The large city blocks created were empty, often used as parking spaces. Even the Hilton, which SOLIDERE had planned to preserve, was demolished by its new Lebanese owners on the 14th of July 2002.219

The 2000s marked the introduction to starchitect constructions in SOLIDERE. The waterfront east of Fakhreddine Avenue was populated with glistening luxury towers such as The Marina Towers, designed by international firm Kohn Petersen Fox, and the Platinum Tower designed by Ricardo Bofil and Nabil Gholam. In the 2010s the 3Beirut tower by Foster and Partners, the Beirut Terraces tower by Herzog and DeMeuron and the DAMAC tower (with Versace interiors) were built at the edge of low scale Wadi Abu Jmil, blocking the view of the Holiday inn towards central Beirut. The latter is no longer the domineering tower in the area. These towers significantly alter the urban landscape and the perception of the Battle of the Hotels. They contribute further to the erasure of vistas from the tower towards the East of the City. If the Holiday Inn were to be conquered again today, we can imagine a full fledge battle of towers to its east and its north.

As for the Marina encircling the St George Hotel in the 1994 plan, it was implemented and designed by Steven Holl as the Zaytounay Bay, a strip of restaurants built at sea level and accessed directly from the corniche opened in 2012, topped with a four story yacht club opened in 2014 whose individual apartment owners can park their boats at the Marina. The development stole the St George’s

219 (Beirut Hilton - Controlled Demolition, Inc n.d.)
waterfront from them and established a privately owned public space complete with strict surveillance, rules on the behavior of its attendees and valet parking.

4.22 Outside the BCD

Meanwhile, the prices of land continue to increase spectacularly all around Beirut. The bulldozing mentality spread, decimating historic fabric to better exploit built up area allowances, with no solid heritage protection agency. The Khatib and Alami 1999 plan was dismissed by the Shura authority, which means there is no official preservation plan today. In 2013, the Citadel tower by infamous developer Jamil Ibrahim was built in Ain Mreiseh a few blocks away from the St George, mimicking SOLIDERE’s waterfront development and destroying half a block in Ain Mreisseh near the Palm Beach Hotel.

In 2016, the most updated draft for a heritage law was prepared by the Culture Minister Raymond Areiji, in which an effort was made to take into consideration the failures of the previous heritage laws which did not consider compensation for owners. In an interview with the Daily Star, he disclosed that: “The law introduces a new concept that includes incentives for landlords to preserve their properties, whereby investment is taken into consideration and owners are given the opportunity to transfer and sell air rights in a different area.” As of 2016, voting on the law in parliament was pending, since priority was with dealing with the presidential void. Areiji expressed the difficulty of preserving heritage in Beirut, since no post-war masterplan was drawn outside of the BCD, and the high level of investment and small amount of empty building sites has increased the “investment factor” and given people the incentive to demolish and sell their lands. Until this proposed law passes, preservation remains precarious and in need of creative solutions in law and design and constant activism through NGOs such APSAD, Save Beirut Heritage and the Association for the Protection of Lebanese Heritage.

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220 (Ghaith 2016)
And although “Section 13 of law 646/2004 empowers the Ministry of Public Works, (under which the Directorate General of Urbanism operates) to refuse a building permit if the building(s) in question are likely to be harmful to public health and safety, the natural landscape, the environment or architectural landscape”, refusal is often trumped by corruption and higher powers who can give demolition permits in the flick of a wrist. “Activists protest that the construction of mega-projects and high-rise buildings is the driving force destroying Beirut’s cultural identity, arguing that the weakness of the legal framework for protecting architectural heritage -- in addition to land speculation -- compromise the protection of heritage sites.”

I mention this last statement purposefully to highlight the controversy of my project in contrast to the classical activist stance in Beirut, as I have argued that the high-rises of the Battle of the Hotel have come to define Beirut’s Cultural Identity rather than or maybe even also in addition to destroying it. “Cultural Identity”, as I have discussed in the beginning of this thesis, was definitely a work in progress for Lebanon since Independence. The nation crumbled under the weight of social disparities manifested in architecture, resulting in an urbicidal civil war. That too is part of our cultural heritage as Lebanese, whether we like it or not. In my preserving of events rather than individual landmarks, I am not casting any value judgement on the architectural style of the group of buildings I am aiming to preserve, but rather I am valuing the characteristics of the buildings that have made the event I am preserving possible. This way, the issue of whether modernism is part of Lebanon’s architectural heritage as a “style” becomes secondary to whether a building played a significant role in the battle of the hotels. Preserving the Holiday Inn and the Murr tower specifically because they are high-rise buildings might seem like a counter-intuitive stance for a heritage activist, but I argue that history does not lie uniquely in what the building looks like, but what it is able to do, what events it was able to produce and witness.

221 (Arbid 2014)
However, this is not to say that the physicality of the building itself is not valuable. Indeed, I am not only interested in the manifestation of the event from the inside out, but its public perception, its image, is also, I believe, quite significant. I speak of this significance in 5.1 *The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art*.

**4.23 The Current Preservation of Urban Warfare Sites in Beirut**

Whether inside or outside the “SOLIDERE” boundary, actively preserving the events of war through the built environment is not current practice in Beirut yet. Furthermore, what qualifies as “historically significant” has yet to surpass the style and age of the building. Notions of heritage are still primitive and have yet to value architectural significance beyond the French mandate’s early modernity according to SOLIDERE and the CDR’s masterplan. Furthermore, they remains unclear in the case of the two official bodies dealing with preservation in municipal Beirut today, the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) which reports to the Ministry of Culture and the Directorate for the Operation of Archeological Sites and Museums which operates under the Ministry of Tourism (which are both relatively “weak” ministries which lack funding). Although the city center and the hotel district had been some of the most damaged areas during the war, intentional memorials of this “negative heritage” in the form of architecture are still absent. Those buildings in Beirut that still bear the traces of conflict today, only do so because of ownership disagreements or the structural difficulty of their demolition.

In SOLIDERE, the effort towards reconciliation is a shy one, as the new Central Business district’s mission is to insure maximum profit and luxury enjoyment and “reunite” Beirut within a leisurely, pseudo historical city, with the slogan “Ancient city of the future” (penned by the marketing agency Saatchi and Saatchi). SOLIDERE’s attempts at war memorials are synthesized in a series of landscaped gardens and archeological sites, among them the still inaccessible “Garden of Forgiveness” and maybe even the

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222 the Directorate of Urbanism, however, falls under the Ministry of Public Works, who has more funding and agency.
223 (Fricke 2005)
incomplete and unengaged “Shoreline Walk” marking the historic seafront before the landfill. The fate of its untreated buildings, such as the City Center Dome and the Murr tower are still uncertain until this day.

There are a few exceptions of engagement with the layer of war in Beirut’s existing architecture outside the BCD: the Centrale restaurant, in which the architect Bernard Khoury encases the exterior of a “historically protected” and bullet-pocked 1920s building with a steel grid and mesh. A more deliberately memorial project is the Barakat building, a sniper’s nest and ottoman era villa on the demarcation line, which, after years of activism by architect Mona Hallak, was expropriated by the Beirut Municipality and has been preserved with the invasive traces of its militia occupants. It will open as the Beit Beirut Museum of Beirut in October 2017.

The preservation of the Barakat Building, an early 20th century building on the demarcation line, is the first project by the Municipality of Beirut to openly acknowledge, in its architectural restoration and its program, Beirut’s war heritage. The restoration of this iconic building is mainly a result of Mona Hallak’s strenuous decade long efforts in making sure that the building was not demolished and that its restoration preserves traces of the war. The house was eventually purchased by the Beirut Municipality, which, with funding from the French government, commissioned Lebanese Architect Youssef Haidar to the Beit Beirut Museum and Urban Cultural Center. I visited the unfinished museum last summer, and was critical of many of Haidar’s design decisions. On the one hand, he fortunately preserved the snipers’ architecture: the carved sniper openings which allowed for precise shooting and the concrete castings which revealed the imprints of sandbags (unintentional sculptural works reminiscent of Rachel Whiteread’s castings). On the other hand, the façade, which had inevitably been plastered, was manually pocked with finger-carved bullet holes, unethically replicating and kitsch-ifying the traces of

224 (Beitbeirut.org n.d.)
war. The same occurs with the encasing of the snipers graffiti in a bulky glass box, uncomfortably positioned over a small portion of a wall left intact with its ageing qualities. Furthermore, the destruction of the back outdoor staircase, which Hallak heartbrokenly pointed out in the tour, was replaced with a circular atrium with a wrapping stepped ramp, white, clinical and frankly unnecessarily imposing. “Win some and lose some”, Hallak remarked. “At least the building still stands”.

Beit Beirut is important because it might be the first architectural project in Beirut actively commemorating the war through it architecture and program and endorsed by the Beirut Municipality. This means that the authorities and the public have officially opened the discussion on the significance of the history of war and its representation through a preservation project.
V. Representing the Object: Defining Boundary

Accounts differ as to how many militants and civilians perished as a direct consequence of the battle of the hotels, ranging from only about a hundred persons to two thousand. Its significance does not lie in the amount of casualties it made, but rather in its powerful representational aspect, as it was centered around recognizable buildings. It still captures the imagination of many Lebanese today, as most of its buildings still exist, and the imposing ruin of the Holiday Inn is a powerful yet silent reminder. Yet when I ask about the Battle of the Hotels to those who have lived through it, they immediately mention it as a traumatic episode, during which what seemed like dozens of Christians were being thrown off the Holiday Inn, although historic accounts show only the two snipers were dropped when the Mourabitoun conquered the tower. The sniper, however, was real, and captured the terror and fascination of many: how could one person have so much power? “What if the sniper was looking at me? Was special, in a certain way?” Asks Pierre Sabbagh in a 15 year-old’s wonder. The ability of the sniper, with the advantage of his high vantage point, to reach into the lives of so many, made the battle of the hotels and its environs a terrifying event to all Lebanese within and without the sniper’s radius.

The reason for this battle’s fame is perhaps that it was extensively covered by the local and foreign press the time, as it generated visual content: architecture is palimpsestic in that it bares the marks of all events inflicted upon it, hence it has the ability to encapsulate and record violent events in an image. Jalal Toufic’s text “The Withdrawal of Tradition Past A Surpassing Disaster” proposes that the buildings that have had the “fortune of not being destroyed by the war, have had their tradition “immaterially withdrawn by the surpassing disaster.” In other words, the events they had gone through were so

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225 (Jureidini, Mc Laurin and Price 1979), Appendix A, Table 1.
226 (Toufic 2009), 15
traumatic that they underwent an immaterial transformation beyond the physical realm. He goes even further in qualifying those surviving buildings which have been depicted by artists as monuments. If we consider the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War to be a surpassing disaster, then the following can be considered of its surviving buildings:

“Any building that was not razed to the ground during the surpassing disaster, materially subsisting in some manner; but was immaterially withdrawn by the surpassing disaster; and then had the fortune of being resurrected by artists, writers, and thinkers is a monument.”

Documenting architecture through real and fictional narrative is therefore necessary to avoid “a collective post-traumatic amnesia,” which has already occurred from the avoidance of his subject by popular culture according to Toufic.

A similar idea was expressed in 1991 by sociologist Samir Khalaf and historian Philip S. Khoury in the M.I.T. workshop entitled “Recovering Beirut” on post-war reconstruction: “The war has been wasteful and futile, ugly and unfinished. The task of representing or incorporating such inglorious events into a nation’s collective identity becomes, understandably more problematic. But it needs to be done. Otherwise, the memory of the war, like the harrowing events themselves, might well be trivialized and forgotten and, hence, are more prone to be repeated.”

This statement speaks of four main components: Event, Memory, Representation and Identity. The representation of events is deemed crucial for avoiding the loss of memory, but it is also crucial in creating memory and in constructing identity.

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227 (Toufic 2009), 25-26
228 (Toufic 2009), 25
229 (Khalaf and Khoury 1993), XIV
5.1 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art

Documenting and representing the war has been a major concern of post-war Lebanese artists. The Battle of the Hotels and its buildings figure in a substantial sample of post-war Lebanese art, representing the hotels and the battle intrinsically or extrinsically during and after its occurrence. Lebanese artists have understood that this episode in the history of Lebanon is a crucial part of our cultural heritage, and have rushed to reproduce it before nothing is left of it. Since I am producing an art object to be installed at the sight, I thought it would be interesting to see the different ways in which Lebanese artists tackled the Battle of the Hotels. The question of medium is important for me, as it expresses the underlying implications of the artists work.

5.11 Bellum

Johanna Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige’s *Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer*, explores the notion of truth in the representation of architecture as they reject the architectural propaganda of the Lebanese “Golden-Era” postcards. The artists invent the story of a photographer called Abdallah Farah, who, with his father was commissioned by the Lebanese State to take touristic photographs of Beirut during the 50s and 60s. When Abdallah’s father passed away, the war broke out, and the photographer was left with postcards documenting a Beirut which was no longer there. In order to “make [the photographs] closer to his reality”230, he began the “Historical Process” of inflicting burns on the photographs which were accurate to the bombings of the period, for example during the Battle of the Hotels. The artists showed the final product, but also replicated the process of burning the photographs, making the treatment of the medium the main intervention. In the second phase, called the “Plastic Process”, the artists realized Ibrahim started inflicting burns on images of buildings and people that had never been hit by the war. He had become his own militia, purging himself of images

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230 (Hadjithomas, Joreige and Toufic Winter 2002), 89
and subjects reflecting his psychological issues or political preferences. In the third phase of the project, the artists reproduced Ibrahim’s burnt images onto postcards, which they gave out at their exhibition opening, somewhat reclaiming the medium of the postcard and disillusioning its trend as a glorifying tool for the “golden era” of Beirut.
5.11 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art

Figure 29: Johanna Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige’s Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer
5.11 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art

Figure 30: Raed Yassin. China, 2012. Porcelain Vases, Variable Dimensions
5.11 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art
Figure 31: Rabih Mroué’s 2007 performance piece “How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool’s Joke”
Raed Yassin draws illustrations of the major events of the Lebanese Civil War on porcelain vases in “China” (2012). One of these vases represents the Battle of the Hotels in a scene depicting the Holiday Inn burning, with fighters peeking and falling out of its loggias. Yassin reifies the battle onto a mass-produced cultural and tangible artifact appropriated from the far-east. He is shown breaking the pot similarly to Aiweiwei in a short film clip. Yassin’s illustrations revolve around each pot in a drawing with no vertical edges except for the 3-dimensional tangential curve of the pot, a never-ending drawing for a never-ending battle.

Rabih Mroué’s 2007 performance piece “How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool’s Joke”, co-written with Fadi Toufic, stages four militia fighters sitting tightly on an uncomfortable sofa meant for three. Watching it in 2008 was the first time I personally listened to an integral story of the civil war. This play affected me and my future architectural projects beyond measure. Rabih Mroué, his partner Lina Saneh, and artists Hatem Imam and Ziad Antar take on characters which tell their stories as militants for various warring factions. Their narratives bounce off of each other as they sit still and images of official documents circulate under their feet. On the screen above them, their images are photoshopped onto martyrs posters, with monochrome backgrounds and the logo of the militia to which they belong. Although the characters are fictional, the names of the militias are accurate. The characters talk frantically about their battles and daily events, until they are killed off and resurrected instantaneously, automatically joined into another militia. The Murr tower is perhaps a fifth character in this story, as the play starts and ends with it. All the characters, at the end of the play, find out about Beirut’s 2007 violent student clashes, say, “My blood was boiling [...] Given my former experience in combat, I know that the battle for Beirut is as good as won by whoever’s the first to control the tower...” This chronological documentary play allows for the unwritten war narrative to express itself as an infinite

231 (R. Yassin 2012)
232 (Mroué and Toufiq 2007-2008)
loop of crime committed by all parties involved. The medium allows us to stare at these criminals in the face, and realize that their accountability slips from our hands as fast as they are dead and resurrected. Mroue reiterates: “One of the main things that I wanted to say in this piece was that I am afraid of another civil war in Lebanon. I wanted to recall what we all committed as Lebanese during the civil war in order to think about it and maybe to learn for the present and for the future.” 233 The permit for presenting the play was denied by the Lebanese General Security in 2007, as well as its appeal for the request and clarification for the denial, until the Minister of Culture Tarek Mitri decided to present it to the Council of Ministers. The permit for it was granted, without censorship, before the session was held.

5.12 Post-Bellum

In the year 2000, Ziad Antar walked into the studio of Hashem El Madani in his hometown of Saida (the same studio Akram Zaatari acquired the photos from for the Arab Image Foundation234), and purchased ten rolls of black and white film dated 1973 and which expired in 1976, one year after the start of the Lebanese Civil war.235 From then on, he started taking photographs with this expired film, experimenting with this seemingly unusable medium until he could reproduce recognizable images, all the while documenting the process. However, recognizability or “documentary”236 is not the aim of Antar at all: “In my artistic practice, I do not care about translating the same image that I am seeing.”237 The purpose of filming with an expired roll of film is perhaps letting go of part of the authorship of the image, letting the medium speak for itself: “With film, you have the magic of not knowing exactly what will materialize.”238 Antar stretches the boundary of the legitimacy of photography as an art form by almost removing himself from the equation. He snaps a quick photograph, with no tripod, since these places are usually forbidden to photograph, and hopes for the best. The film dictates the outcome

233 (Schau in Blau 2011)
234 Non-profit photography archive and research organization based in Beirut
235 (Milliard 2011)
236 (Downey 2012)
237 (Downey 2012)
238 (Milliard 2011)
rather than the photographer. This letting go of the claim to the photograph expresses perhaps a helplessness to try and gain control of the fate of these buildings in Beirut. They could also signify a carelessness about their derelict state, a long-standing, banale familiarity, with a lack of engagement.

In the 2009 Sharjah Biennale installation entitled “Beirut Bereft: The Architecture of the Forsaken and Map of the Derelict”, Antar showcased fourteen photographs of derelict buildings in Beirut from his Expired Series, among them “Murr Tower, Wadi Abu Jmil, built in 1973” (2009), and “The Saint Georges Hotel, Ain Mreiseh, built in 1950 (x 1932)” (2009). The large prints were accompanied with text from Rasha Salti describing “a generation marked by a loss of ritual in the postwar period,”239 a concept quite similar to Jalal Toufic’s in “The Withdrawal of Tradition Passed a Surpassing Disaster.” The emptiness of these photographs of buildings speaks of obsoleteness, and ruin, as we are not quite sure where the image exists in time: does it belong to the date of expiration or the date the photograph was taken? And don’t these derelict buildings belong to the date of the medium rather than the present day? According to Jalal Toufic, these building became ruins as soon as they were abandoned, therefore their state belongs to the date of the film. They have become fossils, sedimenting in the city, their past life deposited within their solid walls. The trauma has rendered them mute and subject to chance discoveries through this medium of expired film. Their representation is skewed by the medium, although: isn’t their skewing more representatively truthful of their state?

239 (Rogers 2011), 162
5.11 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art
Figure 32: Ziad Antar “Beirut Bereft The Architecture of the Forsaken and Map of the Derelict”
5.12 The Battle in Post-War Lebanese Art

Figure 33: The Atlas Group: “Sweet Talk”

Impossible not to recognize the Murr tower
Fact in fiction is a dear friend of Walid Raad. The artist, who has created the Atlas Group, an organization who has produced archival documents for Lebanon since 1999, and in which he is the sole contributor, constantly manipulates “the archive” as a means of expressing underlying phenomena pertaining to the war, recollected in the post-war period. “Sweet Talk” is a commission by the Atlas Group, who, in 1989, “recruited dozens of men and women to photograph streets, storefronts, buildings, and other spaces of national, technological, architectural, cultural, political, and economic significance in Beirut.”240 The Hilwé commissions (1992-2004), were submitted by Lamia Hilwé fourteen years after she was asked to produce them as part of the “Sweet Talk” project. The plates consist of a small indistinguishable black and white print of each building documented by Hilwé to the right and at its center a large colored cut-out photograph of the same building, floating against the background, devoid of context or base and forced into an awkward form. Hilwé mostly photographed generic residential buildings, some riddled with bullet holes and others intact. Most are unrecognizable and do not constitute monuments in the traditional sense. Hilwe has picked up a few details she has deemed significant, such as television antennas, and balcony contours, but has sliced off many of these buildings diagonally, disrupting their usual orthogonality. This project expresses the impossibility of documentation and the overbearing interpretive aspect of the archive. What has been removed? What has been kept? Who controls what is visible and what has been rendered unclear? Representation exerts a control over what we see. One of the plates, however, contains a shard of a structure quite recognizable: It is the Murr tower, a monument against all intention, a monument despite itself, an indestructible “wasteful relic”, a necessary reminder of the absurdity of Beirut.

240 (The Atlas Group n.d.)
What all these artists have in common, and my interest in their work, lies not only in the subject matter, which is the Battle of the Hotels, but in how each of these works manipulates, deforms and questions the medium with which it is made. Whether it is the postcard, the vase, the stage or the photograph, the underlying intention of these artists is to express the ineptitude of the existing modes of representation of the Battle of the Hotels in expressing the gravity of the event, “the withdrawal of its tradition”. These mediums are skewed by the artists themselves, they are the final process, the final event imposed upon the existing mode of representation.

This is what I am also exploring in the production of a map, a marble slab, and a historic district. I am attempting to stretch the definition of these mediums. Can a map express time and movement? Can a piece of marble convey an event? Can the boundary of a historic district express 5 months?

241 (Toufic 2009)
5.2 Making the Map: The Battle of the Hotels

The urban nature of the event of the Battle of the Hotels would benefit from a representational tool able to chronicle episodes within the historical urban space. I am producing a battle map, which is essentially a historical map that carries data in four dimensions: length, width, time and movement. The historical boundaries of the Battle of the Hotels will be determined from this map. As we have seen, according to section 3.1, a few of the buildings determining this historic boundary have been erased, therefore, the historic battle map can only be fully understood in today’s context. The aim of mapping the Battle of the Hotels has been detailed in section 1.2 To Preserve a Battlefield and 1.3 Mapping the Urban Battlefield. This map can be used as a supplement to the tour (Appendix 4). The back-side of the map has the printed data base, a few historical battle maps and the weapons used during the battle. A booklet with magazine and newspaper visuals relating to every event, as well as building fiches, accompany this map during the tour. The map can also be of course read as a digital image in case a website were made. It would be supplemented with animated GIS maps of the Battle.

The first phase in making a map of the battle of the hotels was to create a vector base map of 1975 Beirut. I sourced the overall map of Beirut from a CAD agency in Lebanon who had copied pre-war cadastral maps. However, the 1975 city center was missing in their map, and instead had the new grid of the implemented 1994 SOLIDERE plan. To fill this gap, I traced over Heiko Schmid’s map entitled “Beirut Central District” Demolition and Preservation 1975-1998” and positioned this tracing over the map of Beirut. This is the basemap layer in gray.

The next step was to create a database of the Battle of the Hotels, which I found practical to make in Excel, in case it was to be converted into GIS data in the future. I organized the data of the Battle of the

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242 Maacaron Computer Training Center
243 Dr Schmid wrote his Geography thesis on Beirut. Unfortunately he passed away in 2013.
Hotels vertically chronologically by date and horizontally by Information Source (MOBA, GB Dissertation, GB Colloquium, Historic Newspapers, witnesses), Date, Time, Neighborhood, Building, Building Occupant, Event, Corresponding Post (meaning the new program the building had acquired with its militia/military occupants), Weaponry and comments on events outside the Battle of the Hotels.

According to the National Register Bulletin’s “Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering America’s Historic Battlefields”, defining the boundaries of a battlefield occurs by identifying military Movements (or maneuver in military terms), Positions, Areas and related Locations. According to my findings, defining the boundaries of a battlefield occurs by identifying its buildings, events, movements and areas.

5.21 Buildings

The table helped me identify all buildings mentioned in the literature on the Battle at any point. I marked their footprint on the map and colored them distinctly, so they can be quickly spotted by identifying their name on the legend. Photographs framed with the corresponding color are aligned at the bottom of the map. I identified building programs and marked the buildings with a corresponding letter.

Based on these events, I was able to complete my “Buildings” legend by adding functions attributed to buildings specifically during the events of the Battle:

- Command Posts (Headquarters): Represented by a small magenta or cyan arrow, these are:

  - Phalanges: Haigazian University
  - Phalanges: Sector Four Headquarters
  - Phalange: Port Main Headquarters
  - LNM: Plam Beach Hotel
• Signal Stations were “Vantage points used to transmit information from a forward area to a rear area.” These are structures tall enough and whose vistas are clear enough towards the enemy’s view
  - The Murr Tower
  - The St Charles Holiday Inn Tower
  - The Hilton Hotel

• Observation Posts “Vantage point used to observe the enemy or a military engagement” and Sniper Stations are all represented by an Eye symbol. These are:
  - The Murr Tower
  - The St Charles Holiday Inn Tower
  - The Phoenicia Annex tower
  - The Hilton Hotel

• Amenities Available: A very important component of an urban battle is amenities such as the availability of running water, food and electricity. If these are not cut off, they can make the defenders of a tower unshakeable (this was indeed the case with the Holiday Inn). These were
  - The St Charles Center
  - The Phoenicia

• Hospitals: I gathered this data from the 1978 Map of Beirut
  - “The American University of Beirut – Medical Center (AUBMC) was extensively serving as a field hospital for the fighting factions. Many times, it even became difficult to admit

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244 (Andrus 1992-1999)
246 (Maps - DMA Map of Beirut 1978 1:12,500 n.d.)
a civilian emergency from the region of Ras Beirut to the American University of Beirut – Medical Center.”

- Makhoul Hospital
- Ahliyya National Hospital
- Trad Hospital
- Red Cross
- Sacred Heart Hospitals
- Various other small hospitals

Most of the building involved in the battle are concentrated within 3 blocks in Minet El Husn, from the St George at the north to the Holiday Inn at the south. These is a small front at the Starco/Hilton/Normandy area. There are also peripheral buildings, uninvolved such as the Central Bank, which only played a role at the beginning of the battle, or very involved such as the Murr Tower.

### 5.22 Events

I then went through every entry and identified those that can be counted as an event. I used magenta to represent the LNM and left-wing, and I used cyan to represent the Phalanges and right-wing. I positioned these symbols (events) next to the buildings in which they occurred. Each of these symbols contains a letter which identifies one of the four phases during which the battle took place. Below this letter is the chronological number of the event. These “event numbers” have their own column in the database and refer directly to the specific events that are on their row in the database. I identified a few types of events during the Battle of the Hotels, such as:

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247 (Bikhazi Medical Group n.d.)
• Building Invasion (marked as a rectangle with an inscribed triangle pointing towards the left or right to represent the political affiliation of the invaders)

• Attempted Building Invasion (a dashed rectangle similar to the “Building invasion” symbol)

• Neighborhood Street Fighting (I framed the neighborhood’s name with a textured rectangle to represent neighborhood names with my sources mentioned as places where both militias clashed on the streets)

• Building set on Fire (a flame symbol)

• Massacre (a skull symbol)

• ISF or Army Vehicle Round (an oval)

• Explosion (Carbomb or destruction of heavy weapon or vehicle, represented by a jagged circle)

• Ceasefire (a circle)

These events are specific to urban warfare. I’ve summarized them from the sources and narratives I have gathered in the database. The most events involved the Holiday Inn (21), followed by the Phoenicia (11), the Murr Tower (11), the St George hotel (8), Hilton Hotel (7), Normandy Hotel (5), the Alcazar (3), The Palm Beach (2), The Martinez (2), Starco Center (2), the Excelsior (1), the Central Bank (1), St Vincent School (1), the St George Annex (1) and the Port Warehouses (1). The Holiday Inn, Phoenicia and Murr Tower are the 3 major buildings in the Battle of the Hotels. However, the other buildings play a major defensive role at the north of the Holiday Inn (Phoenicia, St George, Alcazar, St George Annex): as soon as the Holiday Inn is invaded by the Phalanges, the northern buildings are invaded for its defense. Halfway through the battle, the major offensive by the LNM started by taking over these defensive hotels, blocking the Holiday Inn on all sides except the East. It was the beginning of the end. The Hilton and Normandy, to the east of the Holiday Inn, also played a defensive role, since they were invaded as early as the second phase by the phalanges, after the had lost the northern hotels.
5.23 Movements

I identified movements that led to these events in the battle of the hotels, based on classical battlefield terminology:

- Approaches to the battlefield (Beginning of phase, a large colored sun-shape near a neighborhood or attached to an attack)
- Retreats or withdrawals from the battlefield (End of phase, a ceasefire circle symbol) The ISF replaced the militias in the buildings at the end of each round. The Phalanges retreated towards their Sector Four headquarter bureau each time, while the LNM went west. The LNM made a makeshift headquarter at the Palm Beach, but in fact its headquarter was far from the battle of the hotels south of Beirut near the Jamal Abdel Nasser mosque on the Saeb Salam highway.
- Approach movements during the battle (thick colored arrow) The LNM were already stationed in Hamra while the Phalanges came from downtown. Careful approaches included coming in from Ain Mreisseh’s alleys, Kantari or the Junblatt slope which leads down straight to the Holiday Inn. As for the Phalangists, combattants would, according to Assaad Chaftari (a fighter who spent a few days at the Holiday Inn), park their car in Wadi Abu Jmil and race to the Holiday Inn across Fakhreddine highway (avoiding the Murr tower’s sniper) to be stationed at the Holiday Inn.
- Retreat movements during battle are marked by a zigzagged arrow.
- Firing to and from buildings (thin colored arrow)

5.24 Positions

As for positions (“stationary points”), some of them were relevant while others did not apply.
• Picket lines: “A position held by a detached body of soldiers serving to guard an army from surprise.”\textsuperscript{248} There were a few set up by the LNM to guard west Beirut, as well as to block the Right’s passage through the BCD.

• Artillery positions: All buildings were artillery positions

As opposed to classical battlefields, I did not encounter Skirmish lines, which are “a small body of troops deployed in advance of a battle line to initiate contact with the enemy.”\textsuperscript{249} Battle lines “a formation where soldiers move out of marching columns of attack for both attack and defense”, Regrouping positions or positions reuniting dispersed elements other than the Phalanges Headquarter, Entrenched position nor Unentrenched troop positions.

5.25 Areas:

• Staging Areas: “A place where troops or equipment in transit are assembled and processed, as before a military operation.”\textsuperscript{250} In the case of the Battle of the Hotels, the staging areas were probably near the weapons pick up points, which were the Airport for the LNM and the ports of Beirut and Jounieh for the Phalanges.

• Holding Action Areas and troop reserve areas in the case of the Battle were most probably near the command posts of the parties all around the city and within the residential areas of each faction’s territory according to the shifting demarcation lines as the battle went on. Anyone who had a weapon could engage in the Battle, especially that the parties encouraged their civilian constituents to carry guns to protect their families.

• The territories under left or right constantly throughout the battle are hatched in cyan and magenta. The battle of the hotels is a breakthrough for the left-wing because they are able to

\textsuperscript{248} (Andrus 1992-1999)
\textsuperscript{249} (Andrus 1992-1999)
\textsuperscript{250} (The American heritage Dictionary of the English Language n.d.)
expand their territory. The evolving demarcation lines, marked by thickening black lines, express the movement of the line towards the nearest boundary at the date inscribed within the triangle labeling it. Before October 1975, the line separated north and south of Beirut. Between October and December, the Left-Wing were west of the hotels. Between December and March, they had taken the northernmost hotels, encircled the Holiday Inn and taken over half of City Center. As of March, the permanent demarcation line, with its no mans’ lands, was drawn between East and West Beirut

- Sniper Range: The MOSLBA document documented that the Lee Enfield rifle was used for sniping. This rifle has a 503 m effective sniping range and a 2,743 m maximum range. I described the effective diameter of these rifles on the major sniping towers (the Murr Tower, the Holiday Inn, the Phoenicia Annex and the Hilton), shooting at opponents zones.

Bivouac Areas, which are temporary shelters, do not apply to urban battlefields, as buildings are invaded as a form of shelter. The manipulation of the space by adding sandbags at some balconies and Concrete Masonry to close walls is a way of manipulating the space to suit warfare needs.

5.26 Conclusions

A takeaway from the map would be the intense concentration of actions and events in the 3 northernmost blocks of the hotel area. The map clearly shows that the Left conducted a major offensive in all directions to attempt to take over the Holiday Inn. The Phalangist, in contrast were mostly defending themselves from the tower, and were able to sustain their defense for 5 months from October 26 1975 to March 21st 1976.

I also started my GIS visualization. I assigned coordinates to every building of the Battle and “animated” each line sequencially with flaring points on top of the buildings mentioned in the database. You can see
it here: https://mayssajallad.carto.com/builder/1ffe07cc-2fe6-11e7-be7e-0e3ebc282e83/embed (Copy and paste this link onto your browser to visualize it)

This map animates the chronological sequence of events during the battle. This is still a very primitive GIS map but it already yields interesting results, since it is based on my detailed chronological database. It represents the 5 months of the Battle of the Hotels in a span of 30 seconds. To make the map more accurate, every single day should be represented in the database from October 27 1975 to March 29 1976, this way the duration is truly proportional. Right now it represents the frequency with which a building was mentioned in the database. We can notice that the fighting mostly happens along Fakhreddine Avenue. The movement of the battle is going clearly from West to East, lingering most on Fakhreddine Avenue and specifically on the Holiday Inn. The 3 fighting lulls are very apparent, as there was no mention of these buildings in the database during this time. The first and last phase involve the buildings most distant from the main fighting axis if Fakhreddine Avenue.
THE BATTLE OF THE HOTELS
BEIRUT, LEBANON
OCTOBER 1975 TO MARCH 1976

Breakthrough of the Lebanese Civil War and the World’s First High-Rise Urban Battlefield
5.3 Making the Boundary: The Battle of the Hotels Historic District

Drawing the Urban battlefield was therefore based on the events. The main preservation zone contains the buildings and main streets while the second zone is within the effective range of the snipers positioned on top of the Holiday Inn, the Murr tower, the Hilton and the Phoenicia annex.

The resulting boundary inverses the proportions of a battlefield in a landscape, since main battle happened on streets rather than in open spaces for battalions, and the sniper range is equivalent to the open field. The buildings within zone one would be prevented from demolition and their apertures and openings preserved. As for zone 2, its street networks and building heights will have to be maintained. This is already skewed by SOLIDERE’s new gateway towers (in what they call the historic hotel district): these block the view to the east of the Holiday Inn and Phoenicia. Their connection to East Beirut.

Drawing this boundary is a recommendation for the preservation of these structures. The long term goal would be to insure their protection on the municipal, directorate or ministerial level.

Overlaying the plans of SOLIDERE with the 1975 BCD, one realizes how much the street network has changed. Furthermore, SOLIDERE has demolished the Officers’ Club, the Hotel Byblos, the Sector Four headquarter as well as the Normandy, and Hilton, not to mention other establishments which belonged to the earlier hotel district such as the Khan Antoun Bei. SOLIDERE deformed the site from which most Phalangist operations during the battle of the Hotels stemmed, and erased the Normandy checkpoint that was a Phalanges checkpoint to prevent Muslims going east, and after the battle, became a Mourabitoun checkpoint to monitor entrances from East to West. The three buildings left in SOLIDERE are the Starco Center, the St Elias church which has been restored, and the Murr Tower. It is tempting to
exclude SOLIDERE completely from my boundary to avoid being within two jurisdictions, but doing so would deprive me of the Murr, which is an essential element of the battle.

My boundary, which connects the remaining building and the existing streets, starts with the Central bank and Haigazian building, which I connect through Michel Chiha Street to reach the block of the Murr tower, which I include fully since the Phalangists laid down a ring of fire around it early in the battle.

Going north on Fakhreddin avenue, I include the St Elias Church to the East as well as the St Vincent and Charity Sisters schools, from which the last Mourabitoun offensive started. I add the Starco center to my boundary, as well as its Southern road Omar Daouk, which has been maintained. The connection from its northern road to Fakhreddine avenue, on the other hand, has been completely altered. The High-rise towers of Damac and Beirut Terraces, block the view of the Holiday Inn to Starco, which was initially seen through the large crevices in the Holiday Inn’s East Façade. We know Starco was a stronghold of the Phalanges, and that the loss of the Holiday Inn by the Right would directly threaten that building and the Sector Four command post a few meters away from Starco. Nothing remains of the Sector Four Headquarters (it was replaced by 3 Norman Foster towers called 3 Beirut), except for the Omar Daouk road on which it stood.

Continuing north, I wrap the Holiday Inn, Phoenicia, St George, its annex, Alcazar, Excelsior, Palm Beach and Martinez hotels together, which includes a few residential blocks west of the Phoenicia and Holiday Inn. This makes a compact, minimal boundary. I am mostly interested maintaining the heights of these buildings and the viewer’s ability to see them from the Holiday Inn’s façades.

However, it would be erroneous to think of the preservation of an urban war without the maintenance of intricate spaces between buildings, of the existing block, lot and street networks. The adjacent neighborhoods of Kantari, Ain Mreisseh and Zeitouneh’s streets were used for the movement of fighters, to supply weaponry from the port and airport, to transport the injured to the numerous
hospitals around the area and to set up flying or permanent roadblocks to kidnap people based on their identities. The nature of these neighborhoods narrow streets were ideal for surprise offensives, and were key in the left’s counter-offensive in December 1975, when they were able to take over all the hotels north of the holiday inn. These were spaces for the stealth invasion of militias and sudden attacks on buildings, but they were also spaces of escape for civilians who had to be cleared out of the premises. I am especially thinking of the Ain Mreisseh and Kantari neighborhoods, which the LNM had to know very well to be able to penetrate the Holiday Inn. As Kassir remarks, “It is a paradox of modernity that as the city grew, the more it came to resemble the labyrinth of the old walled town” 251, making its street conditions ideal for modern militia fighting and difficult to control by the Lebanese army. The combination of having towers and small streets is ideal for urban warfare.

Furthermore, the snipers’ reach widens the boundary of the district. The Lee Enfield sniper’s rifle used, as mentioned in the 1979 MOBA document, has an effective firing range of 503 m radius. Therefore, the battle of the hotels reached, at least, the boundaries of the snipers’ arches on the map. I propose that what is left of the neighborhoods surrounding the hotel district be protected as well because of the snipers’ reach and their importance, as mixed religious communities, in the development of the Hotel District and in their strategic role in the events of the battle.

Exhibiting this map in situ, at the Holiday Inn, the fortress of the battle of the hotels, will be the first step at implementing the preservation of the “Battle of the Hotels Historic District.”

Symbolically, the invasion of the hotels was a blow to luxury and diplomacy loss of control of the nation state. However, what I argue in this thesis is that the battle of the hotels was first and foremost an

251 Kassir, 7
architectural and geographical phenomenon, fueled by the spatial qualities the hotels and towers
offered and the military strategies envisioned within and around them.

5.4 Making the Space: The Holiday Inn as a platform

The Holiday Inn still looms over the city today, a rigid building pocked with bullet holes and crater-like
openings on all its facades, whose once pristine white mosaics have turned sepia toned from the fires
which consumed it. The colossal structure stands today riddled with bullet holes, sniper openings and
rocket crevices. Its dusty faded colors contrast with the area’s ultra-luxurious glistening towers across
the Fakhreddine Avenue in SOLIDERE and its renovated modernist hotels. Its façade’s once severe
modernist grid is softened by a multitude of bruises, and damaged elements. The immobility of the
modernist façade is given movement by the diversity of holes having attacked it. This movement locates
this structure within time and space, it bears the marks of a historical event which it cannot be divorced
from.

It remains in ruin, under military surveillance since May 2008, when fighting broke in the streets of
Beirut after the government attempted to disable Hizbullah’s communications network. Over the course
of a week in May, Hezbollah streetfighters fought with Future Movement in West Beirut. It was then
that the government was quick to order the military to be stationed at the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower,
to prevent history from repeating itself. Military tanks are still parked at the Holiday Inn’s ground floor
today. In fact, one needs a permit from the Ministry of Defense to access it.

The fate of the St Charles Center was suspended since the end of the Battle of the Hotels due to
ownership disputes, since its Kuwaiti owners wished to demolish it and its Lebanese owners to renovate
it. Since its inception, the company was owned 54% by the Kuwaiti group, 32% by the Abdini Family’s CIL
group, 10% by the Ministry of Finance and 4% by various small investors Today, the negotiations have
stopped, as the court decision in 2016 was finally to liquidate the company: “The buyers might keep the
building (most probably) or demolish it, nobody knows”, said Khaled Shbarro, real estate broker and consultant who, in 2002 made a study of the building for a client of his who wished to buy it.

Its interiors have been gutted. All that remains are the elevator cores, traces of the partitions on the floor and the loggia’s mosaic partition and its parapet. In my few visits to its interior, I have been struck by the infinite repetition of the interior’s loggias and the incredible views they frame of the hotel district and the sea to the north and the Murr Tower and Kantari to the South. The power of this tower lies in its incredible views, which were used in equal measure for its leisurely and deadly qualities.

Each couple of loggias, separated by a 2m high partition have the same detail, invisible from the outside of the building: Two horizontal L-shaped parapets, joined by their short flange and whose long flange held metallic railing bars below (all pillaged today) and a white marble slab above. I remember we were quite charmed by this detail when I first visited the Holiday Inn in 2011 during a studio class, as we never guessed of its existence. This is the same detail found in a sketch by Andre Wogenscky and sent to Le Corbusier for the Unité d’Habitation in Rezé-les-Nantes252, and which was never executed. Wogenscky took the opportunity to try it out in Beirut.

The marble slab on these loggia parapets is missing on most, if not all the loggias of the Holiday Inn today, as the Hotel was looted of all its belongings after the battle of the hotels. The hotel was also gutted of its internal partitions in an early – and failed - rehabilitation effort. Only fragments of the marble slabs on top of the loggia parapets still exist today.

My proposal, for the Holiday Inn’s restauaration, will be the replacement of a few of the marble slabs on the parapets of the Holiday Inn’s loggias with an identical piece of marble, carved with 3 drawings of the battle of the hotels. The first drawing, will be the map of the battle, a 1:5000 3d model sculpted into the marble, the second drawing will be a map of my proposed historic district, highlighting the boundaries.

252 (Misino and Trasi 2000), 52
And the third will be an annotated skyline of the view, which differs whether the slab is on the north or the south of the building. Regardless of the program occupying the Holiday Inn in the future, whether it be offices of a hotel, the restoration of these parapets will maintain the views and the iconic infinite grid of the Holiday Inn and offer, through the maps, a permanent gesture of disillusionment and memory in the restored building. This building element proposes to open-up a new dialogue about how to memorialize the civil war at one of the very locations where it started.

Each mapped marble slab positioned in the building will be in reference to a particular event and is connected to another installation outside the Holiday Inn, in a building or street. One of the slabs, for example, points towards the St Vincent School. This school is important during the battle as it launched the offensive that destroyed the heavy weaponry stationed at the hotel lobby and allowed the Mourabitoun to finally conquer the Holiday Inn. The drawings on that particular Holiday Inn slab only speak of that event. In the classroom, the glass pane that has a view to the Holiday Inn has been carved with the map as well as the database of the battle.

Another view would be towards the sidewalk near the St George Hotel. This one commemorates the many victims who perished by the Holiday Inn sniper. The Holiday Inn’s marble slab is on the last floor and a bench on the sidewalk is engraved with the data and map of the battle.

There is, to my mind, a sense of urgency to this project, as the fate of the Holiday Inn is unclear: it might be demolished or restored depending on the new owner’s intentions. I insist on making a physical object since it implies the preservation of the buildings. Once these events become part of the common narrative, and once Lebanese preservation law gains traction, the Battle of the Hotels Historic District will be proposed.
5.4 Making the Space
Figure 35: Rezé les Nantes, Unité d’habitation, handwritten letter from A. Wogenscky to Le Corbusier, 29 April 1951 (Source: Misino, Trasi, 2000)
5.4 Making the Space
Figure 36: Section with Martini Man
Photograph from Jan 2011
5.4 Making the Space

Figure 37: Section with Sandbags

Newsclip from Annahar March 1st 76
5.4 Making the Space
Figure 38: Section with Mother and Child
(Proposal)
Photograph from Jan 2011
5.4 Making the Space
Figure 39 Plan with Mapped Marble Slab on top of loggia parapet
5.4 Making the Space

Figure 40
Section with installations inside and outside the Holiday Inn. The map is etched on the school’s window and onto a bench in front of the st George.
5.4 Making the Spac: The Holiday Inn as a platform

Figure 41: Proposed installation vistas
VI. Conclusion

6.1 What Can Be Done

My findings conclude that preserving an urban battlefield is a complex endeavor simultaneously based on battlefield preservation and historic districting. In countries such as Lebanon where both practices are inexistent, it is a project for the “postmemory” generation, and starts with a simple and yet untackled task: drawing the map of the urban battlefield. This is an innovative practice, which has yet to be rigorously implemented on other urban battlefields in the world. My findings also propose that exhibiting this map within the battlefield in strategic locations, as part of the architecture and public realm, contributes to an innovative and immersive battlefield experience aimed at commemorating and valuing a site for the events it has witnessed.

The first action that can be done is to organize a tour in Beirut’s Hotel District utilizing the 2 dimensional foldout map and the events booklet which gathers images from magazines and newspapers of the battle (this booklet has been generously prepared by Alfred Tarazi following the event numbers of my database). The tour would be organized in collaboration with the Arab Center for Architecture and would focus on the events fostered by the architecture of the Hotel District rather than a qualitative or stylistic description of the architecture. Another short-term project is to create a website where the digital maps of the battle can be shared. It is important to clearly phrase that this work aims at reconciling the Lebanese people by allowing them to critically observe the event that has stirred such strong emotions in them for so long that they avoid pronouncing its name. This pacifist stance follows

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253 (Hirsch 2012)
through in the discussion of urban battlefield worldwide. As Syria and Iraq sink into urban civil-wars, the issue is relevant and crucial.

My proposal for installing building elements carved with the maps and data of the battle necessitates a large budget or grant to be able to test and manufacture at least four mapped slabs in the Holiday Inn and their various public counterparts. Once the funding is secured, I would get in contact with the new owner of the Holiday Inn to ask if I could donate a few of these site-specific marble slabs to them. I would then be in contact with the municipality and the St Vincent school to ask if they approve of my bench and glass pane projects, among the others.

The project of the Historic District is, realistically, one for the future of Beirut rather than its present. The activism in my project lies in the constant lobbying for a solid and effective preservation law to come into place in order to implement phase 3 of the Battle of the Hotels historic district.

6.2 The Post-Event

Back in 2013, I sat down with my father and drew the timeline of his life. I was never very close to him. In fact, I never knew him at all. In his old age, a steady tune of political commentary accompanied his every movement. He was obsessed with regional history and politics. I watched as he sat on the corner of the living room couch with his news-radio channel in the morning and retreated a few hours later to the corner of his bed, glued to the television screen’s political reports. But that morning, when I asked him to narrate the events of his life, when he spoke to me of the world wars, political upheavals, revolutions, check points, civil wars and unrecognizable cities he had witnessed himself, I understood the man he had become. I could finally draw him out more clearly. He was not the man I saw in front of me, but the sum of all the men he had been in history and all those he had affected and was affected by along the way. This is the nature of so many Lebanese post-event parents today. They are part of a war generation that is, like the zone of the battle of the hotels, defined by the invisible boundary of having
witnessed a violent past event, hiding their trauma as best they can to survive, or attempting to figure out, through news channels and conspiracy theories, why it had happened to them. The war is indeed, as my reader Marwan Ghandour remarked, the common thread that defines the identity of all Lebanese today, even the post-war generation of which I am part. So why not build a common identity through it?

I was born in 1990, when the 15-year civil war in Lebanon was coming to its end. In this thesis, I have written about events I have never experienced, and most of which I never knew existed. My parents never spoke about the war, yet I knew that my city had been through something devastating.

I longed to remember... not just to know. I longed to remember as if memory, if traumatized enough, could carve itself into my parents’ DNA and into mine and I could finally understand them. Can Marianne Hirsch’s “postmemory” 254 apply to those whose parents preferred not to speak? This thesis has proven to me that it can and that the city is our mediator. It has been an enriching and traumatizing experience finding out about its violent past: I broke down when I read about the Black Saturday Massacre for the first time this fall. I was filled with rage when I realized SOLIDERE had demolished so much, and that the café I went to a few times was the site of the Normandy Hotel. I was emotional not because I had any personal stakes in these matters... but because I did not know about the history of my own city.

Beyond its symbolic meanings, the Battle of the Hotels was first and foremost an architectural and geographical phenomenon, fueled by the spatial qualities the buildings in Beirut offered and the military strategies envisioned within and around them. The transformation of urban areas into historic objects requires new experimental preservation methodologies in Lebanon, not only because the country lacks traditional historic districting laws, but also because the current “postmemory” generation, which has been de-schooled in the history of the civil war, does not yet recognize its possible historical

254 (Hirsch 2012)
significance. They do not know that the Battle of the Hotels is the first high-rise urban battlefield in the world or the event that directly led to the East-West division of Beirut during the civil war. I therefore propose a new method for setting into motion the creation of a historic district by drawing and carving the map of the district directly on the places from which the militias fought and the public spaces in the city that witnessed the events. The balconies of the Holiday Inn, once sandbagged for sniper posts, now become viewing posts for a generation to confront and historically contextualize its “postmemory” condition. I speak on behalf of the new generation who has inherited this city and its urban battles. It is time to take a distance from these events and observe them with a critical eye. It is time to be aware of the political parties who perpetrated them and continue to rule. It is time to consider the city’s battles and the buildings of these battles as part of our heritage.
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Appendix 2: Building Fiches
BUILDING FICHES
to be completed by Beirut

St George:
Built: 1933 with later additions in 1945
Architect: Poirier, Lotte and Bordes (French), with local architect Antoine Tabet who supervised the additions
Owners: Bustany Family
Streets: Mina el Hisn (South-West- Entrance)
Architectural Typology: 4 story hotel with protruding semi-circular bar-terrace at ground floor and pool-restaurant base. Rectangular plan facing north-east onto the St George Bay with identical facades and wrapping balconies. Central core with atrium.
Number of rooms: 104 (?)
Anecdotes and Characteristics: The Saint Georges was constructed “for the use of French officers”, perhaps in response to the Lebanese Officers Club across the road to the East. The hotel was known for its pool and its bar, which reunited “Spies, politicians, businessmen, journalists, diplomats and oil sheikhs”, and is said to have been the space where many international and political deals were struck. Its many intrigues are described in Said Aburish’s novel “Beirut Spy”. “In 1973, Fortune magazine featured the St George Hotel bar in an article on the top seven hotel bars in the world which serve as centers for international businessmen, emphasizing its ‘tranquility, comfortable surroundings, generously mixed drinks and competent, unobtrusive service’”
A similar hotel called “Hotel Saada” by the same architects was built in Agadir. The hotel’s pool once boasted a huge “Air France” sign.
“Myrna Bustani was part-owner of the hotel, one-time Lebanese member of parliament and chairwoman of the leading international company Contracting and Trading (CAT)”

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Sources:
Excelsior:
Built: 1954
Architect: Umberto Turati, landscape garden by Georges Rayes and Theo Canaan
Owners: Family
Streets: Phoenicia (Entrance), Mina El Husn
Number of rooms:
Architectural Typology:

Sources:

Alcazar:
Built: 1958
Architect: Joseph Habas with Serge Sassouni (Interior)
Owners: Tarazi Family
Streets: Mina el Hisn (Entrance)
Number of rooms: 85
Architectural Typology: Two-story storefront base, restaurant terrace on second floor, five floors of hotel rooms, 7th floor terrace.
Anecdotes and Characteristics: Modern exterior with oriental interior, crafted by Maison Tarazi. The family is known for its crafts atelier and woodwork, which they installed at the ground-floor of the hotel.

Sources:
Phoenicia:
Built: 1962
Architect: Edward Durell Stone (American) with Ferdinand Dagher and Rodolphe Elias local architects.
Owners: Société des Grands Hôtels du Liban, chair Najib Salha
Streets: Ibn Sina (North), Fakhreddin (East-Entrance) and London(South)
Number of rooms: 350
Architectural Typology: 2 story base with lobby and restaurants. Terrace with outdoor pool. 10 story building with balconies on north, east and west. South cloister wall. Top floor restaurant. Escalators from the ground floor.
Anecdotes and Characteristics: “The Phoenicia is the first international chain hotel in Beirut and the first Intercontinental in the Middle-East. The press mentions it ‘imposing 13 story mass of this extremely modern hotel with an oriental inspiration in the decor’” Its pool used to have glass wall onto the hotel’s bar. The Pan-Am airline staff used to stay at the Phoenicia Hotel.

Hotel Byblos:
Built: 1962
Architect:
Owners: Nazzal Brothers

Sources:
Phoenicia Tower:
Built: 1968
Architect: Joseph Philippe Karam local
Owners: SGEL
Streets: London
Number of rooms: 250
Architectural Typology: 22 floors, built with similar features than the original Phoenicia building, "between the pool and London Street". The rooms are at the North and South.
Anecdotes and Characteristics:

The Holiday Inn
Built: 1974
Architect: André Wogenscky and Maurice Hendié, engineers Hanna Heneineh & Abdul Mohsin Kattan.
Owners: 54% by the Kuwaiti group, 32% by the Abdini Family, 10% by the Ministry of Finance and 4% by various small investors
Streets: London (Entrance), Ibn Sina, Fahreddin
Number of rooms: 500 Hotel Rooms, 500 Offices
Architectural Typology:
Anecdotes and Characteristics: According to the Real Estate Consultant and Broker Khaled Chebaro, who in 2002 (says 9 years ago check accuracy) was attempting to buy the St Charles Center for a client, the idea of building the Saint Charles Center came for Mr. Abdini the father under the name Companie Immobiliere Libanaise CIL ("very big in 1970's"). During construction, the Kuwaiti Group (mainly Ex-prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Saad Al Sabbah) came in with around 54% of shares.
AirFrance 1975 had opened its travel bureau at the Holiday Inn.

Sources:
Chbaro, Khaled, Interview, January 2017
The Hilton
Built: 1975
Demolished: 2002
Architect:
Owners:
Streets:
Number of rooms:
Architectural Typology:
Anecdotes and Characteristics:

Sources:
Buchakjian, Gregory. 2016. "Dissertation." Habi-
tats abandonnés de Beyrouth: Guerres et mutations de
l'espace urbain 1860-2015. Paris: UNIVERSITÉ PARIS-
SORBONNE, June 20.

Demolition: https://www.controlled-demolition.com/
beirut-hilton

The Murr Tower:
Neighborhood: Kantari
Built: 1975
Architect:
Owners: Murr Family
Streets:
Number of rooms:
Architectural Typology:
Anecdotes and Characteristics:

Sources:
Buchakjian, Gregory. 2016. "Dissertation." Habi-
tats abandonnés de Beyrouth: Guerres et mutations de
l'espace urbain 1860-2015. Paris: UNIVERSITÉ PARIS-
SORBONNE, June 20.
Appendix 3: Personal Reflections and Conversations

This section contains the conversations that have inspired some of the chapters of my thesis. They are mostly conversation and observations of people I have met throughout the thesis process. They are narrative and emotional. They emphasize the moving experiences I have gone through while delving into the past of my city, a follow up to the conclusion of this thesis.

Pierre Al Sabbagh was 15 when he witnessed the five months Battle at their home in the Hotels District, in a building near the demolished Officers’ Club, where the Monroe Hotel is located today. As a young boy, he used to hang out with the Phalanges, but never participated in the combat. The first story he tells me is of his family’s survival. He was rescued by a Muslim friend he used to play waterpolo with.

I was extremely moved by this story. An act of kindness amid horror. The other neighbors were not spared. Had he not been spared, this story could not have been told. He would not have existed, his son would have not been my friend’s cousin. All would have been lost had the 16 year-old Mourabitoun friend not played water-polo with 15 year old Pierre Al Sabbagh. After this incident, Pierre lost faith in the Phalangist Party, who, without a warning to the neighborhood, took out their militants and their families and left the rest to the hands of the opposite militias.

Its first chapter details the battle of the Hotels, its buildings, perpetrators and chronology. It is a major resource in my thesis.

The conclusion of the battle, he tells me, is the disequilibrium between the spectacular imagery of the battle and the very few casualties in its outcome. Contrary to the Tal El Zaatar or Damour massacres, where there is an absence of imagery, the battles in the hotel districts and the city center were symbolic and spectacular. As the city center was the symbol to Lebanese coexistence, the hotels were symbols of its cosmopolitanism. He expresses to me his desire to keep his dissertation in the safe academic milieu, as the battle of the hotel is a “sexy object”, easily sensationalized.

George Tarazi was the owner of the Alcazar Hotel. He remembers the tourists, the taxis, the big American cars. His accounts are not very precise, but carry a certain sensationalism, which may or may not be accurate, but is certainly product of his generation’s traumatic experience. He tells me the incidents of April 1975 did not scare him very much at the time. It was when the militias attacked the hotel zones that the war took a more serious tone. Already in the press, left-wing journalists were writing against Lubnan Al Funduq “Hotel Lebanon”. The battle had started at Kantari then moved to the hotel district. At the very beginning, it was a confrontation between Burj Rizk “Rizk Tower” in Ashrafieh and Burj El Murr “Murr Tower”, then opened-up towards the Hotel district with the Holiday Inn. He remembers being rescued from the Alcazar Hotel to the Palm Beach Hotel, which was at the time, the command post of the Lebanese National Movement, thanks to a connection his wife had. His hotel kept functioning as a workshop for oriental crafts and interiors, throughout the war.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Conversation in Verdun, January 2 2017
In the conversations I have had with people who witnessed these battles, a common question to me was why I was interested in reviving such an ugly history. They looked embarrassed, bewildered and perhaps suspected me to have a political agenda of some sort. I explained my intentions very candidly: I was born in 1990, when the war ended, and that my whole life I had only understood about the history of Beirut’s war through two sources: My parents, who rarely spoke about it in explicit or precise terms, and the second, more subliminal source, was individual shelled buildings, which seemed to be out of time and place. My fascination with these buildings lead me to explore their histories in my undergrad years in Architecture school at the American University of Beirut. In the current “ruling” generation, there is a certain guilt and trauma which prevent this part of Lebanese history to be considered as heritage in the most traditional sense. (This is even more understandable when all that is modern has had to struggle to become part of the national identity.)

Is my object too violent to be considered heritage? These institutionally unrecognizable objects, in a country where the history of the civil war is not yet taught in history books, is understood subliminally by the collective memory and artists to be an important part of our history. If it is history, how can it be recognized as heritage? This object, this event was chosen by me, the experimental preservationist, to attempt to push popular culture into recognizing it as a violent heritage.

I am making a claim that this is heritage.

Lukman Slim is the founder of the UMAM center for archives. A former combatant with the National Liberation Movement, Lukman’s archive and research center aims at reconciliating Beirut with its past and holding the perpetrators of the war accountable. He shows a great deal of interest for my thesis project, as I describe to him my interest in creating a map of the battle and share with him my findings on the MOBA document by the US Military. Based on that document, he advises me to research all the names associated to this MOBA document. For the mapping, he asks me to consider the Lines of Supply
(first aid, amenities, personnel, food and drink) of the militias and the **Posts of the Lebanese Army**, Headquarters of militias and posts of “command and control” (which were fortified and had clear communication lines with the headquarters). In these early battles these were often makeshift spaces with basic amenities. He advises me to draw a timeline drawing parallel between the military and political history of the battle of the hotels, distinguishing, for example, that the battle became a “revengeful” one after the “Black Saturday” massacre. From this timeline, I would position the forces geographically.

I arrived at the Pan-Wogenscky Foundation at Saint-Remy Les Chevreuses at the outskirts of Paris on a sunny morning in January. The foundation’s director Dominique Amouroux lead me up the paved slope towards the house, its garden scattered with freestanding sculptures by Pan, slightly dusted with snow from that morning. Amouroux was amused at the floating statue in the pool, which would station in the nook of the basin’s steps. I entered the beautiful modernist house, in which I recognized a few Wogenscky details such as the Red accents, the sunken seating areas, the glass bays, and Amouroux lead me up the stairs to Wogenscky’s drafting room, where his large inclined drawing table stood surrounded by books and filing cabinets. With a view to the downstairs living space and a peak at the bedroom, I stood where Wogenscky stood. A man who I wondered about incessantly since my Holiday Inn architecture Studio in 2011. I wondered what he would have liked the Holiday Inn to be in Beirut today and if he had ever known what had happened to his building. Opening up the skinny BEY-SC (Beyrouth-Saint Charles) folder, I found an envelope marked with the architect’s offices address in Paris, with no stamp. It contained colored photographs of the Holiday inn, already festered with bulletholes and pocked with large rocket openings. He knew.
I do not know who sent him these photographs or the precise date they were taken, but my wonder about this humanist architect’s knowledge of the fate of this building and his possible reaction fueled my 2011 project and I can’t help but think of it now, as well. I asked Amouroux about these photographs, and what he might thought was Wogensckys reaction. “André thought mostly about the future, he did not dwell on the past. However, at the sight of these photographs, I like to think that he was more sensible to the violence to which humans were subjected [rather than his building] which must have profoundly touched him.”

In August 2016, I visited the empty interior of the Holiday Inn for the second time. The soldier who accompanied me saw I was eyeing a portion of a wall which still had a few ceramic tiles attached. Without a moment’s hesitation, he took a piece of broken concrete and broke a piece of tile for me. I was taken aback. It was sinfully tempting. I felt like he was picking a flower for me from a desert.
Appendix 4: Tour

This tour will attempt to write a map of the Battle of the Hotels. We will be passing by buildings relevant to the Battle, referring to others that have ceased to exist, and visiting those that allow a vantage point.

I would have to start the walkthrough with a couple of requests from the attendees:

“Please do not take photographs. There is private and/or military security all over the area we are walking through. Instead, I have provided you with this map. You may take notes and draw: it is an alternative mode of representing this space. I have provided you with this drawing pad with a blue carbon copy blue sheet underneath it. If you are ok with that, I will be taking the carbon copy for my records.”

1- Central Bank

We start this walk at the Central Bank right outside the Hamra neighbourhood, or what is referred to as the Junblat neighborhood. It is October 22 1975, a few months after the official start of the Lebanese civil war, a month after the start of the fighting in Beirut’s central district. The Phalangists attempt to enter west-Beirut to take over the Central Bank, Hamra Street (which is the western extension to the street we are walking on), and the American University of Beirut to the north-west. Walking east, we have reached Haigazian University, which the Phalangists used as their base to penetrate the area. However, in a heavy round of fighting, Phalangists are pushed away to Kantari, which are the inner neighborhoods to the north of where we are walking now. These are mixed-confession neighborhoods in the western part of Beirut, which is why their control is necessary and difficult.

We have reached the crossroad between Michel Chiha street and the Fakhreddine Avenue. As fighting intensifies, the Phalangists are pushed away further to their Sector Four office across this avenue north-
east in Wadi Abou Jmil. This area is today heavily altered as a result of SOLIDERE’s reconstruction efforts post 1982. Our only reference point there today is the Starco building.

2-Murr Tower

Look up at the Murr tower to your right across the avenue. On the 25th of October, subgroups of the LNM made up of commandos of the Nasserite leader Ibrahim Koleilat (later leader of the Mourabitoun), as well as members of the Saiqa (pro-Syrian Palestinian organization) and the Democratic Front of Nayef Hawatmeh occupy the Murr Tower and gain heights over all of East Beirut and Kantaru. An exchange of fire between Burj Rizk in Furn El Hayek South-East and Burj El Murr proves unfruitful for the Phalangists. They take position in the residential buildings of Wadi Abu Jmil and Mina El Husn further north and set up “flying roadblocks to kidnap people.” On the 27th, they decide to relocate their heights.

3-Holiday Inn/Phoenicia

It takes only a few Phalangist militants to enter the Holiday Inn Hotel on October 27th. Three of them enter the lobby to ask for cigarettes from the stationary. The Phoenicia is also taken over by the Phalangists, who now have a key advantage, as the Holiday Inn’s views have no rival and the Phoenicia can protect it from attacks from the west and north. Militants occupying the Holiday Inn tower’s top floors “fired recoilless rifles and machine guns” at the Murr tower, which in turn fired “heavy machine guns, mortars and snipers” onto Kantari and the Hotel District. The next day, Phalanges lay down “a ring of fire” around the Murr tower to prevent the supply of ammunitions. In response, the LNM besieges the hotels, firing “jeep-mounted artillery”. The Holiday Inn is “repeatedly hit by rocket fire and mortar fire.” The Holiday Inn’s floors are incinerated day after day, as rocket grenades bust through its concrete walls and set fire to the furniture.

4-St George
As for the St George Hotel on October 27th, it is the “Tigres” of right-wing Camille Chamoun, the former president of Lebanon, who arrive by boat, and take over the hotel on the afternoon of the 27th. A couple of days later, they are replaced by Phalangists. Shooting occurs mainly between the Murr tower and the hotels.

5-Palm Beach

On November 2nd, the LNM take over the Palm Beach and Martinez hotels to your left and fire at the St George, Phoenicia and Holiday Inn from the west. Another ceasefire is arranged on the 3rd on November for guests to pick up their belongings. The next day, The Hotel District regains its calm for about a month, and Karameh asks the militias to step down from the towers. The Phalanges agree as long as the LNM retreat from the Murr tower. The towers are supposedly handed over to the Internal Security Forces.

We are going to walk east now, to the site of where the Normandy Hotel used to be.

Seemingly, for over a month, combats had come to a halt and activity resumed in unravaged areas of the Hotel District and the central district, with only a few sporadic exchanges of fire and kidnappings in the city. On December 6th, the leader of the Phalangists Pierre Gemayel visited Damascus in an effort of reconciliation. While in a meeting with the Syrian President Hafez El Assad, the leaders receive news from Beirut: In an uncontrollable frenzy of violence, instigated by the killing of four phalangist members on that morning, militant members of the Phalangist party went on a killing spree and murdered, on the basis of their Identity Card, about 300 Muslims and “non-Lebanese” civilians in the vicinity of the Phalangist headquarters at the port and city center. The flash massacre occurred in an hour and a half, picking up people from busy Beirut streets. Phalangists set up checkpoints, most notably one at the Normandy Hotel. “It was the first instance of Identity Card killings on a mass scale.” Many Muslim dockers working at the port of Beirut perished that day. The Phalanges leaders assure that the situation
was out of their control, and that they never intended for such a massacre to occur. The opposition, on the other hand, insists that it was a deliberate strategy in order to disrupt the peace negotiations about to occur in Syria.

6-Normandy Checkpoint

One person in particular carries the burden of this massacre: the violence that day was incited by Joseph Saadeh, the father of one of the Phalangist victims who, in addition, had his 1st son murdered on September 3rd of the same year while on a Rally Paper car trail between Mount Lebanon and the central Beqaa Plateau. In an interview on French television, Saadeh, who is questioned about his confessional autobiography, repeats three times: “Do you know which jungle we lived in?” He continues on saying “No justice, No police, No army …nothing. Going out of the house, not knowing whether or not you’d come back…” This incident happened 3 months after the murder of his first son and 2 months after the start of the war of the hotels. Only a deep instability and loss of hope and security could lead to such an instinct: kill or be killed. I would argue that the loss of the hotels as establishments which provided a sense of security for foreigners accentuated the gravity of the security of locals.

We walk back to the Holiday Inn

According to George Hawi, the leader of the Lebanese communist party at the time, the LNM had two options, because “they had to, inevitably, respond to Black Saturday” to appease their militants. The LNM could either retaliate with a similar massacre against Christians or conduct a military/political offensive. Hawi saw a military tour de force to be more appropriate, and planned to “Liberate the Fourth Sector” from the Phalangists, and to open an entrance to the port of Beirut which was until then under the complete control of the Phalangists. Hawi credits himself for mapping the demarcation line
which would separate East and West Beirut throughout the 15 years of the Lebanese civil war: “I took a pen to the map on the wall and I drew a line from Martyrs Square to the Port.”

**7-Holiday Inn**

We are now on the Holiday Inn’s 24th floor. This gives us perspective over the whole city.

The offensive starts on December 8th, two days after Black Saturday. The LNM, led by the Mourabitoun militia, reoccupy the Murr Tower, and take over Riad El Soloh Place and Place de L’Etoile in the city-center, blocking the Secteur 4 Office’s south-east exit.

Coming in from the Ain Mreiseh neighborhood adjacent to Minet El Husn in Coastal West Beirut, the LNM are able to dislodge the Phalangists from the St George and Phoenicia while occupying the Alcazar and Excelsior. December 9th the LNM encircle the Phoenicia and fire RPG, B7 and B10 rockets onto it. The Phoenicia burns, holding 60 in captivity, and the next day, it is the Hotels St George’s turn to burn too. The Phalanges fire at these buildings from the Holiday Inn, which has become their only stronghold in the Hotel District, attacked on all sides.

On the 15th of December, a ceasefire is pronounced the army is tasked to clear out all militias from all hotels, starting with those at the coast such as the Normandy and Hilton occupied by the Phalangists, and the St George and Phoenicia under Mourabitoun control, the Holiday Inn under the Phalangists and the Murr tower under the LNM. Militias were replaced by Internal Security Forces but the ceasefire would not last long, resuming after Christmas and New Years celebrations. Sensing the LNM and PLO’s growing power after the loss of the northernmost hotels, the Phalanges established a coalition called the Lebanese Forces in January 1976.

In January 1976, in the early mornings of the 10th, militias resume their same positions from before the ceasefire and the LNM’s offensive to penetrate the Holiday Inn intensifies, using fires and car bombs to attack the Phalangists. Using an RPG rocket, elements of the Arab Socialist Movement also destroyed
a military vehicle which was supposedly shooting on them at the Hotel Martinez. The army is now involved and has taken position with the Phalangists. They take post near the Normandy hotel. The combats are especially violent and snipers at the Holiday Inn and Murr tower terrorize the population. However, the media covers two massacres taking place at the time, on the 18th of January at the Qarantina refugee camp where the Phalangists kill close to a thousand Palestinians, and its retaliation on the 20th of January in Damour, where the LNM murder around 350 inhabitants of the Christian coastal village of Damour, clearing their way to the South of Lebanon.

In March 1976, there are only half a dozen militants “holding all of the Holiday Inn”. They are “two elements at the 2nd floor, 2 at the 24th floor and two at the entrance.”

Tensions resume in March after a failed attempt at a coup d’Etat on the president on the 10th. In the night of the 15th, the Mourabitoun launch another offensive. On the 16th at dawn, the LNM position themselves at the base of the Murr tower and fire rockets onto the Holiday Inn. On the 21st, the LNM are able to penetrate the Hotel’s lobby.

Heavy firing ensues for the Phalangists to recuperate the hotel, but they end up retreating to the Hilton and Normandy. From March 24th to 29th, the LNM encircle these “last bastions of the Fourth Sector” and are able to push out all Phalangist elements to the port, where their party’s headquarters falls. The demarcation line is drawn.

Although the left-wing seemingly won the Battle of the Hotels, both camps were esteemed as winner, with the endurance of the Phalanges in the Holiday Inn as a main pride and the division of Beirut which would benefit both parties’ control equally.
After the Phalangists lost the Hilton and Normandy, they retreated to their main headquarters at the port (which is still their party’s headquarters today). The permanent demarcation line took shape, with checkpoints along its borders and “no man’s lands” in its vicinity. It would separate the city between predominantly Muslim West Beirut and predominantly Christian East Beirut for the rest of the civil war.

The Battle of the Hotels would shatter the symbols of “Beirut’s glamour and success”

It is not until the civil war attacked the services sector, the pride and means of subsistence of this country, that the conflict reached a flashpoint of no return: a recently published article entitled “The Hotel which changed the course of the Lebanese War” signifying the fall of the Lebanese State.
Bibliography

n.d.


