

DIVERSITY OF ETHNICITY AND STATE INVOLVEMENT ON URBAN INFORMALITY IN BEIRUT

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Abstract

Urban informality has become the dominant feature of urban growth on Beirut City and its periphery. Beirut context, as the rest of Lebanese cities, sheds light on a new era of controversy on urban informality. The appearance of urban informality in Beirut is due to the ways that the state being involved on such areas and its affect on shaping the urban fabric, the ways that the influence of various sociopolitical circumstances the country being passed through by which informal areas being established, and the complexity of ethnicity structure within Lebanese society. Understanding the diversity of the state power and ethnicity structure of the society during various periods of the establishment of informal housing areas would enable the state and housing professionals to provide a clear policy strategy to tackle urban informality. Each marginal area needs special treatment according to its religion and ethnicity structure, to be remolded within the society.

Keywords: informality; urbanization; state; ethnicity; Lebanon.

1-Introduction

The Middle East experience has rarely been incorporated into housing literature within the context of the changing nature of state and civil society. In a recent volume edited by Roy and AlSayyad (2004) argued that denial of the rise of a populist fundamentalism and its challenge to the state is essential to intervene in tackling urban informality. Urban informality in the context of wartime, Lebanon points to the crucial role of ethnic politics.

This research is an attempt to examine urban informality within Beirut City in order to understand the extent to which the religions/ethnics along with political with the demise of pre-war safety net mechanisms affected the urban informality mapping of the country. It has emphasized on the importance of the diversity of state power and ethnicity structure on urban informality and how these

diversity encourage the urban poor for acquiring land plots for housing at reasonable prices. Also, the diversity of government, together with international agents, involvement on such areas and its affect on shaping the urban fabric within the city are clearly noticeable. Various informal areas within Beirut City are reviewed, and the causes and reasons for their formulation are examined.

The research is organized into five sections; the first sheds light on Lebanese urbanization process, followed with an overview of urban informality, the third highlights divergence and state involvement, and the fourth examines ethnic dimension and urban segregation. The last section concludes that urban informality is the most significant phenomenon shaping the built environment within Beirut City caused by the diversity of state power and ethnicity structure due to several attributes and it could be adjusted in favor of upgrading and integrating informal areas within the rest of the urban fabric of the city by which a homogeneous built environment would be melted.

2- Lebanese Urbanization Process

In 1997 it is estimated that the total population of the country is around 3.111 million people, with an annual growth rate of 2.7% (Population and Housing Statistical Facts, 1996). In 2001 Lebanon's population has estimated at 4.3 million people. In the year 2005, the Lebanese population should reach 4.8 million people. The population density on all Lebanese territory is about 2,999 persons/km² (Lebanon State of the Environment Report, 2003). Beirut, capital and largest city of Lebanon, situated on a peninsula that project slightly westward into the Mediterranean. Beirut is contained by the Mountains of Lebanon that rise to the east, with an area of roughly 67 km²; some sites located outside the municipal boundary are commonly associated with the city. Along the coastal line in the southern part of the city of Beirut, the largest informal area, *Dahiya Janubiyya*¹, is located. However, the pattern of urbanization in Lebanese territory is, to a certain extent, related to various decisions for moving from rural-to-urban areas, and it is subjected to four variables.

¹ *Dahiya Janubiyya* is divided by the north-south axis of the airport road by which two different parts were formulated. The eastern part combines dense old villages (*Burj Al Barajneh, Mrayjeh, Harit Hrayk, Ghobeyri, Shiyyah*) and peripheral illegal sectors (*Amrusseyeh, Hay Al Sillom*), while the western part contains major illegal sectors (*Jnah, Uzai*), legal low-density urbanization (*Bir-hassan, Ramlit Al-Baydah*), together with relatively large non-urbanized areas. *Uzai*, a liner and the largest illegal settlement, has been created along the axis linked Beirut and Saida. This area used to be a sea resort area for Greater Beirut before the civil war. On the other hand, the southern suburb is not a homogenous space. It is divided into several territories managed by different players. Hezbollah is hence not its sole constituency or authority. A good number of residents are neither close to Hezbollah nor to the *Amal* movement, the other major political party active in the area. The southern suburb is inhabited by one third of population of Greater Beirut, almost 0.5 million, and occupies an area similar to that of municipal Beirut (respectively 16 and 17.6 square kilometers).

A Central variable is that individuals move (with varying degrees of ease) in response to economic incentives and follow economic opportunities. This is dominated by rural-urban migration where economic opportunities are scarceness in Lebanese rural areas. If location incentives are distorted, so presumably is the growth process.

Another variable is that people move to urban areas for social and political reasons. Migration to urban areas can provide an escape from family and cultural constraints, such as restricted land access or a low level of female independence. It is argued (Castells, 2002) that the new global economy and the emerging informational society have indeed a new spatial form, which develops in a variety of social and geographical contexts: mega cities – Cairo and Beirut among them. This move is accompanied with the acceleration of economic situations, for example the expansion of Eastern Beirut and mount of Lebanon, by which informal areas squeezed in between.

A third variable is that migration to an urban area may also occur because of an expected increase in social status and standing – the perception that the “*high life*” can be found among the “*bright lights*” myth – migrants had been lured to the city by exaggerated tales of high income and technologically advanced living, especially by returned migrants who “wished to convey to others a positives image of themselves and their experiences.”

A final variable is that wars and ethnic conflicts that occurred in Lebanon may also lead to an increase in rural-urban migration. Aside from the impact of war on agricultural income through effects on transport and marketing, war may also push people out of rural areas or even from one part to another in urban areas, for sheer safety reasons. For example, the population shifts that occurred from East Beirut to West Beirut and the rapid informal development of *Dahiya Janubiyya*².

Therefore, the population shifts in Lebanese territory is linked with various circumstances and depended on various incentives. Ethnic conflicts, as it happened during the civil war in particular, increase the danger of living in an area dominated by a persecuted ethnic group, as the potential for ethnic cleansing is high in informal areas. Urban areas generally have a higher level of ethnic diversity and thus may be safe havens for persecuted groups.

² *Dahiya Janubiyya* area is the largest informal agglomeration in Beirut, and has different informal subtypes as being surveyed between October-December 2004, see note 1 and 5

3-Urban informality

The concept of urban informality³ sector is fatally flawed as a tool of analysis for policymaking (Peattie, 1996). The informal sector is therefore said to contain the mass of the working poor whose productivity is much lower than in the modern urban sector from which most of them are excluded.

Recently, a controversy on urban informality and its linkage with the urban poor and correlation with the transformation of the socioeconomic situation and the diversity of cultural/religion context within Third World cities became a critical debate in the literature (see for example, Rakowski, 1994; Roy and AlSayyad, 2004; Bromley, 1994; Perlman, 2004; and Soliman, 2004b). Rakowski (1994) examined urban informality from two different perspectives; essentially the structuralists and the legalists. The former comprised the ILO and advocates of the underground economy; the latter included Hernando De Soto and the advocates of microenterprise perspectives.⁴

Similarly, Roy (Forthcoming) examined urban informality from two contrasting frames dominates the current discussion of informality. The first comes from the report of the Urban 21, an exclusive group appointed as a World Commission in the year 2000 and published by Sir Peter Hall and Ulrich Pfeiffer (2000) as a book entitled *Urban Future 21: A Global Agenda for 21st Century Cities*. Hall and Pfeiffer pay particular attention to one category of urbanization that they call “informal hyper growth” cities. Expressing great concern for these exploding and swollen cities, they argue that this phenomenon is not simply restricted to the cities of the global south but that through migration “some cities of the developed world are invaded by the developing world” rendering them ungovernable (Hall and Pfeiffer, 2000). In contrast with this language of crisis, Hernando De Soto (2000), in his book, *The Mystery of Capital*, presents an image of informality as “heroic entrepreneurship.” With the ear of many of the Third World’s political leaders, he continues a theme that he sounded in his first book, *The Other Path*, that the “informal economy is the people’s spontaneous and creative response to the state’s incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses” (De Soto, 1989). De Soto, in his book *The Other Path*, has defined and elaborated a concept of informality as *activities with illegal means but legal ends and social utility*.

³ The term of urban informality has been lately used to describe the process of informal residential developments, any activities affects land use and land values or physical arbitrary growth within Third World cities. It is used to denote social and economic processes that shape, or are manifest in, the built environment, see for example Roy and AlSayyad (2004).

⁴For details of ILO concept of informality see Rakowski’s debate (1994).

In the two frames mentioned above, urban informality exists in Lebanese territory and characterized by international enforced urbanization and the appearance of informal economy due to the failure of the state to satisfy the basic needs of the disadvantage groups of the society. On the one hand, De Soto never mentions the effect of ethnicity structure on urban informality and its effect on urban fabric within a given environment, on the other hand, urban informality has a great effect on drawing up the social stability within a given area, for example Lebanese case. AlSayyad (2004) argued that urban informality does not simply consist of the activities of the poor, or a particular status of labor, or marginality. Urban informality seems to be *a land use problem and it is thus often managed through illegal attempts of the low and middle strata of the society to restore their "space" or "order" to the urban landscape*. It could be said that *urban informality is a segregated space organized in response to certain circumstances, and not responding to the prevailing law or system. It arises and persists due to economic necessity and material deprivation, physical and social insecurity, ethnic and class prejudice*. If so how does social exclusion create, or at least encourage, the spreading of informal sector within the Lebanese Territory?

3.1 Causes of Lebanese informality

The growing of urban informality in Lebanon is due to various circumstances that faced the country in the last few decades, and is linked with the transformation of socioeconomic, military and political situation. Ethnic and class prejudice is playing a great part in informality phenomenon with Lebanese urban centers in which several key attributes are emerged.

To being, international migration supported by foreign and Arabic powers vying for control of the Mediterranean have used Lebanon as a battlefield for their economic and political conflict. During the last few hundred years, large number of refugees (Palestinian or non-Palestinian) had moved and settled in the periphery of the Lebanese urban centers, especially in Beirut and Tripoli, by which informal residential areas were developed. Also, an extensive rural-urban migration fuelled by two Israeli invasions (1978-1982) led to the transformation of most of the open spaces of the southern suburbs of Beirut into large informal areas.

Next, in the early 1970s, the injection of petrodollars into the Lebanese economy had accelerated the economic growth within the territory by which huge waves of immigrants (insiders and outsiders) moved

toward the major urban centers and emphasized inequalities and marginalized the lowest income groups, either Lebanese or non-Lebanese.

Thirdly, urban informality is created due to internal and external military conflicts that faced the country in the last few decades. Also, external military conflicts (the two Israeli invasions) have led to displacement of people from the south of Lebanon to more secure places within the major Lebanese urban centers. This trend of displacement has resulted in population shift by which Muslims moved from Eastern Beirut to Western Beirut, and Christians moved into the opposite direction. This reorganization of population was in line with ethnicity and dominated by militarization, religious ideologies, and the maintenance of political structures that govern through patronage, division and economic oppression.

Fourthly, in postwar, Lebanon has reached the *Taef* agreement which promoted a new *status quo* in the territory that deliberately ignored the roots of the civil war and set about restoring Beirut's old financial role at the expense of the impoverished and marginalized rural and suburban populations. Little political efforts were invested in the return of internally displaced communities living on the outskirts of the Lebanese cities (Halabi, 2004).

Fifthly, informality is now manifest in new forms and new geographic, both at the rural-urban interface and in terms of development that may serve as a main path to various political wings within the city. The variable geometry of the new world economy and the intensification of the migratory phenomenon, both rural-urban and international, have led to a new population category divided between the rural, urban and metropolitan settings: a drifting population which moves with the economic tides and according to the permissiveness of the institution, seeking out its survival with variable temporal and spatial features according to circumstances of the Lebanese territories.

Finally, the foundation of urban informality is created for the purpose for defensive and control ethnic diversity within the society by which informal growth has taken place according to social exclusion and religion. This is the true source of social tension: growing ethnic diversity in Beirut which has not taken aboard that diversity and continues to speak of 'immigrants' when, increasingly, it is a matter of nationals of non-European ethnic origin. Urban informality has allowed informal process to spread not only among the lowest strata of the society, but among what were once seen as the formal lower and middle classes, including the various ethnic groups within the city of Beirut, therefore, the pattern of urban ethnic segregation is accentuated. Although Beirut accounts for only 40 percent of the

population, it has 42 percent of the ethnic minority population which concentrated particularly in certain districts (Lebanese National Report, 1996). Late in the 1960s, as a successive waves of displaced *Shiite* refugees were feeling the chronically embattled villages in southern Lebanon, *Dahiya Janubiyya* (southern suburb) quickly acquired the label of Beirut's "Misery Belt" or "Belt of Poverty": a ghetto seething with feelings of neglect and abandonment and, hence, accessible to political dissent, mobilization, and violence.

3.2 Typology of Informal Areas in Beirut

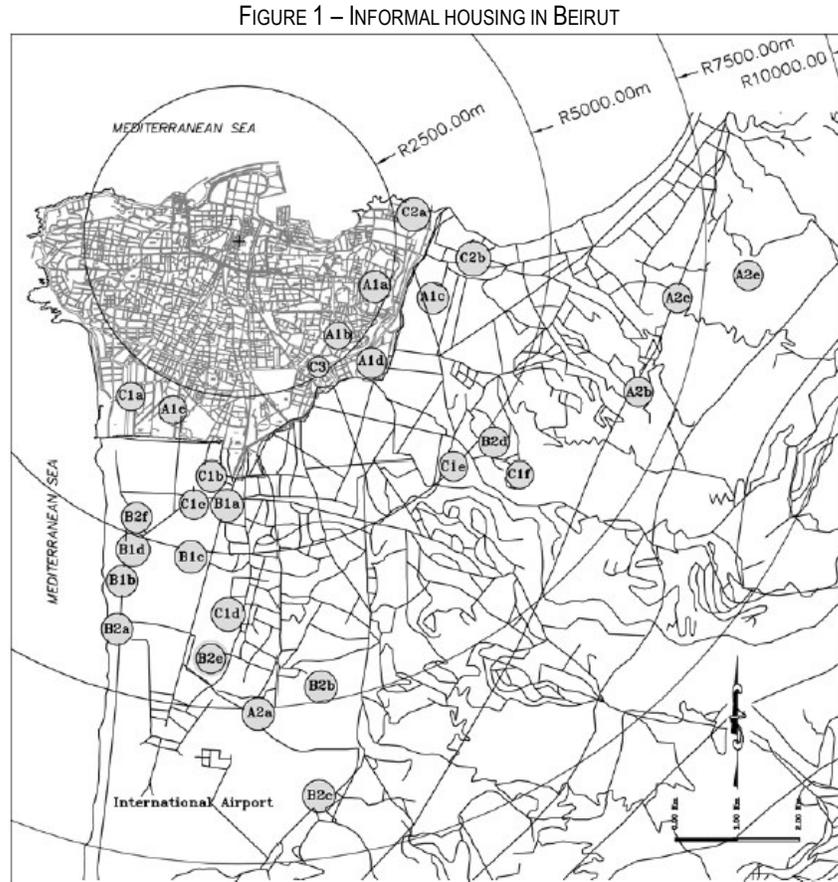
The metropolitan of Beirut contains twenty two informal residential areas with a total population of 300,000 persons (without the number of foreign refugees) which accounted 25% of the city population. Since 1980 Lebanon has lost to unregulated urbanization some 7% of its cultivated land and 15 % of its irrigated land. Most of this development has occurred in the suburbs of Beirut and other coastal cities (Masri, 1999). Depends on previous studies (Soliman, A. 2004a), a typology of three main informal housing types in Beirut is created- semi-informal, squatting and hybrid.

TABLE 1 - MATRIX OF INFORMAL AREAS BY TYPES AND SUB-TYPES

Main Typologies	A		B		C	
	Illegal Land Subdivision (Semi-informal areas)	Population	Illegal Occupied Land (Squatting areas)	Population	Foreign Refugees Camps (Hybrid areas)	Population
Sub Typology	A1 Inside city boundary	23000	B1 Inside city boundary	55000	C1 Palestinians	200000
	A1a Karam Elziatoun	4500	B1a Harsh Tabet	10000	C1a Mar Elias	
	A1b Hai Elsyriaan	6000	B1b Hai Elzahria	5000	C1b Shatilla	
	A1c ElNabhia	5000	B1c Harsh Elkateel	20000	C1c Sabra	
	A1d Harsh Rahal	3000	B1d Ber Hassan	20000	C1d Bourj El Barjneh	
	A1e Wata Almousautbeh	4500			C1e Jisr El Pasha	
					C1f Tal Elzatar	
	A2 Outside city boundary	126000	B2 Outside city boundary	96000	C2 Armenians	12000
	A2a Hi Elselem	120000	B2a Ouzai	60000	C2a Karantina	
	A2b Elzaterihia	2500	B2b Elikely	6000	C2b Sanjak	
	A2c Elrowaisat	2000	B2c Elamosahia	5000	C3	
	A2e Hai Elhean	1500	B2d Dakwanha	5000	Syriac	3000
			B2e El Ramal	5000		
			B2f ElJounhia	15000		
	Total Population	149000		51000		215000

Source: the typology is the author's typology, while the other data gathered from different sources; mainly Fawyz, M. and Bian, E., 2003; Masri, 1999; and a field survey carried out by fourth year students at the faculty of Architectural Engineering, BAU, under supervision of the author, in the period of November- December, 2003. It is important to notice that the city boundary is defined in this study within a radius of 5km from the city center (Sahat El Njemehia).

Figure 1 Illustrates Informal housing in Beirut



Illegal land Subdivision (Semi-informal areas) (A): These areas housed the various waves of rural to urban migrants arriving in Beirut and its suburbs in relation to the country's industrialization and urbanization processes, coming especially from South Lebanon and the *Beka'a* Valley where poverty and insecurity (in the case of the South) gradually encouraged a migratory movement. It is developed on agricultural land in which the owner has legal tenure and a formal occupation permit. Such areas develop in essentially rural locations on the urban fringe, and they tend to be interspersed with, surrounded by or adjacent to undeveloped or agricultural sites. They often develop in advance of the principal lines of urban growth and are most noticeable around the most rapidly growing axial lines of urban roads.

Illegal occupied land (Squatting areas) (B): These areas grew in several parts of the city, where refugees displaced by the events of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) occupied either buildings or

entire neighborhoods, abandoned by their owners or tenants (for reasons of security) or occupied large plots of land and transformed them into squatter settlements. The squatter areas usually exist outside the formal legal economic structure of the city of Beirut such as *Ouzai* area. While scattered squatter areas are still exist within the city boundary such as *Ber Hassan* and *Harsh Tabet*.

Foreign refugees' camps (Hybrid areas) (C): Refugees camps are historically the oldest informal areas of Beirut. Camps were organized for Armenian (1920s), Syriac (1920s) and Palestinian (1948) refugees with the help of international organizations (UNRWA), while Kurds occupied abandoned camps tenements in the city center. The most famous camps are still the Palestinian camps (for example *Shatila* camp) where the most economic deprivation and misery existed. Demographic changes are noted in all informal areas, especially since the 1990s, with the arrival of a growing number of non-Lebanese workers (notably Syrian male workers), who live in these areas of the city.

The critical issues are that what transactions and struggles that is behind the creation of urban informality? Does the concept of urban informality differ in cities and within the city itself? Does the sociopolitical transformation affect the progress of urban informality? Does historiography has to do with the formulation of urban informality?

4-Divergence and State involvement

Most of informal housing areas in Beirut have established due to political, economical, ethnical and religious reasons. In 1899, after cholera crisis, a new quarantine area near *Nahr* (river) Beirut was constructed. At the beginning of World War I, the site received further refugees and became a main human settlement in Beirut and accommodated 10,500 persons of Armenian community. The great riots of September 1903 between Greek Orthodox and *Sunni* groups resulted in splitting the society in Beirut, where an estimated 15,000 Beirut Christians fled to the mountains in fear of Muslim reprisals (Hanssen, J., 1998). Since the end of World War II, Beirut witnessed population shift due to sociopolitical and economic crises.⁵ The following part illustrates the influence of state involvement in the formulation of urban informality during different periods of Beirut modern history.

⁵ These areas formulated the main spots for establishing *Dahiya Sharqyyia* agglomeration which had received people, mostly Christians, who escaped from Western Beirut during the civil war and during the two Israeli invasions.

The French molded the ruling class and structured the state by grooming the Marionettes for rule and influencing the 1926 Constitution- which, with some modification, remains the basis of modern state today. Under the French Mandate, serious efforts were initiated to prepare master plans by *Ecochard* for Beirut. Functionalism and rationalism defined a form of urban zoning in which the segregation of functions became the key concept (Ghorayeb, 1998). Perhaps the proposed plan reflected on housing development and social segregation, where the middle income classes' residential areas were sited in locations far from the elites, so it was the beginning of social exclusion in the city.

After the declaration of Israel state in 1948, huge movements of Palestinians arrived at Beirut. UNRWA rented some buildings and scattered *Waqf* land plots to shelter these refugees. Hence, the beginning of the creation, legally, of foreign camps on the fringe of Beirut City is occurred. In 1952 there were six Palestinians camps, one of those located at *Mar Elias* and Known as *Mar Elias* camp. Further southern suburb of Beirut, another two camps were created, *Shatellia* and *Bourg El Bragnahia*. *Debhia*, *Geser El Bashia* and *Tal El Zahter* were three camps developed in east-north of Beirut. Overtime, these camps received more Palestinians and Lebanese who emigrated from surrounding rural areas by which these camps informally developed and expanded.

Arbitrary urbanization soon spread throughout Beirut, and with the advent of the year 1952 a sequence plan was set for Beirut to control the city's administrative boundaries. In the early 1960s, once again, *Ecochard* set up a plan for Greater Beirut⁶. Despite all these attempts, the plan did not touch the informal areas surrounding the city of Beirut for religious and political reasons and could be divided into two categories. The first category is informal housing areas close to industrial zones. These informal areas accommodated people who emigrated from rural areas seeking job opportunities, and were settled close to industrial zones. This type had characterized with expansion of the existing informal areas located eastern sector of the city and close to industrial zones. The second category is more Palestinians displaced to Lebanon after the defeat of 1967 war. By the help of UNRWA, the refugees from Palestine had settled mainly in scattered camps at north east and southern areas in Beirut. Over time, these camps expanded to accommodate people from Lebanese rural areas and from outside Lebanon (*Tall El Zahter* camp became the largest informal area). It was estimated that 0.6 million people were displaced by wars or catastrophes in Beirut.

⁶For further details see Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait (eds) (2003)

In 1972, Israel marched into South Lebanon and the invasion included 150 southern villages. Nearly 250000 southern citizens were displaced from homes and lands (Beydoun, A., 1991). A large number of those people moved to out strikes of Beirut (*Dahiya Janubiyya*). Irregular residential areas swelled up around greater Beirut, and by 1975 informal communities had been growing as a peculiar social case in the cultural texture of Beirut. Such irregular human settlements were in two categories; the first, comprising various social groups of Lebanese and non-Lebanese people, was inside Beirut's administrative border; the second, reserved for Palestinians who were joined by some Lebanese families, was in refugees camps in Beirut's suburbs.

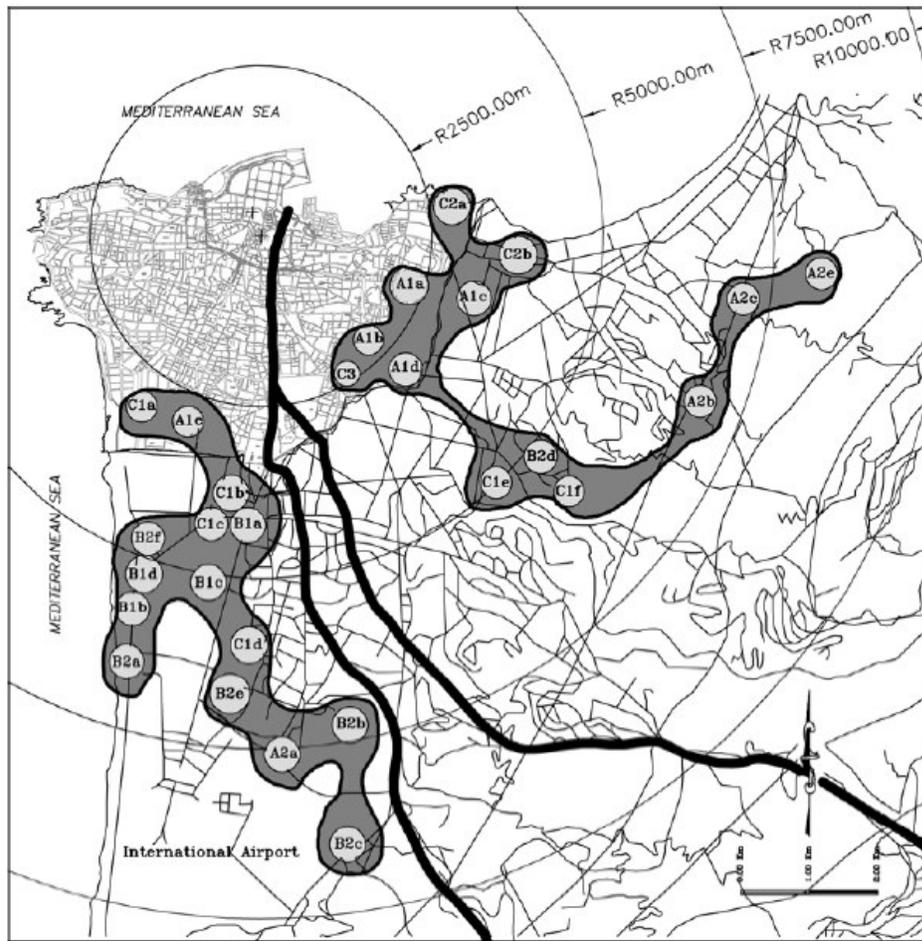
The continuing civil war of 1975 led to a radical change in the demographic fabric of Beirut's overall urban structure. The resulting population shifts and migration due to conflict changed the distribution of the population in and around the city radically. *Dahiya Janubiyya* flourished at the southern of Beirut as an illegal, anarchical space inhabited by poor *Shiites* led and/or manipulated by *Hezbollah*.⁷ Due to the multiplication of waves of internal displacement and by ethnicity conflicts the demographic structure of the city of Beirut has changed according to *the power of who control what, and who has the power for ethnic majority*, and the degree of influence on the civil war. The *Shiite-Marionette* balance that first favored the Marionettes changed gradually towards a *Shiite* hegemony strengthened by the population displacements from the northeastern suburbs of Beirut, from the *Biqaa* and from South Lebanon. Also, during the Israeli occupation for the southern part of Lebanon in 1978, a massive wave of people moved towards Beirut, and most of them settled at *Dahiya Janubiyya*. The two *Shiite* parties (*Hezbollah* and *Amal*) had a great influence in shaping *Dahiya Janubiyya*. The Palestinian camps were basically residential tent-clusters set up on land provided by the state or rented by UNRWA from private property.

After the civil war a dramatic change in the demographic urban fabric of Beirut has occurred. Also, the division of the city (eastern and western sectors) created new urban centers to meet the needs and demands of population and market mechanisms. Urban informality has formulated an outer informal wall for the city of Beirut formed two informal agglomerations; *Dahiya Janubiyya* and *Dahiya Sharqyyia* separated by an immature pocket which represented the Green line (Demarcation Lines) between

⁷ Amal and Hezbollah are two Shiite Muslim Political movements. The former emerged in the mid -1970s with the outbreak of the civil war, and the latter emerged in 1982 with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In addition to their political and military roles, they provide social, educational and medical services for Shiites and other Muslim groups inhabiting the urban areas that fall within their sphere of domination. A Third party called the Progressive Socialist Party headed by *Walid Jumblat*, as a *zaim* of *Druzes*, played a major role on urban informality in Beirut and in the mountain of Lebanon, and he was later appointed as the minister of dislodged.

western and eastern Beirut (see Figure 2). These two agglomerations constituted a defensive human wall for both western and eastern Beirut, and they also reflect the ethnic diversity; Muslims and Christians.

FIGURE 2 – TWO INFORMAL URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS IN BEIRUT



After sixteen years of war, *Taiif* Accord and the political reforms was approved in 1990 between various conflicted parties in Lebanon by this led to the reestablishment of a centralized political authority. The *Taiif* Agreement brought many more stakeholders and categories of actors, old and new, into the political game of post-war Lebanese politics. They all had demands and the ability to achieve them, one way or another. In other words, “consensus” had to apply not only in politics, but also on the ground, in the administration, in the institutions, in the diplomatic corps, in privatization, in awarding contracts and in all other profit-making enterprises (Adwan, 2004). These processes resulted in a manifold increase in corruption of construction/redevelopment, as well as to the spreading of informality in Lebanon. Studies

(Lebanese National Report, 1996) indicate that there are 45000 households (of the total number of those dislodged) occupying residences on illegal basis and 120000 households living under grievous conditions in places unfit for habitation. The government has made practical attempts to intervene in the domain of housing through the project of Beirut's southern suburb (Elissar), by imposing plans for Beirut's southern inlet and Beirut International Airport peripheries. The plan of housing and restoration of dislodged groups as it appears in the Plan 2000 for Reconstruction and Development has several obstacles. *Dahiya Janubiyya* is considered a main barrier for Beirut southern part development. Figure 2 illustrates two Informal urban agglomerations in Beirut.

5-Ethnic dimension and urban segregation

Urban ethnic segregation in Lebanon is a unique model, where it depended on religion and culture background. These religious demographics have historically molded the urban fabric, and empowered political institutions of Lebanese territory. Also, these people maintained extensive social networks which are reflected on their physical setting, and determined the formulation of informal areas according to their ethnic diversity. The urban movements within Beirut has been influenced with the changing, or may be political, conflict surrounded the urban fabric of the city. The country has 17 officially recognized religious wings, and the majority of population is under an umbrella of two religions; Muslim (*Sunni, Shiite, Druze, and Alawites*) and Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant). More than five thousand Jews are still living in Lebanon (Faghaley, K., 2002). The spatial segregation of the city on the basis of the ethnic and cultural characteristics of the population is thus not a heritage of a discriminatory past, but rather a characteristic and increasingly common feature of Lebanese society.

There are extensive migratory movements of refugees from hunger and war, in Lebanon during the civil war and during the two Israeli invasions. The perception of an ethnic diversity which goes beyond the direct impact of immigration and that is the spatial concentration of ethnic minorities in Lebanese cities, particularly in Beirut and in specific districts of the city, in which they can even make up the majority of the population (such as *Dahiya Janubiyya*).

Unequal development at a regional scale, economic and cultural globalization, ethnic diversity and transport systems favor large shifts of population in Beirut. Also, the exoduses provoked by wars and the pressure of the peoples of nearby countries, have led into arbitrary development. The city of Beirut, therefore, is witnessing an increase in the drifting population, though of a differentiation in ethnicity

structure and war threats. The crucial phenomena within Beirut are three different movements of populations. To begin, the international movements of population (both Muslims and Christians) this had led to the creation of camps and encouraged international immigrants to settle informally in scattered locations in Beirut (such as *Dahiya Janubiyya* and *Dahiya Sharqyyia*). Next, the mobility of populations of visitors is constituted another trend of the drifting population, mainly students who continuing their higher education and using the city and its services without being residents. Finally, the inner population movements, either from rural to urban areas or displaced people who suffered from continue war threats where the demographic characteristics of the urban fabric of Beirut City, have changed.

Drifting populations give rise to four main problems in the running of Beirut. Firstly, their existence increases the pressure on urban services to an extent which the city cannot take on without at least receiving special aid from higher government levels. Secondly, the lack of suitable statistical accounting for that mobile population, and the irregular nature of its movements, prevents sound planning of urban services of the city. Thirdly, distortion is set up between the people present in the city and the citizens able to deal with the city's problems and running. Finally, drifting populations increase the level of consolidation among certain sect of population which led into the formulation of big informal agglomeration and became difficult to intervene for future development, unless the approval is obtained from the political leader (for example *Sunni, Shiite, Druze, and Alawites*).

It is argued (Joseph, S., 1982) that the heterogeneity of the urban area in Beirut put pressure on the family by making alternative sources of identification available to individuals. Sectarian institutions exerted pressure on individuals to adopt sectarian identities. Ethnic, national and political ideological groups exerted similar pressures. Therefore, each sect of Beirut's population has its own urban setting, so urban informality followed the same path. The urban setting in many ways reinforced family ties and made them essential. Because of strong family ties, the role of the mediator is a critical one in Middle Eastern culture; therefore, the political leader or *Zaim* is playing a major role in shaping the built environment as such as his sociopolitical and economic role in urban setting.

Inequality of income, hunger and war, and discriminatory practices in housing markets lead to a disproportionate concentration of ethnic minorities in certain urban zones within the city of Beirut. For example, a main district for Jews community in Beirut located at *Wadi Abou Gameal*. Each ethnic group has a certain location within the city; subsequently the urban informality followed the same pattern

during the political and riots crisis, for example riots of 1958 and the civil war. This form of urban informality has always been depended on exceptional circumstances of varying intensity.

6-Epilogue: A Credible Future

The acceleration of urbanization process and emergence of urban informality in Lebanon is largely due to an increase in rural-urban migratory movements by which spoils the landscape and impacts natural heritage. Also, the population shifts during the seventeen years of the civil war and international immigration have played a major role in accelerating urban informality by which the shaping of the urban fabric either formally or informally has spread throughout the countryside and tend to mushroom linearly along roads, costal lines and highways and are related to ethnic and state diversity within the country.

The spread of urban informality is the most significant phenomenon shaping the space and urban fabric within Beirut. Most of the periphery or former suburbs in Beirut have witnessed arbitrary residential development that caused (and caused by) serious socioeconomic problems, not only for their residents, but also for the different governments in Lebanon. State power, social segregation and ethnicity was dominating the formulation of urban informality. In many cases, urban movements and urbanization process, and their discourses, actors, and organization, have been informally integrated in the structure and practice of local government, either directly or indirectly, through a diversified system of citizen participation, community development, and ethnicity enrolled. As a result, there thus arises a double process of urban segregation - on the one hand, that of the various ethnic minorities with respect to the dominant ethnic group and, on the other hand, that of the different ethnic minorities amongst themselves.

The creation of two urban agglomerations (*Dahiya Janubiyya* and *Dahiya Sharqyyia*) within the city of Beirut has led into a dramatic change in spatial space that shape the urban environment within the city. This has occurred due to the forces of political players, population shifts, market mechanisms, and ethnicity conflicts. The most significant increases during the 1980s took place in *Dahiya Janubiyya*, basically due to influxes of refugees from southern part of Lebanon and Israeli occupation for the south part.

In the context of economic globalization, the absorption and containment of unplanned zones of urban development have become imperative as a minimal response to the extensive liberalization of the use value of land and to the exchange value of resources and power in the city. The unauthorized quarters are finally being considered as integral parts of the urban matrix.

Likewise, although economic inequality is influenced by ethnic origin, institutional barriers and social prejudices are much less deep-rooted than in formal areas. Various settlers in Beirut with an equally religion-based past have thus evolved towards different patterns of spatial segregation and ethnic diversity, in function of cultural, institutional and economic factors which favored the mixing of background and social integration in Beirut. What does appear to be established is the tendency towards segregation of ethnic minorities in all parts within the city, and particularly in the periphery parts of the city.

Based on the modes of confrontation between urban laws, norms, social exclusion and practices, a critical approach are needed to the integration of the informal housing areas to the urban fabric of a city. Do the day-to-day adjustments, the individual and group arrangements (between occupants, holders of property titles, ethnicity leaders) concerning the right of use of land, social integration and constructed property not call into question the often-simplified ideas of the absence of regulation and social homogeneity in the informal and irregular areas?

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