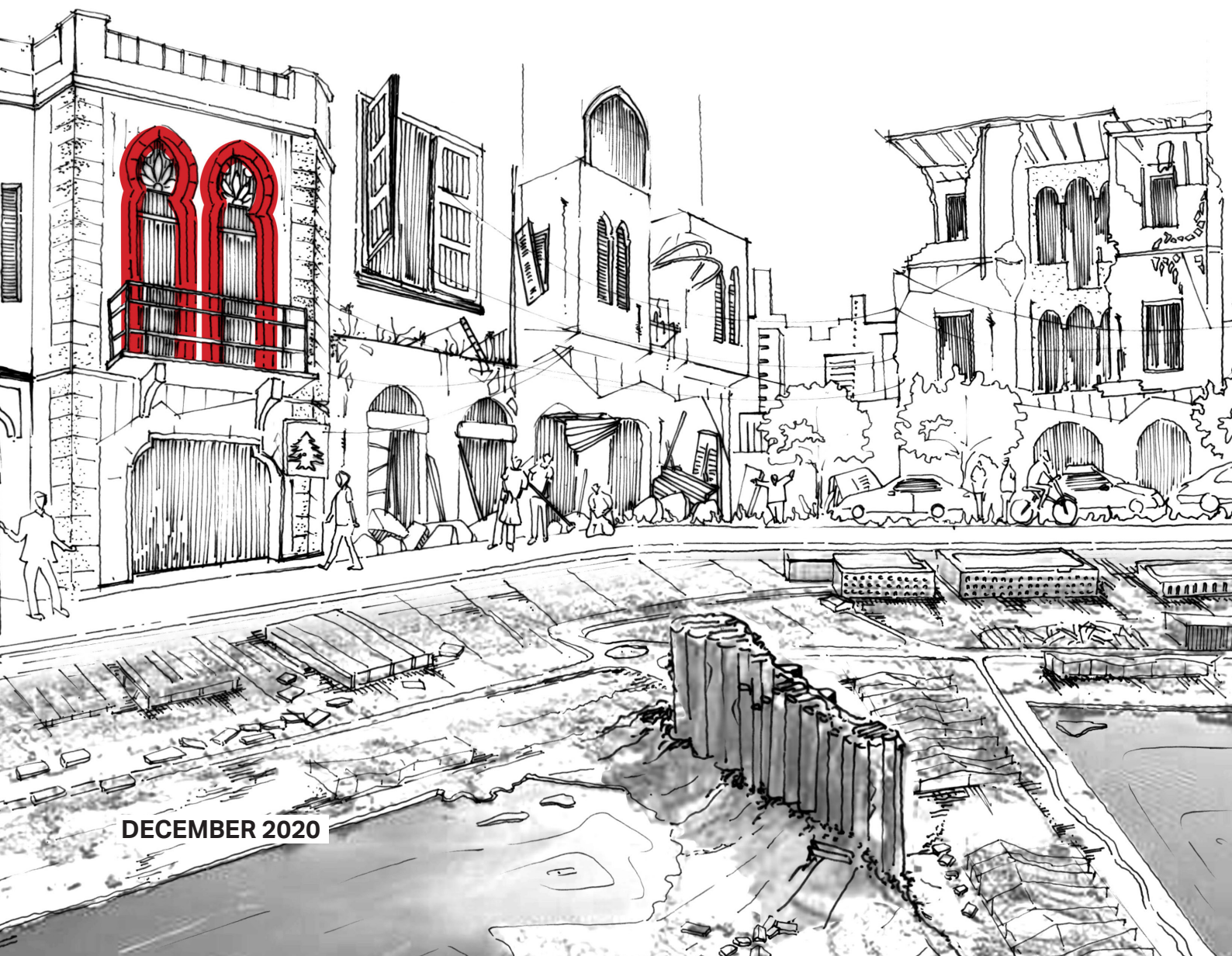# BEIRUT

BEIRUT RECOVERED

A SERIES OF ARTICLES
ON POST-DISASTER
RECOVERY

dar

DECEMBER 2020

STATEMENT
OF WORK

On August 4, one of the most powerful non-nuclear blasts in history rocked Beirut, devastating the city's central and eastern neighborhoods and triggering a massive humanitarian crisis. When the dust settled, it fell on a Beirut that had been irrevocably changed. The neighborhoods and areas most affected by the port blast had not only provided shelter and livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of people, they had also served as the unofficial but vibrant heart of Beirut. By virtue of their outstanding character, rich identity, exceptional heritage, unique creative industries, and active public life, these neighborhoods were viewed as an inclusive, accessible foundation for the brighter future the Lebanese dreamed of. Within seconds, they were wrecked to rubble.

The Dar community in Beirut was shaken to the core – with thousands of its Lebanese employees directly or indirectly affected by the tragedy. Since its beginnings in Beirut in 1956, however, the company and its people had been deeply rooted in Lebanon, surviving and preserving across countless trials as we sought to build a better future for Lebanon and use Lebanese talent to help drive progress around the world. With tragedy striking so close to home, the entire Dar Beirut community was galvanized to help support their community. Over a hundred Dar architects and engineers were voluntarily deployed to the affected areas to support in needs assessments, and many were involved in immediate relief efforts.

It soon became apparent, however, that the scale of the tragedy required a more comprehensive recovery vision. To spark an essential community conversation, Dar prepared a series of articles. Our objective was to present, from a planning perspective, a comprehensive understanding of the multitude of challenges faced by Beirut in the aftermath of the port blast. These include the city's long-standing urban and socio-economic issues, which will continue to be aggravated in the immediate future. Together, the articles present an emergency plan that targets restoring a semblance of normalcy in the affected neighborhoods as well as a future plan which aims to inform a vision for the revival of the area as a whole, a vision that not only guides the reconstruction of the city but also addresses the vulnerabilities that existed before and restores the heart of Beirut.

The topics chosen for these articles are reflective of the most pressing issues facing the affected neighborhoods: social sustainability restoration, housing sector reformation, creative industry rehabilitation, and public realm reclamation. Once addressed, these issues will enhance the overall resilience of the neighborhoods by enhancing the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.

The findings of the articles are based on Dar's expertise and familiarity with the affected neighborhoods and are supported by desktop research and data collection. Each article presents a condition assessment of the topic in question before and after the disaster to tailor a context-specific approach before proposing a set of short-term solutions and long-term recommendations.

After August 4, there is a critical responsibility to build back better. Lebanon's under-resourced and neglected physical and administrative infrastructure will need to be seriously readdressed in order to create a powerful set of actions that will enhance community resilience in the face of such large-scale strife. Moreover, it is integral to the city's renaissance, development, and regrowth that the post-recovery effort address both urgent issues for short-term recovery and long-term strategies to seasonal, long-standing, and future challenges. This recovery and redevelopment must aim not only to preserve that which has always had value but also to improve on that which needs to be questioned and changed.

Through these articles, we hope to begin a conversation around an urban recovery that is people-centered, place-specific, and value-led.

dar   dar

TEAM

Author: Lili Abou Hamad

Report Production/Design Layout: Mariam Adra

Front and Back Cover Drawing: Ali Chahine

Editor: Haya Yahya

ACRONYMS

ACD: Arts, Crafts, and Design

CCI: Creative and Cultural Industry

CCS GF: The Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility

DCMS: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

EY: Ernest & Young

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

OEA: Order of Engineers and Architects

SME: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

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LIST OF FIGURES

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The study area of the articles (approximately 216 hectares with a population of around 59,500) mainly comprises the neighborhoods most affected by the Beirut port blast. These neighborhoods are characterized by their unique historic urban and social fabric, and they boast a rich mix of uses and a diversity of socio-demographic groups. The selected study area is outside of the limits of Beirut Central District under Solidere governance. It is worth noting that some of the proposed solutions or recommendations in the articles are not limited to the study area, but address the city in its entirety and can be even scaled-up to a country level.
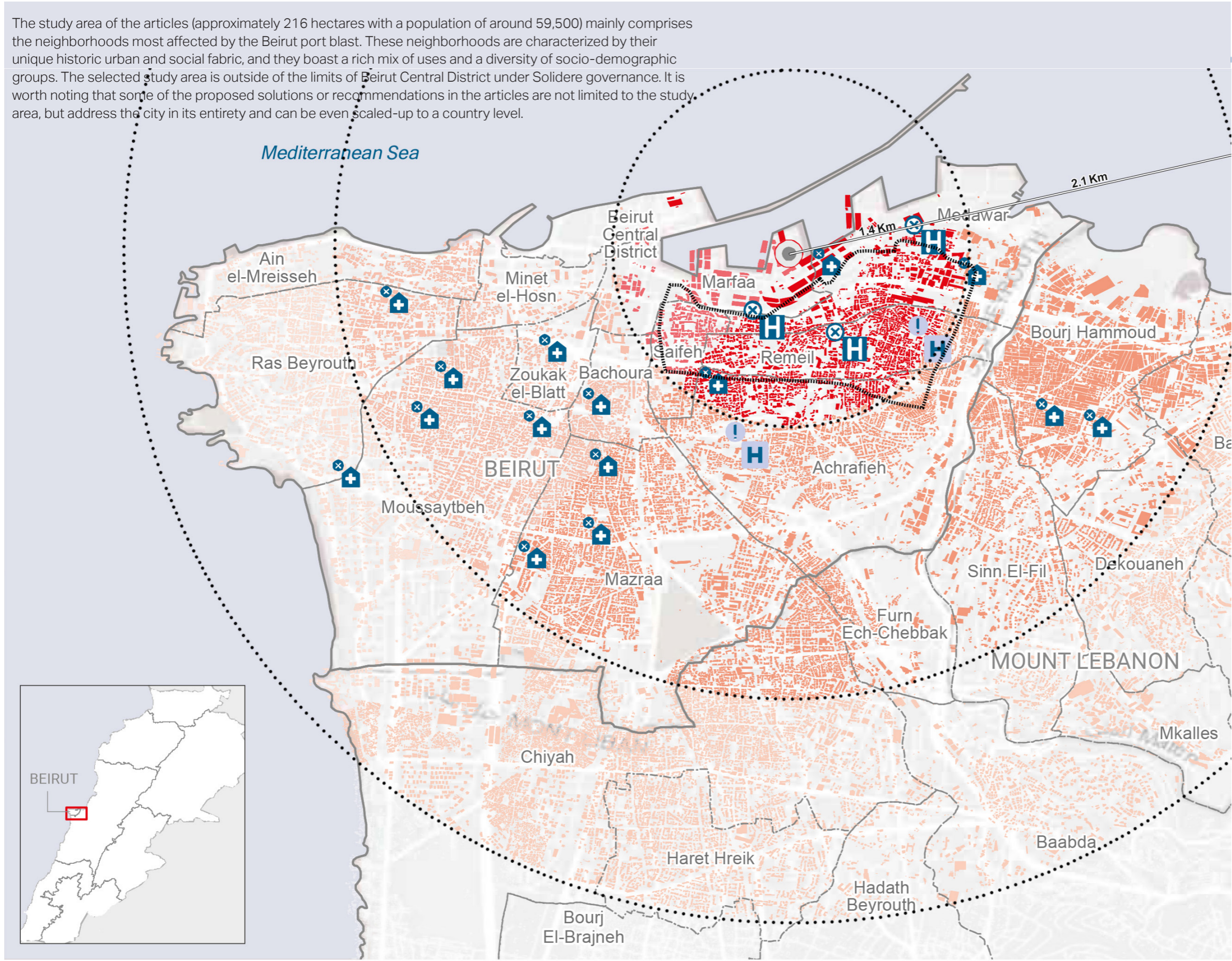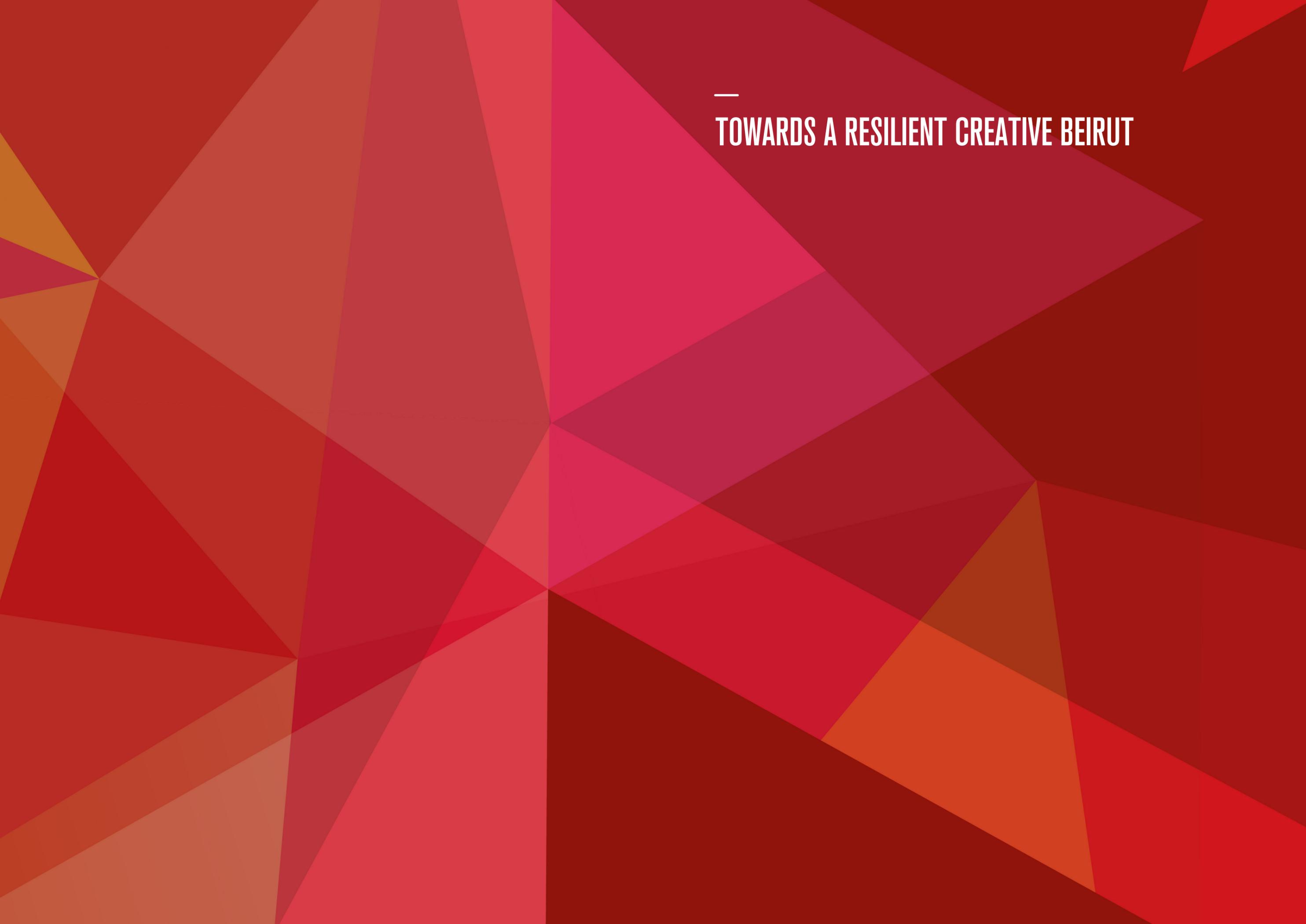

Figure 1.1. Beirut: Buildings Exposure to Port Blast with Damaged Hospitals and Health Facilities | Created on 14 August 2020

Source: LRC, WHO,OCHA, ESRI, Google Feedback: www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int

TOWARDS A RESILIENT CREATIVE BEIRUT

Figure 1.2. Designer Moussallem was injured locking the studio door
Source: Dezeen, 2020

DEFINING THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY

UNESCO defines culture as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs." This comprehensive definition of culture refers to cultural heritage in all its forms as well as to creativity and the diversity of cultural expressions. The definition of culture also includes the cultural and creative industries, which refer to "infrastructure and the resources and processes for the production, distribution, and sale of creative cultural goods such as music, crafts, audio-visual products, theater, cinema, and books in both formal and informal economies" (UNESCO, 1982). These creative industries have "close economic relationships with other sectors such as tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries, heritage, and sport" (Creative Industries Mapping Document, DCMS, 2001).

CCI, A RAPIDLY GROWING ECONOMY

The cultural and creative industry (CCI) is one of the world's most rapidly growing economic sectors, creating jobs and fueling economic growth. The sector provides 29.5 million jobs globally, and with a global revenue of US$ 2,250 billion, the CCI exceeds telecom services and even surpasses India's entire GDP in revenue (EY 2015).

Although automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics will have a major impact on employment globally, a 2015 study by Nesta – titled 'Creativity vs. Robots' – argued that the creative sector was to some extent immune to this threat, with 86% of 'highly creative' jobs in the US, and 87% in the UK, having no or low risk of being displaced by automation.

Nevertheless, creative industries are often early adopters of new service models and technologies, and they take an active part in the digital economy and society.

THE RISE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THEIR ROLE IN THE REGENERATION OF BEIRUT

Cities that attract and retain creative classes flourish, while those that do not, stagnate – this was the observation made by Richard Florida while researching US cities in 2002. In many cities such as New York City, San Francisco, London, and Berlin, research has

revealed that creatives often serve as "urban pioneers" and initiators of "spontaneous" urban regeneration or beautification of "declining neighborhoods." This was the case in Mar Mikhael, the creative district of Beirut (GAIA-heritage, 2015).

After the civil war in Lebanon, the market-oriented reconstruction of Beirut Central District spread throughout the city, increasing opportunities for speculations and construction, and changing Beirut's urban and social fabric. This, in turn, initiated several cycles of neighborhood gentrification in Beirut that led to a displacement of young artists and creatives due to rising rents, from Monot, the starting point of the gentrification, in the mid-1990s, to Gemmayzeh in 2000.

Mar Mikhael was the next neighborhood to be gentrified. Hosting primarily car mechanics and other light industry businesses and workers, it was a low-to-middle income neighborhood. In 2006, Mar Mikhael's urban fabric and features, its central location, its proximity to Bourj Hammoud where many craftspeople had set up shop, and its low rents began to attract creatives who were then followed, after 2008, by hospitality developers, investors, and real estate developers (Buccianti- Barakat, 2014).

In 2015, there were approximately 71 commercial venues rented out to the ACD (Artists, Crafts, and Designs) industry in Mar Mikhael including boutique retail stores, design studios and offices, art galleries, architectural design firms, and metalworking shops, according to the Mar Mikhael Creative District Map developed by GAIA-heritage which provides consultancy services to manage cultural and natural heritage. With financial assistance from the European Union, GAIA-heritage prepared a conference in 2015, aiming to improve the social and economic returns of the arts, while reinforcing the role of these trades in the regeneration of historic urban environments and initiating dialogue between residents, artists, craftspeople, designers, and investors to identify their common needs.

Although a "creative cluster" was identified by GAIA-heritage in Mar Mikhael beginning in 2006, its potential is still under-exploited, as it remains only marginally influential when compared to other sectors such as real estate in Beirut (GAIA-heritage, 2015).
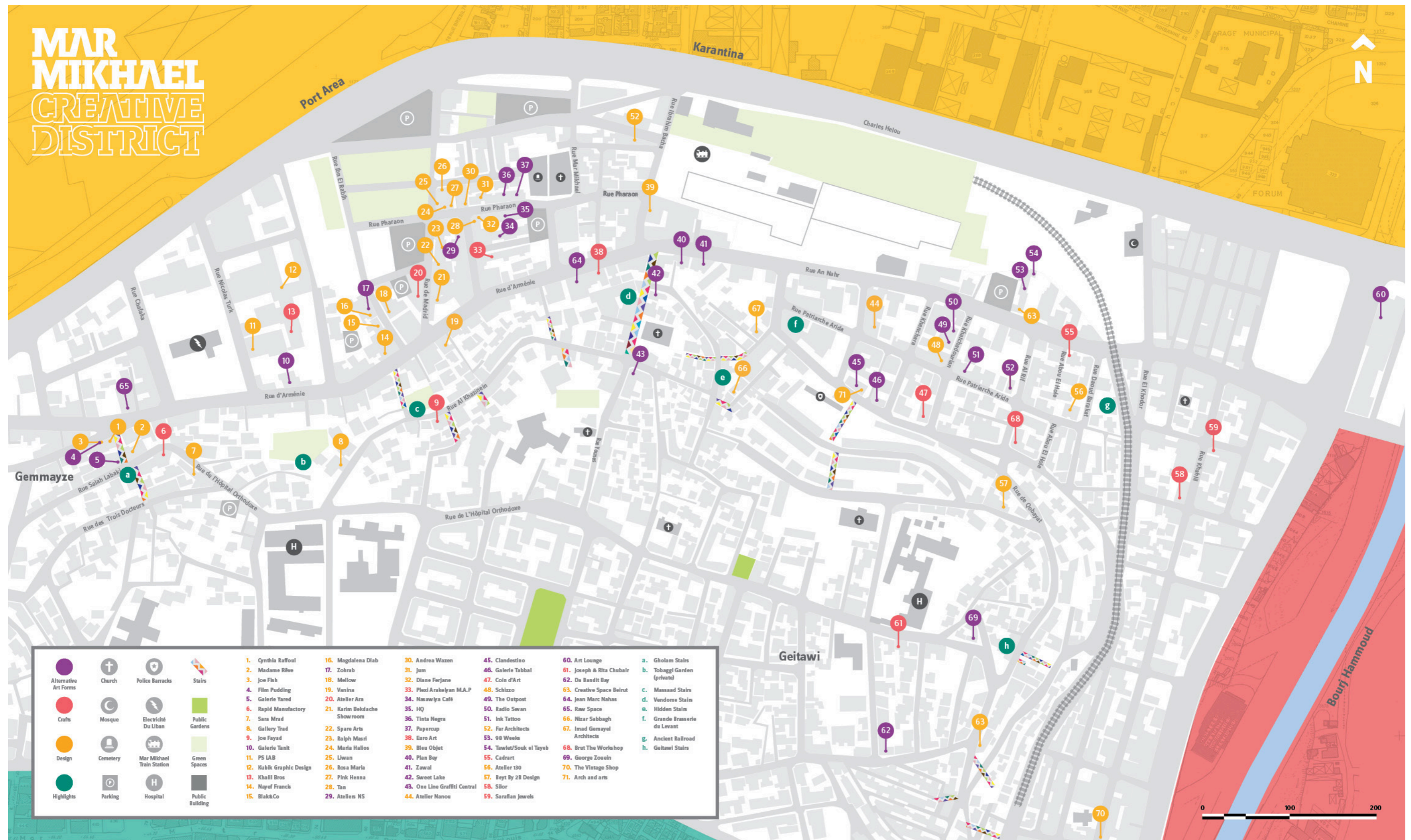
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Figure 1.3. Mar Mikhael Creative District (Map by GAIA-Heritage, 2015)

Legend:

- Alternative Art Forms
- Crafts
- Design
- Highlights
- Church
- Mosque
- Cemetery
- Parking
- Police Barracks
- Electricité Du Liban
- Mar Mikhael Train Station
- Hospital
- Stairs
- Public Gardens
- Green Spaces
- Public Building

1. Cynthia Raffoul
2. Madame Rêve
3. Joe Fish
4. Film Pudding
5. Galerie Yared
6. Rapid Manufactory
7. Sara Mrad
8. Gallery Trad
9. Joe Fayad
10. Galerie Tanit
11. PS LAB
12. Kubik Graphic Design
13. Khalil Bros
14. Nayef Franch
15. Blak&Co
16. Magdalena Diab
17. Zohrab
18. Mellow
19. Vanina
20. Atelier Ara
21. Karim Bekdache Showroom
22. Spare Arts
23. Ralph Masri
24. Maria Hallos
25. Liwan
26. Rosa Maria
27. Pink Henna
28. Tan
29. Atelien NS
30. Andrea Wazen
31. Jun
32. Diane Furjane
33. Plexi Arakelyan M.A.P
34. Naaawiya Café
35. HQ
36. Tinta Negra
37. Papercup
38. Euro Art
39. Bleu Objet
40. Plan Bay
41. Zawal
42. Sweet Lake
43. One Line Graffiti Central
44. Atelier Nanou
45. Clandestino
46. Galerie Tabbal
47. Coin d'Art
48. Schizzo
49. The Outpost
50. Radio Sevan
51. Ink Tattoo
52. Far Architects
53. 98 Weeks
54. Tawlet/Souk el Tayeb
55. Cadrart
56. Atelier 130
57. Beyt By 2B Design
58. Silor
59. Sarafian Jewels
60. Art Lounge
61. Joseph & Rita Chubair
62. Da Bandit Bay
63. Creative Space Beirut
64. Jean Marc Nahas
65. Raw Space
66. Nizar Sabbagh
67. Imad Gemayel Architects
68. Brut The Workshop
69. George Zouein
70. The Vintage Shop
71. Arch and arts
a. Gholam Stairs
b. Tobaggi Garden (private)
c. Massaad Stairs
d. Vendome Stairs
e. Hidden Stairs
f. Grande Brasserie du Levant
g. Ancient Railroad
h. Geitawi Stairs

THE VULNERABILITY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

- **Gentrification:** Since the establishment of new bars, restaurants, and real estate investors in the neighborhood in 2008, both Mar Mikhael's long-time residents and its comparatively young creative industries have felt the impact of rising rents (a 483 percent increase from 2009 to 2015) and displacement pressures. While part of this increase is due to normal market inflation, part is also due to opportunism among landlords who are seizing this period to maximize their profits (Executive Magazine, 2015). Moreover, Mar Mikhael's light-filled historical buildings with their gloriously high ceilings, which were an important attractor for the creative industries, are now being replaced by new high-rise apartments that are transforming the neighborhood's urban fabric.

- **Disconnection from local community:** Another threat facing the creative industries is their disconnection from local residents. A survey of ACDs in the area revealed that only 50% of ACDs identified the neighborhood as an added value to their activity and business development (GAIA-heritage, January 2015).

- **Spatial challenges:** According to the same survey, inappropriate public realm design (exemplified in the lack of urban infrastructure, the poor state of the sidewalks and stairs, as well as the lack of visibility) slows the growth of the ACDs.

- **Fragmented representation of the CCIs in the government, coupled with the fact that there is no central agency/body responsible for the industry and capable of setting plans and strategies:** Some creative industries (e.g. fashion, design, digital media) are not represented in the government while others are represented in either the Ministry of Information or the

Ministry of Culture. This fragmented and reduced representation jeopardizes any national strategies and plans that could foster the CCI.

- **Lack of government support through laws, incentives, and funding:** Legislation that could potentially enable the CCI (e.g. IP rights, secured transactions law, etc.) remains pending. This, coupled with the lack of security for people employed in the sector given the precarious nature of the business, threatens the sustainable growth of CCI businesses.

- **Educational gap in CCI:** A gap exists between the need for and the availability of trained technical talent, with the gap often filled by lower wage skilled non-Lebanese laborers. This is why apprenticeships are important for the development of the sector.

- **Difficulty accessing external markets:** The CCI businesses have a limited local market and suffer from the lack of structural support for export of services or access to external markets.

- **Limited access to financing:** The perceived high risk in the CCI, coupled with limited risk management from the banking sector in creative industries, prevents CCI businesses from accessing finance.

- **The deteriorating economic situation and COVID-19 pandemic:** In Lebanon, the creative industries are suffering from inflation, capital control, and the pandemic that have collectively lowered both local and global demand for their products and are struggling to grow with the absence of governmental support.

THE AFTERMATH

The Beirut port blast impacted the historical neighborhoods of Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh, which are known for their high concentration of heritage assets and CCI businesses. In a single moment, the livelihoods and life achievements of various business owners vanished.

The vital, creative, and multicultural city was severely damaged. What was formerly a vibrant labyrinth of streets occupied by numerous independent young designers and creatives, alongside niche cafes and artisan metal workshops, capturing Beirut's passion for art, has been turned into a mass of debris. Artists are having difficulties dealing with myriad uncertainties and are left unable to plan for any long-term project.

According to the rapid damage and needs assessment report issued by the World Bank on August 31, besides "damage to tangible cultural heritage, the cultural sector has also experienced severe loss of cultural production and intangible heritage, with impacts on associated livelihoods, and risk of permanent exodus from the sector by those affected. The port blast damaged 713 CCI businesses, out of 850 in the affected areas, and 64 galleries and cultural spaces out of 88. Each CCI business, gallery, and cultural space provided on average five full-time jobs, mostly to youth. US$ 1.0 – 1.2 billion is the total damage incurred in the cultural sector, US$ 400-490 million is the economic loss" (World Bank, 2020).

Fortunately, since the explosion, several initiatives have come to light. The SuperFund initiative, by the environmental foundation Slow Factory, is helping local designers restore their damaged studios and supporting livelihood and employment. Tunefork Studios, a Beirut-based recording studio, has created a

fund to help support musicians, producers, and sound engineers whose equipment was heavily damaged by the explosion. Meanwhile, in response to the priority needs identified by Lebanese experts on the ground, UNESCO has launched the International Action Plan for Culture, which consists of three axes:

1. Immediate operational interventions for the stabilization and safeguarding of the historic urban fabric and heritage sites of Beirut;

2. Support to artists, cultural professionals, and communities in order to revive the cultural life and creative economy of Beirut; and

3. Mid-term initiatives to support the sustainable reconstruction and recovery of Beirut through culture.

As part of this effort, the 'Li Beirut' initiative, an international fundraising appeal by UNESCO aims "to prevent property speculation in the damaged city's historic center and transactions taking advantage of residents' distress and vulnerability and to support the rehabilitation of schools, historic heritage buildings, museums, and the creative economy." UNESCO also brought together artists and cultural professionals in three ResiliArt debates in September (UNESCO, 2020).

Fear of a reconstruction that will demolish the city's vibrant scene and charming areas is recurrent. As a result, residents and shop owners have suspended signs saying "we are staying" to express that the neighborhood they live and work in is not for sale. To ensure an efficient recovery for the creative industries, immediate and medium- to long-term actions are proposed in the section below which also highlights the important role of culture in the recovery process.
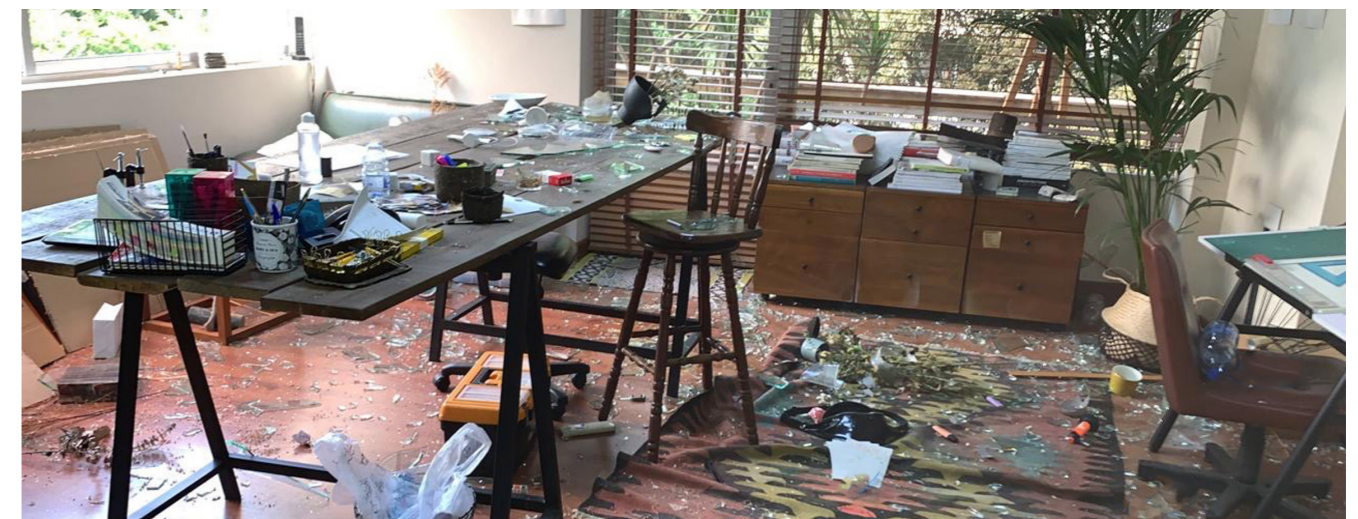

Figure 1.4. Damage at Paola Sakr design studio
Source: Dezeen, 2020

Legend

- Cadastral Limits
- Survey Area Boundaries
- Survey Zone Limits
- Buildings under the risk of full/ partial collapse
- Buildings at risk of separation in its nonstructural components
- Buildings with crack in external/internal components
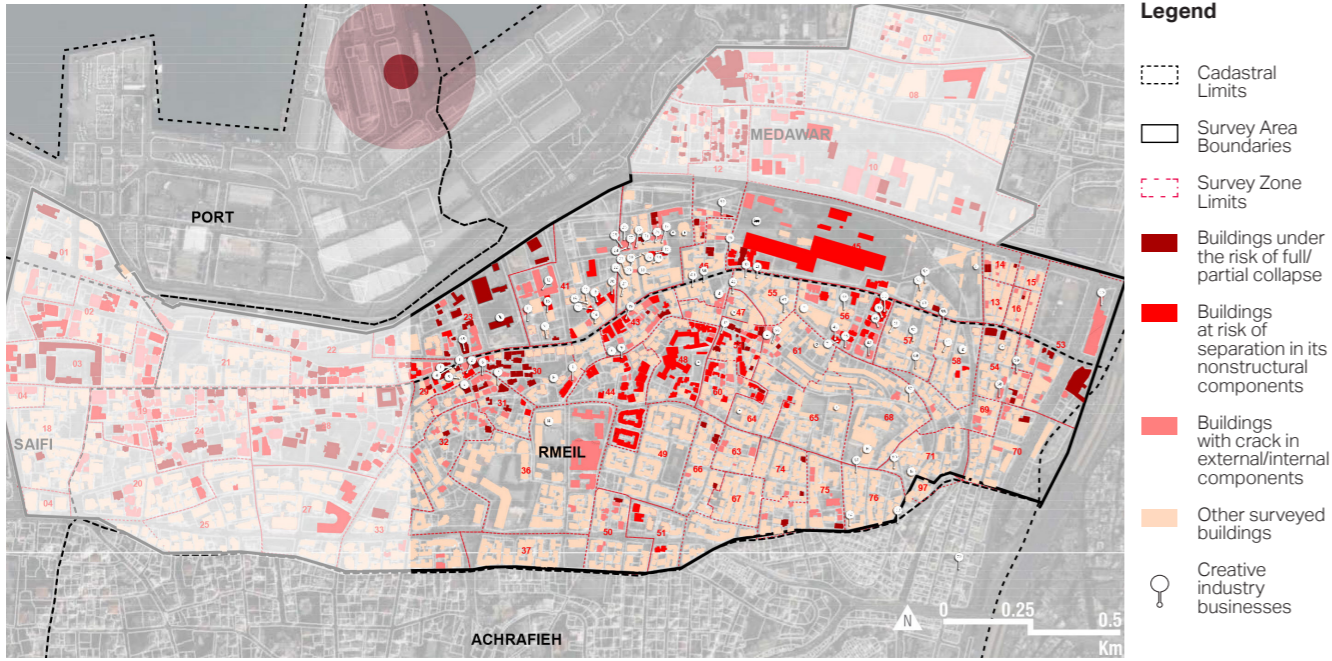- Other surveyed buildings
- Creative industry businesses

Figure 1.5. Damaged CCI Businesses in Mar Mikhael
Source: Map Produced by Overlapping the Damage Assessment Undertaken by the OEA (22/10/2020), Lebanon and the Map Produced by GAIA-Heritage (2015) Locating CCI Businesses in Mar Mikhael.

THE KEY ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESS

The CURE Framework, developed by UNESCO and the World Bank Group, is a culture-based approach to the process of city post-disaster reconstruction and recovery, an approach that takes into consideration the needs, values, and priorities of people. In the CURE Framework, "culture is mainstreamed into all sectors and areas of intervention and across all phases of the reconstruction and recovery process, including needs assessments, scoping, planning, financing, and implementation" (UNESCO and World Bank Group, 2018). Integrating culture and prioritizing the safeguarding and promotion of traditions, local knowledge crafts, and cultural industries in reconstruction and recovery processes, with a place-based strategy that prioritizes the reconstruction of physical assets, will:

- Strengthen a community's sense of belonging, as well as the livability of the built environment, and
- Support the reconciliation process through the (re)construction of cultural landmarks, monuments, and other places of significance.

Such a people-centered strategy will strengthen community ownership and accelerate the socio-economic recovery of cities.

PRINCIPLE 01 Acknowledging the city as a "cultural construct" where built structures and open spaces are closely linked to the social fabric.

PRINCIPLE 02 Starting the reconciliation process with the (re)construction of cultural landmarks and places of significance to local communities.

PRINCIPLE 03 Fostering cultural expressions to offer appropriate ways to deal with post-crisis trauma and reconcile affected communities.

PRINCIPLE 04 Prioritizing culture early in the planning process, starting with needs assessments and the implementation of emergency interventions that reflect community priorities.

PRINCIPLE 05 Engaging communities and local governments in every step of the recovery process.

PRINCIPLE 06 Using finance models that balance immediate/short-term needs with the medium/long-term development timeframe of reconstruction plans.

PRINCIPLE 07 Ensuring effective management of the reconstruction process by striking a balance between people's needs and the recovery of a city's historic character.

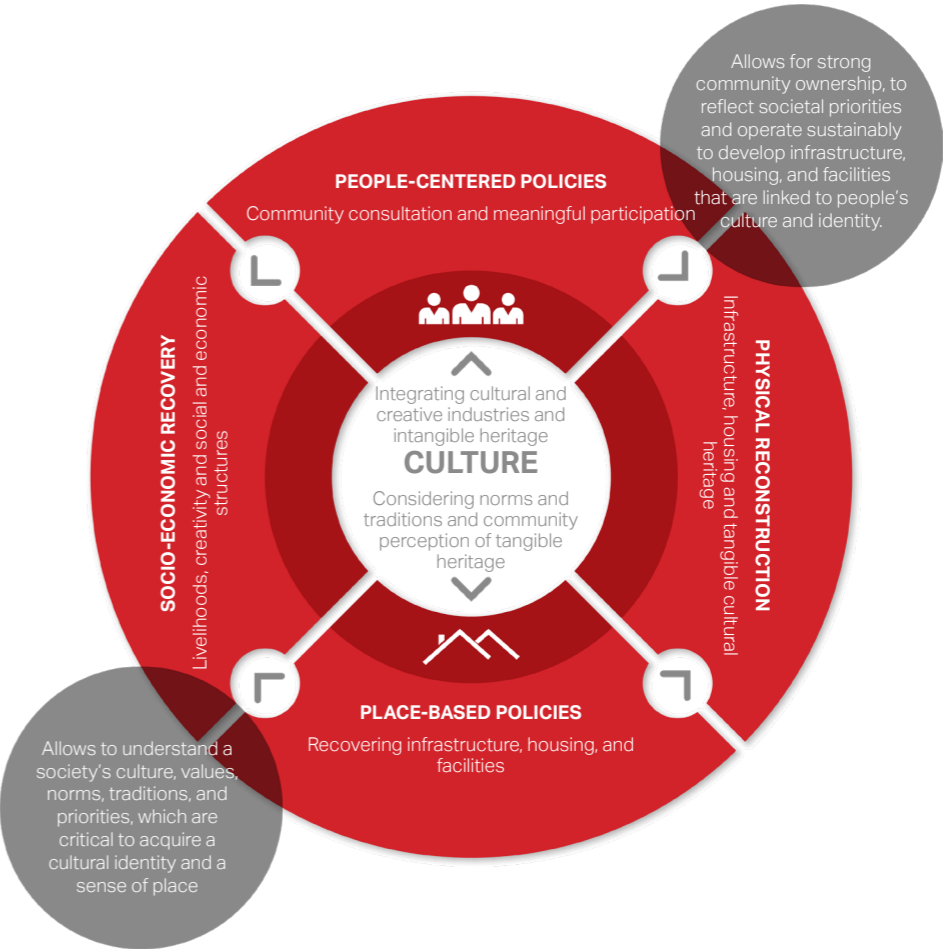Figure 1.6. Principles of CURE Framework, UNESCO and World Bank Group, 2018

Figure 1.7. Culture in City Reconstruction and Development Framework, UNESCO and World Bank Group, 2018

THE IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Assess the damages and identify the needs of the creative and cultural industries: The CURE Framework advises that besides "capturing affected structures, equipment, and raw materials, impacts manifest themselves in an interruption in sales or export of goods or provision of services. It is important to determine which skills or intangible knowledge or know-how might have been lost. It is also essential to assess whether any schools of craft or informal training centers were affected or whether any established craftspeople (and especially master craftspeople) were displaced due to the explosion. Institutional aspects such as the existence of regulatory or licensing authorities for arts and culture should also be noted. The assessment should also capture indirect economic losses to agencies such as those for marketing or promotion of the local creative and cultural industries. The assessment must consider the pre-crisis condition of the facilities and markets for cultural heritage products. Data is to be collected on the number, type, and size of commercial and manufacturing facilities, their specifications and machinery, data on annual production and equivalent dollar amount, and information on the destination of the manufactured goods. Data on local or domestic consumption and the value of cultural product exports must also be collected. This process creates a pre-/post-crisis inventory that includes the typologies, sizes, and gross of units of production and sales" (UNESCO and World Bank Group, 2018). Such a thorough assessment will pave the way towards delivering more efficient support for CCI businesses.

- Enforce adequate legal measures to prevent the demolition and loss of CCI workplaces. Meanwhile, provide a temporary workplace in the affected neighborhoods where CCI businesses can come together and resume their work immediately.

- Use the rehabilitated CCI workplaces as temporary shelters for the most vulnerable population and as social places where members of the community can heal from emotional and psychological trauma and support each other, through active listening.

- Adopt a public realm strategy that will enhance walkability and connectivity. By increasing footfall, the visibility of the CCI workplaces will be improved.

THE MEDIUM- TO LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

- Select and incentivize the growth of specific niches: The Lebanon Economic Vision Report, issued by McKinsey & Company in 2018, envisions Lebanon as a regional creative hub, globally renowned for a set of specific niches (2-3 industries) selected by devising a mechanism for selection and engaging with experts in the field. The report recommends incentivizing the growth of these industries through launching a joint public-private sector initiative that will provide soft loans; attract investment; and support in marketing, promotion, distribution, and export (McKinsey & Company, 2018).

- Invest in creative and cultural industry infrastructure through engaging with stakeholders to understand the gaps and the needs; developing a business case for each project; and investing in the required business, regulatory, technical, digital, and fiscal infrastructure projects (McKinsey & Company, 2018).

- Create a new financial system to support the industry's growth and leverage the development of its small businesses. For example, the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility (CCS GF) is an initiative managed by the European Investment Fund on behalf of the European Commission. The initiative aims to enhance access to finance for SMEs in the cultural and creative sectors, allowing them to scale up and become more competitive. The CCS GF can partially cover financial intermediaries' potential losses on a portfolio level on loans provided for CCS projects as a way to encourage the engagement of financiers with the sector. In addition to the guarantee in place, financial intermediaries under the CCS GF can benefit from free of charge capacity building services targeting the lack of expertise when it comes to financing CCS. €600 million in loans and other financial products are expected to be created by the program (European Commission, 2020).

- Provide funding from multiple levels of government, spread the risk, and increase stability and continuity. Indirect funding in the form of tax reductions, for example, can be used to provide incentives, alongside more traditional grant funding.

Once up and running, successful projects often get tenants and other beneficiaries to help fund running costs. The government can also support running costs (Inter-American Development Bank, 2019).

- Develop effective social and economic policies that promote and protect creativity and unlock resources in order to position Beirut as a hub of creativity and innovation. A rethinking of the way government is organized, the way Beirut is planned, the way education is delivered, and the way citizens interact with their communities, will be needed for such a change. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that the policies are implemented by a strong public actor.

- Develop an intellectual property strategy, covering patents, designs, trademarks, and a framework to encourage individuals and businesses of all sizes to create value by protecting and licensing IP.

- Foster a neighborhood-based creative economy through a bottom-up approach that initiates and maintains a dialogue between different stakeholders, residents, investors, and ACD (Arts, Crafts, Designs) businesses in order to balance the various interests and needs especially in a heritage area like the damaged one. Such a dialogue can take place through resilient neighborhood networks and communities (both a community of inhabitants and another of ACD businesses), as well as through a platform for articulating common local concerns and needs and organizing joint events, traditional gatherings, cultural activities, exhibits, performances, and open discussions about neighborhood life. In this way, the various stakeholders can act together towards economic growth and social inclusion.

- Grow and develop Beirut creative cluster, a network of creatives that stresses the importance of sharing knowledge, fostering cooperation and collaboration, and promoting the development of Lebanese creative products and services for the local, regional, and international markets. Promote and demonstrate the benefits of exchanging ideas; sharing benefits; finding new partners as co-creators; providing vocational training in all creative industries to develop a talented, skilled, and productive creative workforce; and supporting research and business development as a source of innovation, value creation, and job creation in the sector.

- Emphasize the role of the artist as a citizen and civic leader and aim to develop a localized civic creativity where citizens, artists, and public sector officials, through arts and creative practice, re-calibrate traditional views and methodologies of engagement from policy and art perspectives (Cunningham, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Culture is a major source of resilience. When integrated into the planning, financing, and implementation of post-disaster recovery, culture can fuel other development sectors. Lebanon's cultural and creative industries contribute to its economic growth, attractiveness, competitiveness, social inclusion, and civic pride, and they reinforce Beirut's image as a hub for creation. As such, they are a key resource for the city's recovery and social cohesion.

Figure 1.8. Creative Space Beirut, a Free School for Fashion Design
Source: Beirut Today, Photo by Lynn Sheikh Moussa

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