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ARCHITECTURE OF UTOPIAN SOCIAL BATTERY IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITIES

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Abstract

During the span of the recorded history, there has been always a continual eagerness to reach what is seen as a perfect place, this perfection has been later called utopia or the 'non-existent place' in Greek. Eventually, the perception of utopia differs between people, groups, eras, and many other factors, it's a simultaneous desire of improving the current conditions. One of these perceived utopias was Neoliberalism, which is an economic philosophy with ideas linked with free-market, economic liberalism, and capitalism. Indeed, this utopia has turned into a dystopia in which this philosophy became a prevalent mode of producing cities that is designed to keep the production flow and reproduction of labour. Unfortunately, this model of producing cities faced several failures, but this has not changed the truth that this model was superimposed over any other existing model. Moreover, this model has become a hegemonic model, and the latest demonic phase of it is the financialisation of the city, which transformed the city to a place to park capital and observe its surplus, and more a place that provides a ground of revenues and interest rather promoting social life for its habitants and provoked more exclusion, precarity, and temporariness. Therefore, this research aims to design social batteries that will act as initiators of utopian socio-spatial reconstruction in the neoliberal city, to achieve this aim the study will start by presenting a literature review of previous readings, opinions, and proposals. Considering the case study, this paper will be studying the communal sovereignty in the Dalieh, Beirut. One of the last remaining public outlets in Beirut and a significant part of the cultural and environmental heritage of the city. This analysis will include surveying, interviews, focus group discussion, and generation of mapped and statistical data of the city. The paper will conclude with a vision of socio-spatial instruments that will be injected and dissolved within the city, those instruments called social batteries are precise interventions with intended overlapping of programs that allow reconstruction of social spaces that resemble the city and its citizens' needs.

Keywords

Architecture, Utopia, Social Battery, Neoliberalism, Social Space, Financialization

1. INTRODUCTION

In our contemporary time, an economic system built on ideological background frames the operations of the societies (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberalism, this term does not plainly describe a group of individuals, but it does describe a set of malignant, non-partisan, and deceptive ideals that have come to dictate the way in which we frame societal issues (Hackworth, 2006).

This ideology created an epochal shift in Architecture, as the production of spaces is now occurring within the process of neoliberal development. Space enters into the neoliberal mode of production (Lefebvre, 2003), everything in the city is part of the exchange (the ground, the underground, the air ...) the infrastructure of the city (airports, train stations, ports, etc.) all are of the capital and its fluxes and are subject to investment. Mainly these investments are controlled by an urban growth machine as described by Harvey Molotch which point to the embeddedness of the city developers within the other power structure of the city (government and banks) to create a growth machine that is lucrative and profitable for the few local elites over the collective social rights of the many (Molotch, 1976). This growth machine bend laws to secure the production of cities that serve the accumulation of wealth.

Accordingly, this paper will discuss a vision of socio-spatial instruments within the city, those instruments called social batteries are precise interventions with intended overlapping of programs that allow reconstruction of social spaces in the neoliberal cities, these spaces will be resembling the city and its citizens' needs, relying on a utopian approach of production of spaces that is a result of a more emancipatory, heterarchical, and democratic social order (Fig.1) that engage the public participation in the process of decision making in the production of spaces and thus benefits the common good of the society as a whole.

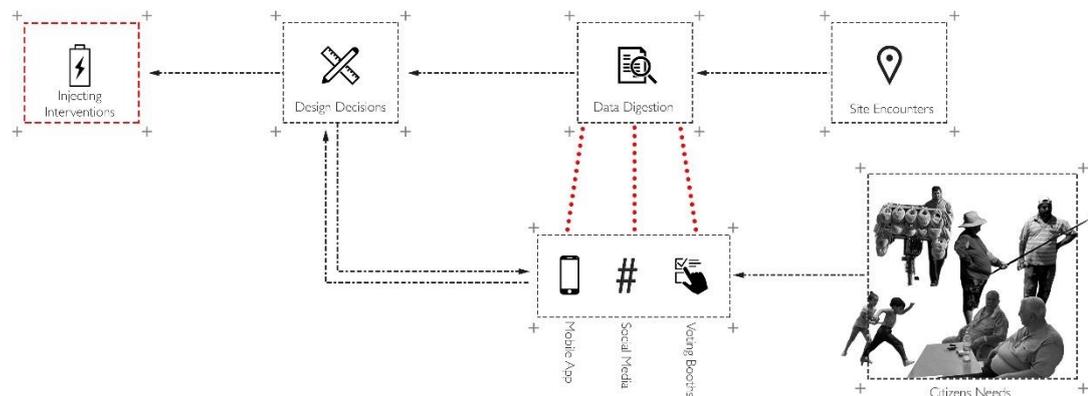


Fig.1: Diagram showing the heterarchical system that will engage the public participation in the process of producing the social batteries

The neoliberal political economy created a superimposed model of producing cities (Rolnik, 2019), in which space and land become more meaningful and central in the financial circuit process, and their social value was disregarded. Every other way of organizing territories that do not cope with this model has been stigmatized, marked as illegal, called sediments, and even demolished. The financialization of cities turned cities to a place to park capital and observe its surplus, and more a place that provides a ground of revenues and interest rather promoting social life for its habitants, and provoked more exclusion, precarity, and temporariness. This is seen in the displacement of the middle-income and lower-income residents from the city and segmentation of the city based on class, as financialization caused inflation in the property prices, it became harder for these segments to endure living in the city, which led to housing crises where residents are being replaced by the luxurious apartment that is likely left vacant (as a type of secured assets). A permanent parameter is demarcated in which beyond it the rule of law fades, the parts of the city outside this parameter are left in a state of exemption and 'permanent temporariness', where services and

infrastructure are rarely available. Paradoxically these part hosts the workforce of the city. Moreover, neoliberalism provoked gentrification of the social and urban fabric of cities in favour of investment, where a vast number of buildings (especially heritage buildings) are demolished and replaced by buildings with greater built-up areas and higher development ratio.

“The research aims to design social batteries that would act as initiators of utopian socio-spatial reconstruction in the neoliberal city”

The objectives of the research are:

- Presenting the ramifications of financialization and neoliberal urban policies
- Developing vision socio-territorial interventions focusing on interdisciplinary approaches between society and space
- Investigating how social battery can initiate a future change in the production of the cities.
- Study the importance of the social and communal agreements that organize the uses of Dalieh in Beirut.

This research hypothesizes the possibility of socio-spatial reconstruction of the neoliberal city by injecting architectural interventions that catalyze a hetrachial model of and communal practices.

This paper will be analyzing the present incentives and ramification of neoliberalism in cities and tackle them to create a clearer image of a possible social-spatial reconstruction. The study will be based on data collection of the information and references that are issued in the last 30 years.

As a caste study, this paper will be interpreting the socio-spatial sovereignty in the Dalieh, Beirut. One of the last remaining public outlets in Beirut and a significant part of the cultural and environmental heritage of it. Using field method of data collection that aims to observe and analyze the pattern of social activities happening in Dalieh through direct observation, interviews, and emic anthropological approach to understanding people’s behavior in this space.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quest for social utopia and producing alternative socio-spatial futures for cities has been a pivot for various studies, researches, and several critics for many years. This topic has been discussed by a variety of experts from a range of fields and perspectives, such as architectural, anthropological, economical, sociological, philosophical, etc. The constructivist movement, and one of its members the constructivist architect Moisei Ginzburg discusses in his book *Rhythm in Architecture* that was published in 1923, the concept of the social condenser and the role of architecture in transforming societies. Later, in 1974 Henri Lefebvre published a book concerned by the production of spaces. 2 years later, the American sociologist Harvey Molotch published a paper in 1976 which was a milestone in urban studies and focused on space and land interests and their promotion of urban growth machine (Molotch, 1976). In 2011 the political theorist and urban planner Susan Fainstein published a book about the concept of ‘Just City’ later the architect and urban planner Raquel Rolnik published a book titled “Urban Warfare” which discussed the city conditions under financialization in 2019.

2.1 Definition of the Social Battery

Socio-spatial transformation depends on the environment and architecture has a formative influence in catalyzing such changes. Consequently, these changes need to be energized, hence the Social battery is the instrument that will power these changes just as the known battery, which is used in conditions where electricity is unreachable; the

social batteries are precise intervention that will be plugged in the neoliberal city to power the socio-spatial reconstruction, and act as the regenerator of social life in the neoliberal city- where social life is halted and nearly lost due to the ramifications of neoliberalism.

The premise is that this battery will engage the public participation in the process of decision making in the production of spaces either directly by creating a heterarchical system that make the public a main actor in this process (Fig. 1), or indirectly through an emic anthropological analysis of citizens, by which the design is based on the investigation of how people think, how they perceive and categorize their environment, their rules and behavior. The response of the battery is fueled from the site itself and then deployed and used to understand this site. Subsequently, it will create an environment where there is potential to allow construction of social space that resemble the city and its citizens' needs, in which segmentation and hierarchies are removed.

2.2 Neoliberal Urban Policies and its Ramifications

The economic ideology of Neoliberalism has been infused in the public policies of several governments (including developed and developing countries), consequently, the ideological triumph of neoliberalism was manifested by domination of the resources and thus its urban policies have been imposed on these countries. The neoliberal urban policies have led to extremely unjust and segmentation of territories in the city (Hackworth, 2006) and these ramifications are tangibly and intangibly seen in the city:

- Spatial contingency & urban inequalities
- Segmentation of the city based on class and other factors
- Displacement of low and mid-level tenants
- Land and property speculative practices
- Privatization of Public Spaces
- Housing Crisis

These ramifications were pivot of many studies, theories, principles, and ideologies that tried to formulate a democratic, independent, and critical social thoughts.

2.3 Theories, Principles, and Ideologies Concerned by Utopian Social Space

Several theories, principles, and ideologies that shed light on the relationship between architecture, urbanism, and social sciences, highlighting the complementarities and tensions between construction spaces and living space.

2.3.1 Susan Fainstien's Just City

Fainstein proposed the just city theory that stress on the role of urban planner in adopting new urban development policies. Her ideas are concerned about encouraging the recovery of urban life in a capitalist economy by merging participation and equity, these issues were the focal point of many progressive urban planner's researches. Fainstein argues that reform can be accomplished on the local level despite obstacles, she incorporated three principles that are relevant to the twenty-first-century city: equity, diversity, and equity. (Fainstein, 2011)

2.3.2 The Social Condenser

The Social Condenser was a type of architecture proposed by Soviet Constructivists, in post-revolution era, the purpose of this type of architecture was to construct a radical new space with new kinds of human communities that include work, public culture, and collective residence. The term condenser came from the electric notion of the condenser, which is an electrical transformer used to condensate electric currents by re-deploying and intensifying it. Thus, for the Soviet Constructivists, it was about intensifying and redeploing architecture with revolutionary social and political electricity (Kopp, 1971). The Social Condenser (Fig. 2) was an instrument invented by the Constructivists as a manifestation of the social transformation and the Post-Revolutionary architecture, what it consists of and what it's social role (Ginzburg, 2016).



Fig.2: Poster by Gustav Klutsis showing the electrification of the country, 1920. Source: strelkamag.com Access Date: 12-11-2020

2.3.3 Superstudio

An architectural firm founded by Italian Architects Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia in 1966, the Italian firm was a major radical architecture and design movement in the late 60s. Superstudio saw architecture as an instrument for social change and creating alternative socio-spatial futures. They produced illustrations that were considered against the capitalist architecture that emerged after the war, their ideas were concerned with people's need over consumerism (Natalini, 2016). Natalini shed light on a critique of urban planning that raised fundamental questions on the role of planning if it merely a representation of the current allocation of powers even if it is inducing social injustice.

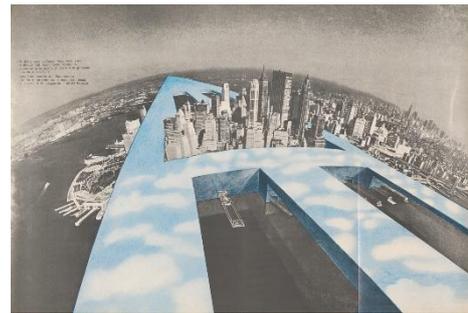


Fig. 3: Collage showing a continuous monument wrapping the city into infinite nurturing grip Source: Superstudio. Image Courtesy of Alvin Boyarsky Archive

"...if design is merely an inducement to consume, then we must reject design; if architecture is merely the codifying of bourgeois model of ownership and society, then we must reject architecture; if architecture and town planning is merely the formalization of present unjust social divisions, then we must reject town planning and its cities...until all design activities are aimed towards meeting primary needs. Until then, design must disappear. We can live without architecture..."

- Adolfo Natalini, 1971

2.3.4 Henri Lefebvre's Theory

The French philosopher and sociologist introduced the theory of the production of social space, he also distinguished between four types of spaces: abstract, conceived, perceived, and lived. Lefebvre was Marxist; accordingly, he was influenced by Marx, he used and reinterpreted his ideology. Lefebvre mentioned the space in his writings, on the contrary to Marx who did not introduce the space in particular. Namely, he distinguished between domination and the appropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1992), he argued that a utopian society creates its forms of space-which is utopian, but at present the relations of property and economics blocks this possibility. Accordingly, he emphasizes on ending the private property and the domination of the state over the space as a start point of the transition from the domination to the appropriation of space.

“every society - and therefore every mode of production - produces a certain space, its own space”

– Lefebvre, 1992

2.4 Previous Trials and Applications

The theoretical aspect concerned by utopianism and social space has inspired many who tried to apply these theories, this section will be discussing two types of applications and trails. The first type is a multidisciplinary type, consisting of applications concerned by social equality in the form of urban policies and local initiatives, while the second type is specified by architectural applications in the form of buildings concepts.

2.4.1 Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a process that allows the public to take part in decision making about the allocation of budgets by which the citizens can set up the expenditure priorities of a public budget. This process is significant to the engagement of different social levels of the society in the decision making and diminish the supremacy of a group over the others by implementing transparent spending, greater accountability, and equitable development. This process was considered a radical form of participation, it was developed in Brasil in early 80s, later it took advantage of the technological development to mutate into and a digital version that resulted increase the number of participants and spreading over the world like in cities Madrid, New York, and Paris. The participatory budgeting had a substantial positive impact on meaningful expenditure, citizen satisfaction, and democracy.

2.4.2 Casas Particulares System, Cuba

After the Cuban revolution in 1959, drastic changes occurred on the level of legislation and urban policies in Cuba. The new policies controlled the real estate market, in which speculation from foreign investors was stopped, rents were reduced, land speculations were



Fig 4: Aerial Photograph of Havana, Cuba
Source: Bing Maps

halted, and evictions were stopped. The mortgages and property taxes were removed on the Cuban homeowners in Havana. Although these policies protected Havana (Fig. 5) from gentrification and protected the Cubans from displacement and becoming victims to financialization, but, it later led to the deterioration of the urban fabric due to the lack of maintenance and unhealthy density, all the districts of Havana struggled with deterioration, but Havana Vieja (the old town) faced the highest percentage of it. As the country couldn't cope with the growing touristic demand, the socialist-led government passed a law that aims to make the country's socialist policies more sustainable. The "Casas Particulares" system was introduced in 1997 that allowed Cuban to rent rooms in their homes for tourists, the importance of this system is that it provides a proper income for the homeowners which will finance the maintenance of the buildings, and changed the relationship between the Cuban and the tourist, from a maid and a hotel guest, to a host and guest. Furthermore, this dispersed tourism system stressed on the ideology of socialism in which a large group of people (tenants) are sharing an almost equal amount of tourism shares, instead of one small group (hotels) getting it all.

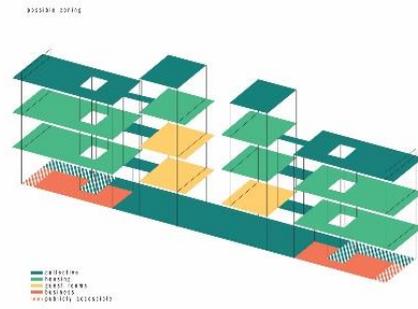


Fig.5: Diagram showing the uses of residential unit in Havana including the tourist rent rooms in yellow Source: Iwo Borkowicz

2.4.3 Narkomfin Building, Moscow

Design by Moisie Ginzburg, this building was an application of the social condenser (Kopp, 1971), through it Ginzburg stressed on the role of environment in promoting the transformation of the way of life. The F and K types of apartments (Fig. 7) were designed to enrich the social experience of the user, where the will-let corridor was a sort of street (Fig. 6) that enhance collectivity, the social exchange is also catalyzed through communal dining and kitchen.

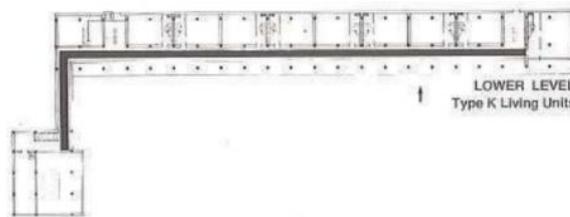


Fig.6: Lower Floor Plan, type K living unites Source: Town & Revolution book



Fig.7: Apartments type K & F plans Sorce: Town & Revolution Book

2.5 Parameters of the Study

Based on the previous studies, the research reached certain parameters of the study:

Natural and Cultural Layers	Social and Economic Activities	Users Socio-Economic Status
Level of public participation in decision making	Allocation of Resources	

3. METHODOLOGY

Referring to the various types of research methods, this research will be conducted using four types as follow. Firstly, the inductive method, to analyze the data gathered round the selected the case study: ‘The Communal Sovereignty in Dalieh, Beirut’, recognizing its importance as one of the few remaining public spaces in Beirut (Fig. 8) and representation of the cultural and environmental heritage of the city. The second method used is the field method, the author had planned several visits to the Dalieh, undertaking direct observation for the several social, economic, and ecological activities happening there, taking live photographs, interviews, and sketches for the site and its surroundings. Additionally, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed on a sample of people to recognize their perception of the Dalieh and any future interventions. Third, the analytical method, the research evaluates and study the answers of the questionnaire, and interviews. Finally, a vision is deduced, on the executing a Social Battery act as an initiator for a Utopian production of spaces in the neoliberal city and preserves that communal sovereignty in Dalieh.

3.1 Introduction to the Case Study: The Communal Sovereignty in Dalieh, Beirut

Historically, Beirut has been known for its unique livable coast, one of the precious spots on this coast is the Dalieh. ‘El Dalieh’ or ‘Daliet Beirut’ as it is called by the Beirutis, is the vast land (115,000 sqm) on Beirut coastline that extends from the city’s symbolic Raouche Rock, and slants gently towards the Mediterranean Sea, the origins of the name came from the topographic nature of the site where ‘Dalieh’ in Arabic refers to the plants that hang down. For Decades Dalieh has hosted intriguing informal economy of fishing, restaurants, boat touring, vendors, photographers, and others who occupy this area in the city. It was a prime destination for weekend picnics, sea-goers, lovers, and idyllic location for festivals and celebrations for a range of communities. Moreover, Dalieh has an exceptional diversity of ecological, geological, and topographical features, this include cliffs, enclaves, natural pools, rock islands as well as a valuable layer of native plants and habitat. Amid the glitzy post-war reconstruction, Beirut has been exposed to massive privatization and neoliberal real estate development, the coastline was the first target for the developers where most of the city’s coast was illegally privatized by bending the law.

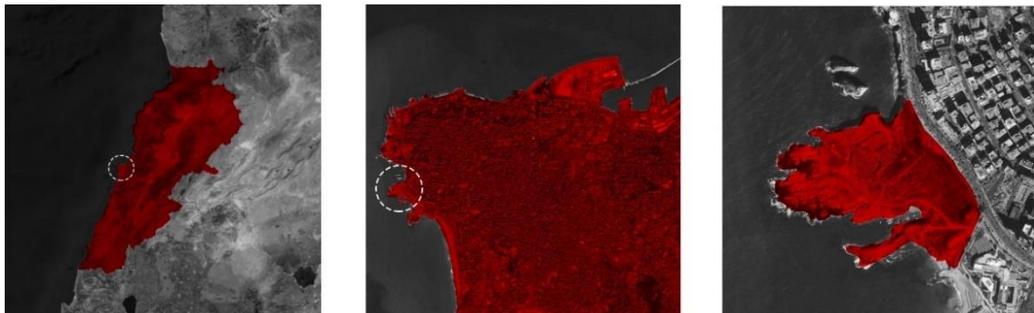


Fig.8: Maps showing location of Dalieh relative to Lebanon and Beirut Source: Bing Maps edited by the author



Fig.9: Panoramic photograph of Rouche and Dalieh (in red) Source: www.dalieh.org access date: 15-11-2020 edited by the author

The Dalieh endured these changes, although it is neither a public property nor a park it remained accessible for the public including Lebanese and non-Lebanese working class as one of the rarest remaining free outlets to the sea. However, the neoliberal growth machine has later landed on the shores of Dalieh with development plans that threatened its ideal setting.

3.2 Socio-Spatial Analysis of Dalieh

According to the social and spatial analysis, the Dalieh (Fig. 9) contain 4 aspects that overlay it in form of tangible and intangible layers: The socio-economic and cultural activities, geomorphology, archaeology, and ecological biodiversity. The following analysis aims to study and explain each aspect.

3.2.1 Socio-Economic and Cultural Activities

Experts estimate that the social, economic and cultural activities in Dalieh have existed for thousands of years. Over these years, it has provided a sustainable income for various communities of the city dwellers including refugees, non-Lebanese, and mid to low-income Lebanese. The socio-cultural significance of Dalieh is manifested by the variety of its appropriators, the recreational typology of the site that is implied through restaurants, cafes, mobile vendors, and fisherman, has attracted visitors not only from the city but from the suburbs as

well (Saksouk, 2015). People with multiple religious and interests come to Dalieh as a prime destination of *siran*, which includes barbecue, picnics, and strolling. These activities usually happened on Fridays and weekends and they are accompanied with activities that temporarily or permanently happening in Dalieh such as swimming (Fig. 11.b), diving (Fig. 11.c), and fishing (Fig. 11.a). The fishermen in Dalieh managed to be the main appropriator in Dalieh over decades, it includes two ports that have been functioning for more than 70 years respectively, one of these ports was recognized officially in 1995 by the maritime authorities. Furthermore, 75 fishermen working in the port were registered in the fishermen cooperative. The southern port (Fig. 10) accommodate the fishermen tools, clothes, and nets, they also built kiosks for them and their families beside the port. Equally important there is a swimming club created by a group of elderly Beirutis who swim in Dalieh on every day's morning.



Fig.10: Map showing the layers of socio-economic activities in Dalieh
Source: The Author

Likewise, Dalieh host yearly events, one of these events is *Erb'et Ayoub* or *Job's Wednesday*, this event is related to the prophet Ayoub (Job) who is believed that he has bathed in the water of Dalieh to heal from his pain. Thus, every year Beirutis descend to the sea (Fig. 12.a) on this day to take bath in the sea waters and heal from pain, preparations for the "Job's Wednesday" celebrations start a week early, youngsters clean the Dalieh, set up tents, and distribute them according to regions and families. Similarly, the Kurdish community in Beirut celebrate yearly the *Naworoz* in the Dalieh (Fig. 12.b), this vast social group gather in thousands in Dalieh every year on 21st of March since the 80s, they set a music stage, food kiosks, and celebrate with their national flags all day.



Fig.11.a: Local fishermen
Source: Al Jazeera
photographed by Kelly Lunde



Fig.11.b: Swimming in Dalieh natural pools
Source: Al Jazeera
photographed by Kelly Lunde



Fig.11.c: Diving from Dalieh Cliffs
Source: Al Jazeera
photographed by Kelly Lunde



Fig.12.a: Celebration of Jobs Wednesday in the 60s Source: www.dalieh.org Access date 19-11-



Fig.12.b: Celebration of Nawroz Source: Beirut report Access date 19-11-2020

3.2.2 Geomorphology

The coast of Beirut is known for its unique geomorphology, where a limestone plate protrudes on the shoreline, this plate is visible on the western coast where it could be traced through the 30-40 meters high limestone cliffs (Copeland, 2000). One of the last remaining karstic outcrops on city's coast is the Dalieh (Fig. 14) and the Rouche Rocks, these two sites are visible documentation of the geological history and the morphosis of the coast. This morphosis (Fig. 15) was caused by the fluctuation of sea level, weathering, erosion, and other tectonic activities. Hence, that's why Dalieh was nominated for World Monuments Watch as one of the high valued sites to the visual landscape heritage.



Fig.13: Longitudinal Section in Dalieh Source: The Author

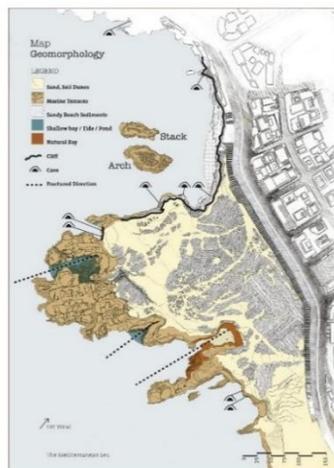


Fig.14: Geomorphology Map of Dalieh Source: Dalieh.org Access Date:17-11-2020

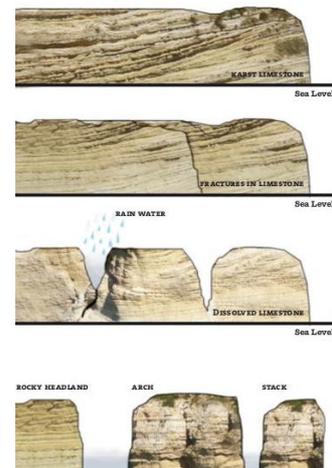


Fig.15: Geological timeline of Dalieh Coast Source: Dalieh.org Access Date:17-11-2020

3.2.3 Archaeology

According to archaeological studies, Ras Beirut is known to be utilized since the lower Paleolithic age until the Byzantine era. Consequently, Dalieh-which is in Ras Beirut, was one of the supposed archaeological sites. In 1914, the first recorded findings in Dalieh, where many tools fragments were found and collected, later these pieces were shipped to France and currently, they are conserved in the Museum of Confluences in Lyon. Several archaeological excavations took place in Dalieh and it is still believed that this peninsula hides more archaeological treasures to be explored. (Fig. 16)

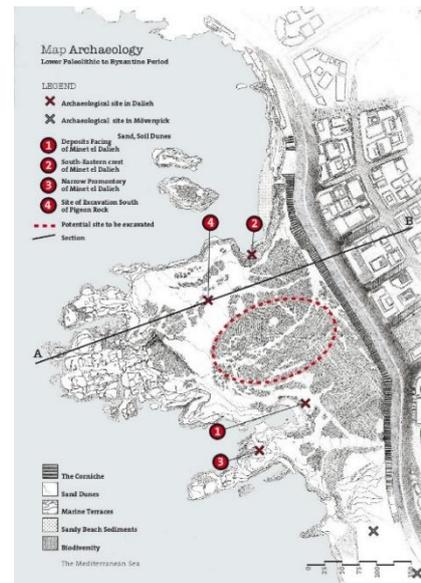


Fig.16: Archology Map Source Dalieh.org Access date:17-112020

3.2.4 Ecological Biodiversity

Studies showed that the floral cover in Dalihe (Fig. 17) compromise 6% of the whole Lebanese flora. Consequently, these studies show the richness of Dalieh and its unique biodiversity (Shaer, Samah, Jaradi, 2012) that harbours both terrestrial and marine species. The geological typology of Dalieh served in protecting endangered coastal plants and species, additional it is believed that the caves and tunnels in the karstic outcrop served as a habitat for sea lions, and sighting of this specie was recorded in 2013.

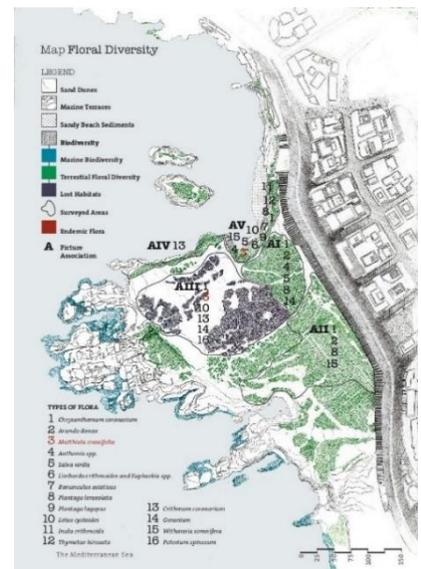


Fig.17: Biodiversity Map Source Dalieh.org Access date:17-112020

3.3 Identifying the Threats and the Problems

Referring to the property records that date to 1940, the site of Dalieh was labelled as ‘non-ædificandi’ which means it is not designated for construction. Moreover, the records show the ownership of different plots of Dalieh by specific families such as Shatila and Baydon. Dalieh remained unbuildable during this time until a neoliberal growth machine started to shape after the civil war. The neoliberal based reconstruction of Beirut envisioned the coast as an attractor for tourism, this vision originates from the rentier economical system that marks the Lebanese economy. This urban growth machine consists of private real estate developers, politicians, and local elites who gathered to bend the existing laws to serve their benefits on the behalf of the public good. 1995 marked the first major transformations in the ownership of the Dalieh, where a major property purchase was registered by 3 private real estate companies that later consolidated the shares to secure a larger plot, these three companies were owned by the prime minister then Rafiq El-Hariri. In parallel, after this

purchase, the Lebanese parliament issued an ‘expectational law’ that enable the owners of plots that are greater than 20,000 square meters to have quadrable surface exploitation and doubled total exploitation if the building to be built is a hotel. The lobbying behind these regulations has bent the law in the favor of the local elites and the private interests over the common good, and the public spaces in the city. Moreover, this law has affected the social life in the city where kilometres of the coast in Beirut were turned to hotels and gated resorts and the coastal violations reached more than 90,000 square meters (Fig. 18). This threat stayed looming around the Dalieh, in 2013 the real estate companies started their development plans, and they commissioned Rem Koolhaas for the project. Afterwards, when the news about the project leaked, the Civil Campaign to Protect the Dalieh, that includes activist, architects, engineers, professors, and urban planners issued an open letter to Koolhaas discussing the importance of the site to the city and the violation of laws that lead to developing this property (Saksouk, 2015). Later, Koolhaas responded to the letter and showed that he is aware of the site uniqueness and its importance to the civic life in Beirut and that he will be taking that into consideration and any future intervention. Additionally, in 2015 the kiosk and homes of the fishermen were razed, and evictions happened based on the request of the real estate companies.



Fig.18: Map of the Coastal violations in Beirut Source: NAHNOO

3.4 Selections of specific locations in the Dalieh

To elaborate on the previous studies, specific locations are selected. Firstly, the Fishermen Port (Fig. 19), as mentioned previously this port reside in a natural bay where fishermen build rooms and kiosks to live in, this port compromise the main elements of Dalieh and have a great potential to prevent any intervention on the behalf of the public good by empowering this socio-economic practice. Secondly, the other location is the naturally formed diving podium that has attracted thousands of the city dwellers to watch and participate in diving competitions in the Dalieh (Fig. 20)



Fig.19: The fishermen port in Dalieh



Fig.20: Diving Competitions in Dalieh

3.5 Different Perspectives of Public on Dalieh and Communal Practices

Pursuing greater credibility of the conducted research and to achieve maximum interaction with inhabitants and the activist concerned by the Dalieh, the author held a meeting with them and distributed a questionnaire in several spots in and around the site in order to know if the point of view of the sample verify the hypothesis illustrated.

3.5.1 Holding Interviews

Seeking more materialistic information, the interviews were held with several inhabitants of the Dalieh including elderly ones who spent their lives in this area, to recognize their point of view, aspirations, and concerns. Moreover, interviews were made with activist and architects who advocated the preservation of the Dalieh. The questions that were asked during these interviews are as follows:

- What Dalieh means to you?
- How to describe the situation of the Dalieh nowadays?
- What are the threats public space & Dalieh particularly are facing?
- How do you consider the Dalieh importance to you and society as a whole?

Answers of the interviewees were complementary and similar; samples of these answer are presented in the below quotations:

Abir Shatila, 31 years:

The case of Dalieh is not the affair of the fishermen only, it is the affair of the whole city, of us how we use our city and our open public spaces. If the fishermen lose their affair, we all lose. The public place must not be defined from an ownership point of view but the use.

Abu Issa, 53 years:

The Dalieh is the place that saved me from being broke or a criminal, I came to Beirut from Syria in 2011 where I was living in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus. My wife and I work in Dalieh since then at the ramshackle cafe that sells drinks, snack, and water for the local fisherman. I thank God that this place exists.

Layla Itani, 60 years:

This place has been our home for decades, Me, my father, and my grandfather lived and worked here, I remember the good old times when all the Beirutis came to Dalieh on "Wednesday of Ayoub" to spend the day here. The real estate companies say that this is their private property and we must leave. In fact, they illegally registered this land during the civil war, while we are living here from the 50s. This land is having been always open to the public, and these white rocks belong to the Lebanese people not to the investors.

3.5.2 Questionnaire

The author designed a close-ended questionnaire, and it has been distributed on a sample of 115 persons, including inhabitants, fishermen, and users of the Dalieh as well as architects, urban planners, politicians, lawyers, ecologists, sociologists, economists, engineers, and university students, in the ages between 18 and 55 years old. The questioner was distributed in Dalieh as well as different spots in the nearby neighbourhoods, to test the hypothesis of the author the questions were precise and direct as follows:

- Q1: What is your vision for the ideal use of Dalieh?
- Q2: Do you think that strengthening the existing activities in Dalieh will contribute to protecting the area from private development in the future?
- Q3: How do you evaluate real estate development policies in Beirut and their impact on society and public property?

- Q4: Do think Lebanese society's perception of the public property changed after the 17th October uprising?
- Q5: Do you think that public spaces can be a means of political and social change?
- Q6: In your opinion, will the financial and economic collapse affect the percentage of Lebanese people visiting resorts and restaurants, and will they switch to public spaces as a less expensive alternative?

Following the field methodology, the research paper analyses the results.

4. RESULTS

The research evaluates and interprets the answers to the questionnaire, and interviews using the analytical method with correlation to the respondent's socio-economic status and location of residence in Beirut.

4.1. Interpretation of the Interviews

Interviews were used in creating a mental image of Dalieh and the activities accruing there, this image was later translated into activities map (Fig. 21). The interviews were held in this site helped defining the appropriators of the Dalieh who are mainly from 'lower socio-economic class', they include Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian refugees who have been living and working in Dalieh for several decades. Interviewees showed their nostalgia to the city when it was more socially livable and before being invaded by development and exposed to severe gentrification after the war, this feeling was transmuted in collage art. (Fig. 22)

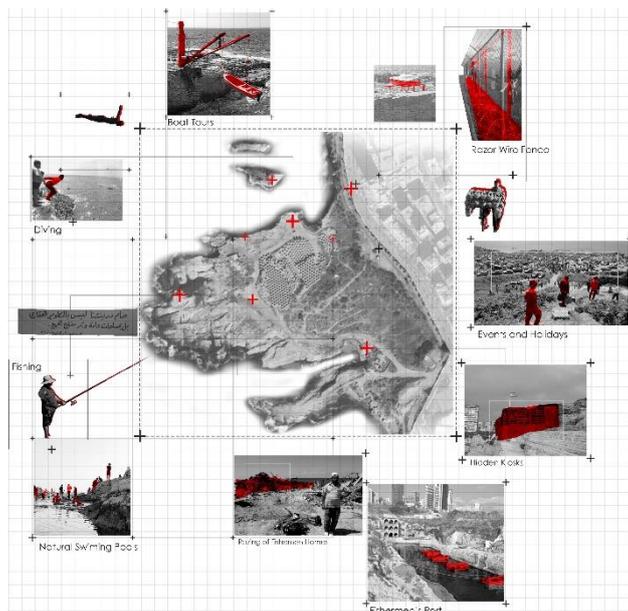


Fig.21: Mapping the mental image of Dalieh

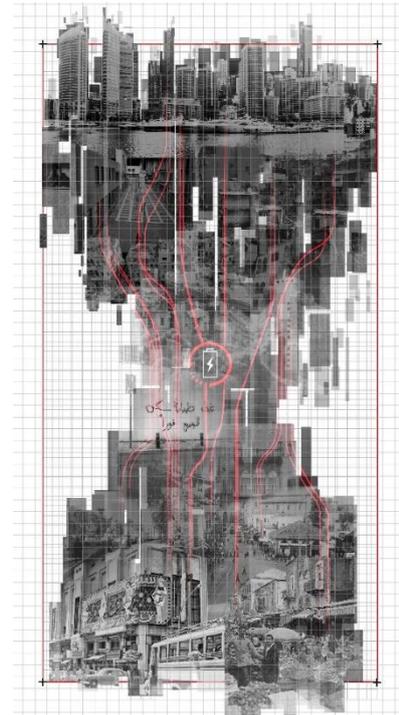


Fig.22: Digital Collage by the Author

4.2. Evaluating the Questionnaire Responses

After the distribution of a close-ended questionnaire, 115 responses were collected, the questions were directed to verify the hypothesis raised by the author. To contextualize these responses, they were correlated with socio-economic status of the respondents and location of residence in Beirut, the result was evaluated and presented in the figures below.

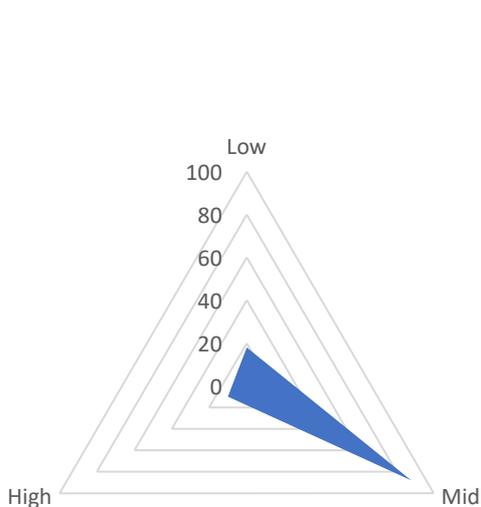


Fig.23: Web chart showing the socio-economic status of the respondents

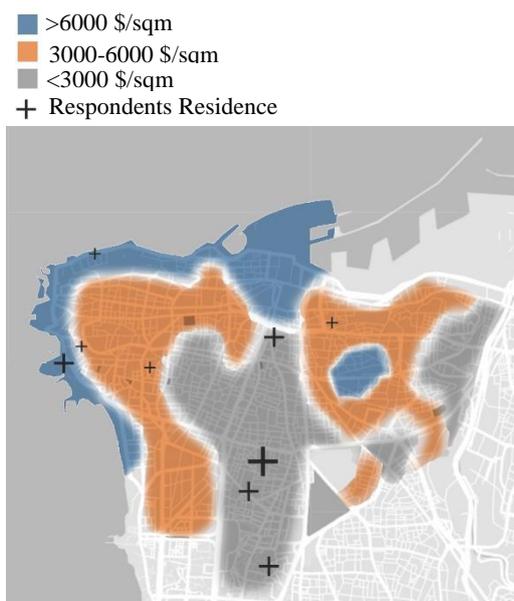
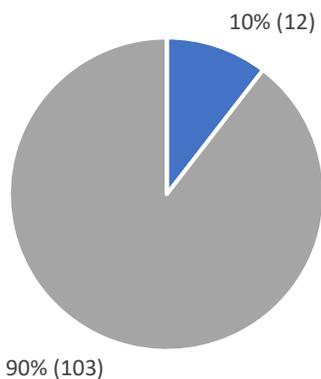
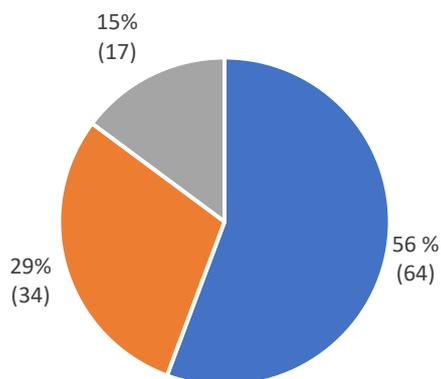


Fig. 24: Respondents location with respect to the property prices in Municipal Beirut



- Keep it open for the public
- Keep it open for the public and introduces several enhancements
- Privatize it and convert it to a Resort, Hotel, Luxury apartments, etc

Fig.25: Pie chart showing results of answers to question 1



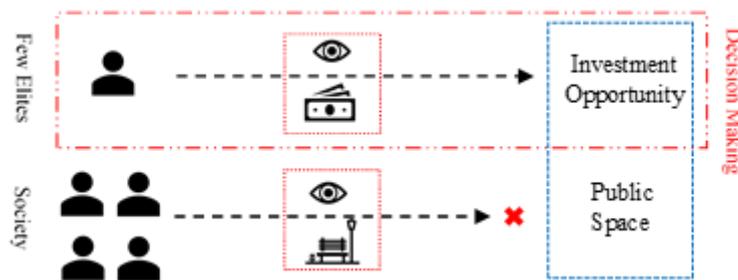
- Very Bad
- Bad
- Average
- Good
- Very Good

Fig. 26: Pie chart showing results of answers to question 3

Results have shown that the majority of the respondents are from a middle class (Fig. 23) and residing in zones in the city that have mid to low property prices (Fig. 24). Additionally, responses to question one (Fig. 25) shows that the majority chose the ideal use of Dalieh is to be kept public with introducing several enhancements while none of the respondents perceives privatization as an ideal vision. Considering the result of question two (Fig. 26) all answer evaluates the real estate development policies in Beirut below average and more than the half of the respondents evaluate them as very bad policies.

Setting this data side by side with the socio-economic status of the respondents it arises an essential deduction that public spaces have a higher social value for middle and low classes that live in an affordable zone in the city, these zones are usually more condensed than expensive zones and lack recreational and public spaces which justifies their responses, furthermore the socio-economic status characterized by the mid and low income suggests that these groups reach out for public space as free options hence they can not afford the expensive alternatives.

Accordingly, this advocates the significance of the engagement of different social levels of the society in the decision making in a heterarchical manner. Consequently, the production of spaces will not be motivated by the aim of achieving revenues for a small segment of the society rather its incentives will be to produce spaces that are socially just and resemble the city and its citizens' needs.



5. DISCUSSION

The previous findings have shown the notability of the social value of the land in the city and particularly the Dalieh. This value is noticeable within specific segments that are considered mid to low class and live within condensed zones in the city. Furthermore, the previous studies have shown that the production of spaces in Beirut is done through a hierarchal system (Fig. 26) that is profitable for the interests of a small segment of the society and excludes most of the society segments from the process of decision making.

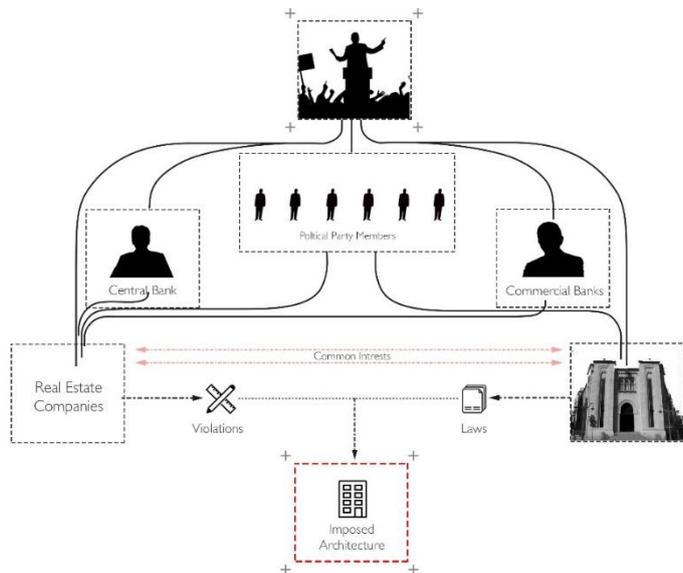


Fig.26: Diagram showing the hierarchal system of producing architecture in Beirut

The social battery will incorporate public participatory approach (Fig. 27) to fosters this public sovereignty over other kinds of dominations. Hence, the process of designing the social battery will primarily include the appropriators as a key player to formulate a wider perspective on the intended interventions. In this way the design will no longer be imposed on the public, rather it will be produced by them.

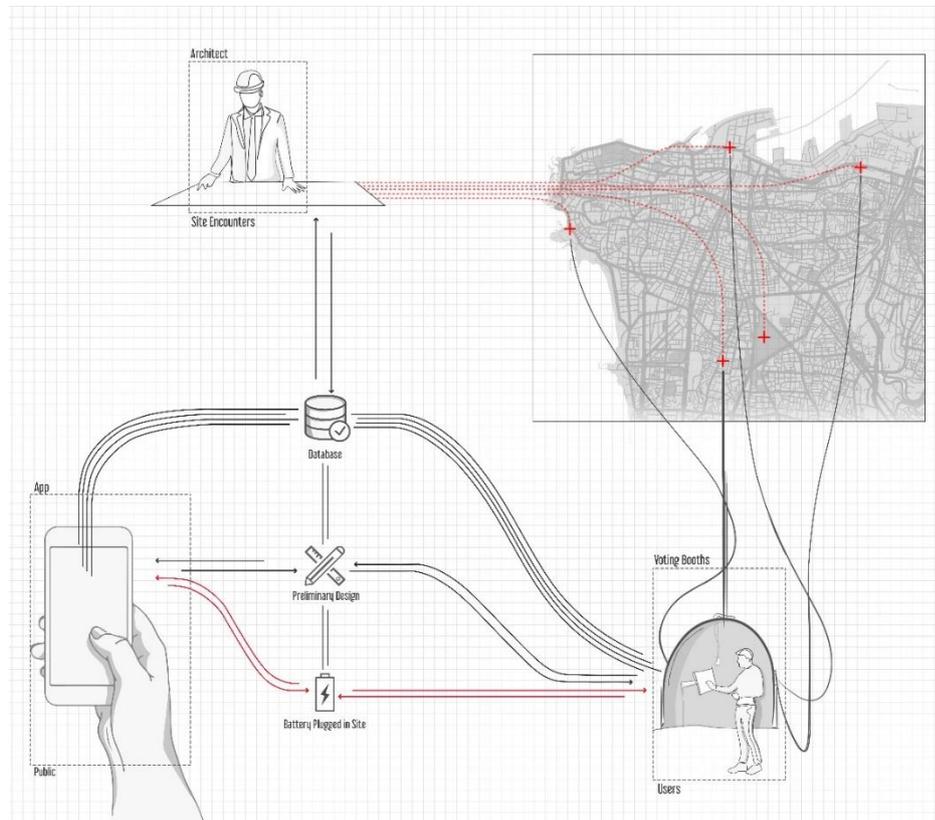


Fig.27: Diagram showing the public participatory process in producing social batteries

6. CONCLUSION

Finally, the research concludes with a set of conclusion points as follows:

- Social batteries will be socio-territorial interventions focusing on interdisciplinary approaches between society and space
- Implementing a participatory system that counters the neoliberal mode of production of cities.
- Catalyzing the communal sovereignty in Dalieh has greater potential to as the initiator to the process of socio-spatial reconstruction in the city
- Urban Planning should take an active role to overcome the bureaucracies and private interests for more egalitarian solutions that take into social relations into consideration.

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