

# The case of Beirut, Lebanon

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## PREFACE

### On the Difficulties of Mapping Slums in Beirut

We attached a great deal of importance to mapping the slums in Beirut, especially because we believed in the need for producing this document at a time when there is little if any public debate around the question of informal settlements in Beirut. Nevertheless, we faced many difficulties in achieving our task. In this preface to the report, we describe some of these difficulties because we believe that they are important for understanding the slums of Beirut.

A particular challenge to undertaking the mapping slums in Beirut is the absence of a unified understanding of the city. Indeed, during the years of the civil war (1975-1990), the city was divided into two sections, each run by one or several antagonistic groups. The developments of the city during this phase followed somewhat different trajectories, and studies conducted at the time generally concentrated on specific sections or neighbourhoods (eg Charafeddine 1985, 1991, Halabi 1988). Furthermore, and prior to 1975, most slums were located near the industrial suburbs of Beirut, essentially its north-eastern suburbs and almost all studies of slums and poverty looked at living conditions in this area. At the time, the southern suburbs did not attract the same scale of industrial development, notably because the development of large-scale public works (eg the Gulf Club, the Sports Stadiums, Beirut International Airport) and high-income beaches led to

land speculation and made access more costly. However, shortly after 1975, most of the residents of the north-eastern suburban slums of Beirut were evicted from their houses and many started squatting in various areas of the southern suburbs, in expensive sea-front beach resorts, empty green lots, or institutional buildings. Their numbers, compounded by an extensive rural to urban migration fuelled by the two Israeli invasions (1978 and 1982) and the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon (1978-2000), led to the transformation of most of the open spaces of the southern suburbs of Beirut into large slums. Today, it is the southern suburbs of Beirut that carry the label of "illegal settlements" in most people's minds, while the eastern suburb slums, now relatively limited in scale, are more or less invisible for the research community and others.

Another difficulty in mapping slums is the mobility of many of their dwellers, whether Lebanese or not, without any tangible means for quantification, before, during, and after the war. Rather than a period of stability, the post-war scene has been a phase of important population changes in all the slums in Beirut. Indeed, policies to reverse the population exchanges that occurred during the war as well many reconstruction projects, whether the rehabilitation of downtown, the southern suburbs, or infrastructure projects, are all generating important patterns of displacement. The impacts of these projects



are either in displacements to make way for developments, or in attracting labour to work for the projects. Quantifications are available for important moments of the war, such as the estimated 200,000 individuals who navigated from the eastern to the southern suburbs of Beirut between 1975 and 1976, or the 700,000 to 900,000 displaced at least once over the 15 years of the war (Virely 2000). Prior to the war, reports on slums also often mention Arab workers (especially Syrian), and the transformation of some of the slums over time with changes in their dwellers, especially Qarantina.

Finally, a major hindrance to the mapping of slums is the scarcity of information on the topic, especially on current conditions. We often had to rely on limited field-work and interviews with public officials conducted personally for our information. Despite the difficulties faced in creating a reliable typology, the analysis we propose below attempts a first unified understanding of the slums of Beirut that we think is useful for initiating a discussion of the slums in the city.

## I INTRODUCTION: THE CITY

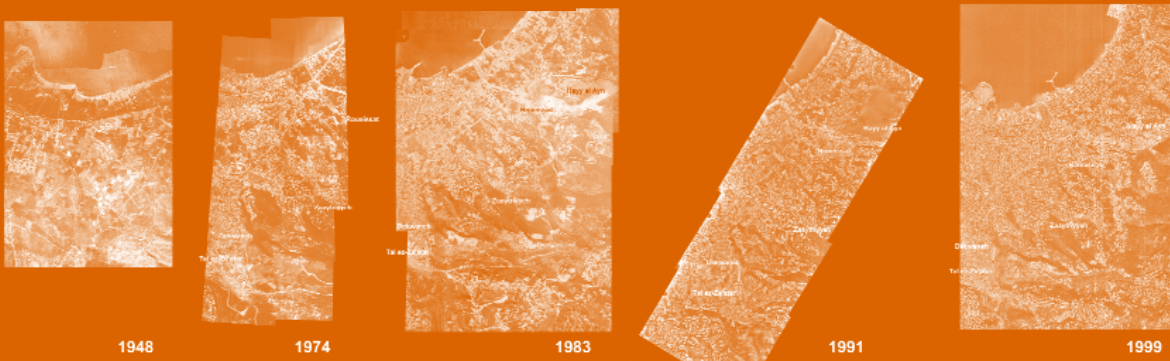
### A. THE URBAN CONTEXT

#### 1. National Overview

Lebanon is a small country of 10,425 km<sup>2</sup> in South-West Asia. The country has a 200km coastline, running north-east - south-west along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It borders with Syria and Israel. The total population is estimated at around 4 million<sup>1</sup>, 86.6 per cent of whom live in cities, with 32.5 per cent or 1.3 million people living in Beirut and its suburbs alone (ACS 1998).

The country's modern history is marked by religious and political strife, which led to a succession of conflicts (1860, 1958) and culminated in the 1975-1991 civil war. The country was also particularly marked by its regional context, with the trans-Arab national movements of the 1960s as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948

Evolution of Slums in Beirut: Far-Eastern suburbs



(Corm 1986). Lebanon particularly suffered from the Arab-Israeli war. Between 1978 and 2000, sections of the country were occupied by Israel, including the capital city in the summer of 1982. Military conflicts were particularly destructive, with important human and material casualties: some 65,000 dead, 84,000 wounded, 22 per cent of Lebanese families displaced at least once, and 700,000 to 900,000 émigrés, as well as the destruction of the physical infrastructure of the country (water, electricity, telephone networks, roads), some 300,000 houses severely damaged, and most productive sectors negatively affected. The war and its various consequences (including severe inflation) are also recognised as having substantially impoverished Lebanese households, reduced the country's middle class, and exacerbating already existing income differences. By the end of the war, the Lebanese GDP had decreased by two thirds (Baz 1998, Haddad 1996).

### The Independence Years (1942-1975)

Until 1918, Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire. The country gained its independence in 1942, after twenty years under the rule of the French Mandate, during which many of the current institutional set-ups were created. The post-independence phase was also marked by rapid demographic growth and continuous rural-urban migration (Bourgey 1985).

Until the beginning of the 1970s, the country's policies were marked by a strong economic and a relatively political liberalism. At the time, the Lebanese economy boomed, mainly from an influx of capital from neighbouring countries (oil, rent and others) as well as from Lebanese expatriates, all attracted by the guaranteed secrecy of the Lebanese banking system. Capital was essentially invested in real estate and construction, and contributed to the growth of the capital city (Tabet 2001). By 1975, the Lebanese economy essentially relied on its service sector, at the expense of the industrial, and especially the agricultural sectors. Few if any social policies were developed, and with the exception of some emergency measures, the state intervened rarely to improve housing conditions.

Some exceptions to these tendencies can be seen under the mandate of President Chehab (1958-1964), who was elected after the short civil conflict of 1958, and sought to strengthen the presence of the state through regional development policies, the establishment of social institutions, and the control of the growth of Beirut. To this end a number of public institutions were created and the first five-year development plan was launched (Fawaz 2002, Tabet 2001). These efforts did not however reduce the drastic level of income inequality in Lebanese society and the resulting massive rural-urban migration.

### The War Years (1975-1990)

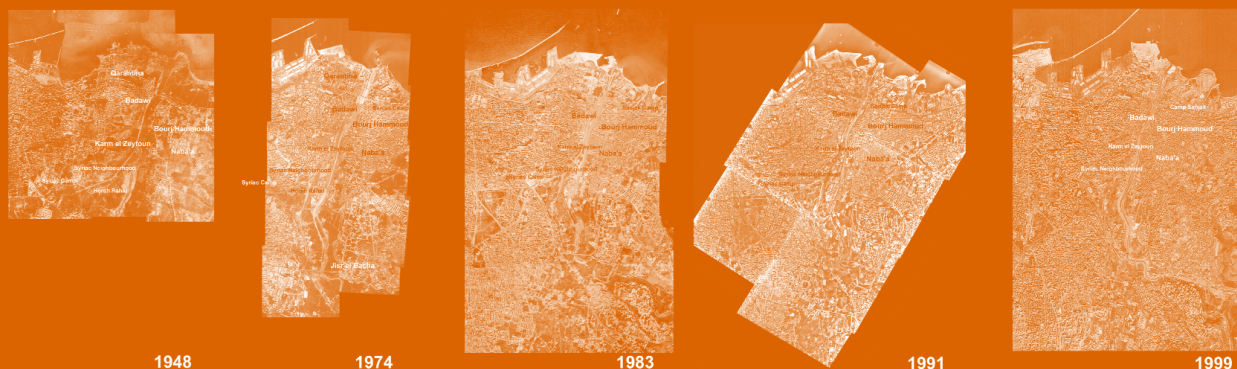
During the fifteen years of the civil war social, economic, physical, political, and administrative structures were almost completely destroyed. The central state also lost much of its power and its services were considerably reduced. Furthermore, much of the country's productive apparatus was considerably weakened and the informal and illegal (war) economy flourished considerably. The country has also faced, as of 1982, a rampant inflation that has impoverished its middle classes.

### Post War Reconstruction (1990-Present)

The post war reconstruction phase has been marked by two national plans: the National Emergency Reconstruction Plan (NERP), orchestrated for the first five years of reconstruction and Plan Horizon 2000, complemented later by Plan Horizon 2005. The two plans are managed by the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), created in 1977 as a public central management organism for all reconstruction works. A total of 130 projects were planned, over 15 sectors. The plans are essentially financed by foreign and internal loans (CDR 1992).

Most investments are concentrated in physical infrastructure and large-scale "showcase" projects. Public transit, low-income housing, and other salient social problems are not addressed. In order to solve the problem of displacement, the Ministry of Displaced People

Evolution of Slums in Beirut: East and Near-Eastern suburbs







was instituted, and a 'return programme' was launched.

Between 1993 and 1995, substantial economic growth was noted in the country. However, since 1996, the economic activity in the country has shown a substantial slow-down, especially because of the current crisis in the real estate and construction sectors and the unstable regional context, including large-scale Israeli bombardments in 1993 and 1996 (Aveline 2000). The budget deficit has now reached alarming levels - 38 per cent in 1999. Furthermore, the volume of debts, both internal and external, has substantially increased because the country is unable to service its debts, which have reached over US\$ 30 billion (UN-ESCWA 2000). Since the end of the war, several studies have pointed to increases in poverty levels and worsening of living condition indicators: over 25 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line (Haddad 1996), and median incomes have been reduced considerably, according to one study, by 50-60 per cent in comparison to what they were in 1966. Currently, 25.8 per cent of individuals living in Beirut earn less than US\$106/month, and the rate of credit is five times higher than in 1966 (Hamdan 2001).

## 2. The History of Beirut

Until 1840, Beirut was a secondary port city of the Ottoman Empire, with a total of 5,000 inhabitants. The city began to grow exponentially during the phase that preceded the French Mandate, and already had 130,000 inhabitants by 1915. By that time Beirut had become an important port city and a major point of passage between the Syrian hinterland and Europe. Important infrastructure works at the time, such as the Beirut-Damascus road (1863), the railway to Houran,

and the extension of the port (1895) all attest to this newly gained importance (Beyhum 1991).

The French Mandate continued with the modernising policies already begun by the Ottomans (known as *Tanzeemat*). In 1920, Beirut became the capital city of Greater Lebanon, headquarters of the central administration of the Levant States by the French Mandate, and confirmed its future political and economic roles. Planning for the central city district destroyed much of the old city and paved the way for new road developments. Around this node, the city grew along three main axes: the Damascus Road (east), Tripoli Road (north) and Saida Road (south). The city also integrated new housing quarters, such as the Armenian quarters (eastern suburbs) (Beyhum 1991, Tabet 2001).

The post-independence phase (1944-1958) of Beirut was characterised by rapid demographic growth and spectacular spatial development. The city benefited from local industry developed during the preceding era. Until 1975, both capital and the educated elite arrived from nearby countries to the capital city, and Beirut benefited from a highly efficient banking sector. Beirut also housed waves of low-income refugees and migrants coming from its own hinterlands (South Lebanon, Beka'a, and the north), as well as migrant workers and waves of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948 by the creation of the state of Israel. By 1960, the population of the Beirut agglomeration was estimated at 400,000 inhabitants (Mission IRFED 1963). The city within its municipal boundaries became denser and new neighbourhoods were created. Villages surrounding Beirut were incorporated as extensions of the city, low-income suburbs extended beyond the Armenian quarter and onto agricultural lands to the south (Beyhum 1991).

Attempts at planning the development of Beirut and its extensions were unable to limit real estate speculation or balance political and economic forces in favour of the city. In consequence, rural migration, refugees from the south and from Palestine, as well as migrant workers from neighbouring countries all fuelled the city's "misery belt", which gained visibility from the 1960s (DGU 1973, Tabet 2001). These neighbourhoods with poor living conditions housed the successive waves of rural migrants as well as foreign refugees and workers whose numbers were estimated at some 60,000 persons at the beginning of the 1975 civil war. The majority of them were non-Lebanese. In fact, estimates at the time considered that one quarter of the population residing in Lebanon was non-Lebanese and that two thirds of these foreigners were Palestinians (Bourgey and Pharès 1973). These population movements generated a new urban geography for Beirut as well as its suburbs, which grew denser. Within the urban agglomerations, density had also increased and problems of congestion appeared (DGU 1973, Tabet 2001).

Both Beirut and its suburbs were severely damaged by the war, with an estimated 10 per cent of constructions destroyed. The city was divided into two sections, one predominantly Christian, the other predominantly Muslim, run by rival militias, and the old core was completely emptied, then squatted in by refugees coming from various parts of the country. Depending on their religion, entire populations were evicted from the western and eastern sections of the city and they moved in waves out of their areas of origin towards areas where they would be safer. The large urban periphery provided new spaces for urbanisation for displaced populations and urbanisation increased continuously, along the entire coast and on the surrounding hills (Beyhum 2001, Tabet 2001). Much of the growth of the city at the time occurred illegally, in

violation of building codes, construction codes, and property rights regulations.

Reconstruction of Beirut and its suburbs began in 1991, essentially under private initiatives, with the construction of new buildings (around 15,000) and the eviction of squatters in many areas, including the city core and the old green line. The state has also launched large-scale infrastructure projects (roads, services, etc) and facilities (eg sport stadiums, the extension of the airport and the port, governmental hospitals, the Lebanese university campus, etc). Many of these projects led to the displacement of hundreds of families (whether squatters or not), highways intersected dense neighbourhoods of the city, and important disruptions in the urban fabrics ensued (see section IV).

The state has also organised several large-scale urban projects, the most important of which was the reconstruction of Beirut downtown, which has been entrusted to a private company, Solidère, under the direct guidance of Prime Minister Hariri, a major shareholder in the operation.<sup>2</sup> Other projects include the rehabilitation of the North Coast (Linord), which has organised hundreds of hectares of reclaimed land over the sea, as well as the Elyssar Project, designed to rehabilitate the southern suburbs of the city, displace squatters from the coast and build several thousand housing units (described below, section IV). Since 1995, investments have slowed down, and the execution of large-scale projects and highways has either halted or continues at a slower pace.

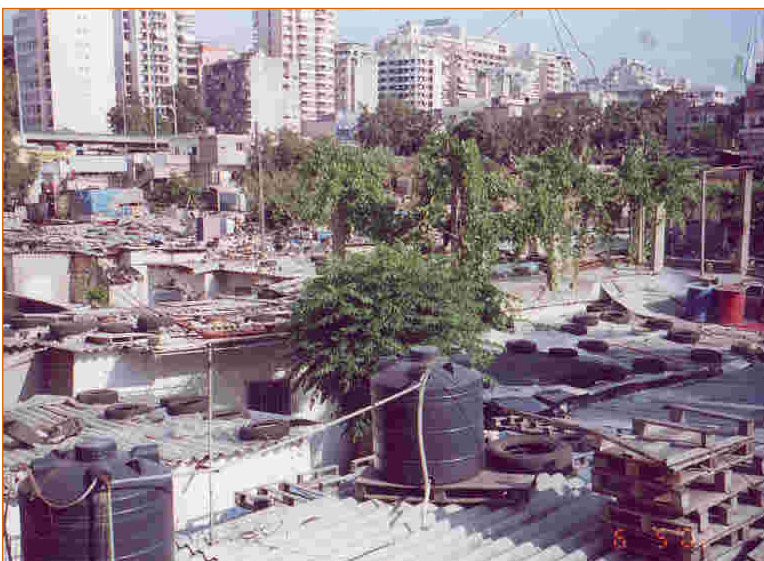
### 3. The Physical City

Municipal Beirut is at the geographical centre of the Lebanese coast, in the form of a cape extending over 9km into the sea. The city is built on an undulating site that falls sharply to the north-west, west and east and more gently to the north where the port and the old city core are located. There are three elevated areas within the municipal boundaries, Moussaitbeh, Kraytem, and Achrafieh (the highest, at 95m above sea level), in which most development occurred in the first phase of urbanisation (late 19th century) (Ministry of Planning 1968). Since then, the city has gradually extended onto its southern sandy (west) and agricultural (east) plains, northern coastal plains, and the nearby mountainous areas.

The city enjoys a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and hot, humid summers. The spring and autumn are agreeable. Rainfall is seasonal and falls mainly during the winter. Prevailing breezes are south-westerly, which is typical of this coastal area (Ministry of Planning 1968).

### 4. Demographics

Between 1950 and 1970, Beirut witnessed a large-scale expansion that multiplied its population by four, climbing from 300,000 to 1,100,000 inhabitants. By 1975, Beirut already housed one quarter of the



Wata El Moussaitbeh

Lebanese population (Bourgey 1985). The waves of foreign migrant workers, especially Syrian, as well as Palestinian refugees (many of whom left their camps in rural areas for those in Beirut) constituted a considerable section of these residents, around 45 per cent according to some estimates (Bourgey 1985).

Today, the metropolitan region of Beirut has 1,340,000 inhabitants, that is, one third of the total population residing within Lebanon (excluding seasonal workers). As for municipal Beirut, it now houses 403,337 persons, who constitute only 10 per cent of the total population of the country, a notable decrease from the 22.3 per cent it constituted in 1970 (Hamdan 2001).

The reduction in the birth rate, already begun in the 1970s, continues, generating a relative ageing of the society. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in Beirut, where only 34 per cent of the population is aged below 20 years, compared to 50 per cent in 1970 (ACS 1972, 1998). Other indicators also highlight differences between the Metropolitan Region of Beirut and the rest of the country, such as relatively better schools, higher literacy rates (only 8.7 per cent of Beirut residents are illiterate, while 11.6 per cent of the total residents of Lebanon are), better health care services, and higher median incomes (ACS 1998).

Over the last decade, women seem to have accessed college education in equal numbers to men (ACS 1998). They nonetheless still constitute the largest section of the illiterate population (12 per cent of women compared to 5 per cent of men), especially among women over 25. Women's economic activity is also much lower than men's (76.4 per cent and 30.7 per cent), especially within the suburbs. Women's median salaries are also clearly lower than men's in all categories of employment (424 US\$/month versus 557 US\$/ month).

## 5. The Urban Economy

Beirut's rapid growth over the last century is tied to its economic role as a location of transit for goods, notably to Damascus, and its port, which plays a vital role in its economic life (Fawaz 1964, Mission IRFED 1963). During this era, the urban economy was also heavily centred on commerce, particularly the vibrant gold and money market (Mission IRFED 1963). The Lebanese economy is largely marked by its service sector, which has been the largest employer before, during, and after the war. (Around 55 per cent of the total active population in Lebanon already worked in the tertiary sector in the 1970s) (ACS 1972). From the end of the military conflict the banking sector has begun to re-emerge and today plays an important role in the economy of the country (Hamdan 2001). It is important to mention the size of the informal economy, which most economists agree holds a dominant place in the country, especially since 1975.

As for urban industries, they grew considerably in the pre-war era and the number of Lebanese workers in this

sector almost quadrupled, from 35,000 in 1953 to 150,000 persons in 1975, that is 19 per cent of the Lebanese work force, a percentage considerably higher than in neighbouring countries (eg double the figure in Syria). Almost half of this sector (43 per cent) was located in Beirut (Mission IRFED 1963). In 1974, around 40 per cent of the workforce living in the Beirut suburbs was employed in the industrial sector, and in 1980, most of these workers, that is around 60 per cent of the industrial workforce, was concentrated within the Lebanese capital (Nasr 1974, 1982).

Looking at the work force, around 38 per cent of the residents of Beirut are currently working, a rate slightly higher than the country's average. This difference reflects the higher rate of involvement of women in the economy (22 per cent in Beirut, 14.7 per cent in Lebanon). Unemployment rates are also slightly lower in the capital city. The minimum wage is US\$190/month.

## 6. Governance

### Political Structures

The Lebanese political system was established under the French Mandate rule (1920-1942) and many of the existing institutional structures (especially the bureaucratic and the judicial systems) were organised at the time and followed the French model. The first republic was declared in 1926, with the first constitution.

The country has a republican form of government with an executive body (the president, elected by the 128 members of parliament and the government), a legislative body (the parliament, elected by all Lebanese aged 21 and above), and a judicial body.

The constitution was revised in 1989, during the *Taef Agreements* that marked the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. Among the major changes instituted by the new constitution is the redistribution of power, initially concentrated in the hands of the president, to the council of ministers whose membership was distributed across religious groups. One unusual characteristic of the Lebanese political system is the establishment of a quota system that dictates the political representation of various religious groups and the religious affiliation of important ruling members (eg the President has to be Christian-Maronite, the prime minister Muslim-Sunni, etc).

### Administrative Structures

The structure of the Lebanese administration is rather centralised. The country consists, from an administrative point, of 6 governorates called *mohafazats*, administered by an appointed high level public sector servant, the *muhafez*. Each of these is subdivided into a total of 26 quarters, called *qada'a*, each headed by an appointed *caim-maqam*. The municipality is the locally elected representative body. All municipalities have an elected municipal council headed by an elected mayor (except Beirut whose mayor is appointed).



## II. SLUMS AND POVERTY

### B. TYPES OF SLUMS IN BEIRUT

#### Towards a Definition of Slums in Beirut

Given its complex history, the limited illegalities in property rights, and the widespread violation of building and construction codes, it is difficult to adopt legality as a criterion for slum identification in Beirut.<sup>3</sup> We have therefore adopted, for the purpose of this study, a definition that identifies slums as areas of the city where the majority of residents live in precarious economic and/or political conditions, with high levels of vulnerability, and where services and living conditions appear to be lower than other sections of the city. Also, given the absence of public data on these areas, and/or on poverty in the city, our definition and assessments rely essentially on qualitative measures, developed through our own research experiences in the city, various reports (academic and professional) in Lebanon and Beirut, as well as interviews with slum dwellers, researchers, and policy makers. Hence, we do not claim to present in this typology, a comprehensive listing of slums and their living conditions in the Metropolitan Area of Beirut but rather an initial investigation, designed to bring visibility and attention to those areas in the city, and to propose theories that can explain their location and the logic of their evolution.

#### 1. Typology of Slums

The analysis we propose below attempts a unified understanding of the slums of Beirut and proposes a typology that organises them according to their mode of production and the particular regional and national political situations that led to their establishment. Furthermore, depending on the time when they developed, and the region where they were located, each of these types, as is explained below, tends to have some common characteristics, in terms of location, relation to the law, level of services, and living conditions. In some cases, and given a long and complex history, slums can belong to several categories and we have included them in both. Following this approach, the following categories of slums can be listed:

- **Slums that began as international refugee camps or low-income housing areas for international refugees (instituted from 1920-1955)**

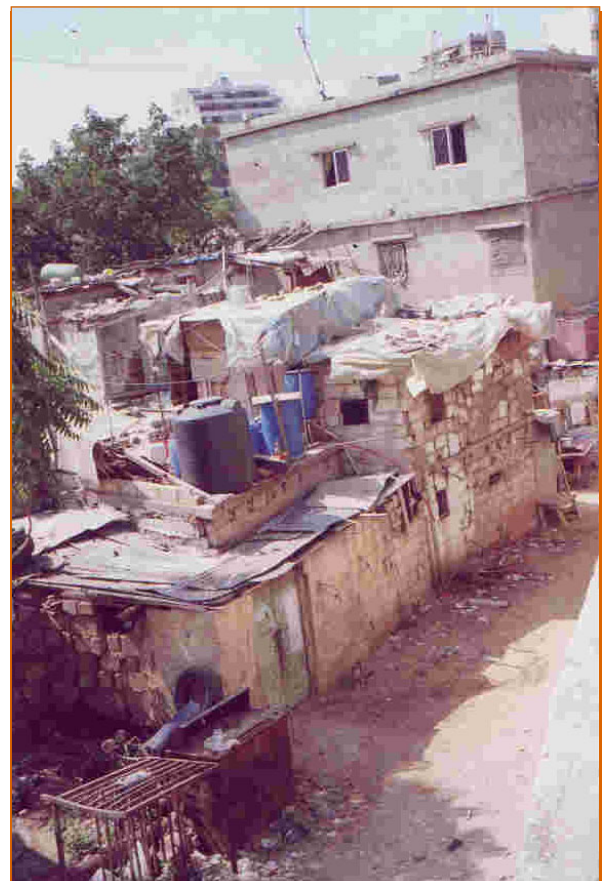
Refugee camps are historically the oldest slums of Beirut. These slums are located within and outside the city's municipal boundaries. Camps were organised for Armenian (1920s), Syriac (1920s) and Palestinian (1948) refugees with the help of international organisations, while Kurds occupied abandoned camps and deteriorating tenements in the city centre. Today, only

traces remain of the Armenian camps while the Palestinian camps are among the main slums of the city.

- **Slums that began as housing areas for rural-urban migrants (1950s-1960s)**

These slums 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 an important migratory movement. We also include in this section one exceptional camp that grew, at least in part, to house Syrian rural migrants (Wata Mousaytbeh).

Several types of slums should be listed under this category, according to their location, and the conditions of their development: (i) slums that developed either as a direct extension of existing refugee camps, or in their close vicinity; (ii) slums that developed on agricultural or green land, in the far suburbs of the capital city, and in violation of urban regulations, and (iii) slums that developed as squatter settlements in areas of contested property rights, often in the context of political rivalries among elite groups. In general these human settlements conform to various schemes of illegal land occupation/illegal land subdivision described elsewhere in the Third World.



Wata Mousaytbeh

A typology by historical origins should however not lead to the conclusion that slums today differ greatly because of their origin. On the contrary, many contemporary forces that act on these slums have resulted in similar patterns of evolution.

■ **Slums that began as squatter settlements during the period of the civil war (1975-1990)**

These areas grew in several parts of the city, where refugees displaced by the early events of the Lebanese civil war (1975) occupied either buildings or entire neighbourhoods, abandoned by their owners (for reasons of security) or occupied large plots of land and transformed them into large squatter settlements.

For instance, all slums have witnessed the development of large-scale rental markets and renting has become, since 1982, the primary method of accessing housing and a major source of income for old property owners in slums. This is further enhanced by the freezing of much of the housing stock by rent control outside slums and hence the reduction of rental opportunities for many low-income people to such informal arrangements in slum areas. There are unfortunately no figures to list for the size of this market, but its development marks an important change in forms of occupation, their duration, as well as the demographic structures of these areas that have considerably increased in density.

Similar demographic changes are also noted in all slums, 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.<sup>4</sup> Today, almost none of the slums could be described as housing a group or community of similar national or religious origins. On the contrary, each of the existing slums has attracted migrants who arrived to the city during its various phases of growth. Hence, early Lebanese rural migrants tended to occupy areas within or at the fringes of refugee camps.

Furthermore, the populations displaced by various military conflicts and those coming from rural areas are confused, and often individuals have several reasons for their displacement. Moreover, during the civil war a major reshuffling of the populations occurred, some slums were emptied, partially or completely destroyed by militias, and today, almost all the slums of the city house heterogeneous populations that include members of all the migrant and displaced groups, as well as other migrant labourers and low-income families from Beirut.

Other similarities across slums can be perceived in the methods of construction and the permanence of the built structures. All slums combine a varying percentage



of precarious, tin sheet and wooden houses with more solid and permanent structures. All slums also contain houses serviced in varying degrees, going from legal electricity and water hook-ups, to illegal hook-ups or the absence of these services altogether.

Furthermore, various types of illegality can be listed simultaneously for all slums, albeit to different degrees and hence it is common to see overlapping violations to property rights, building, land use and zoning codes. The degree to which all of these aspects are developed will be described below.

Before closing this section, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that the typology we are proposing is not the only possible one for the Beirut slums. A more frequently-adopted typology subdivides them geographically according to their location with respect to the municipal boundaries of the capital city (Bourgey and Phares 1973).

Other typologies have subdivided them according to their location, east or south of the city, to mark their wartime evolution (Halabi 1988). The latter classification is particularly useful since the division of Beirut into two antagonistic parts led to important changes in slum areas in each of the two sectors, notably depending on the attitude or position of militias towards these slums (Halabi 1988). This trend is currently being reversed with the policies of the Ministry of Refugees (see section IV).

Despite these elements, we believe that a typology by origin has the merit of best explaining the variety and the differences that exist between these slums, especially since these differences still have relevant repercussions to date. It also responds well to the challenge of proposing a unified understanding of Beirut.



## C. DESCRIPTION OF SLUMS: ORIGINS, FORMATION AND CHANGES BY TYPE

### 1. Slums that Began as International Refugee Camps/Low-Income Housing Areas for Refugees

Between 1920 and 1952, three groups of camps grew in the city of Beirut, in response to emergency situations that brought groups of international refugees into the city, fleeing massacres in their areas of origin: Armenians, Syrians, and Palestinians.

#### Armenian Camps

In 1922, the arrival, of 10,500 Armenians to Beirut fleeing Cilicia (where the threat of massacres was intensifying<sup>5</sup>) marks the formation of the first slum in Modern Beirut. Arrangements for their accommodation were taken by the Red Cross, the French Mandate authori-

ties, and the League of Nations, setting up thousands of tents on empty terrain (probably public), situated in the north-east extremity of the city, in the area of Medawar. These led to the creation of the first so-called slum known in the modern history of Lebanon, the camp of Medawar in Qarantina (see **Box 1**) (Keuroghlian 1970, Khayat forthcoming).

As of 1926, on the initiative of various Armenian associations, and with the help of Mandate authorities (seeking their disengagement from the camps), more permanent solutions were proposed and the Armenian refugees were gradually relocated outside the Qarantina area, to the nearby areas of Bourj Hammoud and Khalil Badawi, Karm ez-Zeitoun, and other “popular” low-income neighbourhoods of the city. These were consolidated over time to a great extent and improved their living conditions (Khayat forthcoming). In 1939, with the arrival of Armenians from Alexandrette as well as other areas of Syria, new extensions appeared to

#### Box 1: Qarantina, a Profile

Of all the camps and slums of Beirut, Qarantina is perhaps the one that most marked the visual and historical memory of the city. It continues to be remembered as an important slum area over 20 years after its complete destruction.

The camp of Qarantina was located within the municipal boundaries of the city, in the north-eastern section, near the port. Originally the location of the quarantine built by Ibrahim Pasha in 1834 (Yahya 1994), Qarantina became, in 1922, the first Armenian Camp of the city. Its creation coincided with the arrival of 10,500 Armenian refugees at the port in December 1922, and the establishment of the first camp, Medawar Camp, in this location. Little by little, the inhabitants of these camps replaced the tents with wooden and metal structures,

known as *tanake*, the Arabic translation for tin, the material in which the houses were built (Keuroghlian 1970). Gradually, the camp extends east, beyond the Beirut River. By 1971, it covered a total area of 7.74ha and its density, 1,637 persons/ha, was one of the highest in the city (Mouvement Social 1971).

#### The progressive departure of Armenians

As of 1926, the Mandate authorities and Armenian associations looked for more permanent locations for this migrant community who would be gradually resettled outside Qarantina (see below, section IV), in the nearby eastern suburbs. Plans were made in parallel to demolish the barracks of the central camp in phases. This outward movement was catalysed by a fire that broke out in 1933, destroying the entire 600 housing units of Medawar, and forcing the departure of the last inhabitants. Rather than leading to the eradication of Qarantina, the departure of the Armenians from the camp led to its transformation into a more or less temporary housing area for new populations groups - Kurds, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and others (Bourgey and Phares 1973).

#### The arrival of new populations

Between 1948 and 1975, new populations came to join the few Armenian refugees who continued to live in Qarantina: Palestinian families as of 1948 and a little later Lebanese migrants from the South, as well as Kurds and Syrians. The majority of these populations were fleeing unemployment and

poverty and were attracted by proximity to the industrial zone (Nasr and Nasr 1974). The initial camp gradually extended to neighbouring areas, especially on terrain owned privately, either by individuals or by the Maronite (Christian) Waqf (religious estate) (Jazra 1969). Private owners have in fact often built precarious houses for rent.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Housing at the beginning of the 1960s shows that processes of land occupation were very diverse, and included property ownership, rental, sub letting, and others (Report of SMUH 1964). The camp was not only a zone of habitation; it also housed many activities such as commerce, small-scale industries, slaughterhouses, tanneries, and others.

A survey conducted in 1971 indicated that at that date, a total of 12,633 individuals and 2,560 households were located in the area. Only 29.4 per cent of these were Lebanese, most of whom were from the south of the country. The majority of the residents were Syrian and Kurdish, forming each a little over 30 per cent of the total population (Movement Social 1971). The concentration of the Kurdish communities at the time was very notable, especially because Kurds in Qarantina represented a large percentage of the total Kurdish population in the city. On the other hand, the survey indicated that Syrian households, unlike others, were mostly composed of male migrant workers who pooled together in rooms, rather than families.

An important element of the Qarantina population was its mobility over time. Indeed, surveys conducted in 1963, 1971, and 1975 all indicated a stable number of residents, less than 15,000, but all identified different resident groups living in the area.

At the time, Qarantina was recurrently present in the minds of policy makers, especially in planning for its disappearance (see section IV, Doxiadis 1959, Mission IRFED 1964, Ecochard 1964). No interventions were devised however, and Qarantina remained until 1976, when several fires burst out and caused the destruction of blocks in the neighbourhood (Massabni 1977). A number of houses were also destroyed to leave space for the construction of the Beirut-Tripoli North Lebanon highway and its residents were relocated (Khayat forthcoming).

the north of the neighbourhood (Ruppert 1999), of which the current Sanjak Camp is the last trace. Today, only narrow sections of Bourj Hammoud can still be labelled as slums, such as Camp Sanjak, where mostly foreign workers live.

In 1975, Qarantina was among the slums and “popular neighbourhoods” judged undesirable by militias in charge. It was placed under siege and attacked before being razed to the ground on January 18, 1977 (Massabni 1977). Its population fled to other areas of the city, such as the squatter settlements of the southern suburbs of Beirut and the fringes of downtown that were by then completely evacuated.

### Syriac Camps<sup>6</sup>

Like the Armenians, Syriac refugees arrived in Lebanon at the outset of the waves of deportations of this community undertaken by the Ottoman Empire (in areas that were to form modern Turkey), in the early 1920s, and camps were set up for most of them as temporary housing.<sup>7</sup> Their settlement was facilitated, notably for the Catholics among them, by Syriac communal associations who organised first their housing in self-help structures in the early 1920s (what became the Syriac Camp) and a little later through the construction of a housing project in Hayy el Serya’an, nearby. Over the years, the Syriac community from Turkey was joined by others from Iraq or Syria, mostly migrant labourers, who settled there because of common religion and income. Two of the most notable places housing these communities and recognised for their poor living conditions are the Syriac Camp and Hayy el Serya’an (Syriac neighbourhood).

Until 1995, the Syriac Camp was located to the south of the Hotel-Dieu Hospital, in the eastern section of the city and housed members of the Catholic Syriac community. The camp was built on *Waqf* land (land owned by religious institutions) in a mixture of temporary and more solid structures, and in 1971 housed a total of 103 residences with 464 individuals (Mouvement Social, 1971). At that date, most of these residents were Lebanese by nationality (94 per cent), but being Syriac, most had been recently naturalised (Mouvement Social 1971). Other residents of the camp were Syrian, and, according to the survey, most probably of Syriac confession as well. Well delineated and small, the Syriac camp extended over 0.54ha and its density of 859 persons/ha in 1971 was lower than in the other slums. In 1995, a decision was taken by the Catholic Syriac Church to replace camp houses with a new building complex in which the current residents would be housed. An estimated 140 families will therefore occupy units built for them by the Catholic Patriarchal authority (It is unsure whether the camp then housed other people who are not entitled to residency and were hence displaced without compensation at the time of the project).<sup>8</sup> Save for less than ten buildings, the camp has disappeared from the Beirut plan with this project.

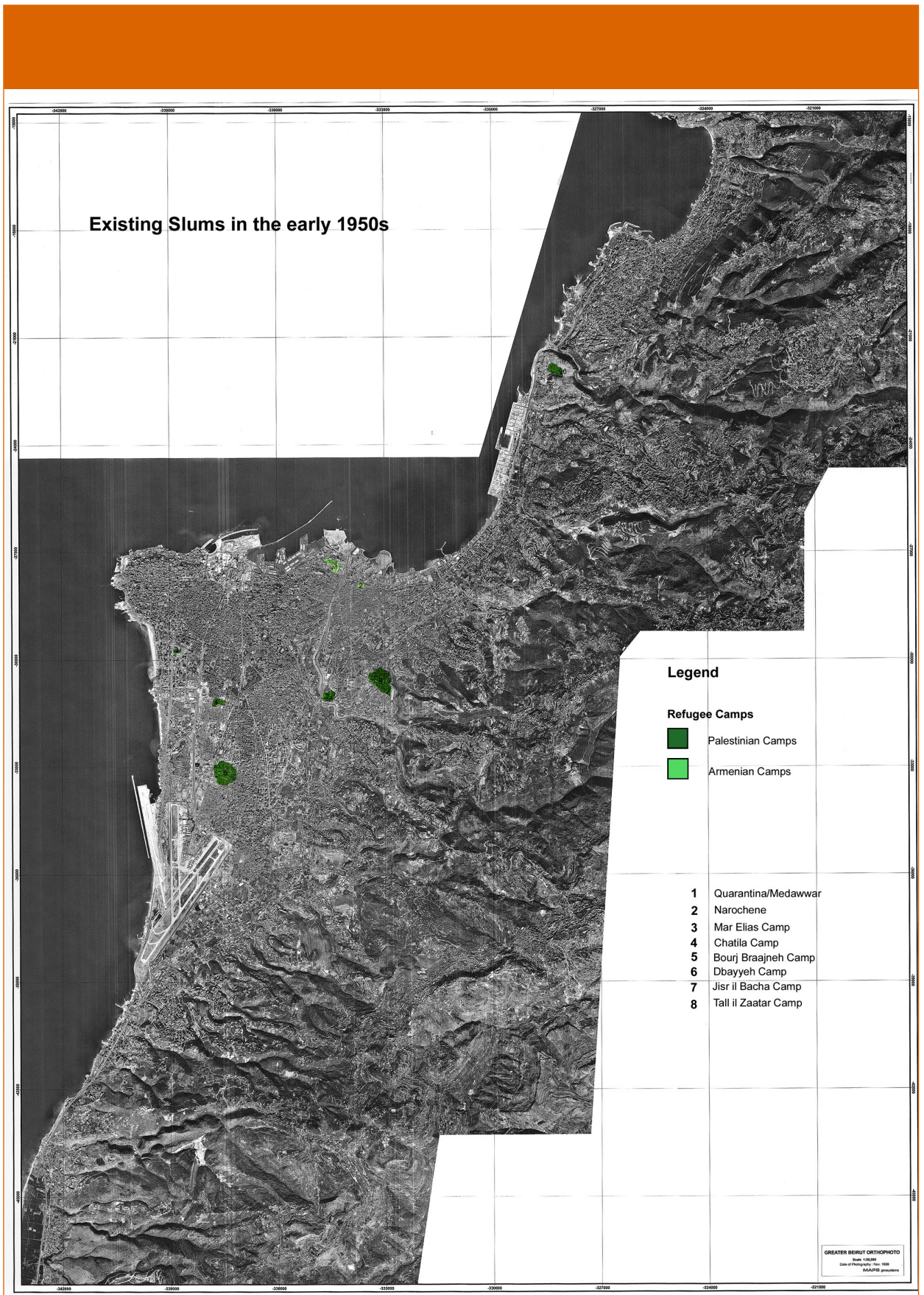
As for Hayy el Serya’an, it was first inhabited by a few Syriac families who established residency and work in the area prior to the Ottoman deportations. These families were followed by Syriac and Assyrian<sup>9</sup> refugees at the outset of the massacres, and the neighbourhood was consolidated as the Syriac neighbourhood with the construction of a housing project for Syriac Catholic refugees by religious associations. Later, the neighbourhood grew with Druze and Muslim rural migrants coming to Beirut, especially in one area called *Al Joura* or *Jourat el Druze*, in reference to the Druze property owners and the location of the neighbourhood at the bottom of a hill. During the war, non-Christian groups evacuated the area and houses were either rented or squatted. According to its residents, the neighbourhood has severely deteriorated during the war years. Today, the neighbourhood is inhabited by members of both Catholic and Orthodox Syriac groups, a very few Assyrian families (most have left the country), and Lebanese war squatters, Lebanese rural migrants, and foreign workers (especially Sudanese). Several houses in this neighbourhood are still occupied today, while others have either been evacuated through the mediation of the Ministry of Displaced People, or have opted for paying rents to old property owners. Hayy el Serya’an contains structures of very unequal quality, with corrugated metal and wood rooms, as well as three-four storey concrete buildings in poor physical conditions.

### Palestinian Camps

The arrival of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon began in 1948, at the outset of the declaration of the State of Israel in their country, and the perpetuation of a set of massacres that precipitated their departure (Pappe 1992). During the first years of their exile, Palestinian refugees in Beirut either rented places or lived in camps originally established for Armenian refugees, especially Qarantina (Sfeir-Khayat 2001, Gedeon 1974). As of 1950, and under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), a special UN body delegated to organise the temporary settlement of Palestinians in neighbouring countries, camps were instituted to house various Palestinian communities.<sup>10</sup> Land was rented from private property owners (*Waqf* or religious land and private individuals), directly to UNRWA, and refugees were allowed to erect first tents and then houses on these plots. They remain today, within the same structures, with poor levels of services and living conditions.

As of 1952, there were a total of six Palestinian camps within the Metropolitan boundaries of the Lebanese capital city (and 15 in all of Lebanon), all created between 1949 and 1952. Only one of these camps was located within the municipal boundary of Beirut: Mar Elias. The camp extends over an area of 5,400m<sup>2</sup> and houses today around 1,750 refugees. Two





Existing Slums in the early 1950s



other camps are located in the southern suburbs of the city, Shatila and the Bourj el Barajneh, and according to UNRWA figures, they occupy respectively over 39,500m<sup>2</sup> and 104,200m<sup>2</sup> and house 1,600 and 8,200 refugees (UN-UNRWA 1992). Another three camps were located in Beirut's eastern suburbs, Dbayyeh, Jisr el Bacha, and Tell ez-Zaatar. Of these three, only the camp of Dbayyeh still exists. It covers an area of 83,576m<sup>2</sup> and houses a limited number of Palestinian refugees who have returned since the end of the civil conflict. Hence, there are today a total of four Palestinian camps in the Metropolitan Area of Beirut. The UNRWA figures listed for the number of refugees do not however reflect the total population of these camps, first because they do not account for non-Palestinian presence, which is extremely high in some cases (such as in Shatila), and includes migrant workers, low income Lebanese families, and others and because the numbers also do not account for areas in direct extensions of camps, where families have settled outside the boundaries delineated by the organisation (see section C2).

### Factors Impacting on the Development of Camps

Refugees in Lebanon did not escape the urbanisation trends of the pre-civil war years and many came to live in the camps of Beirut. By 1975, these camps grew more congested with the arrival of newcomers, Palestinians and others, and extended, whenever possible, to the areas around them. Hence, the areas listed above by UNRWA do not correspond to the actual areas of the camps, especially in the 1970s, when a survey by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Works revealed the development of two so-called camps in extensions of Shatila, Sabra and Bir Hassan, as well as the growth of the Tell el Zaatar camp towards Dekwaneh (Gedeon 1974, see section C2). At the time, Tell ez-Zaatar alone was estimated to house 13,000 inhabitants (Nasr and Nasr 1974).

All Palestinian camps suffered considerably during the years of civil conflict, especially between 1973 and 1977, and in 1982, during the Israeli occupation of Beirut, as well as during the so-called war-camps episode of the Lebanese war.

Three camps and their extensions were completely wiped out at one time or the other. Two of them, Tell ez-Zaatar and Jisr el Basha, were permanently erased from the city map, their residents killed or displaced and the houses flattened in 1976, when they were attacked by opposing militia groups. The third, Shatila, lost 2,750 persons in three days during the massacre in the camps that occurred during the Israeli invasion in 1982. As for the residents on the Dbayyeh camp, most of them were at the front of the civil war conflict and had to desert the camp during the war towards more secure areas.

### Living Conditions in the Camps

Living conditions within the camps have been very difficult, especially since 1982. First, densities are high, reaching sometimes over 1,400 persons/ha (Bourj el Barajneh Camp). Second, physical infrastructure is poor: streets are narrow, often unpaved, little sun and ventilation reaches the houses, and there are poor services (garbage collection, water, etc). Sewers were installed in most camps by the residents after the arrival of the PLO in Lebanon in 1969, (Gedeon 1974) but are insufficient and have been poorly maintained since 1982. Furthermore, many constructions were severely damaged during the war and remain in poor conditions. Third, camps have weak social facilities, schools are congested and health services insufficient. Fourthly, many camps have seen major population changes in the last few decades. This is especially the case of Shatila, where most residents now are foreign workers. Old residents complain about the presence of a predominantly single male community and the social problems this generates. Finally, the occupation of these camps has been contested by property owners who have reclaimed their land recurrently (UN-UNRWA 1992).

## 2. Slums that Began as Housing Areas for Rural-Urban Migrants

From the 1950s on many families left their villages of origin to come to Beirut, attracted by employment opportunities in factories (eg in the Bourj Hammoud area, Sad el Baouchrieh and Choueifat), large institutions (eg Beirut International Airport, Regie du Tabac, etc), construction sites, or in construction quarries (eg the Jdeideh area).



Environmental degradation in Hay El Sellom

Attracted by the potential for cheap labour, the growing industrial sector of the 1960s (see section A.5) located its new factories by the growing slums. Hence, industrial enterprises were situated in the eastern suburbs of Beirut, to the north of Bourj Hammoud, near the overpopulated areas of Sin el Fil, in Mkalles, south of the camp of Tell ez-Zaatar, in Bouchrieh, by the Syriac camps, and further away eastwards in Fanar, by the Zaayriyyeh neighbourhood. Slum dwellers and industrial developments fed on each other (Nasr and Nasr 1976). All in all, a total of 1,878 factories, 88 per cent of which employed less than 10 workers, with a total of 13,855 workers were located in the eastern suburbs of the city at the time (Tabet 1968: in Nasr 1982).

Even if not negligible for the scale of the country, the share of industries in the southern suburbs remained at the time much lower, with only 12 industries employing over 100 workers were located in the area, that is less than half the 26 industries of the same scale in the eastern suburbs. At the time, most of the workers of this industrial sector were not originally from the capital city but were either Lebanese rural migrants or foreign labourers. In 1973, the population of the eastern suburbs was estimated at 290,000 including the far suburbs and the Palestinian refugees (Nasr and Nasr 1976).

Most of these migrants either rented rooms or apartments in the suburbs, or lived in slums as renters, owners, or squatters inside camps, or in informal settlements, close to the city centre or in its far suburbs. The process of housing acquisition for these families took different forms, depending on the area in which they settled, their religious affiliation, the earlier trajectories of members of their family, tribe, or village, the jobs that they were able to obtain, the time at which they arrived to the city, and other factors. We divide them below in three categories, depending on the location of the settlements and the modes of housing acquisition.



Hay El Sellom

## 2.1. Extensions of Existing Camps and Low-Income Housing Areas Near the Old Industrial Zone

Rural migrants as well as migrant workers from neighbouring Arab countries first occupied areas within or in close proximity to refugee camps (in the form of extensions) and low-income housing areas organised for Armenian, Palestinian, or Syriac refugees. Hence, the camps grew (especially in rental space) but also spread onto nearby land whenever possible, fuelled by the arrival of people from the same groups (eg Palestinian refugees from rural camps, Syrian workers of the Syriac confession) and others.

### Areas in the Eastern Industrial Zone, as Extensions of Armenian Neighbourhoods

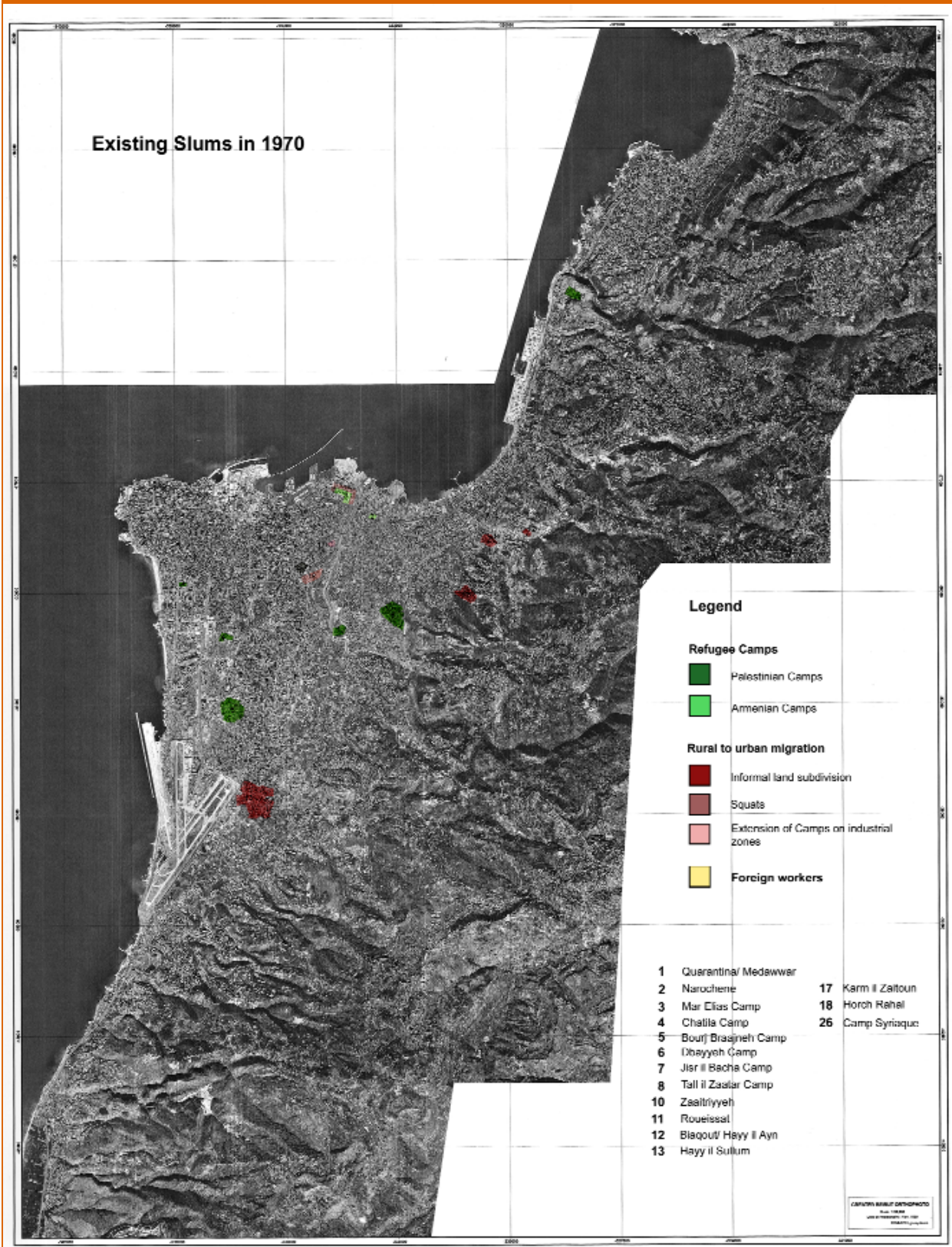
The largest extension of camp areas was to occur, as early as the 1930s, around the first settlements of Armenian and Syriac refugees, with the extension of the initial camp of Medawar (see box on Qarantina) to the areas known as Badawi, Bourj Hammoud and Karm el Zeitoun, all popular Armenian neighbourhoods at the time. These population movements were first triggered by the departures of the Armenians from Qarantina (Nasr and Nasr 1974). This was no coincidence, as Armenian refugees had brought with them an artisanal experience that they could exploit locally at the time of their arrival, and hence extensions to their camps occurred in parallel to the establishment and growth of some of the first industrial zones at the fringes of the city that were later to attract rural migrants to the area (Boudjikanian 1982).

Around this primarily Armenian core (at the time) grew other neighbourhoods, mostly in slum conditions, such as Naba'a (south of Bourj Hammoud), Horsh Rahal (also known as Camp Rahal), and sections of Sinn el Fil along the Beirut River. These employment areas attracted other populations (eg Palestinian refugees in rural camps) and became densely inhabited residential neighbourhoods<sup>11</sup> (Mouvement Social 1971, Bourgey and Phares 1973). Documents on slums during this period give an idea of their diversity and the different situations that led to their creation. Below is a description of three of them.

### Extensions to Palestinian Camps

Rural migrants, whether Lebanese or Palestinian refugees placed by UNRWA in rural camps, also established themselves near Palestinian camps, in both the eastern and southern suburbs of Beirut. The camp that would see the largest extension at the time was Tell ez-Zaatar, which by 1974 had extended over five times beyond its original size, growing from the 56,646m<sup>2</sup> terrain on which it originally founded in 1950 to over 300,000m<sup>2</sup> in 1974 (Gedeon 1974). In 1971, the Ministry of Planning counted 17,160 inhabitants, Lebanese and Palestinian, living in Tel ez-Zaatar, compared to the





Existing Slums in the early 1950s



6,347 registered refugees counted by UNRWA around the same time (Gedeon 1974).

A further extension of the camp, referred to as Ras Dekwaneh (in reference to the old village and district in which the camp was located), also housed an additional number of Lebanese and Palestinian residents, bringing up the total population of Tel ez-Zaatar-Ras Dekwaneh to around 24,500 persons, of which almost half were Palestinian and 34 per cent were Lebanese (both from the South and the Bekaa) (information from Nasr and Nasr 1976).

The situation is similar in the southern suburbs. By 1974, two "new camps" were recognised as *de facto* Palestinian camps in the city, even if they were neither registered nor recognised by UNRWA, the Palestinian relief agency. The first, Sabra, was a direct extension of the camp of Shatila from which it was indistinguishable. This area grew from the 1960s, with shacks and temporary structures built illegally on privately owned land, especially by families fleeing South Lebanon. These families first settled within the Palestinian camps but soon spread to areas nearby (BTUTP 1993).

The squatter settlement of Sabra extended considerably as from the mid-1970s, fuelled by a series of national, regional, and institutional events (such as the land pooling and re-parcelisation project of a large section in this area that created confusion over property rights and hence facilitated squatting). In 1974, Sabra housed a total of 2,640 residents, mostly but not exclusively Palestinian.

The other 'camp', Bir Hassan, also extended in close proximity to the Shatila camp and housed 1,785 persons, also mostly Palestinian refugees (Gedeon 1974). Here too, UNRWA and Ministry of Planning figures differ to an important extent. While the UNRWA survey counted 4,257 individuals in the 39,567m<sup>2</sup> parcel rented and recognised by the institution in 1974, the Ministry of Planning compiled a total of 12,645 individuals identified in the three areas, of which 8,220 individuals were in the Shatila Camp alone (1971). This figure is three times higher than the registered count of UNRWA, and reflects migratory movements within the Palestinian community towards Beirut and the role of camps as residential areas for migrants, be they Palestinian or not.

Within that same area, and also in direct proximity to the Shatila camp, were the early developments in Horsh Tabet (sometimes referred to as "the slum of Ghobeiri" in the 1970s studies, see **Box 2**). A little further away, still in the southern suburbs, were the early developments of Raml (see below) also dating from the same period and starting in the camp of Bourj Brajneh, which by then was very congested<sup>12</sup> (Charafeddine 1985).

**Box 2:**  
**Population Changes, the Case of Naba'a (1)**

The first developments in Naba'a can be seen in aerial photographs from the early 1950s. At the time, the first waves of rural migrants, initially from South Lebanon and somewhat later from the Beqa'a Valley, arrived, attracted by employment opportunities in the eastern industrial districts. The neighbourhood then extended towards Bourj Hammoud (north) and Sinn el Fil (south). By 1976, it housed around 30,000 residents (compiled from Nasr and Nasr 1976).

In 1976, Naba'a was among the neighbourhoods placed under siege by opposing militias and most of its residents were evicted to other parts of the city, soon to be replaced by squatters (refugees from other areas).

By the mid-1990s, the indemnities and "return" policies of the Ministry of Displaced People accelerated important changes in the neighbourhood. First, many old property owners, ousted since 1976, have been able to regain their properties. While some return, others who have settled elsewhere, have chosen to rent out their apartments. In the volatile rental market, the most lucrative opportunities are leases to transient residents who often pay rents per head (rather than lump sums), or pool to share the rent between several people, and are hence able to pay higher rents in total than other groups. Naba'a's rental market also appeals to low-income groups, especially because rent controls have reduced the availability of rents elsewhere in the city.

Large numbers of Syrian, Ethiopian, Asian and other foreign nationals, all employed in menial jobs as well as working class Lebanese families now come to what has now become a very mixed neighbourhood. These factors considerably change the demographics and composition of the area, which is growing denser and more diverse. This new situation generates mixed feelings among many of the Lebanese residents since they see the arrival of migrant workers as a source of problems, expressed in their words as: higher density, "degeneration" of the neighbourhood, overwhelming presence of men, insecurity, etc.

Today, an estimated 12,000 inhabitants (according to the local authority, the moukhtar) live in Naba'a, mostly in poor conditions, with scarce services, and uneasiness vis-à-vis the mobility of this area's residents (World Vision 1999).

Some figures can be extracted from the 1999 survey conducted on an extension of Naba'a (Hayy el Jadeed), which is indicative of similar trends in this area. The survey indicated that average family size was 5.25, the rate of illiteracy was 11 per cent, much higher than the national illiteracy level. The survey also indicated that some 252 families, that is 60 per cent of the total number of families were refugees, that around 43 per cent of the houses were still occupied (squatted by war refugees) and another 37 per cent were rented out (Mouvement Social 1999).

(1) Information about Naba'a is based on the authors' personal investigations, interviews with social workers in the area, as well as 16 interviews conducted by students in the Lebanese University in the DESS of Urbanisme in "Etude de Cas, Naba'a," by M. Fawaz and T. Khayat (Spring 2002).

## The War Years

The years of the civil war, especially in times of intense violence, triggered important changes in the demography and geography of the Beirut suburbs. In the eastern suburbs of the city, so-called “cleansing campaigns” were undertaken after conflicts broke out between slum dwellers and the militias in charge in 1976. Several of the above listed slums, as well as all the camps by which they were located, were razed to the ground, and their residents either massacred or deported from the area. Hence, no traces of life exist to date in Qarantina, Jisr el Basha, and Tell ez-Zaatar, or in most of Ras Dekwaneh, all of Horsh Rahal, and other smaller areas of Sin el Fil where the construction quality allowed the process of bulldozing (Charafeddine 1991, Massabni 1977, As-Safir 1983). Other areas in which constructions were generally in better conditions were almost completely emptied of their populations, and houses were soon squatted by other refugees and migrants themselves fleeing other sections of the country. Over the years, some of these neighbourhoods were consolidated into new communities. The neighbourhood of Naba'a illustrates this process, and the later consequences in the post-war era (see **Box 2**).

Conversely, areas located in the southern section of the city (with the exception of Shatila, see above) grew considerably during the first years of the war, as was the case of Raml, and also the extensions of Shatila, such as Sabra and Horsh Tabet. During the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut, houses in Sabra and Horsh Tabet were destroyed along with the Palestinian camp of Shatila, and the area remained uninhabited until 1992, when the project of “clearance of the Sport Stadium” in the post-war era (located nearby) displaced the squatters from the stadium proper to this same zone where they re-established themselves on large sections of the terrain (BTUTP 1993).

A field survey undertaken by a private office in 1993 revealed the occupation of around 21ha in the Sabra area. These were divided between Horsh Tabet (16 ha) and another area of 8.3 ha to its west, inhabited by 4,255 persons in 685 housing units (BTUTP 1993). The section below, looking at squatter settlements that developed during the war, will trace this evolution as well as detail the changes that occurred especially in the southern suburbs between 1975 and 1990.

## The Post-War Years

Changes in the post war years are almost equal in amplitude and repercussions to those of the war era and their impacts are also different in the two sections of the city. These changes are marked by post-war reconstruction policies and projects, notably by the “return policies” of the Ministry of Displaced People, which aims at ensuring the ‘return’ of refugees to their ‘original’ places of residence, and the construction of urban infrastructure and large-scale public buildings (eg

the *Cite Sportive*) in this area, which necessitates the displacement of large communities.

In the eastern suburban neighbourhoods, in areas where original slum residents had legal rental or property titles (even if constructions were illegal), the policies of the Ministry of Refugees ensure the return of these properties to their owners. Hence, many families (often those displaced from areas where they were squatting in other sections of the city) have returned to their original houses, after squatters were displaced (in exchange of meagre indemnities). Others, who over the course of the 15 years of war had established themselves elsewhere in the city, have instead chosen to rent their houses out, paving the way for the enlargement of a rental market which is attractive for transient populations, especially foreign migrant workers (sometimes coming to work in the construction of large scale projects). A good example of such changes is illustrated by the neighbourhood of Naba'a (see **Box 2**).

All areas identified as slum extensions have housed a number of migrant (foreign) workers who came to work on construction projects. Also, many of these areas (Naba'a-Bourj Hammoud, Karm ez-Zeitoun) have been intersected by a highway project that displaced a good number of residents and transformed the neighbourhood's morphology profoundly.

Furthermore, all the slums in this section have attracted a number of people displaced by construction projects who arrived after being evicted from their orig-



Naba'a

inal housing. This is the case, for example, with Horsh Tabet (in the vicinity of the Shatila Camp) and the “Sabra” area, which were to house, after 1992, a large percentage of the families evicted from the Sports Stadium where they had been squatting during the war (BTUTP 1993, see **Box 4**).

## 2.2. Slums in the Far Suburbs of the Capital City

Located in the far suburbs of the city, on lands of relatively low monetary value, and close to factories and other employment opportunities, a number of areas, formally identified as green agricultural lands, and zoned with rather large minimum lot sizes (Hayy el Sellom for example was planned with 2,000m<sup>2</sup> minimum

lots) were taken over from the 1950s by an informal process of urbanisation.

Four areas can be identified under this category: Hayy el Sellom (Amrousseih) in the southern suburbs and Zaaytriyeh (Fanar), Roueissat (Jdeideh) and a smaller development known as Hayy el Ayn (Biaqout) in the eastern suburbs. The three areas of Zaaytriyeh, Roueissat, and Hay el Ayn are said to be “off-shoots” of each other. Zaaytriyeh is said to be the oldest (dating to the 1950s), and the first anchor from which people left to Roueissat when the slum became too congested. Similarly, Hay el Ayn’s first dwellers first occupied areas in Roueissat but then fled the area (where the only locations they could access were too close to the river for

### Box 3: Hayy el Sellom

Hayy el Sellom is one of the areas that have turned into a refuge for lower-income families looking for shelter since the mid-fifties. It is located between the Beirut International Airport and the industrial zone of Choueifat, within the jurisdiction of Choueifat Municipality. Since 1953, this area has evolved from an agricultural zone (predominantly planted with olive trees) into one of the most congested residential areas of the suburbs of Beirut, with a density estimated at around 1,200 inhabitants/ha. The urbanisation of Hayy el Sellom was gradual, and paralleled the main events in modern Lebanese history: It has notably housed various flows of rural migrants and war refugees arriving in Beirut since the early fifties (Charafeddine 1991, Yahya 1994), as well as an increasing number of foreign migrant workers (Syrians, Asian, etc.). Today, the population of Hayy el Sellom is estimated at around 120,000 inhabitants.

For a long time, Hayy el Sellom was organised in sub-neighbourhoods with related families and villages, each with committees following their services and organising their lives. Several self-help projects were set up to extend the sewer networks, and water and electricity were gradually obtained through processes of political clientelism. The number of families remained limited: until 1975, there were barely 500 families living in the settlement.

During the eighties, the saturation of the land and the arrival of new migrant groups encouraged the vertical densification of buildings and the development of a large housing rental market. More recently, this rental market has been especially attractive to foreign migrant workers who rent rooms in shacks, etc.

Several types of illegal conditions exist in the area (violations

of building codes, town planning codes -notably zoning and minimum lot areas-, safety codes, health standards, and property rights). While the early phase (1952-1976), illegality was restricted to illegal land subdivisions and constructions, violating urban codes meant to reduce the density of the area, other forms of illegalities developed during the war: people squatted on the borders of the river that goes through the settlement, and some squatting also occurred especially on public and institutional land. Violations of building constructions also grew exponentially, since several stories were added to the small family homes of the 1960s.

Most residents in Hayy el Sellom complain about poor levels of services. They are also alarmed by environmental problems associated with a high density and with the proximity to industrial zones that constitute the major problems in the eyes of its residents. They believe, for instance, that the unusually high rates of skin and asthmatic diseases (especially for children) stem from the absence of open space, the obstruction of the sun rays that seldom reach the houses, the constant traffic congestion, the Ghadeer River that collects industrial waste before it goes through their settlement, and a garbage recycling facility that emits toxic gasses right at the edge of their settlement. The situation of the squatters living on the sides of the Ghadeer River that crosses the neighbourhood is however the most dramatic. They still live in corrugated metal houses and their homes are seasonally flooded by the polluted water of the river.

Source: Fawaz 2000





comfort) and bought new lands nearby (in the 1960s). It is important to note that none of the pre-war reports indicated these areas in their definition of slums, probably because these areas had relatively better physical structures.

All of the slums in this category developed as of the 1950s, fuelled by migration from several areas of the country, mostly the Beka'a and South Lebanon. They grew through land sales in which rural migrants purchased shares in large lots from property owners, and built houses on small lots of land, sometimes as big as 100-200m<sup>2</sup>, often in violation to zoning and construction codes. Land sales occurred through the mediation of land developers who were often early comers from the same village of origin or family, who secured these sales and helped in financing credits. Tribes also played an important role in the organisation of these neighbourhoods, for example the Haydar tribe in Hayy el Sellom, but especially the Zaayter tribe, after whom Zaaytriyeh is named, but whose members spread throughout the eastern suburb slums.

All four of these areas grew in sub-neighbourhoods developing among people of the same area of origin or family. Construction was carried out essentially by local contractors and dwellers, Through social and political

### The Civil War Years

With the advent of the civil war, these areas have faced drastically different destinies. Only Hayy el Sellom was located in an area where the militias in charge were sympathetic to the main population group, and hence the settlement grew considerably during the war, to become the largest slum in the city (see **Box 3**). Most of the residents in other areas (Roueissat, Zaaytriyeh, and Hayy el Ayn) fled either to their areas of origin, or to other areas of the city (including informal settlements). Throughout the civil war, these three settlements were squatted by other group of Lebanese refugees or rural migrants, who remained there until the mid-1990s.

Since the end of the civil war, and with its 'return policies', the Ministry of Displaced People has paid indemnities and displaced most squatters from informal settlements (with exceptions), returning the properties to their original owners. While many of the original owners are now returning, others are choosing to sell or rent their old houses to families, or, more often, to migrant workers in Beirut. These create new mixes among population groups (Christian and Muslim), almost unique in Lebanon, as well as new patterns of housing in these informal settlements, notably the extension of a large (informal) rental market and considerable changes in



View of Hayy el Sellom

networks (family and village of origin), people organised the building process and the provision of services, often obtaining favours in exchange for votes with the politicians from their areas of origin. While land ownership in these slums is legal, land subdivision (and hence the location of the lot within a larger area) and constructions violate various urban regulations and building construction codes.

Until the beginning of the civil war, most of these areas maintained low densities and building quality was far better than in other sections of the city.

the demography of the areas (similar to conditions described in Naba'a). Many of these formally tight family neighbourhoods are now congested, with an unusually high percentage of mobile male populations.

The residents of all these areas tend to have poor living conditions. They especially suffer from poor public services, such as unpaved roads, poor sewage systems (installed often by earlier residents) and dirty water. Electricity, hooked legally to these areas where meters were installed in the 1990s, has also become unaffordable and in some cases, residents are choosing to rely on private electric generation that they think is cheaper or to resort to illegal hooking. In general, the proximity of these areas to industries and water courses (especially

Zaayriyyeh and Hayy el Sellom) has been the source of severe problems for their residents, who often complain about pollution and its health impacts. Also because of their location far from the city, many of these neighbourhoods have suffered from lack of public services, schools and health care. The case of Hayy el Ayn, whose school was built by its residents but destroyed soon afterwards, has made the papers recently because the residents live too far away to send their children to school, commuting costs are high, and families sometimes opt not to send their children to school at all.

In general, the attitude of the municipalities towards these areas has been hostile, since their residents are not voters, and are often dismissed as “illegal”. One

### Ouzai and Raml

Land conflicts over property in both Ouzai and Raml predate the beginning of squatter settlements in these areas and go back to the establishment of land registries during the French Mandate, the abolition of the concept of communal land that existed in the Ottoman registries (*mush'a*), its transformation into public land, and later into private ownership, appropriated by a number of members of the Beirut elite who were aware of development plans for the area (Charafeddine 1985, 1991, Clerc 2002, Al Safir 1983). Both Raml and Ouzai grew into housing areas according to family and village patterns, in squatting but also other forms of appropriation such as purchasing shares



Environmental and physical degradation in Havy el Sellom



View of Ouzai

master's thesis, quotes a representative of the municipality of Fanar explaining that “Zaayriyyeh” should not have existed (Coignet 1999). The attitude of the mayor of Choueifat was somewhat similar, as he explained to us in a private interview that the problem of “Hayy el Sellom” was beyond the scope of what he could deal with. This is not systematically the case, since historically, some municipalities have provided minimum services under popular or political pressure, but the tendency to ignore these areas is strong everywhere.

### 2.3. Slums that Developed as Squatter Settlements in Areas of Contested Property Rights

Squatting pre-1975 was limited in Beirut to a few locations: Raml, Ouzai, Horch el Qateel, Horsh Tabet, and Jnah in the southern suburbs (as well as Sabra and Horsh Tabet, mentioned above) and Wata el Mousseitbeh, within the city's municipal boundaries. These three squatter settlements are all located in areas of contested land ownership, where conflicts over the establishment of land registries during the French Mandate, rising land prices, and different political rivalries paved the way for their development (Clerc 2002).<sup>13</sup>

in the very large lots of the area or directly renting land from the municipalities who saw in the process a form of re-appropriation (Clerc 2002). Construction in Raml began mostly in the 1950s and by 1967, Raml extended over 17.7ha. At the beginning of the civil war, this squatter contained some 800 houses with around 8,000 residents (Charafeddine 1991). Their rapid development during the war is detailed below, along with other slums in the same area.

### Wata el Mousseitbeh <sup>14</sup>

Wata el Mousseitbeh was established as of the 1940s, at the time land conflicts had emerged around the terrain property holders (municipal, waqf, and private). Conflicts over property rights as well as absentee landowners facilitated the process of occupation of this slum in which generally residents recognize that they “own” the structures but not the land on which these houses are built. Wata el Mousseitbeh is located in the South West of the city, within its municipal boundaries.

The settlement is constituted out of two sections – one eastern, the other western – separated by a large road with no possibility of extension on either side. In its origins, Wata is the “druze” camp of Beirut, the only



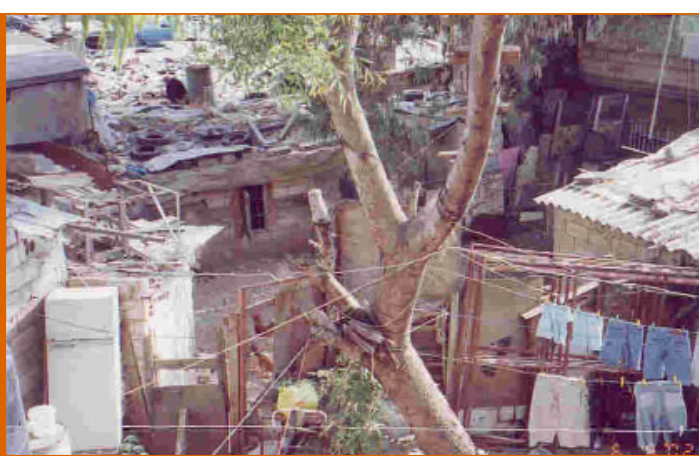
slum that was originally inhabited by a Druze population who arrived from the Lebanese Mountains or the Syrian Jabal el Druze. Since the beginning of the war, these demographics have changed.

Today, this slum – especially its eastern section – is probably the poorest of all others in Beirut. Its two sections differ however considerably, in population and quality of construction. In the eastern section, occupation occurs mostly through informal rents, paid to one (Druze) family, the owner of a marble factory nearby (there are many in the zone), which is believed to own shares in the lots on which the slum was built. This “rent” is very low, around 10,000LP/month (US 6.5\$). Several early comers (or politically supported bosses,

### 3.1 Occupation of Neighbourhoods

As from 1975, Beirut was divided into two sections, each controlled by rival militias, along what was to become for 15 years its “green line.” Several neighbourhoods, located either at the periphery of zones of fighting, or housing communities considered “undesirable” by militias in charge, were gradually (and sometimes violently and suddenly) evacuated of their residences of origin.

First, a number of neighbourhoods at the fringes of the city centre (transformed into a war zone), such as Mina el Hosn and Qantari, as well as along the old green line were evacuated by their original owners and occupied by families (with lower incomes) fleeing evictions from other areas (Yahya 1994). These areas,



El Mousseitbeh



View of Wata El Mousseitbeh

almost all Lebanese) also control a number of rooms (20-30 each) that they rent to migrant workers. In the language of the residents, the leasers are considered “owners” since they own the structures, but not the land. Construction is precarious, in fact the poorest among all slums of the city, and houses are built with tin, wood, and plastic sheets, and consolidated with CMUs, tin roofs, wood panels, and other reused materials during the years of the civil war. Being below street level, the eastern section also suffers from poor drainage and several people have drowned there on heavy rain days. There are no population figures, even if residents refer to 8,000 persons (unlikely).

### 3. Slums that Began as Squatter Settlements during the Period of the Civil War

Most of the actual squatter settlements of Beirut, that is areas in which occupants violate property rights, were founded during the period of the Lebanese civil military conflict (1975-1990), and almost systematically under the protection of political parties. During these years, we can distinguish between occupants of buildings, occupants of entire neighbourhoods, and occupants of empty lots.

some historically privileged and well planned, gradually deteriorated into slum conditions.

Second, many houses and neighbourhoods were evacuated by their original settlers, especially during the first years of the civil war. These neighbourhoods include a number of slums located in the eastern suburbs of Beirut (eg Zaayriyyeh, Naba'a). In these areas, displaced residents were soon replaced by refugees, and later rural migrants, who came to these areas often fleeing from other sections of the country. Since the end of the civil military conflict (1990), and the institution of the Ministry of Displaced People (1992), squatters occupying houses in these areas have gradually been evicted and houses restored to original owners, reducing the size of this type of slums in the city.

### 3.2 Land Occupation

Land occupation occurred especially in the southern suburbs of Beirut where large open areas quickly developed into squatter settlements after 1975, and especially after 1982. Land occupation happened either on previously unoccupied land or in extensions of earlier slums (squatted or not). The latter extended exponentially in size throughout the civil war, especially in times of violence. They now occupy the entire southern coast

of the city and extend eastward, framed by the municipal boundaries (north) and the airport (south). Occupation has taken place on both public and private lands.

First, developments occurred in extensions of the above-mentioned early squatter settlements such as Raml and Ouzai that grew considerably during the first years of the civil war, as well as the extension of the Palestinian camps of Bir Hassan and Shatila (section 3.c) to Horsh al Qateel and Horsh Tabet, wiping away large green forests and empty lots in the area of Sabra and near the sport stadium of the city.

Squatters also moved to new, previously unoccupied areas such as the beach resorts of Jnah, in which cabins were first occupied, with the help of militias in charge, by refugees coming from the slums of east Beirut (eg St Simon, St Michel). Empty lands nearby, allocated for public services (Zahra hospital) were also squatted.

Land occupation also developed in the informal settlements of Hayy el Sellom, where until then land occupation was legal. Public lands (eg river banks, railway lines, etc.) and private lands (especially *Waqf* land) were occupied incrementally during this phase, extending the settlement's area. The **Table 1** illustrates this in figures.

Living conditions within these areas differ considerably, but tend to be more difficult in the neighbourhoods built during the war as well as in areas closer to the waterfront. Services are lacking, and so are public amenities.

A 1992 survey conducted on living conditions highlights low wages and poor levels of education. The survey also indicates rather high percentage of structures built of poor materials. 2.6 per cent of the structures of Ouzai are built of tin and other non-permanent materials, and around 30 per cent of the structures, houses or apartments were listed as being in poor conditions (BTUTP 1992). Elsewhere, still in the suburbs, in Horsh el Qateel (extension of Bir Hassan camp), almost half the structures are identified to be in poor conditions, that is 564 of the total 1,256 units. It is also important to note that all these areas have a percentage of structures in relatively good conditions (see **Table 2**).

The survey also revealed that many economic activities had developed in some of these zones, which now combine activities of substantial economic value (commercial and artisanal) next to housing value. To take Ouzai as an example, the survey indicates that over 1,000 shops were located around the main artery

**Table 1: Population Estimates for the Squatter Settlements of the Southern Suburbs, 1985-1992**

Area	Type of Land	1984 (BTUTP)	1990-1992
Ouzai	Public/ Private	3,537 structures (16,900 residents)	19,600 residents (DAR)
Jnah (Sultan Ibrahim, beaches)	Public	1,273 structures (7,220 residents)	15,900 residents (DAR, includes Hayy el Zahra)
Hayy el Zahra	Public	1,120 structures (5,348 residents)	
Bir Hassan Camp / Horsh el Qateel	Public/ Private	776 structures (4,505 residents)	6,000 residents (DAR)
Horsh Tabet/ Cite Sportive	Public/ Private	2,430 structures (15,492 residents)	12,775 residents (BTUTP)
Sabra area	Private	936 structures (5,868 residents)	(displaced) (BTUTP)
Raml 'ali	Public/ Private	4,028 structures (21,000 residents)	30,000 residents (Charafeddine 1991)
Amrussieh	Public	1,197 structures (7,125 residents)	7,125 residents (BTUTP)
Laylaki	Public	1,292 structures (6,698 residents)	10,000 residents (Charafeddine 1991)
<b>Total</b>		<b>90,156 residents</b>	<b>101,400 residents</b>

Sources: BTUTP (1984, 1992), Charafeddine (1985, 1991), Dar el Handassah (1993)



Hayy el Sellom



**Table 2: Quality of Structures, Selected Areas**

Quality of Structures	tin	dest.	poor	med.	good
<b>Area</b>					
<b>Jnah (beaches)</b>	194	0.9 %	75.4%	21.6%	2.1%
<b>Jnah (Hayy Zahra)</b>	4	0.8%	33.9%	59.8%	5.5%
<b>Jnah (other)</b>	13	2.2%	40.0%	0%	57.8%
<b>Ouzai</b>	21	1.3%	29.6%	55.2%	13.9%
<b>Horsh el Qateel</b>	36	0.2%	44.9%	47.4%	7.5%
<b>Bir Hassan</b>	0	1%	30.6%	58.2%	10.2%
<b>Sport City</b>	3	7.2%	46.8%	27.1%	17.1%

Source: (BTUTP 1992).

that crosses the neighbourhood and constituted until 2002 the only southern exit of Beirut. It also indicated that around 29 per cent of the economic activities of this area were “industrial” (artisanal), while 33 per cent were car repair stores, a particularly flourishing activity in the area. (Since then, however, conditions are likely to have deteriorated because of a number of factors such as bypass roads, overall adverse economic conditions, etc). However, not all these areas are equally economically active, and neighbourhoods located further away from the main arteries, such as Horsh el Qateel or Horsh Tabet tend to be more residential (BTUTP 1992).

Finally, another survey conducted around the same time in sections of the slums of the southern suburbs (Ouzai, Jnah areas, and Horsh Qateel-Bir Hassan) indicates a high level of illiteracy, reaching 23.5 per cent (80 per cent of whom were aged over 45 years). This survey also indicated that around 15 per cent of the youth aged 11-15 years work and don't attend school. It also revealed the following income distribution: 11.2 per cent make less than US\$84/month, 21.5 per cent make US\$84-150, 16.6 per cent make US\$150-204, 19 per cent make US\$204-300, 19.4 per cent make US\$300-540, and 11.8 per cent make over US\$540. Wages are hence significantly lower than the national averages, in which 31.2 per cent of the Lebanese population earned above US\$568 in 1992 (Dar Al Handassah Consultants 1993).



Horsh el Qateel

Table 3: Current Slums of Beirut and their Characteristics (\*)

	Date	Original Population	Dominant Current Pop	Municipality	Type of Occupation			Violations of Building Regulations		Services			Quality of Construction		
					Rented	Owned	Squatted	Lot Subdiv.	Building	very Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Good
<b>1. Slums that began as international refugee camps/ low-income housing areas for refugees</b>															
Sanjak	1939	Armenian	migrant workers	Bourj Hammoud	XXX					X			X		
Bourj Barajneh	49-52	Palestinian	Palestinian	Bourj Barajneh	X	n/a	n/a		X		X		X	XX	
Dbayeh	49-52	Palestinian	Palestinian/Lebanese	Dbayeh	X	n/a	n/a		X		X		XX	X	
Mar Elias	49-52	Palestinian	Palestinian/Migrant workers	Beirut	X	n/a	n/a		X		X		X	XX	
Shatila	49-52	Palestinian	Palestinian	Ghobeiri	X	n/a	n/a		X	X			XX	XXX	
Syriac Neighb.	1930	Syriac (Turkey, Iraq, and Syria)	Syriac/Lebanese/Migrant workers	Beirut	X	X	X		X			X	X	XX	X
<b>2. Slums that began as housing areas for rural-urban migrants</b>															
<b>2.2 Extensions of existing camps and low-income housing areas near the old industrial zone</b>															
Naba'a	1940	South Lebanese	Lebanese/Migrant workers	Bourj Hammoud	XX	X	X		X		X		X	XX	X
Karm ez-Zeitoun	1930	Armenian	Armenian/Syriac/Lebanese/Migrant workers	Beirut	XX	X			X		X		X	XX	X
Bourj Hammoud (sections)	1930	Armenian	Armenian/Lebanese/Migrant workers	Bourj Hammoud	XX	X			X			X	X	XX	XX
Horsh Tabet	1970	South Lebanese	Lebanese/Migrant workers	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X		X		X	X	
Sabra	1970	Palestinian/Lebanese	Lebanese/Migrant workers	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X	X			XX	X	
Bir Hassan	1970	Palestinian	Lebanese/Migrant workers	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X		X		XX	X	



Table 3: (Continue)

	Date	Original Population	Dominant Current Pop	Municipality	Type of Occupation			Violations of Building Regulations		Services			Quality of Construction		
					Rented	Owned	Squatted	Lot Subdiv.	Building	very Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Good
<b>2.2. Slums in the far suburbs of the capital city, in violation of urban regulations</b>															
Hayy el Ayn	1960	Bekaa	Lebanese	Biaqut	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	
Hayy Sellom	1950	South Lebanon/ Bekaa	Lebanese/ Migrant workers	Choueifat	XX	XX	X	X	X	X		X	X	XX	X
Roueissat	1955	Bekaa/South Lebanon	Lebanese/ Migrant workers	Jdeideh	XX	XX	X	X	X		X		X	XX	X
Zaaytriyeh	1950	Bekaa/South Lebanon	Lebanese/ Migrant workers	Fanar	XX	XX	X	X	X		X		X	XX	X
<b>2.3 Slums that developed as squatter settlements in areas of contested property rights</b>															
Ouzai	1955	South/war	War displaced / Migrant workers	Bourj Hammoud	XXX	X	XX		XX		X		XX	XXX	X
Raml	1955	South/war	Lebanese	Beirut	XX	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Wata Mousseitbeh	1945	Syrian/ Lebanese Druze	Armenian/ Lebanese/ Migrant workers	Bourj Hammoud	XXX		XXX		X	X				XXX	X
<b>3. Slums that began as squatter settlements during the period of the civil war</b>															
Amrussiyyeh	1976	Rural migrants/war	Rural migrants/war	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X	X			XX	X	
Hayy Zahra	1976	Rural migrants/war	Rural migrants/war	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X			X	XX	XXX	X
Horsh el Qateel	1976	Rural migrants/war	Rural migrants/war	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X		X		XX	XX	X
Jnah beaches	1976	Rural migrants/war	Rural migrants/war	Ghobeiri	XX		XX		X	X			XXX	X	
Laylaki	1976	Rural migrants/war	Rural migrants/war	Hadath	XX		XX		X		X			X	

(\*) This table is designed to provide an overall idea of the slums rather than an accurate delimitation.

## D. OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL DEFINITIONS RELATED SLUMS

### 1. Official Definitions of Slums

Few if any public references exist to slums, as defined above, in current public discourse. Firstly, slums are generally considered in official discourse as the “outcome of the civil war” and their population is still perceived as “temporarily displaced.” Hence, the official jurisdiction of these areas goes back to the Ministry of Displaced People, created in 1992, whose main task is to eradicate slums resulting from the war. In this scenario, slum dwellers and war-displaced populations are confused (Yahya 1994). Slums are also clearly not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Housing or the Housing Institute, as was duly explained to us by the Head of the Housing Institute.<sup>15</sup>

Poor recognition of slums has meant that to date, there is no official definition of these areas. Instead, slums are mentioned and defined in various ways in reports commissioned or conducted by public institutions. Widely-used definitions are often introduced by foreign experts, in line with discourses in their country at the time (eg hygienic definitions in the 1960s, legality in the 1980s, informality in 1990s even if inadequately used). They however tend to be ill developed. The notorious exception is the “Elyssar approach,” used in the project for the rehabilitation of the coastal areas of the southern suburbs of Beirut (see policies, IV). This approach moves for the first time outside the normative definitions (health, density, etc.) to recognise dwellers’ rights officially - *al-qaten* - for anyone residing in the studied area at the time of the project initiation.

### Physical Approaches

Most definitions currently used fall under an approach relying on physical criteria in the identification of slums. For example, the 1996 report on built structures of the *Central Statistical Agency* included in its classification of physical structures the category “improvised buildings” (*mourtajal* in Arabic), defined as including “kiosks, barracks, and containers used for housing or commercial activities” (ACS 1996). This same category already existed in the 1970 report on the active population in Lebanon conducted by this same public institution, which at the time defined “improvised buildings” simply as “*taudis*” (tin structures) (ACS 1972). However, the current reference to *mourtajal* cannot be seen as a real translation of *slum* since with few exceptions, the majority of slums are no longer temporary structures (as was the case in the first report, notably with Qarantina and Tell ez-Zaatar), and hence the category of *murtajal* now refers to individual structures in slums and elsewhere, rather than actual slum areas.

Other definitions based on physical criteria rely instead on the population density of an area. This is the case for example of the *Evaluation Environnementale de le Côte du Liban* and the subsequent land use maps of Lebanon (1984, 1999) in which slums are marked as “*tissu urbain informel*” (informal urban fabric) and defined according to the density of urban fabric, detected by aerial photographs.<sup>16</sup> (Note that the latter detection process has led a list of areas that almost coincides with the slums we have listed).

### Legal Approaches

Another set of definitions, used especially in the 1980s, relies on legal criteria and refers to slums as “illegal housing,” in reference to violations of property rights, zoning codes, building codes, and others. This is the definition adopted by the first academic literature on the southern suburbs of Beirut, and taken up by practitioners as well, such as the French offices IAURIF in 1984 in their study of the *Schema Directeur de la Region Metropolitaine de Beyrouth* (CDR-DGU 1986, Charafeddine 1985). This same approach is recurrent in the various studies that will look at the conditions of the southern suburbs of Beirut after the war, with the aim of addressing their problems (BTUTP 1992, Dar el Handassah 1993). These studies also adopt a similar terminology in Arabic, “*massaken ‘aswakiyah*” (chaotic housing), in which the legal connotations are often highlighted (BTUTP 1992).



### Hygienic Approaches

Prior to the civil war, slums took on a major visibility in a number of state commissioned reports (generally prepared by foreign experts during the 1960s and 1970s). At the time, definitions were consistently developed in hygienic terms. The list of these reports includes the 1963 report of the French commission IRFED<sup>17</sup> as well as the 1963 studies undertaken by the



French urban planner Ecochard.

They define slums as “*habitat insalubre*” (unhealthy housing), an urgent problem of Beirut to be addressed. Ecochard’s document also lists “*habitat defectueux*,” (defective housing) a category that includes “*bidonvilles*” (recycled material), “*taudis*” (barracks), and “*habitat insalubre*” (unhealthy housing). Reports also refer to “*larges couches de populations marginales*” (large groups of marginal populations), “*quartiers de baraquements agglutinés*” (neighbourhoods with congested barracks), “*quartier malsain de miséreux*” (unhealthy neighbourhoods with miserable people), “*population avec une mentalité de déracinés*” (populations with a mentality of uprooted people), and “*y sont associés maladies, immoralité...*” (to which are associated diseases and immorality) in the descriptions of Bourj Hammoud and Medawar at the time (Mission IRFED 1963).

Among formal documents, prepared and issued directly by the public sector, we also see some early mentions to slums, such as in the 1968 Comprehensive Plan Studies for the City of Beirut prepared by the Executive Board of Major Projects for the City of Beirut (Public Agency) that takes up the issues raised by IRFED and Ecochard and discusses sanitary problems of “workers’ camps” (Ministry of Planning 1968).

As for refugee camps, notably Palestinian ones, they are considered outside the jurisdiction of the Lebanese State and their populations are referred to the authority of UNRWA, the United Nations Refugee Commission for West Asia, and in general, maps and projects tend to simply ignore them and consider them, over 50 years after their establishment, as “temporary camps.”



## 2. Official Definitions of Poverty

To date, there is no official definition of poverty in Lebanon. Nor is there an official poverty estimate for the country (Khalidi-Beyhum 1999, Hamdan 2001). Attempts at quantifying actual poverty levels or adopting an official poverty line have lagged behind. Furthermore, major controversies accompany the releases of reports or figures around poverty. In 1996, a report published by the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), *Poverty in Lebanon*, became the subject of important arguments and refutations (Haddad, A. 1996). One year later, a joint study of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), *Map of Living Conditions* in Lebanon was held off from publication for around a year (Khalidi-Beyhum 1999). Furthermore, important national surveys on living conditions do mention poverty in their studies.

Thus, the survey of *Household Living Conditions* undertaken by the Central Agency for Statistics reports on aggregated income levels and needs, without highlighting “poverty” as a category (ACS 1998). In fact, the data we possess about poverty in Lebanon is funded and published through international organisations (eg World Bank, UNDP, ILO, ESCWA, etc.), or special reports in specific neighbourhoods, published by non-governmental organisations (eg Save the Children, World Vision, Mouvement Social, etc).

Historically, the report of Mission IRFED released in 1963 was the first official document to mention “poverty” as a main policy concern. The report estimated around 50 per cent of the Lebanese to be suffering from poverty at the time, 8.8 per cent of which, the report explains, lives in extreme poverty (Mission IRFED 1963). Throughout the 1960s and until 1975 (the beginning of the civil war), several studies of poverty were undertaken, based on poverty lines, estimated according to various strategies, but none was adopted as the official definition (Khalidi-Beyhum 1999).

Currently, the closest to an official definition of poverty remains the one adopted by MOSA in its joint study with UNDP, released in 1998. In order to compensate for the absence of data on income levels and hence poverty line, the study adopted two indicators: “Unsatisfied Basic Needs” and “Living Conditions Index.” These two indicators are developed to measure satisfaction of “Basic Needs” among Lebanese households, defined as housing needs, access to water and sewerage, education, and income.<sup>18</sup> The 1998 UNDP-MOSA report classifies households in five categories, according to the level of satisfaction of their basic needs: very low, low, intermediate, high, and very high. The study indicates high levels of unsatisfied households, whereby over 32 per cent of the Lebanese have low or very low levels of satisfaction, of which 7.09 per cent have very low satisfaction. Nonetheless, the UNDP-MOSA document explains, the definition of Basic Needs is not directly equivalent to poverty, and does not thus compensate for the absence of poverty figures (UNDP-MOSA 1997).

Other studies commissioned by international organisations have developed different poverty indicators. For example, the 1996 ESCWA report, *Poverty in Lebanon*, estimates the poverty line at US\$618/month/hh and places over 28 per cent of the Lebanese people below this line. The same study estimates extreme poverty line at US\$306/month/hh, and places 7.25 per cent of the Lebanese below this line (Haddad 1996).

Consistently, all studies about poverty have also highlighted the importance of income inequality in Lebanon. For example, IRFED noted that 4 per cent of the Lebanese held, already in 1961, 32 per cent of the assets (Mission IRFED 1963).

It is important to note that none of the poverty definitions and poverty studies looks at the living conditions

of non-Lebanese communities in Lebanon. While these groups form some of the most vulnerable groups in the country, migrant workers and Palestinian refugees are neither accounted for nor estimated.

### 3. Unofficial Definitions of Slums and Poverty

Unofficially, definitions of slums and their dwellers are related to the perceptions of residents, areas, and history, before and after the civil war. Nonetheless, definitions on hygienic, physical, and legal terms are among the most commonly used among people and in the press, as well as a few others that distinguish residents according to some of their perceived characteristics. Also worth noticing is the tendency among official and unofficial sources to exaggerate the numbers. Mayors, for example, describe the population sizes of slums as 10 times higher than they actually are, and so do newspaper articles.<sup>19</sup> Finally, theses and academic works (especially those prepared by students abroad) tend to adopt terminologies that are in line with academic trends and advisors and bring in new labels not in line with current policy documents.

#### Hygienic Terms

Hygienic terms remain the most prevalent references to slums in popular terminology. For example, the description of the suburbs of Beirut as the “misery belts” of the city, in reference to the location of slums at the fringes of the city, has not abandoned journalistic discourses (Bourgey and Phares 1973, As-Safir 1974). These terminologies are also common among social workers. Thus, describing one of the slums we identified in our study, a social worker in the Ministry of Social Affairs talked of “*foyers d’infection*,” (foci of infections) and deplored the “unhealthy environment.” She also discussed the need for legalising modes of occupation and imposing legal rent contracts to force out “this population.” This language is in no way unusual.

#### Physical Terms

Another set of definitions, developed before the war, is physical. Among these, “*tanake*” in reference to tin (Arabic translation), the basic construction material of slum dwellings before the war, is a witness of physical definitions (Keuroghlian 1970, Bourgey and Phares 1973). People also refer to slums as residential areas in poor physical conditions, and use poor infrastructure, dirty roads, and unavailable services, to demarcate these areas from others in the city.

#### Definitions According to “Population Types”

During and after the war, people like policymakers have tended to associate “slums” either with the war, in which case refugees and displaced populations tended to be compounded under the terminology of “*mouhajja-*

*reen*” (Yahya 1994), or with the fanatic, anti-state political attitudes with which they labelled slum dwellers (Charafeddine 1985).

In general, especially after the displacement and payment (unusually high) of compensation to a number of squatters in Beirut’s downtown, a common vision among the Lebanese is that the residents of these settlements are “crooks” who are seeking to benefit from the indemnities of the Ministry of Displaced People. Furthermore, because property rights tend to carry major sanctity for most middle-income and rich Lebanese people, fierce condemnation of all squatters tends to be the rule among various groups, in newspaper articles, and elsewhere. Another notable definition, which highlights negative stereotypes against residents, this time prior to the war, is the “kurdification of neighbourhoods,” an indication of the arrival of low-income residents and changes in the demography, in reference to Kurdish refugees about whom a multiplicity of negative stereotypes prevailed (Phares 1971). Not all definitions are however negative, and it is not uncommon to see in studies of the 1970s descriptions like “neo-citizens” and other descriptions more related to the recent arrival of residents to the city.

#### Legality

This is the most commonly adopted definition, especially among people who look negatively at these areas. At the advent of a conflict that opposed the residents of one squatter settlement (Ouzai) to the state’s projects to build a bridge above their area, the pages of almost all the local papers emphasised the “illegality” of the neighbourhood and the absence of “rights” for residents to stay (An-Nahar June 2002). Among slum residents, legality also takes on an important role. Hence, people tend to associate long term residents with legality, irrespective of their legal status and new ones with “illegality” (See Charafeddine 1985).

#### Political Definitions

Unofficially, poverty is often associated with specific communities, such as “Muslim Shiites” or “people from the Beka’a,” or again *mouhajareen* (displaced), all negative labels applied wholesale to communities. These have notably been challenged in the 1960s with new terminology developed by the Muslim (Shiite) leadership at the time that refers to rural communities (notably Shiites) as *mahroomeen* (deprived), in reference to discriminatory public policies rather than personal weaknesses (Moussa Sadr and then the Amal Party). Later, this terminology was to shift again with *mustad’afeen*, “seen as weak” especially for affiliates to the political party of Hizb’Allah who sought to place power back in the hands of this community (Fawaz 2000).

## E. DATA ON THE CITY'S SLUMS

### 1. Neighbourhood Profile: Hayy el Sellom

Given the absence of data profiles for neighbourhoods, we conducted a survey over 20 households in the neighbourhood of Hayy el Sellom. We talked to people in different areas of the neighbourhood, and identified different types of households (women headed, foreign workers, families). Clearly, the number of interviews cannot have any statistical significance, for an estimated population of 120,000. However, we list here some of the findings, by way of illustrating living conditions.

#### a) Household Types and Size

The demographic characteristics of the interviewees indicate that several types of households exist in Hayy el Sellom, such as women-headed households, foreign workers pooling in residence, foreign workers living in their workplace in the neighbourhood, single families and extended families. The size of the household also varies, going from 2 people to 13, and does not necessarily coin-

cide with the dwelling size. The number of children/family varies considerably, from one to 11, but a large majority has between 4 and 6 (national average is 4.95).

#### b) Form of Occupation

Our survey indicated that around two thirds of the households rent, while most of the others actually own apartments or buildings, via the family. The sample also indicated that a number of families are squatting, but we know that these are a limited percentage, located generally on the river banks, by the old railway, and on few *Waqf* land. Length of residency is also variable from early comers in the 1960s (generally owners) and new comers generally renting. Squatters all date from the civil war period.

#### c) Rental and Service Rates

Rents in the area vary considerably, mostly because neighbourhoods vary a lot in quality, and the *souq* area in Hayy el Sellom, which attracts clientele beyond the area, is highly valued. Hence, rent for a shop on the main artery goes for US\$1,000 (2 cases, both rented to





Syrian workers). Elsewhere, and for residential uses, rent goes is around to US\$50. Foreign workers (Syrian and Kurdish) tend to pay higher rents, notably because they pool together in apartments that allows them to share the costs and allows owners to charge higher fees. The costs of services also vary, especially since not all families actually pay for them. Nonetheless, the few who have discussed them talked of around US\$40/month for electricity. Also, in one neighbourhood, residents declared they all paid around US\$3.5/month for garbage collection, organised by residents and commissioned to one Syrian worker.

#### d) Income

Of all the variables, income was the most difficult to assess. Indeed, most of the family budgets described showed higher expenses than possible with the listed income. Furthermore, one third of the families interviewed indicated that they were unemployed or had unsteady jobs. Generally, early comers, also owners, tended to have better positions because they are able to rent some of the units they built earlier (one of them actually lives off and helps children from rents on three buildings he owns). Also, government employees (2 in the sample, one of them, a woman, working in the nearby Tobacco Regie) describe more stable positions than others (around US\$500/month), receive educational aids and transport services. Other household incomes also vary between US\$2.5/day to US\$250/month, with some exceptions for higher and lower wages. Jobs also vary from cab drivers to shop owners in the area to menial, low paid jobs and cooking for women. Foreign workers should also be distinguished, since their situation as shop owners of the lucrative business of used clothes, provides them with a listed income of US\$2,000/month, substantially higher than others.

#### e) Expenses

Education appears to be the biggest strain on families' budgets, and all complain that they cannot afford its costs, even if they see its value. Around half the families with children interviewed had pulled out at least one child at the age of 12 for work. None of the families deliberately refused to send children to school. Instead they all explained that they have had to pull out the children recently (with the rampant economic crisis) because they could not afford schooling anymore. It is no coincidence that the most recurrent form of subsidy listed by these families concerns subsidies from political parties and employers for schooling.

#### f) Health Problems

Healthcare also seems out of reach for most of these residents, despite the presence of a public dispensary in the area. Families living by the Ghadeer River also complained about child health and skin problems

related to the river (see above) as well as other security threats. One woman described how her child drowned in the river during a winter overflow. Others spoke of long term problems, whose cure they could not afford such as the presence of child with a disability or depression.

The limited sampling we conducted in this area indicated that foreign nationals pay higher rents than usual in slums, and that they are able to afford it only by sharing the costs over a larger numbers of individuals.

## III. SLUMS: THE PEOPLE

### F. THE INHABITANTS OF THE SLUMS

A very rough estimate of the total slum population, compiled using existing data and estimates reveals that all in all, there are around 300,000 slum dwellers in the 24 listed slums, that is over 20 per cent of the population of the capital city.<sup>20</sup> Four groups constitute the majority of these dwellers, all of them generally living in particularly precarious conditions (eg daily/unstable employment, illegal papers, etc). These do not however constitute all those living in poverty in Beirut, nor do they constitute all those living in poor conditions in the city, since many shacks are spread out all around Beirut and its suburbs, outside slums as well as within them.

These groups are:

- A number of the rural migrants, who came to the city starting in the 1950s, in order to work in factories or large scale projects, and whose economic conditions did not improve. The flow is much slower, but continues to the present. (This category generally has slightly higher human indicators than others).
- Lebanese populations displaced due to the various military conflicts between 1975 and 1990 (civil war and the successive Israeli invasions). Displacement occurred in several waves. The largest, in 1976, included the evacuation of most slum dwellers living in the Eastern section of the city. Overall estimates vary between 700,000 and 900,000 persons.
- International refugee groups, notably Palestinians, and Armenians, but also Kurds and Syrians in fewer numbers who came to Lebanon fleeing massacres or oppression in their areas of origin. It is notably large groups of the Palestinian (36,300 persons according to UN-UNRWA 1992) and Kurdish communities who still live in precarious conditions today.
- International labour, notably Arab (Syrian and Egyptian) menial workers and Asian (Sri-Lanki, Indian, and Filipino) and African (Ethiopian and Egyptian) maids.

Note that these groups are not mutually exclusive. Hence, the first two groups intersect strongly, since military conflicts (eg the Israeli bombing of South Lebanon

### Short Histories of Typical Slum Households

#### Yolla, Naba'a

Yolla has been living on "Ghilan Street" in Naba'a for a year and a half. She shares an apartment of 20 m<sup>2</sup> (one bedroom, living room, kitchen and toilet), with her sister and a friend, paying 160US\$ per month. For almost a year now, she has been without a steady employment and she survives on temporary jobs while she keeps looking for a permanent position.

Yolla came to Lebanon from Ethiopia, her native country, in 1997 through a hiring office and with a legal work permit. In the past five years, Yolla has changed jobs numerous times, shifting from being a live-in maid to a freelance worker. While she worked as a live-in maid, Yolla was physically abused in the first household she worked in (she ran away before the termination of her contract) and was unable to collect her pay in the second (the family claimed it needed to keep money to cover costs for legalisation). Four years after her arrival, and following the trajectory of her sister who had left the house where she worked to become a 'freelancer' and live in Naba'a, Yolla also quit her job. With her sister's help, Yolla found a part time job for 300US\$ a month. Six months later, the departure of her employing family left her unemployed, and since then, Yolla has been unable to find a steady job. Occasionally, she works as a cleaning lady in shops to earn some income. Her free days are spent indoors cooking for her roommates. She still has neither legal papers nor passport and therefore no insurance. She is only relieved by the closeness of her Ethiopian friends, when she is in trouble or gets sick. (Yolla says that she also has Egyptian friends but only trusts her fellow Ethiopians). She is stuck in Lebanon and cannot travel abroad unless she pays a large amount of money to the government in order to legalise her papers (which she does not have).

As for her social life, Yolla attends mass every Sunday at an evangelical church nearby in Bourj-Hammoud. After the mass, she and her friends go to reunions or go shopping, mainly on Arax street (Bourj-Hammoud) and Hamra. Yolla has also friends outside Naba'a (they also go to the same church on Sundays). She visits them only in the daytime because she feels insecure at night every time she walks on the streets: men think that she is a prostitute because she is always well dressed and has make-up on. She gets annoyed and scared by their remarks and invitations.

Yolla hopes to return to her country someday when she is able to afford the passport and the ticket expenses. She says that 'it is time to get married'. Meanwhile, she is still searching for a decent and permanent job to save the money for her trip.

Source: Samra 2002

#### Tamam, Naba'a.

Tamam arrived in Naba'a in 1977 at the age of 13 with her parents and siblings. At the age of 38, she is not married and lives with her parents and brother in a small apartment on the fringes of the Naba'a neighbourhood. The apartment, which the family has occupied since it moved to the neighbourhood, has two rooms, with a single bedroom, a living space, kitchen, bathroom and balcony. The rent is very cheap because it is protected by old rent controls (it costs less than US\$15/month, while today the same apartment would cost US\$150), and the family therefore spends very little on rent.

Tamam's family (7 children, 5 girls and 2 boys) moved from Nabatiyyeh, their village of origin in South Lebanon, and their first home in the Beirut suburbs was in Ayn el Remmaneh where they lived for two years before they fled heavy bombardments in the area. At the time, Naba'a seemed like an appropriate location for the family, especially because other neighbours from the village had moved in earlier and the family rented an apartment from one of the (Muslim) owners in the area. At the end of the war, the rent, protected by building laws,

remained very low, and the family opted to stay in the area.

Tamam stopped going to school at the age of 18, after she received her Baccalaureate, the Lebanese high-school degree. She first went to a secretarial school but the school was far away, in Achrafieh, and commuting was dangerous at the time. She took up a few jobs as a saleswoman nearby before she was hired in a printing press in Mkalles (industrial zone) where she has worked for the past 16 years for US 265US\$/month, plus social security benefits and transportation fees.

Tamam's employment is very important for the family because it provides half the steady income for the four remaining members of the household. Indeed, Tamam's parents, both retired, receive no pension. (Until last year, her father was allocated a pension by his previous employer, a company that sold packaging for machines. However, pension payments were stopped and the father was unable to contest this decision because the lawyer requested the sum of US\$1,500, a figure that was well beyond the family's reach). Her brother works for US\$250/month in an NGO and receives social security benefits that extend to their parents. The family also relies on the other married daughters who contribute regularly to the family's income. The family's budget is currently strained because of the father's medical problems: he suffered from a heart attack, had to be hospitalised, and is now under expensive medication.

Tamam does not feel as comfortable in her neighbourhood as she used to. She explains that important changes have occurred here in the past two years. Many buildings, occupied originally by Christian (squatting) families, were returned to their original (Muslim) owners who had fled the area in 1975. The (Christian) families that had squatted have now obtained indemnities and left to buy apartments in other areas of the city, such as Dekwaneh. She describes the building across the street from hers, where over 70% of the residents are new. She says they are either Muslims coming back, or workers renting houses from these Muslim families who chose not to come back, such as Syrian or Sri-Lanki workers. Tamam explains that she closes her curtains and avoids any contact with this new population. For her, there are now too many foreigners in the area...

Tamam however has no plans to move elsewhere. First, she explains that she would need US\$50,000, a sum she could never afford. Secondly, she finds Naba'a to be a practical place to live, especially because of easy access to transport. She compares herself to her married sister who moved to Ras Dekwaneh and has to commute now using several buses to reach her work. Furthermore, she and her parents have ties in the area: she is active with one of the philanthropic organisations of the neighbourhood and her parents have many friends and would be lonely if they left them.

#### Hajj Hassan Issa,

##### Land sale mediator and developer in Hayy el Sellom

Hajj Hassan is 78, his wife is 76. He came to Hayy el Sellom in 1967 where he bought 400 dra'a (local measurement unit) of land from Abu Raymond, at that time the only land developer in the area. The land was on a very large lot, lot #1400, which was subdivided among 264 owners. There, he had 5 children, only 3 of whom survived while the others have left children behind, for whom he has to cater. His two sons, whose education he paid for were able to leave the country and now both work and live in Canada (in white-collar jobs) and have never returned.

Before coming to Hayy el Sellom, Hajj Hassan lived in the village of Al Hibbariyyeh, in South Lebanon, where he owned a farm (Al Hibbariyyeh was occupied by Israel from 1978-2000). Every now and then, Hajj Hassan came to Beirut where he sold his milk produce to a number of notable families originally from his village and their neighbours and acquaintances. Among these acquaintances was a notary, Mr.

and later the occupation of South Lebanon) weakened the economy and encouraged the emigration of families from South Lebanon. Migrants chose to come to Beirut because of economic potentials. Also, many of the rural migrants who came to the eastern suburbs of Beirut prior to the civil war (pre-1975) were displaced by the 1976 events. Hence, they belong to the first two categories simultaneously. Similarly, many international war refugees were naturalised over the course of the years, and they can be placed in any of the second or third categories.

## IV. SLUMS AND POVERTY: THE POLICIES

### G. POLICIES TOWARDS SLUMS

To date, Lebanese public policies have never concretely addressed slums and their dwellers, despite a reasonable number of studies dedicated to the issue. *Laissez-faire* has been the rule, although punctuated by violent incidents of eviction. Presidential visits to the area are rare, generally at the beginning of a mandate (eg Gemayel in 1983 and Lahoud in 1999); they do not translate into projects and residents tend to be sceptical about their meaning. Public initiatives to intervene in slum areas tend to depend on specific individuals rather than actual institutional visions, and remain punctual and limited. All in all, two types of approaches can be detected towards slums since the 1950s. The first adopts a slum clearance attitude and suggests the rebuilding of modern units for the residents. The other discusses some elements of on-site upgrading but remains generally fixed on legal issues.

#### 1. Slum Clearance Policies

Several slum clearance campaigns, initiated by the central state, have happened sporadically, especially after or during phases of conflict. These operations targeted specific neighbourhoods, depending on the time, and often took up the form of political revenge rather than actual policies.<sup>23</sup> The first (recorded) slum clearance operation dates back to 1958, in the area of Ouzai (in the southern suburb of Beirut) and coincided with conflicts that opposed the Lebanese army to pro-Arab Nasserite movements. This operation did not succeed in dislodging residents (Ruppert, 1999). Yet another operation, organised in 1983 under the direction of the newly elected president Gemayel<sup>24</sup>, attempted to demolish a large section of the squatter settlements in the southern suburbs of Beirut and managed to bulldoze around 400 houses and stores in Raml before the operation was halted due to social resistance (Charafeddine 1985).





Buildings in WataEIMoussaitbeh

Furthermore, the execution of large-scale infrastructure projects is clearly seen by the state (central or local) as an appropriate occasion to halt the development of slums, and, at times, to destroy them in sections. Hence, highways and large construction projects (eg the airport extension, the sports stadium) are often carried out in dense neighbourhoods and slums where they displace large population groups. This is the case with the projected extension of the airport that was planned to wipe out 30 to 40 per cent of Ouzai in 1983 and the highway interchange planned in 1973 (70m wide) in the centre of Hayy el Sellom, that was described, it is said, by one public official, as “the only way to deal with Hay el Sellom.” The project, still approved but not executed, would wipe out 800 units (Charafeddine 1985, Fawaz 2000). More recently (this June), important conflicts have opposed public officials and residents in Ouzai where a 16m wide, 2.5 km long

bridge is planned to be built over the area. While these projects have not been executed (even if the highway projects have not be cancelled but remain a looming threat), notably because of the resistance of the local population in the southern suburbs (backed by the political parties of the area), other slums and low-income areas such as Jnah, Karm az-Zeitoun and Naba’a-Bourj Hammoud have been crossed by highways and bridges that displaced an important number of their residents and have caused, to date, considerable nuisance to those who stayed. In Naba’a, the project (still under construction) has caused the destruction of a large number of housing units, including sections of a municipal housing project, and further deterioration of local economic and environmental living conditions (Khayat forthcoming).

Finally, the presence of slums in the city is undeniably a major source of annoyance for public officials who have been accused of building high walls around the new high-speed road built between the airport and downtown to hide the slums (Tareek el Matar, popular song).

## 2. Research and Plans to Address the Development of Slums in the City Prior to the War

### The Pre-War Studies

The first studies we have found of slums date to the mid 1950s. In 1957, a study of housing conditions commissioned to Doxiadis Associates (a Greek consultancy company) included a section on slums. The Doxiadis study identified existing housing sectors and potential sites for the relocation of their dwellers (Sarkis 1998). It proposed, for example, building 5,000 housing units in order to relocate the Qarantina residents, financed at least in part by the state. Units were then to be sold to their dwellers with financing facilities extending over 20 years, and payments not exceeding 20 per cent of the annual family income. Funds were nonetheless never gathered for the execution of this project (Massabni, 1977). In the following years almost all planning proposals made for Beirut took up the same idea and focused on the need to relocate slum dwellers, notably those living in Qarantina, in low-cost housing built to this effect (Ecochard 1963, Mission IRFED 1963).

Counter perspectives can be noted at the time, especially one study conducted on the independent initiative of the French Government by the *Service des Missions pour l’Urbanisme et l’Habitat* (SMUH, French Ministry of Housing), which was leading studies on “uncontrolled urban development” in Africa and the Middle East. In the section dedicated to Lebanon in the report, large sections describe Palestinian and Armenian camps. This study underlined the reluctance of Lebanese public institutions to address the issue of slums, because of

various questions related to their lack of experience in the area, or interests in land. It also noted that the rehabilitation of slums as they are, rather than their replacement, was never considered and that housing institutions systematically planned relocating slum dwellers outside the city (SMUH 1964).

Pre-war studies indicate that a serious reflection was initiated in the early 1970s within public institutions on

recognised the existence of slums but limited its commitments to a few general recommendations about housing policies at the scale of the entire Beirut agglomeration. More than ever, public policies towards slums resembled a *laissez-faire* approach. The beginning of the civil war was to interrupt this search that was suspended until 1983.



the question of slums. This is reflected in studies commissioned by various public institutions in the 1960s-1970s to learn about living conditions of slum dwellers. For example, the Housing Council (Unit of the Ministry of Works and Social Affairs at the time) undertook a survey of the Qarantina area to identify property issues, count the number of houses, and evaluate the population in 1964 (Jazra 1969). A few years later, the DGU (Ministry of Public Works) commissioned the *Bureau d'Etude et de Recherche du Mouvement Social* (NGO) to carry out a study of slums in 1971. The study identified 7 slums, mostly built of tin and other temporary materials and located within Beirut and its close suburbs, but disregarded Palestinian camps (not under the jurisdiction of the state). This study was to form a beginning for a broader reflection in the preparation of new urban plans for Beirut and it reflected a new awareness among a number of (not all) public officials at the time. Indeed, the director of the DGU at the time explained, "it was already clear for us that existing Lebanese urban regulations did not carry the proper provisions for dealing with various illegal situations, and that alternative approaches had to be devised."<sup>25</sup>

However, and like previous initiatives, the report was not followed up by any plans for intervention, or even by shifting policies. This is made clear with the publication of the 1973 *Livre Blanc* published by the DGU that

### 3. Research and Plans to Address the Development of Slums During the War and the Post-War Years: Looking at the Southern Suburbs

Post 1982, the slum development of the southern suburbs of Beirut had taken on such scale and visibility that most policymakers' attention was turned that way. A short halt in combats allowed for reflection, especially after the failure of the attempted eviction proved that other approaches had to be adopted. In 1983, President Gemayel created a commission for the development of the southern suburbs (*Hayyat ima'a el dahiya el janoubiyah*). Ministers, public officials, and political representatives (from municipalities, local residents, and militias) were included in the two committees of this commission (As-Safir July 1983). As an outcome, the Lebanese army briefly entered the southern suburbs of the city where street cleaning, occasional asphaltting and other light works were undertaken. It failed, however, to achieve any other projects and work was soon interrupted by another outbreak of the war. The southern suburbs continue to be a priority (at least verbal) for every government, especially because the squatted (private) land has high market value, the number of inhabitants is very high, and because political actors are closely involved in negotiations in the area.



As from the mid-1980s, the tendency in several reports was to move away from complete eradication of slums, and in the 1986 *Schema Directeur de la Region Metropolitaine de Beyrouth* (General Plan for the Metropolitan Region of Beirut) there is a proposal to address “illegal housing” through the analysis of the existing conditions, and to develop regularisation options, still without any proposal for upgrading though. The report also warns against simplistic eviction measures (CDR-DGU 1986). In the context of preparatory measures for this report, the DGU also planned and commissioned studies to deal with the “illegality of the southern suburbs.” Simultaneously, pragmatic de-facto recognition of the permanence of slums led public agencies (water and electricity) to legally connect slum dwellers. This approach responded to the agencies’ need to collect fees for services residents were getting anyway, albeit illegally. In the following years, studies were commissioned to private offices with the aim of upgrading roads and other works by different public institutions, but none has been executed.

#### Elissar Project

The wartime plans for the southern suburbs began to materialise in 1992, when the government commissioned several studies, specifically on the prime seafront land of the southern area. Plans were made to allocate large sums to this effect. In 1995, these studies lead to the creation of a public agency, Elissar, whose main role is to ensure the proper implementation of the upgrading project for this area, one of whose aims is to transfer the squatters of Ouzai to new low-cost housing projects (7,500 units) to be built within the area. The project also plans the development of tourist/residential neighbourhoods along the currently squatted beaches. It also includes new policies for upgrading infrastructure and services, including a number of highways that would connect the city to the south Lebanon highway (Clerc 2002, Harb el-Kak 2000).

Important new policies have been adopted with this project. Firstly, Elissar recognises the rights of the dweller, *al-qaten*, irrespective of the mode of occupation. Secondly, the project recognises the importance of providing housing solutions for displaced populations, a mention already present in foreign expert documents but never adopted by a public agency before. Elissar also commits itself to the rehabilitation of infrastructure for these residents. Finally, the aims of the Elissar project are discussed with representatives of the local communities (political parties, deputies, etc), and while co-optation and misrepresentation are among the

most flagrant issues of the day, the concepts of negotiation and participation are implemented for the first time in the history of Lebanese planning. However, since 1995, investments have slowed down and the execution of large-scale projects and highways has either stopped or continues at a slower pace (Harb el-Kak 2000). Plans for the execution of low cost housing seem to have been cancelled while all public discussion is reduced to planning roads. In fact, rather than a public agency in charge of upgrading the southern suburbs, Elissar’s role in the last decade has been reduced to facilitating negotiations with slum dwellers for their displacement to make way for road developments.

#### 4. Slums and Local Authorities

With some exceptions, municipalities tend to intervene to the lowest possible degree in slum areas, which they often consider either outside their jurisdiction, or beyond the scale of their capacities. In several interviews we conducted with mayors, we were subjected to very high population estimates and descriptions of these areas as having “illegal” and “unhealthy” attributes. It is recurrently the legal issue that presents the justification for municipal workers not to intervene, when they explain that the illegal nature of developments, the fact that internal roads are private property, and similar issues prevent them from providing services they otherwise see as necessary.

However, and probably because of their proximity to legal communities, it is not unusual to see municipalities providing minor services for these areas, from street pavement (Jdeideh, Choueifat) to participating in the funding self-help sewer systems (Choueifat). Recently, the municipality of Ghobeiri has taken the initiative of providing water and services to slums under its jurisdic-





tion that were not connected to these services (UN-Best Practice Database, 2001). Another historic exception is the Municipality of Bourj Hammoud which took up the construction of housing units for Armenian groups in the late 1950s.

However, in both cases, mayors were providing services to communities with whom they had political and socio-religious affiliations that explain their activities more than their public office. An important aspect of the relationship of slum dwellers to the municipalities concerns representation. Indeed, since most slum dwellers are either foreigners or rural migrants, almost none of them actually votes within the jurisdiction of her/his municipality. Hence, slum dwellers have no relations of accountability with the mayors of the areas where they live, even if they often argue that a percentage of water and electric bills they pay go to the municipality, to whom they therefore pay taxes.

### 5. Ministry of Displaced People

Various struggles and deliberations led to the creation of a Ministry of Displaced People in 1992, attached to a Fund (*sandouq al-muhajareen*), in order to address problems related to the people displaced by the war, especially the estimated 89,854 who were unable to return 'home'. Different policies were implemented in order to organise the "return" of war refugees, half of whom are illegally squatting in houses. These include indemnities to families to evacuate houses in which they were squatting, funds for the rehabilitation of damaged houses, especially those that were abandoned and squatted during the war, and construction programmes for new residential units destined for displaced families (Ministry of Displaced People 1992). All these policies concern slums directly, since many slum dwellers and many squatters live in them.

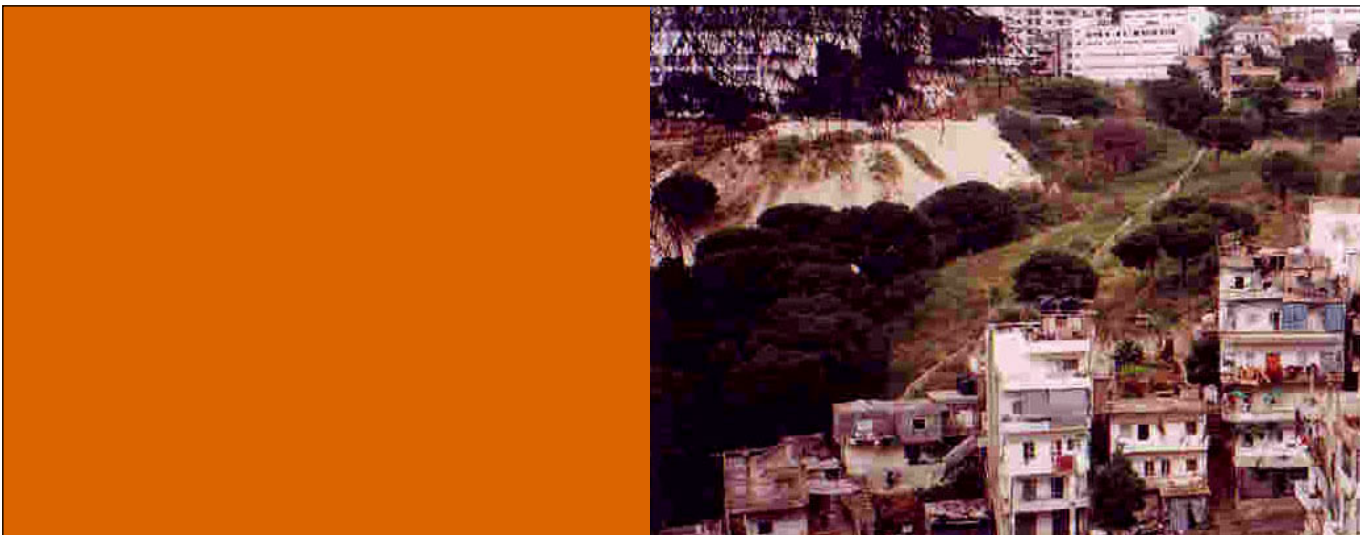
Programmes carried out by this ministry have in general been poorly implemented. Certain payment

phases were severely delayed. Furthermore, many condemn the discriminatory approach of indemnities and poor financial management (including fictitious displacements). For example, at the end of 1997, the figures published by the Ministry of Displaced People indicate that most investments had been placed to finance displacements and much fewer for the rehabilitation of houses (Feghali 1999). Furthermore, and as we have detailed above, the 'return policies' have not always had the desired effects, and the displacement of war squatters sometimes leads to the destruction of communities created during the 15 years of war, without actually helping towards "reconciliation" since many original owners are not coming back.

### H. POLICIES AIMED AT POVERTY

Government social policy for dealing with poverty is still lacking, and the belief in economic growth as a central solution for poverty eradication remains prevalent, despite widespread recognition that it does not work (Al-Khalidi 1997). Approaches in various domains, such as employment, wages, fiscal, price, safety nets, or vocational education remain occasional if addressed. By contrast, the current downsizing of public institutions is likely to create more rather than less unemployment, minimum wages have considerably lost their value over the years, notably due to inflation, and do not conform with the needs of families (Al-Khalidi 1997).

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), though its local offices, is the closest institution to slum dwellers, and its jurisdiction extends over poverty alleviation. These offices' responsibilities extend over a wide range of issues, from urgent health needs to comprehensive centres of social needs, running training programmes, caring for elderly, and other such services in direct relation to poverty alleviation (Al-Khalidi 1997). Together with this ministry, the Ministry of Public Health also



ensures healthcare to all Lebanese who are entitled to coverage for hospital services and therapies. Many slum dwellers are able to benefit from these services.

Recently, two new programmes of poverty eradication have been set up. The first, financed by the World Bank, is the Community Development Project (CDP) established to improve living conditions through (i) funding small, targeted community-based initiatives to improve the quality and accessibility of the poor to education, health, and physical environment services; (ii) basic skills training and capacity building to supplement micro-credit initiatives; and (iii) develop special social programmes targeting the needs of specific vulnerable groups (eg women). The second programme is funded by the European Union and also aims to fund training and micro-credit programmes as an approach to poverty alleviation. It is uncertain whether all slum dwellers will actually benefit from such programmes. Records generally show that the few NGOs that have ventured into such services in these areas have been unable to ensure repayments. One of them even closed an office in Hay el-Sellom, after losses became too high.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the design of these projects will determine whether they will actually be effective in low income areas.

## I NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

In addressing both poverty alleviation and the improvement of slum dwellers' living conditions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially the religious ones, play an undeniably more important role than state institutions.

### 1. NGOs and the Conception of Slums

If they are more active than the state, the conception of slums by NGOs is not very different from the state's and their vision of slum upgrading often coincides with

their replacement with low cost housing projects rather than on-site improvement. This is the case of the Armenian associations who, from the outset, sought to move their community outside Qarantina (as of the 1930s) and gathered funds and assistance in this direction, leading to the gradual relocation of Armenians living at the time in Qarantina to nearby sections of the city such as Bourj Hammoud. By 1928, and with the help of international and Armenian associations, 160 units were built on one of the hills of Achrafieh, Karm el Zeytoon, as well as in Getaoui. Another 550 housing units were also planned in Karm ez-Zeytoon. An additional number of houses were planned in Bourj Hammoud, now the widely recognised "Armenian neighbourhood of the city," where associations of people from the same region or village of origin also gather funds to acquire new lands and build housing (Keuroghlian 1970). Armenian NGOs were also to help later in financing municipal low-cost housing in the neighbourhood (1958-1959). More recently, in 1995, houses in the Syriac camp were replaced by new structures for the same residents, on the initiative of the Syriac Catholic Church and a Catholic Syriac Association.

It is also important to mention the grassroots role of political parties (or NGOs associated to them) and their interventions in slums, which in the case of Lebanon is not at all negligible. Indeed, various political parties have intervened to either facilitate a process of displacement (as was the case with the Druze leader Kamal Joumblat in an initiative to clear Wata Mousseitbeh) or to help residents resist it (eg the continued role of Amal and especially Hizb'Allah with the slums of the southern suburbs). Prior to the war but especially during military conflicts, political parties also organised land occupations (eg Palestinian Liberation Organisation and Amal with the occupation of the Jnah beaches). It is also among political figures (notably Imam Musa Sadr, Shiite cleric and political leader in the



1960s-1970s) that major criticism of state policies towards slums can be traced prior to the war and claims and mediations are made in favour of their residents, especially in obtaining services. Nonetheless, and if we are to look at their visions of a solution, all these parties have lobbied for the construction of low cost housing for residents of slums and it is not uncommon; especially in private discussions, to hear their members complain about the visibility of these areas of the city.

Local community associations, sometimes affiliated to these political parties, also play important roles in the provision of services and organisation of these neighbourhoods. This is especially the case in old slums such as Bourj Hammoud, Hayy es-Sellom, Zaaytriyeh, and others where people have congregated in tribal, family, and village association that first organised land subdivisions and construction and later the provision of services, including sewers in some cases (eg Hayy el Sellom). These committees also play a role in negotiations with the state over projected policies and other issues (Harb el Kak 2000).

## 2. NGOs and Information Dissemination

NGOs were and remain to date active in producing research and information about slums. As early as 1964, detailed reports of Qarantina were developed by an Armenian NGO, "Oasis de l'Esperance," (Oasis of Hope) which conducted a survey of the area, counting houses and identifying modes of land occupation. Others, such as the "Mouvement Social" were directly commissioned by the state and keep up-to-date research offices and archive data on slums. A good part of the data we were able to gather for this report were also produced by NGOs (Mouvement Social, World Vision, Save the Children, Markaz al-dirasat).

It is perhaps also important to single out the role played by Shiite (Muslim) research centres/semi-public institutions in the search for policies and solutions for the southern suburbs of Beirut. A major role in this direction was played by the Higher Shiite Council (semi-public) in organising a conference on housing in 1983 that was to begin the debate about rehabilitation policies for the southern suburbs of the city. This "housing conference" notably required rebuilding alternative housing for squatters when needed, and altering building regulations and zoning when possible to make their housing legal. It also insisted on the need to provide better services and infrastructure for slum dwellers in the southern suburbs.

A few years later, in 1996, the Council for Research and Development (a research centre mildly affiliated to Hizb'Allah) also launched an important campaign about the Elissar project and published a book with research and data on the same suburbs of the city.

## 3. NGOs and Poverty Alleviation

Many NGOs play important roles in poverty allevia-

tion, whether in the form of direct subsidies, training programmes, or more recently micro-credit programmes to help towards income generation. To date, a high percentage of NGOs in the Lebanon - 45 per cent - are registered as charities (Kandil 1994). More recently, a few have also joined in advocacy roles, but they are still limited.

Among NGOs addressing poverty, religious NGOs, both international (eg World Vision, Caritas) or local are by far the most active. Perhaps the most notable among them, serving communities of slum dwellers, are a number of religious (Shiite) NGOs who have formed a network of service providers in the southern suburbs of Beirut. These NGOs have been active participants in the tasks of service provision and poverty alleviation. (Many among them affiliated to Hizb'Allah, a political-religious party with elected MPs in government). For example, *Jihad al Bina'a* (an NGO directly affiliated to Hizb'Allah) replaced absent municipal authorities until their re-election (1998) in, for example, clearing sewers and ensuring garbage collection (until its privatisation in 1992) and still provides free drinking water to all areas of the southern suburbs (including slums and camps).

Among these same religious NGOs, health services, schooling, training programmes, micro-credit, targeted alimonies, and an array of other such facilities are also distributed to their beneficiaries. These services are not systematically limited to the southern suburbs, since *al-Hayy'a as-Sahiyya* (Health Committee) also possesses a dispensary in Roueissat (East Beirut). Nonetheless, all these NGOs almost exclusively target beneficiaries sympathetic to their cause (Fawaz 2000b, Harb-el Kak 1996). ■

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 This figure excludes seasonal workers.
- 2 Solidere as a project is subject to many controversies, opposition by original property owners, architects, planners, but continues nonetheless, albeit with some changes. Works began in 1994, and plan the construction of some 4 million m<sup>2</sup>, and the establishment of modern, up to date infrastructure in the area, but never picked up at the planned pace.
- 3 Many illegal buildings are casinos and beach resorts for the rich, predating the civil war.
- 4 Already before the war, Beirut housed a very large number of international migrant workers, notably Syrians and other Arab nationals. However, the scale/ number of these migrants has increased substantially in the 1990s.
- 5 Armenians were the subject of a series of massacres perpetrated by the Ottomans at the end of the 19th century (1895-96, 1909). The retreat of French troops from Cilicia in 1922 intensified the threat of new massacres and led to the departure of large waves of refugees towards Lebanon and Syria.
- 6 The qualitative information of this survey is almost exclusively developed from anecdotal information obtained from a limited field survey.
- 7 Syrians are members of Christian sects, historically closely tied to Armenians, and are divided in two groups (Catholic and Orthodox) that each has its own religious institutions. They, and the Assyrians (who arrived to Lebanon a little later but under somewhat similar conditions), form historically the same ethnic group and speak versions of the same language (Arameic). These communities lived traditionally in areas of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Syriac refugees were preceded in Lebanon by several groups of Syriac families (especially catholic) who came to this country notably for pilgrimage and other reasons (Mouawad 1991).
- 8 The families have been moved to temporary housing, in the basements of churches and in religious social clubs, and have remained there since because various problems have halted the finishing of these buildings.
- 9 See endnote no. 6.
- 10 Palestinians arrived in Lebanon in waves as of 1948, at the outset of the creation of the State of Israel in their country and the perpetuation of a set of massacres that led to their departure. According to the first census, undertaken in 1949 by the League of Red Cross Societies, there were 140,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (UN-UNRWA 1992), who constituted around 10 per cent of Lebanon's total population. Between 1948 and 1951, the number of refugees fluctuated between 105,000 and 130,000, but most of them do not live in refugee camps (Sfeir Khayat 2001). Today, we can count a total of 319,427 registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who constitute, according to the UN report, 10-12 per cent of the Lebanese population. Only a few of these still live in refugee camps.
- 11 The growth of the Tel ez-Zaatar camp as well as areas of informal land subdivision in Dekwaneh, Roueissat, Fanar, and Bjaout should also, to some extent, be related to the location of the eastern industrial suburb, see below).
- 12 While no documentation lists the history of the close development of Bourj Brajneeh and Raml, we know that a number of the early comers to the area of Raml, in the southern suburb of Beirut, came from the camp to buy or squat in the area (Charafeddine 1985).

- 13 Note that squatter settlements that developed as extension of camps, in areas where property is not necessarily contested are listed in the section "camp extensions".
14. This section is developed almost exclusively on preliminary findings through interviews with residents.
- 15 Private interview (1999).
- 16 The exact definition used in the report is "dense urban fabric, with very dense horizontal structures and narrow roads. The fabric is generally regular, but not hierarchical. An example is the Palestinian Camps inside Beirut, illegal structures along the Beirut beaches" (ECODIT-IAURIF 1997).
- 17 IRFED, a mission of French experts (priests) who were commissioned by President Chehab to evaluate strategies for Lebanon's development.
- 18 According to this report, *Basic Needs* are defined as housing needs (measured as number of rooms/person, space/person, and heating), water and sewerage access (measured as connection to water mains, drinking water, and type of sewerage connection), education (measured as schooling and educational level), and income-related indicators (measured as number of cars/hh, workers/hh, and profession/type of work).
- 19 For example, a 1983 study by the Safir counts some 800,000 residents in the southern suburbs (1/4 of the country) while studies at the date estimate it to 400,000 (As-Safir 1983).
- 20 The percentage of residents could be inflated by the fact that the ACS figure of 1,300,000 residents for Beirut and its suburbs doesn't account for illegal migrants, many of whom live in slums.
- 21 Private interviews with policy makers of the era.
- 22 A not unimportant detail about Amin Gemayel (1982-1990) is that he was the son of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the Phalange Movement, the militia/political groups that bulldozed Palestinian camps and slums of East Beirut in 1976
- 23 Private interviews with Mohamed Fawaz, former head of the DGU between 1974 and 1993.
- 24 Private interview, Al Majmou'a NGO.

## ACRONYMS

CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CEGP	Conseil Executif des Grands Projets
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NERP	National Emergency Reconstruction Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

## GLOSSARY

<i>Al-qaten</i>	Dwellers' rights
<i>Massaken 'aswakiyyah</i>	Chaotic housing
<i>Mouhajareen</i>	Displaced people
<i>Mourtajal</i>	Improvised buildings
<i>Tanake</i>	Wooden and metal structures
<i>Waqf</i>	Religious estates or lands

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## UNDERSTANDING SLUMS: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human Settlements 2003

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