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Forever Nearing the Finish Line: Heritage Policy and the Problem of Memory in Postwar Beirut

Adrienne Fricke*

Abstract: Between 1976 and 1991, central Beirut, repository of centuries of historic structures, was substantially destroyed by civil war. In 1994, a private company known by its French acronym Solidère was created by government decree and given the task of reconstructing the center of Beirut. Despite political problems, the Solidère project brought the hope of social recovery through economic renewal; yet progress should not come at the cost of memory.

How can Beirut, destroyed, be a site of both recovery and erasure? Even though traditional legal and political discourses acknowledge that cultural heritage holds a powerful position in reconstruction, there are few tools for capturing its functions. Using heuristics originally employed in archeology and art history, this article addresses psychological aspects of reconstruction by discussing contemporary Lebanese art. If culture is defined not only as what people do but *how they make sense of what they have done*, the enormity of the political problems of post–civil war reconstruction become clear. National governments hoping to consolidate authority would do well to consider how best to approach public places resonant with emotionally charged memories.

Policymakers should consider the complex benefits of negative heritage in drafting laws that will enable its protection. Legal reform carried out with the goal of balanced heritage policies that accommodate negative heritage is key for postconflict urban spaces. By acknowledging the weight of the past, such policies would also bolster confidence in the emergent government and the political process.

J'habitais la maison d'en face,	I lived in the house over there
Face à la guerre et au Jardin,	Facing war and a Garden
De morts plantés et de rosiers,	Planted with corpses and roses,

*University of Pennsylvania Law School. Email: africke@alumni.law.upenn.edu.

Ancêtres oubliés dans la dynamique d'une allée	Forgotten ancestors in the movement of an alley
Dans une cube de mémoire.	In a cubicle of memory.
Sous le balcon d'un oeil, une moitié de corps,	Under the balcony an eye, half a body,
L'autre formant un angle sur le trottoir.	The other half at an angle with the sidewalk.
Une moitié de corps, sign isolé sur ma fresque de haine.	Half a body, a single sign on my canvas of hatred.

Nadia Tueni, *Archives Sentimentales d'une Guerre au Liban*, 1982.

"For the Lebanese and for tourists, betting on horses has always been a favorite leisure activity." Paid advertisement, Solidère, *New York Times*, November 22, 1993.

BERUIT: AN INTRODUCTION

Between 1976 and 1991, central Beirut, a repository of centuries of historic structures, including important monuments from the Ottoman and French colonial periods, was substantially destroyed by civil war. The war saw violence between sectarian groups, including Shiites, Sunnis, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Maronite Catholics, and Druzes, and the city space was drawn up into sectarian enclaves. Although the fighting engulfed the entire country, the devastation of Beirut's city center has come to symbolize the destruction of Lebanese society; its ruined buildings and infrastructure are the primary locus of the history of the conflict. As the commercial heart of the country, the city center was the space where Lebanon's many religious and ethnic groups could engage in a neutral setting. This shared public space was destroyed physically and socially by snipers, shelling, mortar attacks, and gunfights between rival militias. Further damage occurred during the Israeli bombing and siege of the city in the early 1980s and was heightened by the armed interventions of various foreign powers. Former commercial and civic buildings, formerly the scene of intercommunal commerce and social interaction, were transformed into militia headquarters. The city's roads and infrastructure sustained severe damage.

When the fighting finally ended in 1991, Lebanon faced the problem of how to rebuild its once-flourishing capital. Rather than taking on this monumental and emotionally charged task itself, the postwar government delegated responsibility for reconstruction to a private entity, the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District S.A.L. (better known by its French acronym Solidère), with controversial ties to leading politicians, including the billionaire former prime minister, Rafik Hariri. Significantly, several of the primary stakeholders in Solidère are believed to have participated in the demolition of parts of the Beirut Central District, or BCD, during breaks in the fighting, which critics say lends an air of war profiteering to the reconstruction effort. Since becoming

the official redevelopment authority, Solidère has sought to remake, not repair, the central city space.

The story of Solidère embodies major themes in Lebanese governance: private and personal influence, the cult of capitalism, and a weak state unwilling, if not unable, to perform its regulatory functions. The legal framework for the Solidère project, Law 117, was put in place on December 7, 1991, by the outgoing Lebanese government; it amends the constitution and cedes to a private development authority the power of eminent domain. While this legal mechanism is roughly analogous to the Redevelopment Authorities used to revitalize decaying urban areas in the United States, it poses unique problems in a postwar setting in which sectarian divisions continue to dominate and where the redeveloping entity is functionally run by the prime minister under a different guise. The reconstruction of downtown Beirut is an object lesson in the politics of reconstruction and governmental accountability in postconflict situations; in this sense, the formal and legal process of reconstruction is as important as the substantive questions of historic preservation or urban planning that have been made and partially fulfilled.

In this case, and in every war-torn city in recovery, the legal and political fields have been the first to address these issues. But these traditional schools of thought have failed to address a psychosocial problem: how can Beirut, destroyed, be a site of both recovery and erasure?

Using heuristics originally employed in archeology and art history, this article addresses the psychological aspects of reconstruction by discussing contemporary Lebanese art that takes as its subject memory, loss, and architecture in the postwar setting. Discussions about cultural heritage often tap into deep aquifers of unexamined emotions, regardless of the discipline or forum in which the discussion takes place.[1] Even though traditional legal and political discourses acknowledge that cultural heritage holds a powerful position in reconstruction, there are few tools for capturing its functions. Yet an engagement with the emotional and psychic aspects of heritage, especially negative heritage, should be thoughtfully embraced through policies of cultural management. This kind of management includes not only the traditional purviews of the archeologist, anthropologist, and art historian, but also the activities of the government and, by extension, the private companies which have contracted to carry out its mandate. In fact, cultural management in postwar settings may be necessary for meaningful civic development and instrumental in reinforcing a sustainable civil society. Conversely, the sublimation of negative cultural heritage's emotional charge may result in an incubation and reexpression of deep social divisions. The main ideas used here for understanding the current process of rebuilding in Beirut—memory, amnesia, and nostalgia—highlight rather than suppress the emotional aspects of recovery that continue to seep through the porous, if tidy, discourse of postwar development.

The examination of the reconstruction leads to a set of policy considerations for incorporating a broader notion of heritage that could accommodate the remembrance of national trauma, with the understanding that should the region

remain stable, Solidère would likely fulfill its vision of complete redevelopment by 2018. Despite the fact that significant political changes would be necessary to gain popular and governmental support for a remembrance initiative as suggested in this article, the value of the thought experiment persists: to accept the status quo as an economic and political necessity would mean acquiescence to Lebanon's willed postwar amnesia. Unfortunately, a majority of the buildings in the BCD that survived the shelling and bullets have already been razed by the very corporation entrusted with redevelopment of the area. Whereas 265 key structures have been identified as worthy of preservation, including religious and public buildings, a more inclusive program of urban planning, including secular and private buildings, is necessary for the psychic healing of Lebanese society. While it may be too late to incorporate a more expansive vision of urban planning into the BCD, there are many private and residential structures elsewhere in the city that might benefit from a frank assessment of the issues at stake. In time, the cultural management of postwar Beirut may prove as important as the reconstruction of its roads and electricity grid.

The Solidère project has brought the hope of social recovery through economic renewal to the Lebanese; this article does not suggest that Lebanese society should remain psychologically frozen in the war years or shun economic growth. It is problematic to equate the level of violence inflicted by the loss of culture and the loss of human life in a war. Progress, however, should not come at the cost of memory. Absent the painful process of examining recent history and the role of the Lebanese in the violence that consumed their country, the danger of repeating the mistakes that led to the war looms large.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS: LAW 117 AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF RECONSTRUCTION

The dubious legislative history of the private company Solidère, headed by the onetime prime minister of Lebanon, billionaire Rafik Hariri, is rarely discussed in media accounts of Beirut's comeback, but an overview helps clarify the political stakes in the project. After the first major episode of fighting in 1975–76 destroyed the Beirut Central District, the government created the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) to assume the role formerly held by the ministry of planning. The council had commissioned a plan from the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR) based on discussions between private and public organizations interested in the reconstruction effort. Jad Tabet, a prominent Lebanese architect, characterized the goal of the APUR 1977 plan as "remolding" the center "into a meeting place for the various communities, thus expressing sentiments of national consciousness to reinforce Lebanon's unity."[2] Lebanese literary scholar Saree Makdisi observed that the 1977 plan sought to "restore the class and communal diversity that had characterized it before the

war,"[3] showing an awareness of the long-term problems of economic inequity for postwar society.

The government's APUR plan, although technically in effect throughout the war, was never implemented, so its relative merits and flaws will remain theoretical. Instead, private entities profited from the lack of governmental controls between 1983 and 1994; ironically, most of the city center was demolished by these would-be developers during ceasefires and lulls in the violence. The unsanctioned dynamiting of the BCD, which was termed *cleaning up*, began in 1983, and only an outbreak of fighting in 1984 stopped the demolition.[4] Approximately 80% of the remaining structures were destroyed during the ceasefires of the following years. The final clearing of the area occurred precipitously over a holiday weekend in 1994, in what commercial district landowner Omar Daouk called "the biggest land grab in history."[5] The official 1977 APUR plan called for the rehabilitation, not eradication, of many of the areas destroyed in the cleanup, including historic structures, several traditional Souks, and the Saifi neighborhood.[6] Many Lebanese believe that the economic forces allied in Solidère (including former Prime Minister Hariri) were responsible for the furtive destruction of much of the downtown area.[7] Certainly Solidère stepped into the vacuum created by the lack of buildings and infrastructure. Angus Gavin, spokesman for Solidère, stated in one of its official publications that the destruction of the city center had been "on such a massive scale that reconstruction was no longer a simple matter of restoring the fabric as it existed before the war."[8]

Law 117 provides the framework for Solidère by modifying the earlier amendments to the 1977 law that created the Council for Development and Reconstruction.[9] By the end of the war in 1991, nearly 100,000 claimants clamored for legal priority to a mere 1,630 parcels of land. This posed a serious obstacle to the vision of the private developers.[10] Law 117 amended the 1977 legislation and granted Solidère the power to expropriate the property of existing owners, who receive shares of Solidère stock in return. Landholders received 65% of the total number of Solidère shares, with an estimated value of $1.2 billion. Solidère's remaining shares, valued at $650 million, were sold to the Lebanese public to raise cash for infrastructure. Former Prime Minister Hariri was the majority stockholder and the driving force behind the company; his resignation from office in 2004 caused stock in Solidère to drop. Lebanese commentators in the early 1990s considered Solidère fundamentally flawed because the legislation amending the constitution to grant it full power over reconstruction was passed by an outgoing government and ignored public input.[11] Regardless, the language of Law 117 does not mandate the creation of Solidère per se, although it would have been difficult to imagine another set of developers competing for the job. Solidère engaged in a worldwide advertising campaign to promote its vision of the new Beirut, including a six-page spread in the *New York Times*, a year before it had gained legal status as the sole official developer of the downtown district.[12] The problems inherent in this glossy vision of the downtown area were clear to a British journalist visiting the BCD in 1999:

> Solidère represents the hope for rebirth of rich Beirut, and there hasn't been much left for ordinary Lebanese. While Solidère glistens . . . much of Beirut sits in poverty. People living in the downtown area were unceremoniously removed to make way for Solidère; many families still inhabit their bombed-out homes; and the Palestinian refugee camps, which include Sabra and Chatila, notoriously massacred by the Christian Phalange under Israeli guard in 1982, are poorer than ever.[13]

In addition to the perceived extralegal reclamation of the BCD by private war profiteers, the reconstruction produced anxiety about the postwar government's ability to protect individual property rights. Under the law, the Council for Development and Reconstruction is charged with administering those property rights.[14] However, public confidence in the government has been undermined by its significant administrative overlap with Solidère consultants. For example, the appointment of Fadel al-Shalak, former head of Hariri's OGER Liban engineering group (which had laid the groundwork for Solidère), signaled what many saw as the "main private organization in the building industry . . . tak[ing] over the official planning advisory body."[15] One traditional landowner stated succinctly, "What the gunmen could not achieve, the developers finished off. They have undervalued the land, and are offering derisory compensation."[16] Approximately 2,600 families, owners, and tenants, were effectively dispossessed by the Solidère project.[17]

In the spirit of collective avoidance surrounding the war, the Lebanese seem to have suppressed the memory of political resistance to Solidère's literal and legal occupation of the field. In a prescient 1997 essay on urban narrative and spatial identity in Beirut, Saree Makdisi observed that "we are losing sight of how [Solidère] came to be the only option, how other options were foreclosed long before the reconstruction effort officially began, how the whole process has been presented . . . as an accomplished fact."[18] Eight years later, the apparent abuse of political process is still rarely discussed, but the Lebanese have hardly forgotten. The persistence of memory means that even if Solidère's abrogation of power is almost always represented as a fait accompli, people are aware that the process was not participatory or universally welcomed.

NEGATIVE HERITAGE AND CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

How do cultures negotiate the memory of trauma such as genocide or civil war? To grasp the complex posture Beirutis have taken towards reconstruction, this article borrows Lynn Meskell's term *negative heritage*, and the French historiographer Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* or realms of memory to discuss how collective memory and place intersect. These analytic tools help illustrate how the intangible culture of violence is mediated through physical spaces such as buildings, monuments, and landscapes.[19]

Negative heritage is used to capture those cultural symbols and spaces that through trauma have become the repository of negative memory in the collective imagination. Negative heritage can encompass conflicting kinds of memory, because each instance of it possesses a twin potential: the interpreting society can "mobilize . . . [it] for positive didactic purposes" (as in the case of the Auschwitz memorial); or it can be erased, if it resists "cultural rehabilitation and incorporation into the national imaginary" (as in the case of Nazi and Soviet statues and architecture).[20] The Beirut Central District constitutes a major site of negative heritage for the Lebanese, as well as for the world, which can be "mobilized as forgetting as well as remembering." The desire to recover from trauma in the most expedient way possible is both natural and intuitive, and any compassionate interlocutor of the postwar process in Lebanon must acknowledge the enormous difficulty of contemplating the last 30 years of strife. For a nation accustomed to survival, such introspection must feel strange, if not indulgent. Still, the polyvalent interpretations of negative heritage that follow from the subject's position in a cultural matrix make it key to reconstruction efforts.

The literal deconstruction of the downtown area created a sort of pilgrimage site described by architect Brian Hanson in 1999 as "the most radical of projects, a sacred nothing which people still flock to see."[21] The cultural management strategies employed to overcome the horrors of the past involve what Meskell terms *past mastering*: the way a society deals with inherently disturbing sites through erasure or forgetting. The two aspects of past mastering are the erasure or eradication of the negative heritage and the inscription of a safe, sanitized past.

Solidère has been actively eradicating the urban landscape of downtown Beirut. Since becoming the official developer, the company has employed a logic of refashioning the central city space. While the restoration work Solidère has done is admirable, it is striking that many buildings that could have been saved were torn down. Even structures from the French colonial period, whose visual vocabulary Solidère employs, were destroyed. A well-documented example was the demolition of a nineteenth-century rococo police station in Martyrs' Square, which Prime Minister Hariri had initially promised to rebuild. The replacement of authentic, potentially troubling relics of prewar buildings with safe, neutral simulacra of colonial styles is a recurring theme in the BCD. Solidère's efforts have left religious buildings magnificently restored but isolated among a wasteland of car parks and empty lots, lonely monuments to a lost society. Removed from their urban context, these buildings have become historical sites, not places of living remembrance. Meanwhile, original colonial structures have been cannibalized. Costa Domani, a leading member of the Association pour la Protection des Sites et Anciens Murs de Liban, noted that much of the fine building material used in the older Italianate villas and palaces has turned up at flea markets. He observes pessimistically that

> Anything in Lebanon is tied to money value—not sentimental or architectural value. The land is the thing that is valuable—anything built on the land has no value whatsoever. Those who have made money have

> done so through land speculation. To safeguard old houses, you need a change in people's thinking.[22]

There are multiple ironies to the past mastering of the BCD. On a material level, the aversion to remembering and contemplating the causes of the war (which provided the political will for the deconstruction of the city center) resulted in the unearthing of a treasure trove of archeological finds that were hastily excavated prior to the major rebuilding phase. But even these long-buried objects were powerful sites of negative history, as prominent journalist and longtime resident of Beirut Robert Fisk observes:

> Perhaps it is this pattern of calamity [multiple earthquakes and fires, revealed in the archeological evidence of the downtown excavations] that makes the Lebanese so frightened of their history. They have still not examined the reasons for the civil war that ended four years ago—the Beirut newspapers refer to that conflict and its 150,000 dead as *al-hawadess*, "the events"—and this unwillingness to deal with the demons of history has manifested itself in one of the most exciting archaeological digs in recent Middle East history.[23]

On a political level, there is great concern that the representation of artifacts from time periods "claimed" by religious groups could be used as legitimate claims to cultural, and therefore political, dominance. Fadl El-Shalak, head of the CDR, admits, "We are frightened of our history because we are not united in our understanding of it."[24]

The second sobering irony is that the posture of forgetting and its desire to clean up through demolition risks the reconstitution of the conditions that led to the civil conflicts of the 1860s, 1958, and 1975–91, and, ultimately, a reenactment of the social trauma. The desire to make culture anew has the unfortunate effect of suppressing trauma; the danger is that it may facilitate the reexpression of the violence it seeks to forget. For this reason, both the metaphysical and physical aspects of reconstruction must inform the reform and creation of cultural heritage policies in Lebanon.

THE NEW FACES OF THE PAST

How is memory expressed in terms of architecture and urban planning? Historiographer Pierre Nora's term "*lieux de mémoire*" helps define sites in which we find "a residual sense of continuity of memory; places in which memory is crystallized."[25] By exploring the operation of nostalgia via these realms of memory, the concept allows us to understand how past mastering occurs:

> *Lieux de memoire* arise out of a sense that there is no such thing as spontaneous memory, hence we must create archives, mark anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and authenticate documents because such things no longer happen as a matter of course.[26]

When the realms of memory are physically erased, spontaneous memory triggered by their visual consumption is no longer possible. The rupture or trauma experienced by a society in a civil war renders both spontaneous and constructed memory difficult, painful, or psychically impossible. The eradication of these physical traces of memory—in the Beiruti case, perhaps as literal an occurrence of negative heritage eradication as the destruction of a tall building prized by militias for having an excellent sniper range—leaves a space open for reworking of cultural narratives. In the case of Solidère, large numbers of viable structures were obliterated to make way for a refashioned, commercial space. The result is a lovely, well-planned representation of a Beirut that literally never was: a finely crafted site one might expect at Disney World, cast in terms of other, more orderly spaces and times:

> Solidère is the glamorous, exciting side of the reconstruction; it's the part which aims to recapture the spirit of Beirut in the 60s, when (as people tell you) it was known as the Paris of the Middle East (for its sophistication) and little Lebanon was the Switzerland of the Middle East (for its mountains and banks).[27]

By providing a sanitized and safe vision of a happy, prosperous past, the Solidère architects are producing a nostalgia whose commercial and tourist value is as significant as it is repressive of more personal, troubled memories. Solidère Chairman Nasser Chamma'a's 1995 proclamation that "We are preserving *what is worth preserving*," (emphasis added)[28] implies a value-extraction model of heritage. The redevelopment of the BCD in the manner of a quasimandate-era Lebanon that never existed signals a profound commitment to forget, or more pointedly, the will to amnesia, characterized by a physical inability to remember. If memory is bound up in some critical way with space, then the destruction of that space hinders the process of remembrance.

Solidère's slogan "Beirut: Ancient City of the Future" makes explicit the focus on the twin prerogatives of ultramodernity and reverence for the distant past. A significant number of edited studies by major Lebanese architects, economists, and urban planners were published in Arabic and French outlining salient objections to Solidère in legal, practical, and aesthetic terms.[29] Ominously, the internal Lebanese opposition to the Solidère plan has dropped out of the larger media narrative, mirroring the larger public will to forget. A British travel writer noted without irony in 1999 that "a company called Solidère was created to oversee the gigantic building site largely on the initiative of the country's richest man, Rafik Hariri . . . He had the dream of taking the area worst damaged by the war and *turning it back into a showpiece*" (emphasis added).[30] The confection of a showpiece, a delicious glimpse of a past that few Lebanese experienced and even fewer can now afford to consume, implies a series of fake memory realms, where negative heritage is dammed up, unable to flow into the collective imaginary.

The effect of selective erasure is only partial, however, and in Beirut it has fed an aesthetic movement obsessed with memory and its policies. The public dis-

course around the reconstruction efforts has been reflected significantly, and to a certain extent shaped by, the work of a number of artists, many of whom are graduates of the architecture program at the American University in Beirut.[31] These sculptors, videographers, and writers have been active in producing art and media interventions focused on memory, heritage, and the physical spaces of Beirut. In particular, the work of artists like Walid Raad and the other members of the Arab Image Foundation speak directly to the negative heritage/nostalgia conundrum by addressing the personal act of memory repression in pieces designed to be performed against a public backdrop of urban existence.[32] In the words of Arab Image Foundation cofounder Akram Zaatari, "it is exactly the absence of any corporate, state, or institutional demand for art that marks the kind of art practices coming out of Lebanon. It is the political economy of art-making."

As reconstruction moves forward and iconic spaces are set to be rebuilt, the overt politics of remembrance are surfacing in the Lebanese press. Public outcry at the proposed demolition of signature works, such as Joseph Philippe Karam's Modernist mixed-use "Bubble Dome" (officially known as the Beirut City Center Building or BCCB) have resulted in successful, if only short-term, solutions. Solidère has agreed to freeze the sale of the site for only five years, making the rehabilitation temporary. Although the building was never officially an art space, young people have used the old, disused movie theater as an alternative cultural venue for the last decade, and it is hoped that this generation will prove loyal to the space. Termed an "object lesson in the city's tempestuous political history," the BCCB, also popularly known as the Bubble, the Blob, and the Egg, will be renovated by postmodern architect Bernard Khoury, who plans to preserve its artillery-scarred surface—"bullet pocks, mortar holes, crumbling plaster and all"—wrapped in wire mesh, and surround it with permanent red scaffolding, giving it, in Khoury's words, "the permanent feel of a construction site."[33] Khoury's project embodies his vision of Beirut, "messy, chaotic, and full of life," which signals a sharp departure from the prim colonial idiom of the BCD. Khoury imagines his structure as providing the "way Beirut's past and future intersect in the present." This ambitious project is significant in that Khoury intends to preserve well-known elements of negative heritage in his rehabilitation. Equally significant is the fact that Solidère approved his radical design for the signature site.

The Bubble overlooks Martyr's Square, a mercantile space completely razed during the war. Solidère is sponsoring an international design competition for the rebuilding of the Square. The site of execution of early Lebanese nationalists by the Ottomans, it became the endpoint of the Green Line, which separated Christian from Muslim Beirut throughout the war. In a prescient statement to the press, Solidère's manager of urban development, Angus Gavin, observed that "It's the only place where all the groups in the city really came together. That has to happen again; if [downtown] works, it means the idea of a multireligious, multiethnic society is back in business."[34] Submissions will be judged by an international seven-member jury under the auspices of the Union of International Architects, and

Solidère has solicited submissions from prominent architects, including Frank Gehry, Norman Foster, and Rafael Moneo;[35] results will be announced in 2005. Whereas it is a glamorous solution, Beiruti urban planners must still grapple with the fundamental need to incorporate negative heritage in the larger scheme. Hashim Sarkis, Beiruti activist, architect, and Agha Khan professor of landscape architecture and urbanism in Muslim societies, observes that reconstruction architects "have not yet taken on the responsibility of imagining the Beirut of the future. . .if you rely on star architects to do that, each one just throwing their little icon in Beirut, then you are missing the point."[36]

INTANGIBLE NEGATIVE HERITAGE: THE ATLAS GROUP ARCHIVES

If the Lebanese civil war was fought on some level over different constructions of the nation,[37] and central Beirut functions in the national imagination as the former site of prosperity and then collective mass violence, it makes sense to consider how it can be managed as negative heritage in which the physical realms of memory have been excised. Given that this vast swath of negative heritage has been gutted from the BCD and rebuilt as a projected fantasy, it is important to look to other kinds of remembrance. There are a number of young artists and architects based in Beirut whose works center on the topic of postwar construction, rebuilding, and erasure, engaging theories of memory. In particular, two pieces by the professor, historian, and multimedia artist Walid Raad reflect lived experience of modern history in Lebanon in light of the missing realms of memory.

Whereas the limitations of using a piece of art as a heuristic for examining public policy are obvious, the advantages in the case of the redevelopment of the fetishized heart of Beirut are numerous. Because the official process amounts to the erasure and calculated imposition of a system of buildings, it makes explicit the will to forget the trauma of the immediate past. The swift, systematic razing of the downtown area and the construction of elegant but historically ersatz structures proves this point. By rebuilding in the architectural idiom of a modified French mandate–past, the current memory regime articulates nostalgia for a time before the civil wars of 1975–91, when Lebanon was a financial center commonly referred to as "the Paris of the Middle East." Yet this carefully manicured vision is being contested in the realm of intangible heritage: namely, performed multimedia works of art.

The Atlas Group is an imaginary, nonprofit research foundation founded by Walid Raad in 1999 in Beirut to explore the contemporary history of Lebanon and, in particular, some of the unexamined dimensions of the Lebanese wars (1975–1991).[38] Raad publishes and exhibits his work with its main platform of public performance, as a "historian of the Lebanese Civil War," presenting findings from an archive of either constructed or found images. Educated in both Lebanon and the United States, he is frank about the personal and emotional content of his work, his own history of trauma, and his concern over what he sees as the collec-

tive will to forget the past. Two pieces in particular speak to the current regime of memory management: *Sweet Talk or Photographic Documents of Beirut* and *Missing Lebanese Wars_Notebook Volume 72*.[39]

In *Sweet Talk*, Raad presents photographs of "every street, storefront, building, and other spaces of national, technological, architectural, cultural, political, and economic significance," beginning in 1973 and continuing "to this day." He claims that his imaginary foundation (the Atlas Group), has "recruited dozens of men and women" to take these photographs, which are often blurry, unreadable as images, and labeled with fictitious addresses. Raad has discussed and presented these images at public lectures and at academic conferences[40] as well as on national televised talk shows in Lebanon, in which he solicits help "from every Lebanese citizen," encouraging individuals to contact him with their stories and images. The reaction to this piece varies with the audience; I have witnessed only the Lebanese performances, which engender a mix of shock, sorrow, and outrage. Even Lebanese colleagues within the academy who are sympathetic to Raad's larger project were shocked by the performance on national TV: the idea that ordinary people were tricked into believing in his simulacra of documentation of their painful history, and in his authority as a historian, was received as cruel and obnoxious. Yet, arguably, the visceral reaction underscores the effectiveness of the piece: the excitement people feel at the idea of such an archive, and their shock and disgust when they discover that the images are unreal, imprecise, or manufactured, speak to the deep need to engage with the trauma of the war. Significantly, it foregrounds the similarity of the process by which the authorities of Solidère have created an ersatz Ottoman mandate–era space that guides Lebanese to misremember the days prior to and between the wars.

Raad's piece *Missing Lebanese Wars* takes a less literal approach to memory. He presents the work of a deceased Lebanese archivist who catalogued the activities of prominent historians of the Civil War. In particular, he claims that they all went down together each week to the Hippodrome to bet. They wouldn't bet on the horses, however; they wagered on how far from the finish line the winning horse would be in the newspaper photo (see figure 1). In Raad's memoryscape, the photographer's trip wire is always set too early, so that the winning horse is never photographed at the finish line. Raad's fictitious group of gambler-historians trade bets on just how far before the finish line the photographer will snap the shot. This provides an apt metaphor for the repercussions of a given set of narrative strategies, the forever unknown ending of the national history; by focusing our attention on the partisan historians' wagers, Raad directs us to ponder the suspension of history sometime just before the end of the race, or the end of a political era. As with the photographer at the Hippodrome, the trip wire of national memory is forever set at an anterior moment crafted through nostalgic images and structures. This anterior suspension helps elide the events of the war from the national narrative; no one has yet won or lost the race, and no one will ever be forced to.

Yet negative heritage is stubborn. The poem with which this article begins was composed by Nadia Tueni in 1972, prior to the outbreak of the war.[41] The poem's

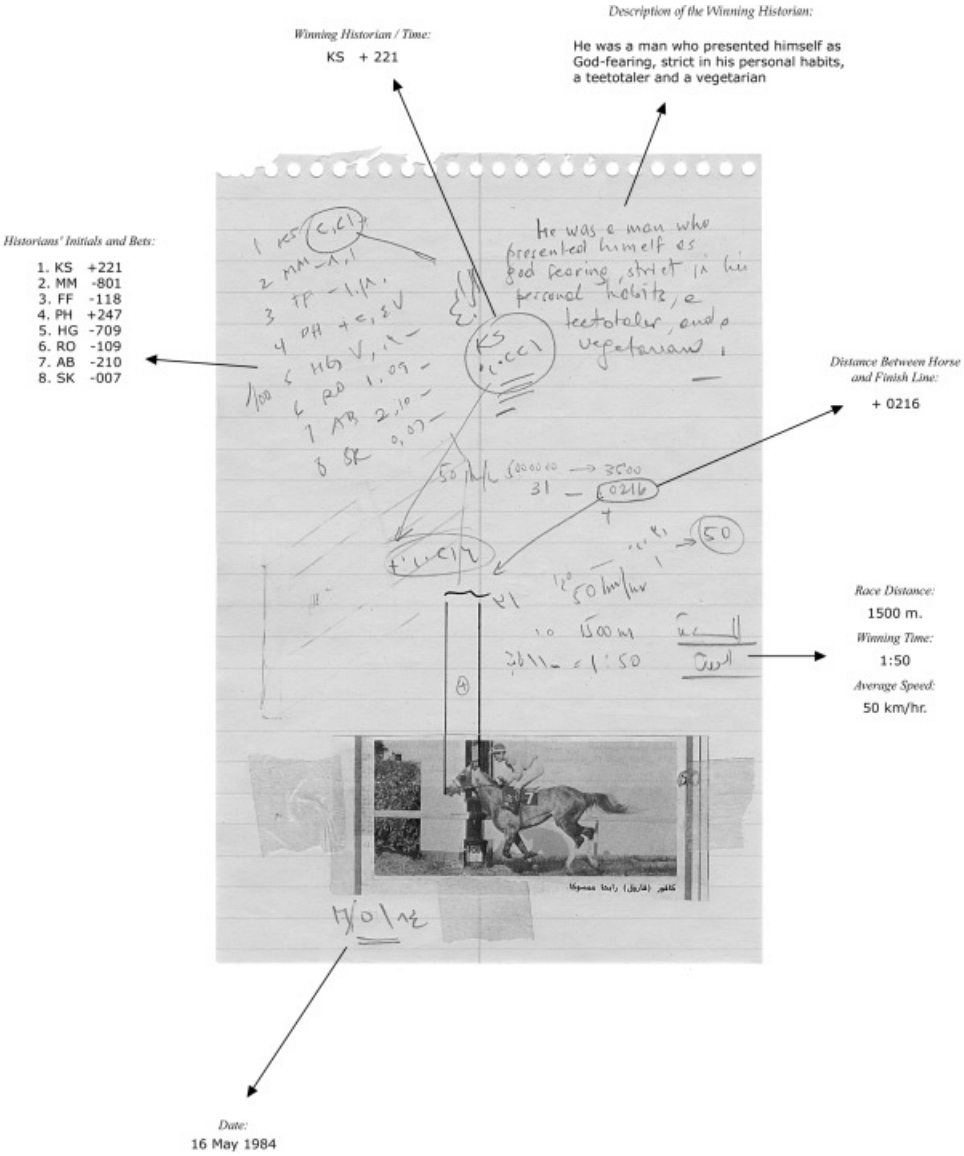

Figure 1. Missing Lebanese Wars, plate 137 (1991–2001). File: AG_AGA_Fakhouri: 137. Color Print, 25 × 30 cm. Copyright © The Atlas Group/Walid Raad and Fadl Fakhouri.

protagonist mentally revisits the house where she lived during another war, recalling in graphic detail that her building faced a "Garden/Planted with corpses and roses/Forgotten ancestors in the movement of an alley/In a cubicle of memory." Tueni's *Sentimental Archives* fits well into Nora's interpretive device: with the spatial realm of her memory gone, she must create a memory house. These archives of emotion frame symbols of violence and social discord (an eye, a body split in two, the forgotten ancestors, and the confinement of memory) within the space of

the house—the garden, alley, balcony, and sidewalk. We can imagine the poem as a snapshot of the internal process by which memory unfolds in the ordinary sites of negative heritage that have been rendered extraordinary by the scope and intensity of the war.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers will do well to consider the complex benefits of negative heritage in drafting laws that will enable its protection. As one commentator notes, the years of vicious bloodshed, violence, kidnappings, and massacres "created a profound trauma that will take rather more than a few multinational retail outlets to cure."[42]

In Lebanon, public awareness of symbols of cultural heritage is acute. Policymakers operating in and around state and municipal bureaucracies can best serve their constituencies by addressing the psychosocial aspects of postwar Beirut. The legal regime in Lebanon is characterized by a number of pressing problems that reach far beyond issues of cultural heritage law, yet which affect it directly.[43] Lack of public participation and governmental accountability, and the inherent problems of the confessional system have all reinforced the privatization of the reconstruction effort. Yet there is cause for hope: in 2004, positive steps were taken towards improving reconstruction policies in Beirut's city center as well as implementing preservation programs in five major historical towns, financed through World Bank Cultural Heritage and Urban Development (CHUD) loans.[44]

While a detailed analysis of Lebanese public policy lies beyond the scope of this article, attention to two areas would likely result in improvement of the current situation. Certain legal and social issues must be addressed for the government to ensure a minimum threshold of positive public reception. The existing laws affecting urban planning, preservation, and housing must be revisited if larger buildings with the potential for economically diverse and integrated residential and commercial use are to be saved on the periphery of the BCD. Current zoning laws encourage the demolition of larger spaces (zoning categories one and two), since the total built-up area allowed is far greater if the existing building is demolished than if the original structure remains. Tax incentives, such as the one passed in June 2004 giving landlords who perform maintenance on their properties a 5% income-tax deduction, should be supported as a way to encourage smaller investors to rehabilitate, rather than demolish, otherwise functional war-era buildings. Such incentives would help preserve the architectural heritage of the neighborhoods bordering the BCD, which are now under scrutiny for redevelopment.[45]

Land-use and housing regulations need urgent attention if negative heritage sites are to be maintained for public use and consumption. The current rental law (No. 159/92, also known as the *Free Contracts Law*) discourages maintenance of older tenant-occupied buildings. Since rents are stabilized at pre-1992 prices, the offers of Solidère or other investors who will pay top dollar for land are tempting to prop-

erty owners who might be mobilized to protect the heritage of their neighborhoods under less dire economic situations. A draft rent law has been hotly debated for more than two years, with both landlords and tenants permanently dissatisfied, perhaps because the real issue is not about rent as much as a crisis in affordable housing stock.[46] Nearly half of Beirutis rent their homes, and there is little moderately priced housing stock, which further entrenches lifetime tenants, who pass their leases on through family members. The social effects of Solidère's vision are palpable, with nearly 70,000 of the luxury apartments in the BCD empty in 2004.[47]

Preservation laws are similarly retrograde. The Directorate of Antiquities protects only structures built prior to 1701, under the Antiquities Law and the Urban Code. Yet opportunities for revision are forthcoming, since the World Bank CHUD project (which will revitalize historic sectors of Baalbek, Byblos, Tyre, Tripoli, and Saida) includes a mandate to bring future heritage-related practices within the UNESCO codes of conduct.[48] Other changes require less work, but would yield a significant payoff. For example, the rules for designation and listing in the National Heritage Register should be changed, since groups of buildings are currently very difficult to list.[49] Unfortunately, from 1990 to 1997, groups of private buildings were added to the list, but the mechanisms to protect them were not sufficient. Legal reform carried out with the goal of balanced heritage policies that accommodate negative heritage would not only improve the texture of postwar life in Beirut by acknowledging the weight of the past, it would also help bolster confidence in the government and the political process.

In tandem with legal reform, lawmakers should focus on revising and consolidating the administrative bodies currently responsible for implementing laws affecting cultural heritage. Admittedly, Solidère is a powerful and unaccountable quasigovernmental development agency with the ability to seize land for public use. The Lebanese government could consolidate the various administrative entities that currently oversee cultural heritage sites and policy, to make them more effective and give them more equal footing when negotiating with Solidère. Journalist Lisa Ball-Lechgar explains the current system:

> At the moment, two separate departments handle the administration of sites and their promotion: the Directorate of Antiquities (DGA) reports to the Ministry of Culture, while the Directorate for the Operation of Archeological Sites and Museums comes under the Ministry of Tourism. This means that it is often not clear who is responsible for each service, leading in turn to not enough money being spent on areas such as site security and preservation.[50]

Social issues, while posing more diffuse difficulties, are no less crucial to the ultimate success of reconstruction. These should include educational and informational programs that encourage continued civic participation and public discussion of Beirut's urban and social history and the reconstruction efforts. Past initiatives supported by the French and British cultural centers have included well-attended public presentations, design conferences, and panel debates on the politics and

aesthetics of reconstruction.[51] The American University in Beirut hosted an influential monthlong public seminar series entitled "*La Meen Beirut*? (Whose Beirut?)" in May of 2004, in which artists, urban planners, developers, and transit specialists exchanged ideas on the impact of reconstruction. Such informal grassroots activity should be encouraged by the government. Small grants would go far to sustain the public's participation in such fora and would represent a tiny portion of reconstruction budgets. After years of unevenly monitored development, the government and Solidère should take care to preserve what remains of the public's goodwill concerning the cultural heritage of the downtown BCD. By promoting education about both negative and positive cultural heritage, the government can improve the chances of consolidating a national Lebanese identity mediated through the *lieux de memoire* of public spaces.

There are no completely happy endings in narratives of nation building. Yet with awareness of the psychosocial dimensions of urban planning in postwar Beirut, the mobilization of negative heritage can bring positive didactic, psychological, and even financial aspects to the collective experience of national reconstruction. For policymakers, artists, and urban planners alike, the national goal must be, in the words of architect and conservationist Mona Hallak, to "honor what this place was, and what we lost."[52] By creating spaces for emotional as well as political expression, nonsectarian governmental initiatives would increase public awareness of its commitment to transparency and good-faith efforts to contend with the challenges that lie on the finish line of history.

CONCLUSION

If war is hell, then reconstruction is a psychological and financial purgatory. In war-damaged urban areas that have experienced prolonged civil wars, it is also a tricky political process. Major world cities have been or are being destroyed through armed civil conflicts, and it appears that the global community will face the challenges of reconstruction repeatedly in the coming decades. The legal and economic aspects of reconstruction are often debated, but it is rare that reconstruction discourse openly addresses the problem of promoting a postwar culture of peace and national inclusiveness. It is vital to discuss the reconstruction of public space and monuments in particular, not only because traditionally they are the sites of commerce, but also the places where the social relations we call *culture* are mediated. If we define culture not only as what people do, but *how they make sense of what they have done*, we begin to grasp the enormity of the political problems of post–civil war reconstruction. National governments hoping to consolidate authority would do well to consider how best to approach public places resonant with emotionally charged memories. A successful approach to reconstruction can aid in governmental authority by making explicit a public commitment to the rights of all citizens, regardless of past trauma.

ENDNOTES

1. For a North American example, see Judge Bauer's unusual rhetorical strategy in the celebrated Kanakaria Mosaics case, in which he begins his opinion with a lengthy quotation from Byron's *The Siege of Corinth*. Autocephalous Greek-Orthodox Church of Cyprus v. Goldberg, 917 F.2d 278, 279 (7th Cir. 1990).
2. Tabet, "Towards a Master Plan for Post-War Lebanon," 91.
3. Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut," 667.
4. Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut."
5. Llewellyn, "The Big Build-Up." *Sunday Times*, January 29, 1995.
6. Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut"; Tabet, "Towards a Master Plan for Post-War Lebanon."
7. For example, see Salaam, *Al- I'amar Wa-Al-Maslahah Al-'Ammah Fi Al-'Imarah Wa-Al-Madinah*; Corm, *Al- I'amar Wa-Al-Maslahah Al-'Ammah Fi Iqtisad Ma-Ba'da-Al-Harb Wa-Siyasatuhu*.
8. Gavin, *Beirut Reborn*.
9. Full text available at ⟨http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/340/342/law_no91-117.html⟩ (retrieved on March 7, 2005).
10. Stewart, "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Postwar Beirut," 487.
11. See Beyhum, "Fi taqyim wa naqd al-martakazat al-dustouria wa al-qanounia," 87–8.
12. Advertising section, *New York Times*, November 22, 1993.
13. Viner, "48 Hours." *The Guardian*, March 6, 1999.
14. Lebanon does not have an analogue to the "Sunshine Laws" of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the American statute whose application limits the influence of private interests on advisory bodies. 2-7 Administrative Law § 7.07. Transparency and faith in the government remain a source of anxiety for citizens.
15. Sarkis, "Territorial Claims," 114.
16. Omar Daouk, cited in Tim Llewellyn, "The Big Build-Up." *Sunday Times*, January 29, 1995.
17. Llewellyn, "The Big Build-Up." *Sunday Times*, January 29, 1995.
18. Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut," 665.
19. Meskell, "Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology;" Nora, *Realms of Memory*.
20. Meskell, "Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology," 558.
21. Hanson, "Redrawing Beirut's Geography of Fear."
22. Costa Domani, APSAL, as quoted in Robert Fisk, "Architecture: Building a new Lebanon ravages its Ottoman Treasures." *The Independent* (London), November 26, 1997.
23. Fisk, "Lebanese recoil as the demons of their history are unearthed; The city's destruction in the civil war provided a great chance to unlock the past, but not everyone has welcomed it." *The Independent* (London), March 1, 1995.
24. As quoted in Robert Fisk, "Lebanese Recoil," cited in the previous note.
25. Nora, *Realms of Memory*, Introduction.
26. Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 8.
27. Viner, "48 Hours." *The Guardian*, March 6, 1999.
28. Llewellyn, "The Big Build-Up." *Sunday Times*, January 29, 1995.
29. Examples include Tabet, *I'amar wa'l Al-Maslaha Al-'Ammah Fi Al-Turath Wa-Al-Hadathah*; Corm, *Al- I'amar Wa-Al-Maslahah Al-'Ammah Fi Iqtisad Ma-Ba'da-Al-Harb Wa-Siyasatuh*. In French, see also, Beyhum, *Reconstruire Beyrouth*.
30. Harvey, "A War Shattered City." *The Times* (London), March 13, 1999.
31. These include Walid Saadek, Akram Zaatari, Joana Hadjithomas, Jalal Toufic, and others affiliated with the Fondation Arabe pour l'Image (Arab Image Foundation). For details, see ⟨http://www.fai.org.lb/⟩ (retrieved on December 11, 2003).
32. As quoted in Wilson-Goldie, "Liberties." *Daily Star*, March 20, 2004.
33. Spindle, "Returning to Beirut." *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2004; Wilson-Goldie, "Beirut's icon of modernist architecture set to be revamped." *Daily Star*, July 2, 2004.
34. As quoted in Spindle, "Returning to Beirut," cited in the previous note.

35. Leftly, "Foster, Gehry and Moneo invited to redesign Beirut." *Building*, May 7, 2004. For contest details, see ⟨http://www.beirutmartyrssquare.com⟩/

36. Wilson-Goldie, "A Spectacle of Anticipation." *Daily Star*, September 1, 2004.

37. For an excellent eye-witness account of the social, economic, and political history of the period, see Fisk, *Pity the Nation*.

38. Walid Raad is a media artist and assistant professor of art at Cooper Union (New York) ⟨http://www.cooper.edu/art/faculty.html⟩ His works include textual analysis, video, performance, and photography projects. Representative samples of his work can be seen at ⟨http://www.theatlasgroup.org/⟩ (retrieved on December 9, 2003).

39. *Sweet Talk* can be found at ⟨http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeAGP.html⟩; *Missing Lebanese Wars* can be found at ⟨http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeA.html⟩ (retrieved on December 9, 2003); see also Abdallah and Awada, "Missing Lebanon Wars."

40. Raad presented his fictitious archive during the Lebanese history panel of the Building City and Nation conference in Beirut (July 1999). Ironically, a number of historians walked out of his performance in protest.

41. Amyuni, "The Image of the City," 31.

42. Taylor, "Laughter in the Dark." *The Independent*, June 3, 2004.

43. For a concise background of the pratfalls of reconstruction, see Adwan, "Corruption in Reconstruction." *Lebanese Transparency Association Report*, December 7, 2004.

44. For a detailed discussion of the implementation of the CHUD-financed project, see Ball-Lechgar, "Inner City Revival." *Lebanon Opportunities*, April 2004.

45. Ball-Lechgar, "Old vs. New." *Lebanon Opportunities*, July 2004.

46. "New Rent Law: A Problem or a Solution?" Judicial and Regulatory Outlook, *Information International Monthly*, July 2002, available at ⟨http://www.information-international.com/iimonthly/issue1/judicial.html⟩ (retrieved on December 9, 2004); see also Tayyar. "Lebanon's Real Estate Sector." *International Market Insight*, December 12, 2002, available at ⟨http://strategis.ic.ca/epic/internet/inimr-ri.nsf/en/gr112464e.html⟩ (retrieved on December 9, 2004).

47. Khayat, "Beirut is for Everybody." *Daily Star*, May 21, 2004; see also Khayat. "Beirut's Urban Planning." *Daily Star*, May 7, 2004.

48. Ball-Lechgar, "Inner City Revival." *Lebanon Opportunities*, April 2004.

49. Ball-Lechgar, "Old vs. New." *Lebanon Opportunities*, July 1, 2004.

50. Ball-Lechgar, "Inner City Revival." *Lebanon Opportunities*, April 2004.

51. Wilson-Goldie, "Liberties." *Daily Star*, March 20, 2004; Medlej, "Reconstruction of Beirut." *Daily Star*, February 4, 2004.

52. As quoted in Wilson-Goldie, "Breaking in Beirut's Brand New Art District," *Daily Star*, July 29, 2004.

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