Sources: Nahnoo NGO

THE STRUGGLE OVER HORSH BEIRUT

AN ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSES

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Abstract

This research concerns Horsh Beirut; the largest remaining public green space in Beirut, Lebanon. A field hospital project being constructed on part of it, has turned it into a contested space against a social service claimed to support poor neighborhoods in the area. The research carries a critical discourse analysis to analyze the discourses by different actors over the project's location, legality and need. It identifies metaphors, storylines and emblematic issues within which problems are constructed. Discourse coalitions were also broadened by analyzing power relations and interests. The municipality's perception of this space, enacted through former policies, has also contributed to its contested nature. The case of Horsh Beirut analyzed shows how powerful actors have, through discourse, not only achieved hegemony over the physical public space where the project is being established, but also over the public's opinion. This research argues that the struggle over Horsh Beirut is not only a struggle against private interests, but also a struggle to regain citizens' democratic right to participate in developing this space. Thus, it concludes on the kind of interventions needed.

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1 Prelude

Beirut is the capital and largest city in Lebanon located on the coast of the country along the Mediterranean Sea (See Figure 10 and Figure 11 in Appendix). Its 2015 population was around 2.2 million, excluding the Syrian refugees (United Nations Statistics Division, 2017) who, as in December 2016, were 280,170 registered refugees (UNHCR, 2016). The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities is the highest authority responsible for the management and supervision of internal affairs including internal security and the work of governorates, districts, municipalities, municipal federations, as well as elected and appointed local councils. It supervises policies related to all ministries except the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Justice, which are independent. To do so, it appoints governors, after the approval of the Council of Ministers, as public servants that supervise and report back. Beirut is considered a governorate on its own. However, unlike other governors in the country, the Governor of Beirut has other roles to fill. He is also the executive director of the municipal council, thus his role is to also implement the decisions taken by the municipal council and the mayor. Beirut municipality has a council of 23 members headed by a mayor, and they are elected every six years.

2 The Protest

Figure 1: Protest against field hospital project
Source: Nahnoo NGO

On February 9th, 2017, residents of Beirut, environmentalists, and NGOs protested against the construction of a field hospital on the largest remaining public green space in the city, known as Horsh Beirut.

The protest came after a sequence of municipal decisions related to the development of the Horsh. The first decision in 2014 entailed the construction of a soccer stadium according to international standards (Bou Aoun, 2017). The second decision enacted a change of zoning to parts of the Horsh from Zone 9, where construction is prohibited, to Zone 4, where construction with 50% horizontal investment and 3.5 overall investment is allowed (ibid.). The municipality justified the zone change as a measure of tolerance given to the Risala Scout Association to settle the illegal status of one of their buildings (ibid.). The third decision, which was the main reason for the protest, was Decision 170 initially taken on 23/3/2016 which permitted the construction of a field hospital on part of the Horsh's area (ibid.). The project is said to be partly funded by the Egyptian government as an aid to the Lebanese people. The justification was that the field hospital will cater to the needs of the poor people in the area and the structure would be *temporary* – it is to be dismantled when another location is found.

The protestors demanded another location for the field hospital and considered these decisions a policy to take over one of the few remaining public green spaces in the highly dense city of Beirut. They do not trust the project to be temporary because of the permanent status of other, once temporary projects in the city. "Horsh Beirut is a heritage; it is the Horsh of festivities" one protestor said reminiscing the days when the Horsh hosted various celebrations (Chameseddine, 2017). "The Horsh is a public area legally protected from any construction; why are violations being permitted?" demanded another activist (ibid.).

The protestors were violently met by other protestors that supported the construction of the field hospital on what they believe is not part of the Horsh, thus does not threaten it. "It is a parking space with a concrete ground; the Horsh is still there, and we also care about it" exclaimed one protestor (MTV, 2017). The project supporters identify themselves as the people of Tarik El

Jdideh – a relatively poor neighborhood next to the Horsh. For them, the field hospital or the clinic as some described it, will provide services they are in need of. What was most appealing in this incident was the language used by the project supporters because it shows how they position themselves in opposition to the first group of protestors. "If *they* are rich enough to get admitted in hospitals, *we* are not …"; "Let us be clear and open about this; *this area has its own character and identity like all places in the country…*" (LBCI News, 2017); "Everyone in this city gets *services* based on *their own area*; *we* want the field hospital to be in *our area*, *otherwise we won't benefit from it…*" (MTV, 2017).

The protest took a violent turn which required the intervention of the Internal Security Forces to protect the group disapproving of the location of the project from the group supporting it, because the latter had a defensive attitude and even managed to assault opposing protestors. Following the protest, the municipality of Beirut issued a statement asserting its support for freedom of expression and its commitment to increase green spaces in the city, as well as to protect the Horsh. According to the campaign launched by Nahnoo NGO, the petition against the project was signed by 150 apartments surrounding the Horsh, and 1024 people online – as of March 28th. Today, the construction of a *temporary* field hospital is still being undertaken on part of lot 1925 legally delineated as Horsh Beirut. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Construction site
Source: Nahnoo NGO

3   Horsh Beirut in Context

Historical development of Horsh Beirut

Horsh Beirut is the largest green public space in Beirut municipality and metropolitan area. It covers a 225,000 m^2 triangular area, and it is located at the southern part of the city between Tarik El Jdideh, Kakas and Tayouneh neighborhoods (See Figure 12 in Appendix). During the 17th century it was a 1,250,000 m^2 pine forest, hence the name Horsh which means forest in Arabic. It used to protect the city from sand dust swept by southern-westerly winds. In fact, Beirut, the Phoenician word for pine, took its name from the Horsh (Shayya, 2010). Apart from its historical significance, the Horsh culturally signifies a place for festivities where people celebrated Adha holidays up until the civil war; 1975 – 1990. Once a forest, Horsh Beirut gradually diminished as the city developed. In the early 1900s, during the French Mandate, large parts of it were used to build the horse race track and the Pine Residence where the French Ambassador currently resides (See Figure 12 in Appendix) (Shayya, 2006). During the 1950s, roads were planned to cut through it, and it was turned into a fenced park in early 1960s by a decree from the Council of Ministers to protect it (ibid.). Yet, it still goes under the name Horsh. Other parts were cut from it to build two cemeteries, and in 1982 the Horsh was bombed and burnt during the Israeli invasion (ibid.). After the civil war ended in 1990, the Horsh was rehabilitated and redesigned through a partnership between Beirut Municipality and Region d'Île-de-France, and it opened in 1995 with an area of 330,000 m^2 (ibid.).

| **1696** | **1916 -1921** | **1950s**: road | **1960s – 1970s**: | **1995:** |
1,250,000 m^2	Pine Residence and	development	Two cemetries cut	330,000 m^2 park
Pine Forest	horse race track	**1960s**: fenced park	from the park	
	(French Mandate)			
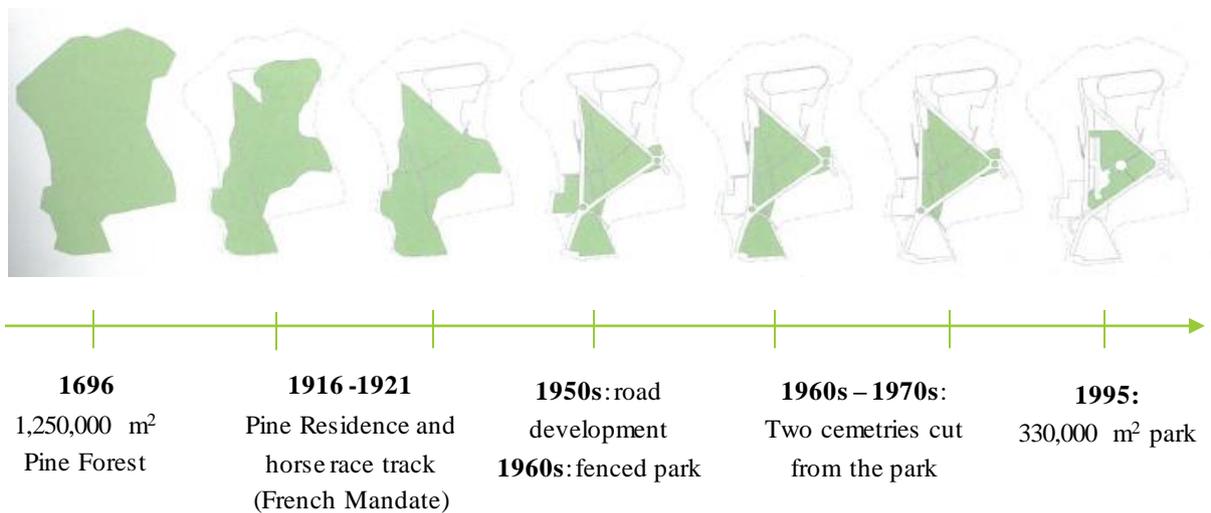
Figure 3: Historical Development of Horsh
Source: (Shayya, 2010)

A public space with special permission

The municipal council of 1998 decided to restrict access to around 80% of the park through a barbed fence claiming that this policy would protect the park from abuse and allow for the trees to grow (Shayya, 2006). Abusive behaviors included littering, and barbecuing in picnics (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). Another reason was the fear that, due to its location in a relatively poor area close to the suburbs, the park would be used as a gathering place for protests (ibid.). It was decided that only "mature people" above the age of 35, later reduced to 30 by the 2010 municipal council, were allowed access to this restricted section through a permission from the municipality (ibid.). Parents above the age of 30 could bring in their kids (ibid.). B. Hamad (interview, April 10, 2017) described this policy as necessary for the protection of the Horsh which he considers a "nature reserve". In practice; however, the age was not the only factor controlling access to the restricted area. Western foreigners and people with high social statuses were very much welcomed (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). The remaining part was open to the public and was viewed as a "popular" space where families had picnics and children were allowed to play (Shayya, 2006). In 2003, one of the parking lots was turned into a sport courts (See Figure 13 in the Appendix).

Reclaiming Horsh Beirut – A public space for all

In 2011, Nahnoo NGO started campaigning and promoting awareness for the need of more public spaces in the city. The strategy to completely open Horsh Beirut was a joint effort between the people, the municipal council, the Governor of Beirut, and even concerned members of parliament and ministers (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). After a town hall meeting with the mayor, a group of volunteers worked with Nahnoo NGO and urban planners to come up with a roadmap for opening the Horsh (ibid.). The roadmap was revised and improved by the municipality of Beirut in partnership with Île-de-France region (ibid.). However, this participatory approach did not lead to a decision to open the park from the municipal council. The latter preferred to subcontract the management of the park to a private company (ibid.). In fact, in the interview with Bilal Hamad, the mayor at that time, he states that privatization was the best solution for the proper management and development of the park, and the council had prepared tender documents for private companies to bid (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). Afterwards, Nahnoo NGO and the civil society confronted the Governor through a letter demanding their right to open Horsh Beirut, otherwise they will take the case to court (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). Consequently, the Horsh was opened for one day on September 5, 2015, and gradually became completely open for the public in May 2016 (ibid.).

The field hospital in Horsh Beirut

According to the interview with municipal council member Imad Baydoun (April 5, 2017), the field hospital was originally established by the Egyptian government, the army in particular, in the South of Lebanon in 2006 during the war with Israel. After the war, it moved to the Arab University in Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood where it provided clinical services, such as free checkups and medications to the people in the area. The university asked Beirut municipality for its relocation, and consequently, the former municipal council decided to establish a temporary field hospital project on a parking space related to Horsh Beirut (Decision 170 on 23/3/2016). However, it is not being built on the exact location proposed (See Figure 14 and Figure 15 in Appendix). It is worth noting that the park has been closed since March 5th, 2017 due to a disease that struck the trees. The municipality announced that the closure for remediation will be until June 2017.

1998 - 2015	**September 2015**	**March 2016**	**May 2016**	**March 2017**
80% of park closed; access with special permission	Park opens for one day	Decision to establish field hospital project	Park is completely open to the public	Park closes for remediation of trees from a disease

Figure 4: Recent development of Horsh Beirut

4 Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The recent incident regarding the field hospital construction in Horsh Beirut reveals a struggle over the largest remaining public green space of historical, cultural and environmental significance to the city. My interest to investigate this case was aroused by several reasons. First, the protestors, while all acknowledging the importance of Horsh Beirut to them, seemed to have different claims on whether the project is violating it. Thus, residents of the same area seem to have different perceptions of this space and its development strategies. Most importantly, their confrontation revealed, through language and practices, hostile behaviors towards one another. Second, the incident has shifted the general discourse from one that is opposing the location of the project in Horsh Beirut, to one that frames this opposition as directed to the project itself, which offers social services to the poor neighborhoods in the area. Therefore, the incident framed the struggle as in Horsh Beirut versus the hospital. This made me question the interest of powerful actors in the project. Who is behind the project and why is there an insistence on this location? Third of all, this case is critical because Beirut Municipality has approved of the project despite opposition from the majority of residents neighboring the Horsh. Considering the municipality's former policies which turned the park into a public space with special permission, and favored privatization for its management, the insistence on building the field hospital in it, raises concerns on the latter's future development paths. Thus, the proposed project in Horsh Beirut makes a 'case' worth investigating in terms of the situation and behaviors portrayed (Farthing, 2016). It is a current and real world problem to the people of Beirut because it concerns a public asset and their right to participate in decision-making processes related to the development of their city.

The major challenge in this research was to come up with a *scientific* research approach. Because the project is quite recent, the starting sources of evidence from which I knew what was going on were TV reports, newspaper and online articles, and social media posts. Given the discursive nature of the problem, it was clear that discourse analysis would be a useful tool to analyze the case (See Section 5.2). Therefore, it was important to acknowledge that the data to be analyzed represents claims and arguments by several actors, and is embedded in political, social and cultural contexts. Thus, what is considered as knowledge in this research are social constructions on the project in Horsh Beirut which result upon the interaction of actors. Defining the epistemological nature of my research helped in defining its aim and the kind of knowledge I will generate. Because the knowledge generated is influenced by social factors, it is constantly changing, thus I cannot arrive at an objective, as in definite, understanding of the problem, nor at a normative one. The aim of my research is to arrive at an intersubjective understanding – one that is disputable, argument-based and not final, but rather offers the best explanation to the problem at hand. It aims at understanding how different actors construct the

problem of the field hospital project through discourse, and how power relations sustain or mask these constructions.

Since media sources that covered the case simply reported claims by several actors, it was not possible to formulate a credible hypothesis about the problem until empirical data was generated. After my empirical investigation, I was able to get a more informed understanding on the nature of the problem. Consequently, I introduced problem construction theory (Edelman, 1988) to support my discourse analysis, because it incorporated a power analysis of political actions which I found evident in the data generated. This process represents an inductive reasoning approach because it was from 'ground up'; from the data to the theory by linking different information and associating it with wider concepts which could potentially explain and make sense of the data generated (Yin, 2009). After strengthening my analysis by including a new theory, I had a more structured framework to analyze my data. Thus, as will be explained in the critical discourse analysis section below, I identified elements in my data that correspond to the theoretical concepts. This deductive method increases the internal validity of my work because it relates observations to theory (Bryman, 2016). In other words, units of data collected in interviews were linked to a general theory, then with the support of the theory, they were turned into units of analysis. This method of inferencing that shifts between induction and deduction is known as abduction. It aims at developing a reasoning that fits to explain the problem at hand (Reichertz, 2004). Therefore, the understanding generated is not complete but it is the best explanation, thus it asserts the intersubjective knowledge to be generated in this research. The validity of my work will therefore depend on the coherence and consistency of my analysis and my argument development.

Moreover, during the inductive research approach, some rival explanations to the problem, additional to the apparent one, can come up during data generation (Yin, 2009). While the main focus was on discourses over a public space, interviews with main stakeholders revealed another aspect to the problem, such as the municipality's development approach and perception towards Horsh Beirut. It shed light on the park's underdeveloped and contested state. Consequently, the analysis was broadened using other sources of data, such as literature review and documents, in order to contextualize the case in the setting of Beirut, thus strengthen the overall argument. Hence a complementary 'rival theory' (Yin, 2009) on the politics of public spaces was introduced to supplement the understanding of the problem at hand. This adds an internal validity to the work because different explanations were considered (Yin, 2009). After arguing for my scientific approach to the case at hand, it is worth mentioning that this investigation, by interpreting problem constructions, takes part in constructing the reality of the general problem because the choice and framing of the topic have been influenced by my point of views and understandings.

4.2   Research Questions

This research aims at answering the following questions;

> 1. How do actors construct the problem and position themselves through discourse?

Through the exchange of arguments between actors, the ideas, attitudes and beliefs are revealed. Discourse analysis will be used to analyze the language and practices of actors. It will identify elements in each discussion in order to understand the logic of argumentation. Consequently, how problems are constructed and how actors position themselves against one another can be revealed.

> 2. What discourse coalitions can be discerned through the actors' direct and indirect storylines and practices?

The influence of power relations in the problem results in direct storylines and practices disclosed to the public, and internal ones that were revealed during empirical data generation. Therefore, power analysis will broaden the range of actors that sustain the same discourse, perhaps for different purposes. Hence, discourse coalitions can be discerned.

> 3. How have powerful actors achieved hegemony over Horsh Beirut in the case of the field hospital project?

The field hospital project is currently under construction because the municipality of Beirut, including the Governor, has approved of it. Yet, the majority of residents surrounding the Horsh oppose the project. From the critical discourse analysis, the 'political maneuver' to carry out the project and immobilize opposition will be discussed.

> 4. In the context of Beirut, what are the social and political implications of this urban policy?

This question aims at an outward dimension of the discourse analysis because Horsh Beirut is a public asset and the largest remaining green space in the city. Moreover, urban policies in other public spaces in the city are also threatening them. As argued in this research, the municipality's policy to use this space despite people's opposition does not only result in spatial implications, but also social and political ones.

4.3   Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The validity of qualitative research rests upon its trustworthiness which includes credibility and transferability (Bryman, 2016). Credibility can be achieved through triangulation of sources of data which means the use of more than one source in order to cross-check information (ibid.). This research will achieve credibility by using several data sources, such as literature review (articles, books, official documents), media sources (TV reports, newspaper and online articles, social media), and semi-structured interviews (expert and layman). Even though this research is context specific and does not aim at generalization, it is still of value because it can generate knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Yet the transferability of the research findings, which add to the external validity of the work, can be evaluated by whether the work provides 'thick description' of the situation (Bryman, 2016). By knowing the details of the case, readers could then judge if its findings are transferrable to other settings. I think this is even more important in my case because the context of Lebanon is different from European countries, so I tried to make the case as clear as possible by using figures, maps and pictures to familiarize the reader with the setting. As for the reliability of the work, it depends on how the study was carried out and whether it is dependable. Documentation of my work can serve as a resource to audit it, thus prove its reliability.
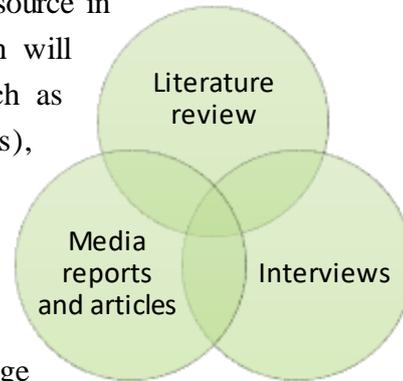
Literature Review

I started my work by doing a literature review about urban development and planning in Beirut to be informed about spatial transformations and the role of government in the built environment. The review drew upon several fields, such as urban planning, sociology, history and political studies. Even though it was not solely related to Horsh Beirut, thus not used in the analysis, it enabled me to understand the complex development of the city which has been influenced by several periods throughout history. Perhaps the most detrimental one was the 15-year civil war (1975 – 1990) that also had demographical impacts because Beirut was divided into a mostly Muslim West and a mostly Christian East. Following the war, reconstruction efforts focused mainly on Beirut's Central District while the rest of the city developed in a laissez-faire manner by real estate development companies under the guidance of the Building Code. Moreover, recent literature on Beirut (Bollens, 2012; Calame, Charlesworth, & Woods, 2011) describe it as a city entrenched in religious and sectarian divisions; 'sectarian labyrinth' as described by Charlesworth & Fien (2014). Even though the Lebanese political system is based on the fair representation of 18 different religious sects, and religious and political interests do interfere in development, or its lack of, I did not want to approach the case of Horsh

Beirut from this dimension. Therefore, the literature review used in this research is related to the park itself; its development, significance, and the related formal municipal policies.

Media Reports and Articles

Since the field hospital project is a current issue, it has been widely discussed on media channels. I reviewed news reports by local TV channels (LBCI, MTV, Al Jadeed), online articles, and the social media Facebook page of Nahnoo NGO which has been active in covering updates related to the project status, such as live videos, press conferences and pictures. Through these sources, I collected the storylines, metaphors and arguments disclosed by actors (either live or quoted) regarding the field hospital project which I used in my discourse analysis. Moreover, I was able to identify the actors involved whom I contacted for interviews.

Interviews

The purpose of expert and lay interviews done was to inquire about perspectives, values and attitudes of actors involved in the issue. Through the media analysis, Mohammad Ayoub was identified as a main actor in the campaign opposing the project because he was on news reports, radio broadcasts and press conferences. Nahla Nasredine is a journalist that published an online article after field investigation and informal interviews with residents neighboring the Horsh. As for Bilal Hamad, he is the former mayor whose council first approved of the project. Imad Baydoun is a current council member and he was chosen because he has been part of Beirut municipality since 1998, thus he was deemed experienced in municipal work. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, yet some interviewees used words and phrases in English. It is common in Lebanon to use both languages, and since it was important for interviewees to freely express themselves, such a mix of languages does not affect the data generated. The translated interviews can be found in the Appendix.

Table 1: Description of interviewees

Interviewee	Position
Mohammad Ayoub	Executive director of Nahnoo NGO. This NGO organized the campaign to oppose the field hospital project, and earlier from 2011-2016 it advocated for the opening of Horsh Beirut.
Nahla Naseredine	Journalist who published an article claiming that project proponents have ties political actors in the municipality and government. She basis her claims on field investigation and informal interviews with residents.
Imad Baydoun	Member of Beirut municipal council since 1998 till present. He opposes the project on Horsh Beirut, yet his opinion does not comply with the majority of the council.
Bilal Hamad	Former mayor of Beirut municipality whose council approved the construction of the hospital in 2016.

❖ Layman semi-structured interviews:

Interview with M. Ayoub

Nahnoo NGO, especially its executive director M. Ayoub, has been very active on media channels advocating against the project. Because I wanted to gain information before my trip to Lebanon, the interview was via Skype and it was recorded. It was a semi-structured one and it was divided based on two topics. The first was related to the former advocacy campaign of opening the Horsh. I wanted to know more about the process, the work with the municipality and the challenges in order to contextualize my case. The second part was about the field hospital project. The data generated was the storylines and argumentations by project opponents. The interviewee also recommended the article written by Nahla Naseredine in order to support his claims. I also met with M. Ayoub at the NGO's head office in Beirut in order to get the results of their online and door to door petition against the project.

Interview with N. Nasredine

The online article published by this journalist contained strong claims and revealed through pictures the involvement of actors from the municipality with project proponents at the protest. I was interested in how she arrived at these conclusions and also in the informal interviews she did with project proponents. The interview was closely related to the information in her article.

While she did not disclose the sources of her information – the people she interviewed, she shared some field observations which I was later able to recognize during my field visit.

❖ Expert semi-structured interviews

Interviews with I. Baydoun and B. Hamad

An interview guide based on Kvale & Brinkmaan's (2007) recommendations was prepared. Interview questions were based on my preliminary research questions. Since I will use discourse analysis to analyze my data, the aim of the questions was to get the interviewee's own attitudes, beliefs and arguments about the topic. Therefore, they aimed at descriptions rather than evaluations. Yet, some evaluative questions were asked towards the end of the interview. What the interviewee did not say or mention during his argumentation was also important for my analysis, because it reveals how he frames the problem (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2007). During the interview, it was also important to be very attentive and to come up with follow up questions for further explanations. I also listed some 'red lights' or points to be attentive for during the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2007). Moreover, I paused often between questions in order to allow the interviewee to be more reflexive and maybe add something, which I think was effective. Both interviews were recorded which allowed me to focus more on the interview, and afterwards, I noted down some comments reflecting on the general impression of the interview and the facial and body expression of the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2007). Even though this is not the basis of my analysis, the interviewee's tone and interaction revealed whether or not he is comfortable in discussing some topics. It also allowed me to personally reflect on how smoothly the interview went.

Interview Preparation Guide

- Setting the interview stage:
  Briefing about myself and my research and purpose of the interview. Ask for the use of the sound recorder.
- Question Types:
  Every question had to be thematic (generate knowledge) and dynamic (keep a good conversation).
    ▪ Introductory question: descriptive and as neutral as possible "Can you tell me about" or "how" questions
    ▪ Follow up or probing questions about 'red lights' for description or further explanation of something the interviewee said
    ▪ Direct and specifying questions about something explained
    ▪ Interpreting question to arrive at a conclusion from what the interviewee said
    ▪ Evaluative question or "why" questions at the end of the interview to ask about personal opinions or reflections
- 'Red lights' I was attentive to that might help in my discourse analysis:
    ▪ Slogans and metaphors used
    ▪ How they frame the "problem" – Emblematic issue. Holistic or limited approach.

- What does he include about a certain topic and what doesn't he include?
- Definition of what is legal or illegal.
- Deliberation: quality of exchange in the discussion (give credit to others, open-minded, offended, contradictory, hesitant) Also can be known based on body language and feelings from the interview

- Debriefing:
  Asked the interviewee if he would like to add anything or ask about something before the interview ends.
- Personal reflections on the interview (interaction, interviewee's facial expression and body language).

Discourse Analysis

After coming up with an analytical framework for my critical discourse analysis, the starting point was to identify relevant elements in the data that would support this analysis. First I identified metaphors used by actors. Then, to understand the meaning behind this metaphor I identified narratives that support it. Together these two elements formed a storyline. Moreover, data generated form interviews gave insight on the emblematic issue in which the field hospital project is framed because interviewees had time to elaborate on that. Identifying these elements has structured my data and gave insight on the logic of argumentation of actors. The range of actors were further broadened through knowledge disclosed in interviews. Consequently, discourses and discourse coalitions were identified. This is further explained in Chapter 5.

Limitations

Further empirical insight could have been gained by interviewing other members in the municipal council. However, attempts to schedule an interview with them failed. The council member responsible for management of public spaces cancelled the interview on the same day, and he did not send me some documents I asked for related to development plans of the Horsh. This brings in another limitation, which is the lack of official data and documents published by the municipality online. Moreover, this research analyzes practices on Horsh Beirut only. Expanding the analysis to other public spaces in the city would have generalized the argument on the status of public spaces in Beirut. However, because of the limited time for this thesis, a broader study could not be carried out.

5 Theory

5.1 Problems are Socially Constructed

When a condition is viewed as problematic, several elements of this problem are consequently defined. First, who is affected by it, and who is liable to deal with it. Hence, 'to whom' and 'for who' this problem is. Second, the reasons or explanations behind the problem are defined to try to identify its origins. It is worth noting that these reasons are per se constructions because they widen or limit the actors involved and position them among one another (Edelman, 1988). Third, and consequently, the range of policies or solutions needed to deal with the problem, are defined – at times limited (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). However, in order to mobilize action to resolve this problem, enough amount of people should view it as problematic. Hence, the fourth element of problem definition is an appeal to a public, often by addressing the latter's ideological and moral concerns (Edelman, 1988). It is only when people identify with a condition and believe it to be a threat, that they perceive it as a problem worthy of their attention and support. Finally, after addressing a problem, the acceptable outcome is also influenced by the definition of the problem because it depends on the capabilities of the actors, and the nature of the problem defined. Therefore, problems are socially and ideologically constructed (Edelman, 1988).

In the process of alleviating a problem, whoever has a stake in it is likely to either profit or compromise. It is of no surprise that powerful stakeholders would selectively define, based on their own interests, what conditions are problems (Edelman, 1988). Edelman (1988) argues that problem construction is a political maneuver that serves various purposes. A quite simple one is that a condition, though problematic for some, is beneficial for others, thus it is sustained. Moreover, problems might be constructed in a way to justify a policy or action that is already agreed upon, as common in political action. Additionally, problems are constructed to mask or divert attention from equally or more important issues that, if addressed, might threaten those in power. For instance, when issues, which are harming to some, are framed in a way that makes them socially acceptable as natural – 'fated problems' (Edelman, 1988) – as in 'this is how the world is' rather than as institutionally manageable problems (Maarten Hajer, 1995). Hence, people would feel that they have no control over these issues, and the latter will be ignored or left undiscussed (Edelman, 1988; Flyvbjerg, 1998). At times, it is in the interest of powerful stakeholders to not properly define what the problem is, and to keep it in the form of ambiguous and inconsistent claims (Edelman, 1988). Then, they would present rationalizations, which are not necessarily true, as rational justifications for the prevailing ambiguity and inconsistency (ibid.). Thus, powerful actors also shape, even disrupt, understandings of what is valid and rational (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

Regardless of their intended purposes, problem constructions, as social and ideological in nature, shape, manage, and govern political and social realities (Flyvbjerg, 1998). As discussed

above, an important element of problem construction is the creation of meaning or understanding about the reasons, actors, policies and outcomes related to the problem. Additionally, it is the necessity to appeal to a public in order to mobilize support and restrain opposition. The question, thus is; how are meanings created and how are people mobilized?

5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

In fact, language evokes realities and sharpens perspectives because it encompasses narratives, metaphors, connotations, and connections to wider concerns which people can identify with, thus support or oppose (Edelman, 1988). These realities and perspectives are constantly redefined as power relations and worldviews evolve because of the exchange of arguments between actors (Edelman, 1988; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Maarten Hajer, 1995). Meanings are thus created through discourses which are not the discussions per se, but rather the argumentative structuring of discussions; how arguments are structured in order to reason, or in this case, to define a problem (Maarten Hajer, 2006). In fact, discourses are 'social commodities' or real constructs of reality because they happen at the level of complex interactions among actors (Maarten Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). Therefore, if discourses constitute social reality, then discourse analysis is a suitable method in understanding how reality came to be (Phillips & Hardy, 2002) – in this case, how problems regarding Horsh Beirut were constructed. Discourses are expressed in texts, speeches, claims, narratives and symbols, and they are contextualized in a set of practices, as in routines and common rules, that when considered, add meaning and relevance to the discourse (Maarten Hajer, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). For instance, if discourses are carried by political actors, practices in political action related to power relations and interests ought to be taken into consideration. Given the interests of powerful actors in constructing social reality, critical discourse analysis incorporates the role of discourses in establishing and sustaining power relations, which are often unequal (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Hence, it analyzes how certain discourses achieve hegemony over others, and consequently who gets to profit and who gets to compromise. Apart from earning the public's acceptability, a certain discourse can achieve hegemony through dominating institutional and organizational practices, defined as discourse institutionalization (Maarten Hajer, 2006). This is critical because power relations are deeply rooted in institutions, thus power abuse can be enacted or legitimated by them (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Since Beirut municipality is part of the discourse over Horsh Beirut, power relations ought to be discussed through a critical discourse analysis.

For the purpose of this research, four elements of discourse analysis defined by Maarten Hajer (1995) will be used to understand how problems are constructed; storyline, metaphor, emblematic issue and discourse coalition. A storyline is an appealing statement that draws upon different complex narratives to give meaning to a problem and to shape actors' perception of it. They use metaphors in order to link one thing or event to another in order to understand them in terms of one another. The use of metaphors would also frame the storyline in a wider and more complex emblem. This emblematic issue associates a general understanding to a discourse,

thus a shift in it is important for the analysis because it will imply a shift in concepts behind the argumentation, in other words, in discourse (Maarten Hajer, 2006). However, by using storylines or such condensed statements, actors assume that others would understand what they are saying, which is not necessarily true (Maarten Hajer, 2006). People could interpret statements differently, so actors with different values, purposes and interests might share the same storyline. Thus, storylines have social implications by forming a basis for discourse coalition where different actors maintain a certain discourse (Maarten Hajer, 2006) – in this case a problem construction. Additionally, as explained above, practices are a key element in asserting a discourse, hence a storyline. Therefore, discourse coalition also involves institutional practices and depends on them to achieve hegemony (Maarten Hajer, 2006).

Furthermore, meanings are created and people are mobilized through publicized actions which are often exaggerated to attract attention and create controversies (Edelman, 1988). In fact, political strategies can be viewed as 'political spectacles' (Edelman, 1988) or 'performances' because they rely on enacting meanings in physical and symbolic settings (Maarten a. Hajer, 2006). They are grounded in historical, cultural and social contexts in order to evoke elements of signification in people (ibid.). In a sense these publicized actions contribute to discourse structuration in a society because they might change people's perception of a problem. Thus, they gain privilege. In order to analyze and understand publicized actions, or politics as performance, elements of dramaturgy as defined by Maarten a. Hajer (2006) will be used. First, a situation is devised by defining actors to be involved, and appropriate behaviors. This is defined as scripting. Second comes staging which is the process of deliberately organizing an intervention in a social or political phenomena. The third element is performance which is how an intervention produces social realities, new meanings and new power relations. To conclude, publicized actions analyzed via their dramaturgical dimension, support discourse analysis, in particular discourse coalition, because they illuminate how power relations construct and maintain a certain discourse. They reveal which actors get involved in a staged intervention to manipulatively sustain a discourse. Consequently, problem constructions can be better understood.

In addition to discourse and action per se, the way they are operationalized matters. After conducting interviews with current and former members of Beirut municipality, discrepancy between the information collected and the one officially disclosed to the public was found. Moreover, there were a lot of ambiguous and inconsistent claims regarding the field hospital to be constructed. Therefore, transparency issues are evident. Given the influence of powerful government-level actors on problem construction, deliberation is an important dimension to include in this analysis. In fact, analyzing the extent of deliberation, or lack thereof, in a discussion is analyzing its democratic quality (Maarten a. Hajer, 2006). Deliberation refers to the integrity, inclusiveness, accountability and dialogue in a discussion (Maarten a. Hajer, 2006). Integrity implies honesty and no double play, while inclusiveness is involvement of all stake-

holders in a discussion. Accountability is whether actors involved are accountable to the political bodies and public they represent. Finally, if dialogue is an element of a discussion, then knowledge is constantly being produced and enriched. Therefore, deliberation in a discussion impacts knowledge production because depending on how direct and transparent interactions are, some information could be highlighted or masked. It further supports identifying discourse coalitions, because it gives insight on the validity of storylines used, and it exposes indirect, internal practices and power relations.

5.3   Analytical Framework

In conclusion, identifying discourse coalition is a sequential process that will be supported by analysis of power relations. Metaphors induce storylines and frame them in emblematic issues. Consequently, a discourse which incorporates ideas, positions and beliefs, and attribute meaning to a social or physical phenomena are formed (Maarten Hajer, 1995). Actors who utter these storylines, maybe for different purposes, form discourse coalitions. Discourse coalitions, as argued, can be broadened and better understood through the analysis of power relations. The latter are revealed through analysis of publicized actions, and of the extent of deliberation in a discussion. Therefore, by identifying meanings, practices and broad range of actors involved in problem constructions, discourse analysis will help in investigating how arguments related to the field hospital project in Horsh Beirut are constructed. As discussed previously, problem construction directs policies proposed to deal with the problem, hence the latter can be viewed as the result of the former. If a policy related to a certain problem construction gets operationalized, this implies that this construction has achieved further dominance. Then, the reasons behind why problems are constructed the way they are can be analyzed. Figure 5 below summarizes the elements of the analytical framework in this critical discourse analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis	
Discourse[1]	**Power Relations**
• Metaphor • Storyline • Emblematic issue	• Publicized actions[2] • Deliberation[3]

⇩

| Discourse Coalitions |
|---|

⇩

Problem Constructions
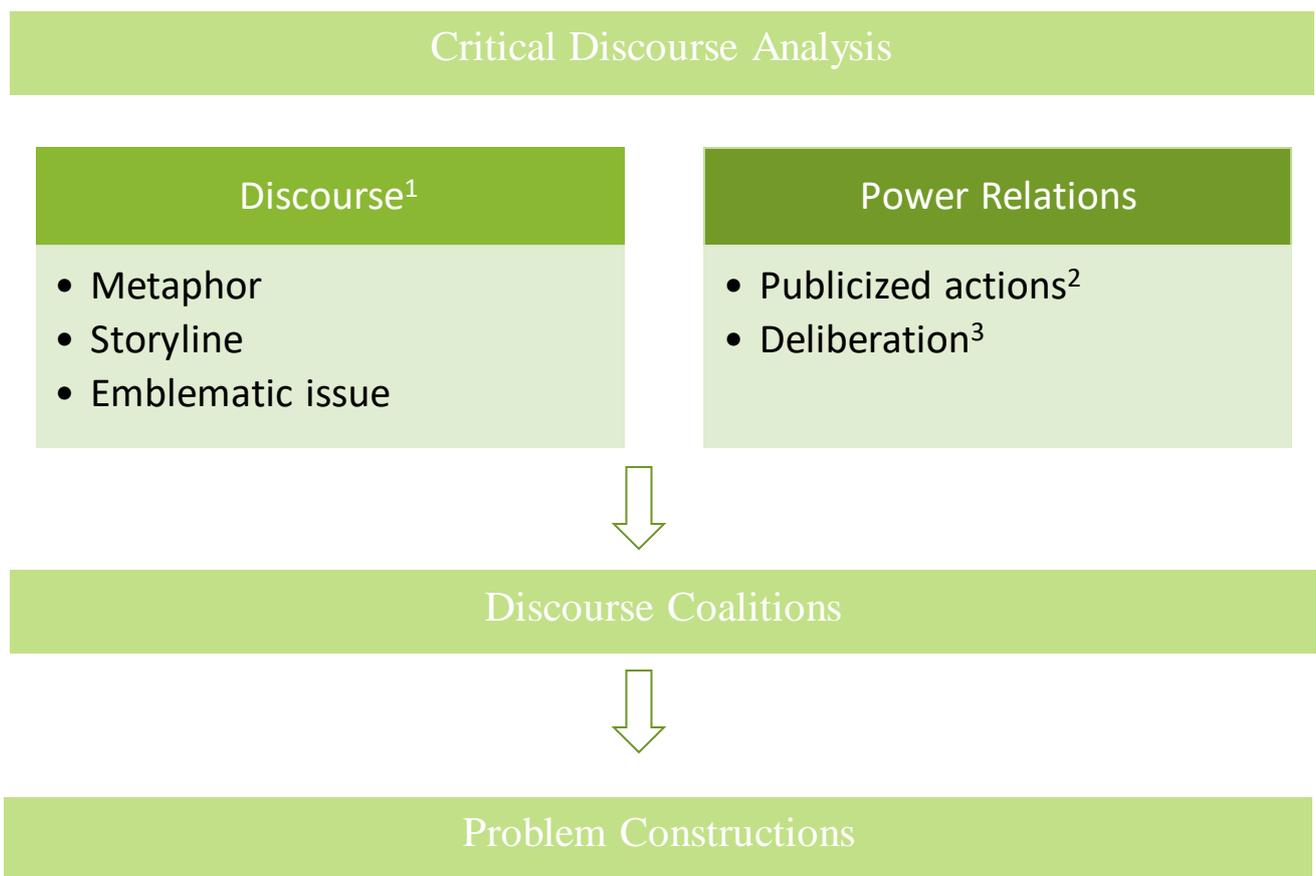
Figure 5:Analytical framework
Note: 1 (Maarten Hajer, 2006); 2 (Edelman, 1988); 3 (Maarten Hajer, 2006)

6 Critical Discourse Analysis

6.1 Discourse Analysis

Based on metaphors, storylines and emblematic issues uttered by actors who participated in the protest described in Chapter 2, two main discourses were identified. The first was presented by 'Neighbors of Horsh Beirut' and 'Together to Protect Horsh Beirut' civil movements who organized the protest to collectively make a public claim that scrutinizes the municipality's decision on establishing a field hospital in the Horsh. The second was presented by people from Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood who confronted the project opponents because they view the project as a social service they are in need of. In what follows, the elements of each discourse will be presented and analyzed.

Project Opponents

'Neighbors of Horsh Beirut' and 'Together to Protect Horsh Beirut' civil movements

Neighboring residents of Horsh Beirut, environmentalists and Nahnoo NGO consider the Horsh a public asset protected by Lebanese law against any violations. Their discourse focuses on Horsh Beirut as a public green space of environmental and cultural significance to the city. Therefore, it is perceived as an utmost pri-

Figure 6: "Stop the nibbling policy of Horsh Beirut"
Source: Nahnoo NGO

ority regardless of the purpose of any project proposed. "I am not against the hospital, but I am against a hospital in Horsh Beirut." says a resident of Beirut at the protest in February (Chameseddine, 2017). "We are against the project because it is illegal to build on the Horsh no matter what the project is. The justifications behind the project are not important; what is important is the location." (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). Moreover, they argue for the importance of this green space in Beirut as the "… only source of oxygen in a highly dense city where the green space per person amounts to 0.8 m^2 while the World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 12 m^2 of green space per person" (Bou Aoun, 2017).

Residents neighboring the Horsh also bring back memories of it before the war; "I am from the neighbors of Horsh Beirut. I live here. This place means a lot to us, it is a heritage. It is Horsh El Eid [Park of festivities] for us." (Chameseddine, 2017). The metaphor 'Horsh El Eid' is used in their storyline to represent the cultural and social significance of Horsh Beirut. It brings back lost memories before the war in 1975 when people from Beirut and other cities used to celebrate Adha holidays in the Horsh. Because recent generations did not experience this cultural and social dimension of the park, such narratives and metaphors restore a shared identity to Horsh

Beirut (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017) – it belongs to the people and they share memories in it.

Figure 7: Horsh Beirut - Park of festivities
Source: Nahnoo NGO

Moreover, their storyline considers the field hospital project a threat that might further reduce the park's area (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). "Stop the 'nibbling' policy of Horsh Beirut" is the metaphor used to sum up this storyline, and it was repeated by protestors (MTV, 2017), and written on banners. "Historically, the park was around 1 million m^2 and it has been reduced to quarter of that size because of exceptions in the law …" was a common narrative to support this metaphor (Bou Aoun, 2017; MTV, 2017). In fact, the park's area was 1,250,000 m^2 way back in 1696, and it was largely reduced in the early 1900s when Lebanon was under the French mandate (Shayya, 2006). Yet since the 1950s state planning policies have gradually taken up parts of Horsh Beirut by changing their zone 9 classification which prohibits construction on the parcel. These exceptions of the law were made to allow for road development, and the establishment of two cemeteries (ibid.). Recently, in 2014 a municipal decision entailed the construction of a soccer stadium according to international standards (Bou Aoun, 2017). Moreover, the current municipal council decided to change the zone of another part of lot 1925, legally delineated as Horsh Beirut, as a tolerance measure for the Risala Scout Association to settle the illegal status of one of their buildings (Bou Aoun, 2017). Hence, the metaphor refers to how urban development policies did not prioritize this public space, thus its area was gradually reduced; or 'nibbled'. Through this discourse, project opponents position themselves against Beirut municipality and powerful actors in the government. They frame the field hospital project in a wider emblem which involves a struggle to reclaim ownership of public spaces against policies that gradually aim at taking over them.

In fact, 'Horsh Beirut' can be also described as a metaphor per se. When used in the project opponents' storyline, it means the entire lot 1925 legally delineated as Horsh Beirut, and not just the fenced park. "We [Nahnoo NGO] decided to enlarge the campaign under the name of Horsh Beirut because after the advocacy on the first project [the opening of Horsh Beirut], 'Horsh Beirut', the word itself, started relating to people as their right, as a place the public owns. When we say Horsh Beirut is in danger this has become a strategy to attract people's

attention and mobilize them to protect the Horsh even if it is not the exact green park but also non-vegetated places. […] Horsh Beirut is no longer just a space to be opened but a case to bring people together to defend their right to public space." (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). This reinforces the same emblematic issue described above.

Project Proponents

People of Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood

In contrast to that of project opponents, the discourse held by this group highlights the need for the field hospital as a social service which people of Tarik El Jdideh are in need of. Their storyline reveals that they do not view the project as violating the Horsh because it is being built on a concrete parking space – a non-vegetated area. In the words of a resident in Tarik El Jdideh; "It [Horsh Beirut] is still there, and we will do anything to protect it because we

Figure 8: "Tarik El Jdideh welcomes the establishment of the Egyptian hospital as a service for its people." Source: Author

grew up with it and we know its importance." (MTV, 2017). In fact, this parking space is used by the park's visitors, hence their perception of 'Horsh Beirut' is rather limited to the vegetated areas, and a violation of the park would mean cutting down trees. Therefore, different actors are using the same metaphor, 'Horsh Beirut' to claim its significance, yet it stands for different perceptions of this space. Moreover, metaphors such as "People are dying on the street" were used by project proponents in order to support their need for the project. "The area [neighborhood] has been crowded by foreigners and tourists… we don't have any more clinics. People are dying on the street..." exclaimed one protestor from Tarik El Jdideh (MTV, 2017). "I want the hospital. We are poor, we don't have the means to get hospitalized. If they [project opponents] have money, we don't" (MTV, 2017). They framed the dispute in a wider emblem which is a struggle over the priority of the field hospital between rich and poor neighborhoods surrounding the Horsh.

Additionally, regarding the location of the project, the storyline focused on the neighborhood rather than on Horsh Beirut. It used metaphors, such as "red line" and "area with its own character and identity" in order to differentiate Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood and its people from the rest of the area (LBCI News, 2017; MTV, 2017). Arguments given by project proponents in favor of the location further asserted this distinction; "Let us be clear about this [differentiation in the city]. If a project is in a certain area, people from other areas [in the city] cannot benefit from it. We want the project in our area because if I want to be hospitalized in another area I can't…" (MTV, 2017). "Our area" and "another area" are metaphors, like "red line" that resonate connotations of divisions in the Lebanese context when during the civil war (1975 –

1990) Beirut was divided into a mostly Muslim West and a mostly Christian East. As a result of the war and the displacements in the city, some neighborhoods or areas in Beirut are associated to sectarian religious enclaves because the majority of their residents belong to a certain religion. Tarik El Jdideh in particular has a majority of Sunni Muslim residents, and was part of violent clashes in 2010 with Shi'te Muslim residents to the North of the neighborhood (Bollens, 2012). Therefore, this storyline is embedded in unpleasant historical and social contexts. It also frames the field hospital project in Horsh Beirut in a different emblem which relates the need for the project in the location proposed to a wider problem of a 'differentiated' city where health care acquisition is restricted to the 'area' of residence. Another metaphor used in the storyline to describe differentiation among areas is "let us not hide behind our finger" [literal translation of a Lebanese saying] (MTV, 2017). It reinforces the emblematic issue of differentiation as a known and inevitable reality – one cannot hide behind their finger.

6.2   Power Analysis

The way arguments were exchanged by opposing groups, portrayed through language and behaviors at the protest, lack inclusiveness, dialogue and reciprocity. Project proponents claimed that they represent Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood, while many people from Tarik El Jdideh interviewed by Nahla Nasredine, a journalist that covered the story, (N. Nasredine, interview, April 4, 2017) oppose the project. Moreover, the door to door petition conducted by Nahnoo NGO collected signatures from 150 apartments all around Horsh Beirut including those in Tarik El Jdideh. Their storyline also associates the field hospital project to a specific target group – the poor people of 'their area'. Therefore, by differentiating themselves and the beneficiaries of the project, their discourse lacked inclusiveness. The day before the protest, project opponents were threatened; if they participate, their properties will be damaged (M. Ayoub, interview, March 21, 2017). Even during the protest some were assaulted which required the intervention of Internal Security Forces. The latter stopped the civil society movement from reaching its final destination in attempt to "protect them from project supporters who showed hostile behaviors" (Nahnoo, 2017). It is clear that hostile behaviors left no room for dialogue and exchange of arguments – and to an extent for opinion expression. Therefore, the intervention of project proponents at the protest illustrates an attempt to mask discourses in order to privilege others that, if sustained, might benefit the interests of powerful actors.

A Publicized Action

In fact, power relations were proven to interfere in this intervention after a confession from Imad Baydoun, a member of Beirut municipal council. Given his position as an insider, his statement can be considered reliable. Moreover, the latter came after a confrontation during the interview, and it was a turning point that contradicted some of the interviewee's previous statements. When asked about how the protest, which required the intervention of Internal Security Forces, was discussed in the municipal council, Imad Baydoun (interview, April 5, 2017) said

that it was not discussed and described behaviors of project supporters in incomplete and ambiguous sentences that did not reach any conclusion. It was clear that he was hesitant to talk about the issue.

"It was not discussed. It was not discussed because the protestors when they arrived at the gate of Horsh Beirut, the way they were pushed aside by the Internal Security Forces *that are part of the Ministry of the Interior* and how they [unknown] brought some people from the area to demand that they want the hospital and 'it is none of your business this is our area'… Nobody [in the council] spoke." (I. Baydoun, interview, April 5, 2017).

The question was followed up by a specifying question on whether the discourse of project proponents reveals untapped social division or differentiation in the city, especially that some neighborhoods in Beirut are affiliated to residents of the same religion.

"Beirut is not a divided city. Beirut has always been a totally unified city. The conflict that happened regarding the Horsh was an attempt to divide the city and create places of differentiation… It [division discourse] was brought up through them [unknown] and this was one thing that was very [very] weak in their [unknown] behavior… The incident was not discussed in the council. It was clear who was behind it." (I. Baydoun, interview, April 5, 2017).

Excerpts from the interview reveal ambiguous description of the actors behind the intervention. Afterwards, when asked about his opinion on how project supporters shifted the project opponents' argument as opposing the hospital per se, while in fact they were opposing its location in the Horsh, he elaborated on the topic stating that people in Tarik el Jdideh actually do not want the project to be in Horsh Beirut;

"All the people around Horsh Beirut do not approve of the location…Nobody wants anything to happen in the Horsh, this is why they shifted the narrative from the location of the hospital to the hospital itself. Because the people in the area don't want anything to happen in the Horsh…The people of Tarik El Jdideh they don't care to build the hospital. Even when it was at the Arab University, in the middle of their neighborhood, they did not really care for it. The people that really benefited from it are not the residents, but the Syrian and Palestinian refugees who live in the area." (I. Baydoun, interview, April 5, 2017).

Consequently, the next question was interpretative because if the people of Tarik El Jdideh don't want the project, then who are the project supporters that claim they represent the neighborhood? To that, he replied;

"These people are affiliated to politicians in the government…the municipality is the one that mobilized these people to create this opposition. The majority of the council members [who voted for the project] gathered these people in order to create a conflict. The council can't do anything anymore regarding this internal majority. The majority is ruling in the way it wants. It is mobilizing people on the street to dominate and shift the discourse and create disputes to present in the media that it is a problem." (I. Baydoun, interview, April 5, 2017).

Hence, data generated from the interview reveals that the intervention by project proponents representing Tarik El Jdideh was scripted by the majority in Beirut's municipal council. It was a publicized action used, in the presence of the media covering the protest, to resonate a conflict or controversy over the project among residents from the same area. The actors manipulated are poor and unemployed residents in Tarik El Jdideh, neighboring the Horsh, who are affiliated to the same political party as that of the mayor, the Governor of Beirut and the Minister of Interior and Municipalities (N. Nasredine, interview, April 4, 2017). In fact, two days after the protest, the Governor of Beirut published a picture on his Official Facebook Page captioned "A visit from the *loyal citizens* of Beirut to the Governor" which pictured him with project proponents – 'people of Tarik El Jdideh' – that voiced their claims on the news (Nasredine, 2017). Moreover, at the Horsh's entrance facing Tarik El Jdideh there is an informal café where pictures of each of the Minister of Interior and the Prime Minister hang (Figure 9). The aim of these examples – and the overall research – is *not* to identify who these actors are, but rather to reveal the influence of powerful actors in the problem. While the statements disclosed by the council member during the interview serve as evidence, insight from journalists who have been on the ground covering the issue, and from field observation also support them.

Figure 9: Picture of political leaders at the Horsh's entrance
Source: Author

This publicized action marginalized the discourse of project opponents that argued against the location of the project on Horsh Beirut, by enacting a discourse that focuses on the project as a social service. "People are dying on the street", "we are poor", "if I want to be hospitalized in another area I can't" are examples of exaggerated statements used to attract attention and create controversies. They evoke empathy, thus create elements of signification among the public in order to immobilize opposition against the project. During an interview last year, the Governor of Beirut, who has the authority to implement municipal decisions, expressed the same storyline; "I am for protecting and increasing green spaces in Beirut and Lebanon, but this project is a hospital and not a nightclub; the issue doesn't have to be framed as if a sin is committed…" (Bou Moussa, 2016). "No sin is committed" is a metaphor he used to highlight the social implication of the project, thus justify it.

Indirect Power Relations

The interview with the former mayor of Beirut municipality, who decided on the project's location at the end of his council's term in 2016, revealed further insight on how powerful actors chose the current location and insisted on it. According to his narrative, the location was imposed on the municipality and its council by the Governor of Beirut and Egyptian officials who related the project to the ties between Lebanon and Egypt (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). In fact, during his entire description of the relocation process, he only mentions 'Horsh Beirut' once and towards the end.

"[…] They want [the project] to be facing the Khashikji Mosque [Figure 16 in Appendix]. There is a parking lot. There are no plantations there, no trees, [it is an] asphalted road. It is used as a parking lot for the municipality and for the mosque every Friday. […] The discussions were made between the Lebanese government and the ambassador of Egypt and they agreed on the location without taking the opinion of the council. […] Is it possible to have a hospital in front of a mosque? And also the location is not appropriate [because it is] in front of the Horsh…" (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017).

It is evident from the excerpt above that the former mayor does not perceive the project as a violation to the Horsh. The parking lot was described as serving the mosque and not the park. His perception of 'Horsh Beirut' revealed through his storyline is similar to that of the people of Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood – it is rather limited to the fenced vegetated park existing independently of its surrounding. In fact, he considers the project illegal only because it is being constructed on an area, within the same parcel, different than the one delineated by the council (See Figure 14 in Appendix) (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). However, when describing Horsh Beirut, the fenced park, the former mayor's storyline elaborates on its environmental importance to the city using the metaphor "lung of the city" (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). This shows how powerful actors, in this case decision-makers, use the same storyline as their opponents in order to formulate rationalizations to justify their inconsistent, even contradictory arguments.

The mayor described his decision on the project location as follows; "[…] So what I did, in a *smart way*, I said; go to the edge of the parking and we decided that they build a temporary structure/facility." (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). Shortly afterwards he adds; "[…] everything in Lebanon that is temporary becomes permanent. This is the problem." (ibid.). Hence, while 'temporary' is used directly – to the public – by powerful actors to support the storyline that the project will not violate the Horsh, indirectly – behind closed doors – it is a manipulation to immobilize opposition and sustain their discourse. In fact, to support this conclusion, the former mayor was hesitant during the interview to discuss the field hospital topic which he describes as "not very pleasant"; moreover, at the end of the interview, he cautiously said that the information disclosed can be published abroad but not in Lebanon.

What was also striking in this interview is the former's mayor discourse on urban development in Beirut, including the development of the Horsh. He describes it as rooted in religious and political interests. He kept elaborating on the issue and giving examples on how development was hindered by interests, and concluding every time; "[…] but this is Lebanon", "[…] this is Lebanon, it has been like this for years", "[…] but because of the religious and sectarian issues in the country and the political and so on…" (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). "This is Lebanon" metaphor is similar to "let us not hide behind our finger" used by the people of Tarik El Jdideh at the protest. It supports the same storyline of a differentiated city and the same emblem of an inevitable reality that cannot be resolved. However, these storylines, used by same actors of the same discourse, have different purposes. For the project proponents, it serves to justify *the need* for the project in the assigned location, while for the former mayor, it serves to justify his council's *approval* of the *imposed* location.

6.3   Discourse Coalition and Problem Constructions

Table 2 summarizes the critical discourse analysis provided above by combining discourse analysis with power analysis. Blocks with a green background are results from the power analysis. An asterisk (*) indicates similar storylines by actors within the same discourse coalition.

Table 2: Summary of critical discourse analysis

Metaphors	Storylines	Emblematic Issue	Actors	Discourses
Horsh El Eid	Horsh Beirut has a cultural significance for the people	It is a lost memory or a lost heritage.	Neighbors of Horsh Beirut	Horsh Beirut, as in lot 1925, has environmental and cultural significance to the city, and it is protected by Lebanese law against any violation, such as that of the field hospital project.
Nibbling Policy	Urban policies have gradually taken up parts of the Horsh	Struggle between society and state to reclaim ownership of this space	Nahnoo NGO and civil movements	
'Horsh Beirut'	It is designated by law as the entire lot 1925 and not just the fenced park		Nahnoo NGO	

Metaphors	Storylines	Emblematic Issue	Actors	Discourses
'Horsh Beirut'	Horsh Beirut is the vegetated area of the fenced park*	Project does not violate Horsh Beirut	People from Tarik El Jdideh and Former mayor	
People are dying on the street	There is a need for a field hospital for the people of Tarik El Jdideh	Struggle between rich and poor neighborhoods surrounding the Horsh	People from Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood	The field hospital is a social service for the 'people of Tarik El Jdideh', and it does not violate Horsh Beirut, as in the vegetated areas of the park.
Red line / **Our area**	Differentiate Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood from the city as having its own character and identity	Historical contexts of a divided city and recent contexts of clashes	Majority in Beirut municipal council	
Let us not hide behind our finger	Differentiated city where services are provided for specific areas**	Known and inevitable reality of a differentiated city**		

Metaphors	Storylines	Emblematic Issue	Actors	Discourses
No sin is committed	The project is a hospital that will provide services and not a night club	How powerful actors justify the project	Governor of Beirut Egyptian Government	
Lung of the city	Environmental significance of Horsh Beirut	How powerful actors use same storyline as opponents to provide rationalizations	Former Mayor	Same as above
Temporary	The project is not a violation because it is not permanent (Direct)	Manipulation to immobilize opposition to the project (Indirect)	Former Mayor	
This is Lebanon	Religious and political interests interfere in development**	Known and inevitable reality of a differentiated city**	Former Mayor	

Discourse coalitions are formed by different actors who utter the same storylines to formulate their argumentation. The table above shows two discourses – one opposing the project and one supporting it. From the power analysis, the range of actors involved broadened, thus the two discourse coalitions are as follows:

- ❖ Project Opponents:
    - ▪ Neighbors of Horsh Beirut
    - ▪ Nahoo NGO
    - ▪ Civil movements
- ❖ Project Proponents:
    - ▪ The majority in Beirut municipal council who voted for the project
    - ▪ Poor residents of Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood manipulated by the majority in Beirut's municipal council
    - ▪ Governor of Beirut who is accountable to the minister of Interior and municipalities and the Egyptian government
    - ▪ Former mayor of Beirut who by approving of this imposed location seems more accountable to the Governor than the people of Beirut he represents

Each of these coalitions constructs a problem of reality – the project in Horsh Beirut – by framing their storylines in wider emblematic issues. These problem constructions are political maneuvers that serve various purposes. First, the scripted intervention constructed the problem over the field hospital project as a social service that poor residents in the area are in dire need of. This construction served to divert attention from Horsh Beirut and mask discourses that support it. It was also needed as an appealing justification of a policy that has already been agreed upon. While the real reason for choosing this particular location is only known to the people who took the decision, clearly any opposition to it would threaten their interests. Therefore, people from the same area where mobilized and pitted against each other in attempt to shape a new social and political reality regarding a scarce public resource in the city. Second is the 'fated problem' (Edelman, 1988) construction within which practices on Horsh Beirut are being framed in, such as 'this is how Lebanon is and has always been'. This has been propagated by actors within the same coalition in order to justify their arguments. The hegemony of this construction among powerful actors in the municipality and citizens makes it critical because it limits the range of actions that could be taken. When institutions themselves construct the problem of religious and political interests as one that cannot be institutionally manageable, the public would view it as hard to change and they would not discuss it. Meanwhile, projects on public spaces like Horsh Beirut get approved, and citizens lose their rights to these spaces. Finally, the problem construction by project opponents takes a holistic approach centered around Horsh Beirut. They focus on the development of the park in connection to its surrounding rather than inside its fenced area. They construct the problem as a struggle between residents of Beirut and their local government which jeopardizes their right to the city.

It is worth mentioning that the former mayor and the council member, in turn, have made problem constructions of their own. They blamed the Governor of Beirut and the majority in the

council respectively, in order to avoid responsibility over practices in Horsh Beirut, yet they are part of the same institution as those they assign blame to.

6.4 Perception of Public Spaces

During the interviews, the former mayor and the council member described the development of the park as limited to its beautification, rather than to improving its accessibility and connectedness to the city. For instance, development was described in terms of enhancing the park's landscape and providing more benches and other furniture (I. Baydoun, interview, April 5, 2017), or as providing jogging and biking tracks, as well as a botanical garden (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). Their limited vision also extends to the acceptable practices in the park. The municipality has always perceived users of the park as potential abusers. This justified its policy to limit access to around 80% of the park's area to 'mature people' aged 30 and above in the period of 1998 till 2016 (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017). Perhaps the former mayor sums up best this perception;

"[…] The access to the park would be through a card; you tag the card and enter. Inside, if you do anything that is considered against regulations such as barbecuing, smoking, littering and so on, you get penalty points. So many penalty points you will be denied entrance to the park for a certain period. Just like the civilized world…" (B. Hamad, interview, April 10, 2017).

However, observations of social practices in the unregulated parts of Horsh Beirut reveal a stark gap between how this space is perceived by the municipality and how it is actually lived by the park frequenters (Shayya, 2006). In the unregulated, unfurnished nor landscaped parking space of the Horsh Beirut, people did picnics and barbecues, and smoked argileh (water pipe) (See Figure 17 in Appendix) (ibid.). In fact, these activities, prohibited in the park, are common social practices in the Lebanese context. Moreover, considering littering a social behavior that cannot be improved, is just a construction of the problem the municipality uses to justify its policy. Thus, the park loses its public character because it is not designed in a way that suits how people want to appropriate this space; instead behaviors are regulated. This perception of Horsh Beirut, institutionalized by decision-makers in Beirut municipality, has resulted in its closure for around 18 years as well as its underdeveloped state.

The approval of the field hospital project falls in line with this limited perception. Even though the project is being established on the park's parking space, Beirut municipality does not view it as a violation to the park. It rather perceives the park as independent of its surrounding; a 'quarantined' space as described by Andraos (2010). Thus, the problem extends beyond the legal or illegal dichotomy that actors argue for in their storylines. It is related to a lack of a development strategy to Horsh Beirut which resulted in its contested state, and the decision to take part of it for a project, regardless if the latter is 'temporary' or social. In fact, looking at other public spaces in the city, Beirut municipality's policies also do not regard them as worthy of conservation and development for the public. For instance, the beaches, which are legally protected against private investment, have been privatized through law exceptions passed by

the parliament and approved by the municipality. Even though these law exceptions were made during the war and civil unrest, they are still being prolonged. For example, 'exceptional' law 402 was passed in 1995 allowed an increase in area exploitation for parcels along the coast in case the project is a hotel. Originally for 5 years, the law has been extended in 2014 for an additional 19 years (Beirut Report, 2016). Another example is Downtown Beirut where souks – popular marketplaces – have been reconstructed after the war by a private real estate company. The latter managed the design, implementation, marketing and sales of the central district after a law amendment in 1991 which allowed Beirut municipality to transfer complete authority to the company (Salam, 1998). In the context of Arab cities, the souks are considered popular public spaces where people from different social classes meet and shop (Andraos, 2010). Yet, reconstruction plans turned these spaces into high end developments with expensive shops and restaurants in order to attract tourism and investment (Larkin, 2009).

Drawing upon other examples of urban policies related to public spaces shows the municipality's lack of willingness to develop them. They are rather considered as resources available to other purposes, such as to profit – in the case of beaches and souks – or to serve the interests of powerful actors – in the case of the field hospital project in Horsh Beirut. Additionally, what is critical is the lack of transparency in municipal practices. Had it not been for the work of NGOs like Nahnoo, awareness on the illegality of these practices would not be raised. Horsh Beirut was closed to the public for 18 years almost right after the civil war, so people have not experienced this space to value its significance. Hence, they might not perceive it as an utmost priority, or as a space they have the right to. Perhaps this adds to the contested nature of Horsh Beirut, and the fact that people from the same area were manipulated and pitted against one another over a common resource that belongs to all of them.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the critical discourse analysis reveals two different discourses. Neighboring residents of Horsh Beirut, environmentalists and Nahnoo NGO oppose the project in Horsh Beirut because they consider the latter a public asset protected by Lebanese law against any violation. Their discourse focuses on Horsh Beirut as a public green space of environmental and cultural significance to the city. Their storyline, expressed through narratives and metaphors such as "Stop the nibbling policy", considers the field hospital project a threat that might further reduce the park's area as former urban development policies gradually did. The problem construction by project opponents takes a holistic approach centered around the park. They focus on its development in connection to its surrounding rather than inside its fenced area. They position themselves against Beirut municipality and powerful actors in the government, and construct the problem as a struggle against policies that jeopardize their right to this space.

On the other hand, project proponents argue for the need of the field hospital as a social service to poor people in Tarik El Jdideh neighborhood. They do not view the project as violating the Horsh because it is being built on a non-vegetated parking space. Their storyline argues for the project's current location by framing it in a wider emblem of a 'differentiated' city where health care acquisition is restricted to the 'area' of residence. Such differentiation was also constructed as a fated problem that cannot be institutionally managed. The analysis of indirect storylines and practices of decision-makers in Beirut municipality extends the range of actors behind this discourse. In fact, the people from Tarik El Jdideh who protested for the project were manipulated by actors in the municipality who represent the majority. Their scripted intervention used exaggerated statements to evoke empathy and shift the discourse from Horsh Beirut to the project as a social service. The Governor of Beirut, as well as the former mayor held similar storylines, thus they are part of this discourse coalition. It turns out, the problem construction propagated by this discourse is a political maneuver to divert attention from Horsh Beirut and mask discourses that support it. While the real reason for choosing this particular location is only known to the people who took the decision, clearly any opposition to it would threaten their interests.

Powerful actors, the majority, in the municipality has institutionalized the 'project as a social service' discourse, thus it has achieved hegemony. Among residents of Beirut, they further enacted their discourse through mobilizing poor people from Tarik El Jdideh against residents of the same area by appealing to the social dimension of the project. Consequently, their discourse gained privilege and a new reality was imposed. Today, the construction of a temporary field hospital is still being undertaken on part of lot 1925 legally delineated as Horsh Beirut. A banner hang at the entrance of the construction site reading; "Tarik El Jdideh welcomes the establishment of the Egyptian hospital as a service for its people." It was also argued that the municipality's limited perception of this space has resulted in its contested nature. Horsh Beirut

is not viewed as an environmental and cultural asset in the city, but rather as a resource available for other purposes when needed. This dominant perception carried out by the municipality and translated through its policies have also implicated the public's perception. Since the civil war, residents of Beirut were restricted from entering the park and experiencing it the way they want. Therefore, this space has little significance to them.

Henri Lefebvre describes space as a 'social product' which goes beyond its physical or materialistic form (Harding & Blokland, 2014). It is the product of how relevant actors perceive it, of how urban planners and developers imagine it, and of how people actually live and experience it. Therefore, public spaces are the product of several political, economic and cultural factors. The case of Horsh Beirut analyzed reveals how these factors compete to define space. Most importantly, it shows how the discourse of project proponents, propagated by powerful actors in the municipality, has not only achieved hegemony over the physical public space where the project is being established, but also over the public's opinion. Even though the municipality has the authority over what is considered public, its interests are not pertaining to the public sphere, but rather to power relations in society (Smith & Low, 2006). Therefore, the struggle over Horsh Beirut is not only a struggle against private interests, but also a struggle to regain society's democratic right to participate in its city's development. The fated construction of Lebanon's reality as entrenched in religious and sectarian interests has been sustained since the civil war. Analyzing this discourse has shown that it is being used as a political tactic to justify policies, or their lack of. Therefore, interventions needed in a city like Beirut require empowering people to stand up against these unjust practices. While Horsh Beirut was partially closed for the public, Beirut municipality partnered with Île-de-France region to gain 'expert' knowledge on the sustainable management of public spaces in Beirut (Municipalité de Beyrouth & Bureau de la Région Île-de-France au Liban, 2013). The plans proposed linking Horsh Beirut to downtown area through a bike path, bus lanes and sidewalks to better integrate it in the city. However, these plans remain on paper because the real problem is not about lack of expertise to design, but a lack of willingness to implement. They create fuzziness over a more important concern related to democracy that allows fair representation and safeguards people's right to the city. Until then, the future of Horsh Beirut remains uncertain.

Source: Nahnoo NGO

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Appendix

Figure 10:Lebanon
*Source: http://images.nationalgeographic.com*
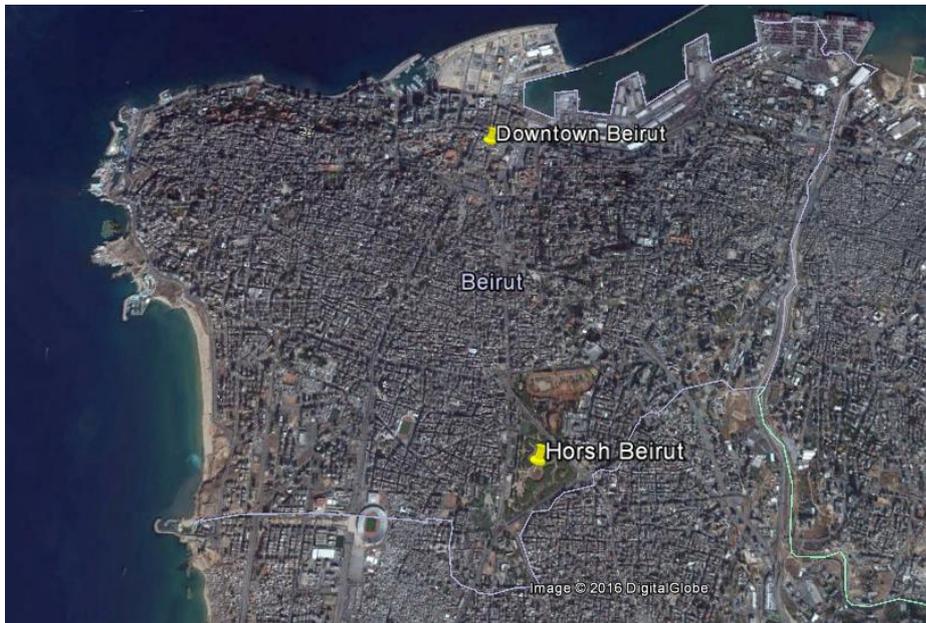
Figure 11: Aerial photo of Beirut
*Source: Google Earth*
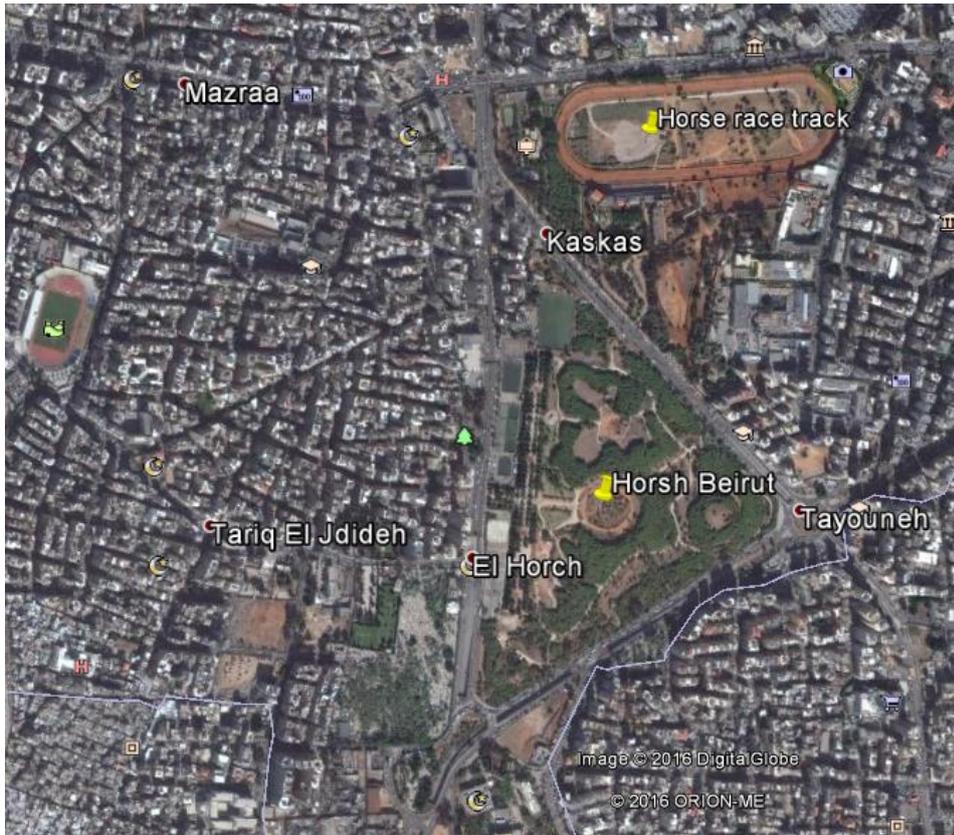
*Figure 12: Horsh Beirut Location*
Source: Google Earth
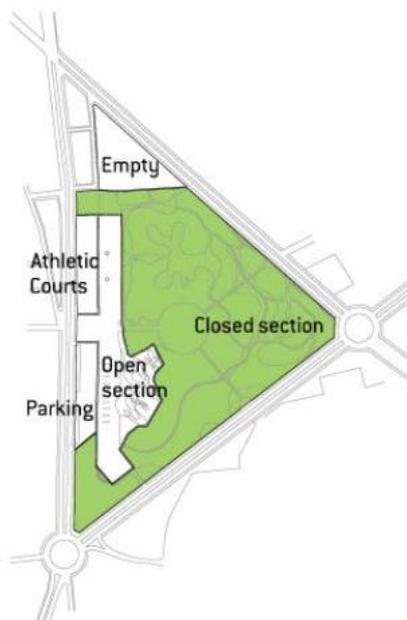
Figure 13: Horsh Beirut: closed section (restricted); open section; sports court
Source: (Shayya, 2011)
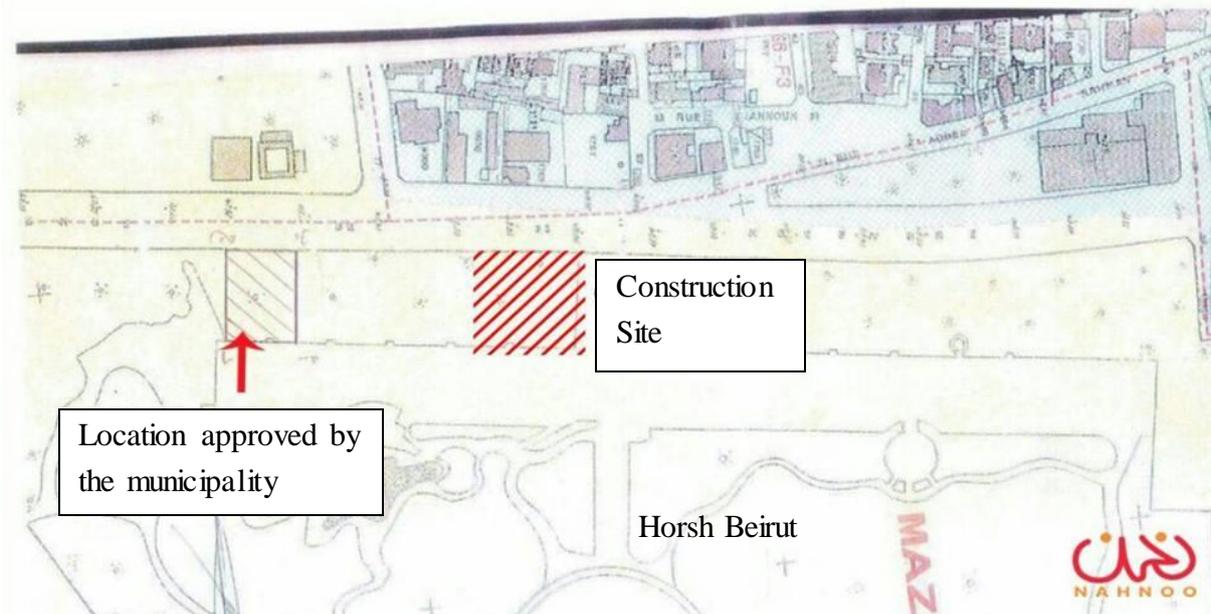
Figure 14: Municipal decision on project location
Source: Nahnoo NGO
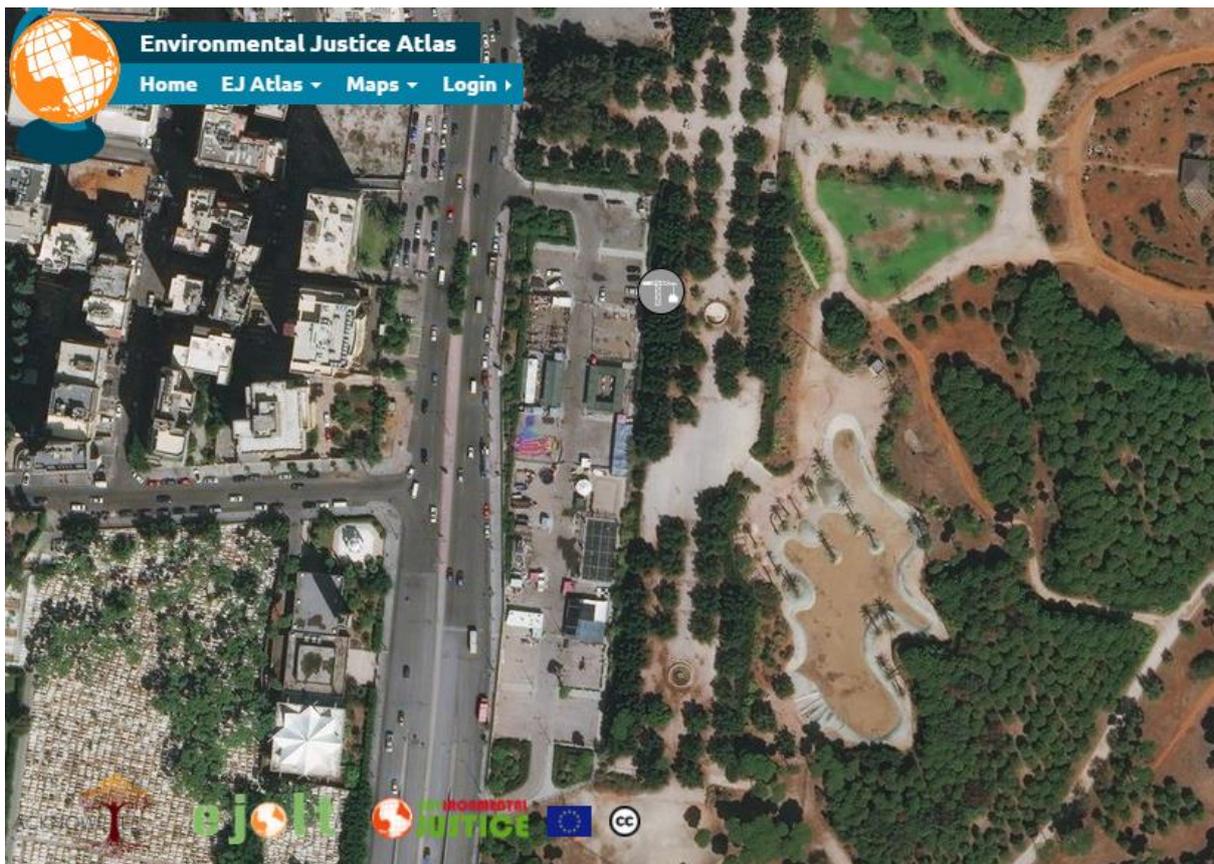
Figure 15: Aerial photo of construction site
Source: https://ejatlas.org/conflict/horsh-beirut

Figure 16: Khashikji Mosque location
Source: https://ejatlas.org/conflict/horsh-beirut

Figure 17: Parking where people barbecue and smoke argileh
Source: (Shayya, 2006)

Interview with Mohammad Ayoub

1. Before the park was completely open, who was allowed to enter its limited area?

The people that were allowed to enter the Horsh were Europeans mostly not any foreigners, also those that allowed entrance were those with a special permission above 30. It is affiliated to one's social status (profession and ties to important people). It doesn't have to be entirely based on connections but the purpose of this policy was to control who was admitted. The reasons the municipality was giving for this strategy was to prevent people from littering or abusing the park and in order to prevent conflicts/clashes between sunni and shi'a populations or Christians/Muslims. However, he believes that the real reason is not that of course, the real reason is that the Horsh or any park requires management especially because it is in the city. Thus, this requires work from the municipality's part such as agricultural management, cleaning and so on. Mostly employees in the public sector don't work. In Beirut you have around 600 security guards but they don't work because the government (public sector) has the tendency to privatize all the work (Bilal Hamad said until I find the right solution through a private company). There is a lack of will to manage a park and provide a public space for the people with no profit apart from privatization. Also they always have a tendency to take over the Horsh (siyasit kadim). Because it has always been closed and people don't really feel connected to it, it is easier to take over the Horsh gradually. People at the municipality were mostly business oriented and looked for private projects.

2. Tell me more about how Nahnoo NGO advocated for the opening of Horsh Beirut.

In 2016, there was a lot of pressure on the municipality and people became more aware of the public space and their right to it. This is not a common concept among the Lebanese. What the public space is? The square in the village and small gardens but never a public space as big as this. The NGO had difficulties in figuring out how to explain this to the people. When they started promoting awareness on public spaces and their importance people became more aware of their right to public spaces. He thinks that this has influenced the political campaigns of municipalities in that they are now stressing in public spaces. Before 2011-2012 there was no article about public spaces but later on the media has started discussing this issue and the right to it. There was a planned/organized strategy for the reopening of the park that included the people, the municipality members (24 members), the governor, the respective ministers and MPs, and this added a lot of pressure. They used many strategies like cooperation, discussions, awareness, confrontation (through protests) and then we used the juridical sector (al kada') and we sent a clear message to the governor that this is a public right so open it otherwise we will revert to the court and issue a case (da3wa kada2iya). Now, they were forced to open the Horsh. Who are they?

When the message was sent, the governor directly decided to open the Horsh in Sept, 5, 2015 to be opened for one day and then that he'll open it gradually until he finally opened it in May 2016.

In the Lebanese law before I go to court to submit a case I send you a letter including my demands. The period for reply is 2 weeks after which I have the right to go to court and submit a case. The governor was responsive to the message and the Horsh opened. But it was also backed up by public discussions [on YOUTUBE Nahnoo NGO it is there] with him where he decided to open it for one day. Bilal Hamad did not open it, the governor did.

The mayor of Beirut just has the authority to decide, while the governor implements everything and he manages the employees. Practically the governor is the mayor of Beirut municipality. This governance structure is only because Beirut is the capital so they thought it should be different.

The strategy Nahnoo took was they considered the closing of the Horsh illegal. At the start of the campaign, it was a different Governor not Ziad Chebib. So the first approach, they were putting more pressure on the mayor not on the governor. The latter is appointed by the Council of Ministers and there is no specific time for his period of work. He is suggested by the Minister of Interior. Even though the law does not state any religious affiliation, in practice it happens as such. The council then agrees to the suggestion or not. The minister of Interior governs all Lebanon through the governors (mount Lebanon, Beirut…). They are public servants. The Minister is more concerned with policies while the governor is more concerned with monitoring municipalities. He represents all ministries except for the ministry of justice (because jurisdiction is independent) and ministry of defense. A policy of health and agriculture by the respective ministries ought to be executed by the governor after the approval of the minister of interior because he is responsible for him. If the policy is legal then the minister can force it on him. His role is to implement and monitor if there is corruption or if the law is illegal.

3. What is your vision of the park?

The vision of Nahnoo at the opening of the park is that a park is needed to have social cohesion, to bridge gaps, to break stereotypes. Because people in Beirut live in isolated neighborhoods, green spaces provide a peaceful environment for interaction. Social integration can't be achieved through a park of course but it might promote it. They prepared a Road Map of how to manage the park. A participatory roadmap with the people. This roadmap was developed by the municipality with the partnership with Ile de France. They approved it and improved it. The roadmap indicates the missing facilities in the park such as benches, toilets, emergency equipment and so they suggested that need to be installed. The process was happening in small steps because the governor and the municipal council did not have a very good relationship. The governor cannot implement a decision or allocate money without a decision form the municipal council. But the council did not want that they wanted to give the project to a private company.

Now Roteract or Lions did a fundraising to install facilities in the park. No transparency to know what is going between the two. Bilal Hamad was corrupt. The system promotes corruption unfortunately.

Town hall meeting with Bilal Hamad on youtube and he asked for a roadmap so Nahnoo invited people for brainstorming. In 2 weeks they collected the ideas and presented it to the municipality with expert help and the people. The municipality decided in 2013 to open the park but they wanted a private company, they did a tender document for private companies to bid and those companies that have a lot of money. These companies were affiliated to them (corruption).

Ille de France submitted the project (park and Plan Vert 2013) to the mayor for his approval along with other projects. However, ille de France left Beirut because none of them were implemented. Bilal Hamad did not have any projects. All the projects were made by someone else.

4. What is Nahnoo's perception of the field hospital project? Who is it for?

The field hospital: They don't know what the aim of this hospital is. The one responsible for this hospital is a military body. They do not have a committee for this hospital and they did not get a license from the ministry of health. They are speculating what this facility is (a hospital or not) and their insistence on having it makes the issue fishier. They insist on having it at the entrance of Tarik El Jdideh between the suburb and the latter so the target group is probably the poor (Sunni/Shi'te/Palestinians). Military speaking, he believes that it is a good strategic point to monitor the area (Palestinian camps, suburb, shiyah…) exactly like the location of Horsh Beirut.

When they were rehabilitating the park, they erected a wired fence in order to allow for people to visit the park until it was completely opened. So the hospital is outside the wired fence not the outer fence of the park. So it is in the park. It has a concrete surface but it was supposed to be green based on the master plan to be completed by the municipality. They said that they want to use this area to construct underground parking spaces for people visiting the park and then on top of them they will grow trees. But in order to do this construction, they need to change the law so until that is changed they left it as a parking. It is a green space and even the courts are supposed to be green spaces but because no one did anything they installed them. But even now this parking SERVES the Horsh. It is thus needed. Where shall we park if the field hospital is constructed and there are no other spaces around the Horsh?

The plan might be found on Ille De France website.

5. Who are the people from Tarik El Jdideh? What are their needs? Who do they represent?

There is a system. Elections don't bring people. Saad El Hariri decides on who the mayor should be. He has his own companies and they take the projects in Beirut. When Bilal Hamad was a mayor, Hariri was not in Beirut so he was free to do whatever he wants. Jihad Al Arab was working with Bilal Hamad. No proof of that. But he is a usual suspect every time. It is like a deal. When the workers on the project were asked who they are working for they said Jihad

Al Arab and not the company that was stated in the decision. [Al Jadeed Reporatge] And when the municipality was accused of this there was no denial or objection from the municipality.

The governor as an employee and to remain in his job he had to implement what the minister of interior wants. The decision to build the hospital is not from the municipality, it is from the minister of Interior. Beirut municipality had decided to stop the construction and it is not being implemented why? The governor left Beirut. They don't want to stop the project. It is a political decision. If the project is against the law, why doesn't the minister stop the project?

How is Machnouk related? Check ramle el bayda project, even when the governor was pressured to stop the project and he did declare a decision to stop it, it was not stopped. Why? Because the internal security forces related to Machnouk don't want to stop it. It is their job. He is not even implementing the juridical decision. Same applies to Horsh Beirut. The governor did many great things. But when he is pressured by the minister he had to do it. The hospital is a political decision. They are other facilities in the area but they don't want to do it there.

The fund covers the medications and the doctors not the construction costs. Of course there is corruption. The number is huge. Such a structure does not cost that much! The minster has some relations with Egypt that he wants to impose. The municipality wanted to profit from that.

Everyone around the Horsh are opposing the location of the hospital. The petition was signed (150 apartments). The people supporting the hospital work for the minister of interior. Every area in Lebanon, each political group has a group of zo3ran that are mobilized whenever they want. These people are living in Tarik El Jdideh and they are poor and they got manipulated. And this is proved through the petition.

All the hospitals need rehabilitation and improvement. Why the division of the target group and allocate it to a certain neighborhood. If it is a public service. And allocate one expensive project to one neighborhood. Their insistence on this specific location raises a lot of speculation. We are against the project because it is illegal to build on the Horsh no matter what this project is. The assumptions behind the project are not important and are beyond the scope of his work what is important is the location. The location threatens the extension of construction on the Horsh and this is why the location is critical. In as much as we need hospitals we need parks. Many people were threatened.

6. After advocating for the opening of the Horsh, how do you describe your plan of work now after this violation?

The Horsh is considered a historical myth. It was considered a sacred place in mythology. It was vegetated to protect the city from the sand. It has been written and described by many writers and poets like Le Martin. Plus, it was considered as Horsh El Eid from people across the country. The new generation does not remember the historical importance of the Horsh.

We have an identity problem. To rebuild this identity, we are recounting shared memories through stories and memories and pictures. In order to regain ownership of this public space.

The people think that Nahnoo wanted to open the Horsh and now they want to protect it. Our work is about advocacy to use the proofs whenever you want and what the time is suitable. Before public space was abused by the public sector and the people did not know about it. Opening of Horsh Beirut created awareness and they discovered that the Horsh was not just this green park but it was bigger. The goal/vision was now changed to increasing the green spaces in as much as possible. They studied the entire case of Horsh Beirut. It has been a learning process and through their own investigation and studies. They had to integrate many disciplines of law, urban planning, design, advocacy, sociology and all of this is learned through experience. Starting from scratch because of the lack of information. Now, their work has become more advanced in research and advocacy as compared to the start. The first goal was achieved.

When the Horsh was opened, everyone was using it from all classes and region but of course this takes time. Now their goal is to have more public spaces. They discovered that there are spaces belonging to the municipality and part of Horsh Beirut we decided to enlarge the campaign under the name of Horsh Beirut because after the advocacy on the first project, Horsh Beirut the word itself started relating to people as their right, as a place the public owns. When they say Horsh Beirut is in danger this has become a strategy to attract people's attention and mobilize them to protect the Horsh even if it is not the exact green park but also not vegetated places. Nahnoo created this case after before upon abuse nobody used to be critical or to ask but now they will do so. This is the project of Nahnoo, a bigger goal on another bigger level. It is a bigger project to reclaim public spaces for the people. The people are part of the process because they feel that they belong to the place. In this strategy they were able to mobilize everyone regardless of their religious background [build horizontal ties] and this is how you build ownership in the city. We are still working for social cohesion. Horsh Beirut is no longer just a space to be opened but a case (kadiya) to bring people together for the sake of right to public space. [The metaphor of Horsh Beirut.] The previous advocacy is being used now to continue the bigger project of reclaiming all public spaces and bringing people together to fight for a common right.

Interview notes from interview with Nahla Nasredine

Practices: Dramaturgy

- The protestors supporting the hospital who voiced their opinions during the protest (News Report) were pictured visiting the governor of Beirut Ziad Chebib on February 11th some days after the protest on February 9th. The picture was *published on the Governor's official Facebook page* and the description read "A *visit* from the *loyal citizens* of Beirut to the Governor". Most of these people are from Tarik El Jdideh. They are poor and unemployed, hence manipulated by those in power to undertake these practices.

- Use of *biased media*: A newspaper funded by the Governor publishes the stories from his side.

- Erection of a small *café* at part of the Horsh (later pictured during the field visit) that clearly indicates the party affiliated to it. This place is claimed to be an observation point (with hidden cameras) where some of the party's followers are asked to monitor the area in return to earning revenues from the café or to earning a small amount of money from the party. *Space differentiation* and *domination* through symbols. The coffee shop is *linked* to the Minister of Interior and Municipalities Nohad El Machnouk who is affiliated to the Future Party. His pictures are all over the place.

- *Change of discourse* from an opposition to the location of the hospital to an opposition of the hospital project itself as a social facility benefitting the poor.

- The *insistence* of the Governor and the Ministry of Interior *on the location* of the hospital raises a lot of speculation.

- *Civil societies and NGOs have* steered the discussion and *raised awareness* on this space.

- NGO directors were accused of being affiliated to other political parties or of having special interests because they are from *"outside of Beirut"*. Relate to *slogan of current municipal council* "So that Beirut will stay for the Beiruti people". Relate to the *historical development of the city. Ancestral voting law*.

- After the article was published and because it contained strong claims about the practices of the Governor, the latter called the editor, who he already knows, blaming him for publishing such an article. However, *no official reply or clarification or even objection was made*.

Story-lines:

- Horsh Beirut is important because it is the *last green public space*. Beirut lacks green spaces.

- The area of the Horsh was *1 million m²* and it has been decreasing due to illegal practices carried out by the municipality. *Practices and policies to take over the public space*.

- *Violation of the public right*. All practices and policies are *towards privatization* to earn profit.

- The *cost* of the project is speculated.

- People interviewed on the street by the journalist do not approve of the location of the hospital. Those who said that they support the need of the hospital, when they were informed that its location is illegal, they would say "change its location then". However, the supporters of the Future political party were reluctant to oppose the project due to their loyalty to the party.

Interview with Imad Baydoun

1.   In the former council, can you tell me about how the idea of building a field hospital came up and how it was decided to build it in the current location?

The idea of the hospital was proposed at the end of the council's term. I don't know how it was proposed. Some doctors were working at the Arab University since 2006, however, the latter asked them to leave because their stay was originally temporary and they had to use the place for something else. Someone talked to the former Mayor B.H. and decided to build a military field hospital in Horsh Beirut even though it is not really a hospital. It was a center to distribute medications. The decision was made at the end of the council's term and afterwards another decision was made for the municipality to fund the project. It was the Egyptians idea to build this facility but it was decided that Beirut municipality had to give up this space and the cost to build the facility so that the field hospital can distribute medications in it. The idea was proposed at the end of the council's term. What is behind this idea? I have no idea. The former mayor proposed the idea to the council in the last two meetings. They took a decision. I was not there. They took a decision (the majority).

The origin of the idea: In 2006 when the Israelis attacked the South of Lebanon, the Republic of Egypt decided that they would establish a military field hospital in the South during the war. This is where the term "military" came from. They came and they did establish a clinic to treat the wounded. Then the war ended, but the idea of building a military field hospital was still discussed and brought up 10 years later.

2.   Why did they choose this location in specific?

I really don't know why they chose Horsh Beirut. I really don't know. First it was in the Arab University. Even if it is illegal to construct in this place, I have no idea why it got located in Horsh Beirut.

3.   After the decision was made, the governor is the one to approve or decline its implementation right? What did the governor do?

Relation with the governor? In one week the decision to have a field hospital on Horsh Beirut was accepted (by the Council) then in the week after it was decided to allocate money to cover the costs of constructing the structure with no bidding (taken by the Governor not the council and he did so and he spent the money). The council "decided" and the Governor implemented directly. The Governor is spending the money. The role of the municipal council is now over. We gave the first decision of approval now the second decision is on implementation, and this is in the hands of the Governor.

When I asked about how the current council transitioned with this project, he said that I am asking political questions beyond the field of my work. Then I said that in the real world, planning is politics and the main actors deciding on the city development are politicians. OK he said.

4.   In the current council, with the new mayor what happened with this project?

The current municipal council is working with the decisions of the former council. The politics of this new Mayor is to implement whatever has been done before. This is his politics, even though, he has many members in the council that are against the project, he wants to go with it.

5.   How do decisions get taken? In case you want to refute a decision…?

The decision is taken by voting. The majority is with the mayor. And they voted. To refute a decision, you have to bring an opposing view to the council for discussion, but you cannot stop that decision if it is going on. To stop the decision, you have to have a majority in the council by vote.

6.   The Governor is supposed to monitor the implementation of the law. What are the reasons he is giving to continue with the project despite the opposition and the violation of the law?

He has a decision from the council of Beirut municipality and he is implementing it.

7.   Yes, but he has 2 roles: the implementation of the council's decisions and the supervision of the municipality's work because he also represents the Ministry of Interior and he has to make sure that the law the practices of the municipality abide by the law.

He has two roles: one as a Governor from the Ministry of Interior and one as a manager of Beirut municipality. As a governor from the ministry of interior he is doing his job, he is not violating decisions according to the ministry of interior, the government. But here there is an issue for the governor because the laws related to the Horsh, prohibit an construction on it. However, he is still going with the project. He brought up the Ministry of Interior as a suspect indirectly. It seems that this is what the ministry wants. For him to stop this law, hence violate it, it needs a decision different than that of the municipality council, beyond its authority. Exceptions of the law!! Who is doing it?

As for the municipal council, as a manager of it, that implements its decisions, he is doing the job. As a manager he is implementing what the council decided, as a governor he is not doing the right job in regard to the general public law. And the law states that construction is not allowed on Horsh Beirut. "He has one eye open and the other closed".

8.   You mentioned that the municipality will pay for some expenses of the project… How much is it really paying? There are claims that the budget allocated is much more than what is needed.

The municipality is currently paying for the project. The amount of money paid is a catastrophe. $1.2 million for a Hungar for 1200 m2. This is a catastrophe, but…

9.   The members in the council supporting the project what are they saying about the huge costs allocated to it?

They would go silent. No excuses.

10.   The hospital has been set to serve a specific target group, the poor people of Tarik El Jdideh. Where did this idea come from?

There is no specific target group for the hospital. The target is not here; the target was in the south during the war. It moved to the Arab University (in 2 rooms) and the doctors that belong to the Egyptian army were staying there and distributing medications and doing very simple treatments like a clinic. The target is Not for Tarik El Jdideh. The target was for the people in the South. And the target is not there anymore. They don't need that hospital in the South.

11.   But members in the municipal council are claiming that this is the reason for the field hospital, where did this idea come from?

The idea emerged from the fact that in 2006-2014 the clinic was in Tarik El Jdideh (Arab University) and it is providing medications and some relief to the people in the area of Tarik El Jdideh.

12.   After the protest and the intervention of the Internal Security Forces to prevent clashes, how was this incident discussed in the municipal council?

It was not discussed. It was not discussed because the protestors when they arrived at the gate of Horsh Beirut, the way they were pushed aside by the Internal Security Forces that are part of the Ministry of the Interior and how they got/brought some people from the area to demand that they want the hospital and 'it is none of your business this is our area'…Nobody spoke.

13.   Didn't you view this incident as having untapped social divisions and territorial differentiation of areas in the city through the language and logic used by protestors? Do you see this in the light of Beirut being a divided city with polarized neighborhoods?

Beirut is not a divided city. Beirut has always been a totally unified city. The conflict that happened regarding the Horsh was an attempt to divide the city and create places of differentiation. Even during the war, it was divided by firing squad, but days after the civil war, all the people integrated together as far as the city is concerned. When the people living here claim that this is our territory, what is your business here? This creates a divided city. It was brought up through "them" and this was one thing that was very very weak in their behavior.

14.   What about the religious enclaves in the city, where people with the same religion reside in specific neighborhoods?

Beirut is not divided. There are certain people which are very few that do not go to some areas in the city following the war. After the war, many people were displaced and very few stayed in their neighborhoods (Samir Khaaf), however in terms of living together, it has been always there. People are mobile in all areas of the city no matter where they live. Inter religious and sectarian marriages are taking place in huge numbers. This is what I think of Beirut. True some people differentiate based ones religion and sect, this is unfortunate; however, in terms of the people living in Beirut and as far as the city is concerned, it is very much integrated together.

The incident was not discussed in the council. it was clear who was behind it. Not discussed.

15.   The incident has resulted in a shift in discourse from the opposition of the location of the hospital to the opposition of the hospital itself. What do you think of that?

The shift of the discourse. I don't have a justification why they want to shift the discourse. Because the location of the hospital that was proposed and decided by the former council is not a topic to be debated for… (interruption)

All the people around Horsh Beirut do not approve of the location. But some people in the area want the hospital to be in "their" area. Then others from another area would demand their own services and so on and so forth.

16.   What do you mean by "territory"?

I am living in this area. It is like a location. If everyone demands a project in his area/territory of the Horsh, it would be gone. Nobody wants anything to happen in the Horsh, this is why they shifted the discourse from the location of the hospital to the hospital itself. Because the

people in the area don't want anything to happen in the Horsh. (Because there is a strong op- position, they shifted the discourse! That's it! They created a conflict). The location of the hospital is not to be discussed.

Who are the people of the area that are supporting the hospital? The people of Tarik El Jdideh. It starts from here till Cola where the Arab University is. The people of Tarik El Jdideh they don't care to build the hospital. Even when it was at the Arab University, in the middle of their neighborhood, they did not really care for it. The people that really benefited from it are not those living in the area, but the Syrian and Palestinian refugees who live in the area.

17.   Therefore, the people of Tarik El Jdideh at least most of them don't want the hospital, then how to you classify the project supporters? Who are they?

These people are affiliated to this and that politician in the government. They [these politicians] have them [these people], on the road [ready] whenever they [politicians] want, they mobilize these people to interfere. "zalmit flein w zalmit flein".

18.   After the protest, Beirut municipality issued a declaration stating that it respects free- dom of expression and public opinion, but regardless of the opposition the construction is still going on. To what extent, do you think, Beirut municipality can… (interrupted)

The municipality is the one that mobilized these people to create this opposition. The majority of the council members gathered these people (manipulated them) in order to create a conflict. The council can't do anything anymore regarding this internal majority. The majority is ruling in the way it wants. It is mobilizing people on the street to dominate and shift the discourse and create disputes to present in the media that it is a problem. This has been the majority since a very long time. Same political ideology. This time they are using the word "temporary" even though nothing in Beirut is temporary. They use it in order to get a building permit without zoning requirements (no floor to area ratio) and they can build temporary structures that can be dismantled.

19.   Where can citizens get acquainted with the decisions of the Council because the minutes of meetings published on the website are very brief (one line description).

The minutes of the meeting need to be formulated into decisions and this would take 6-7 days to organize and indicate each decision. He has long proposed an internal system for the munic- ipality in order to achieve more transparency but they (the majority, dominating the council since 1998) don't want it because it means that more responsibilities are needed and more transparency. The council can't do anything against the hegemonic power. No public partici- pation because the council is elected by the people. This idea was never discussed or brought up as an improvement of municipal work.

20.   As a long-term member of the council, how can you describe the municipality's perception of Horsh Beirut?

The perception of Horsh Beirut is a space to be conserved (protection of the trees and the space from practices and behaviors of the people that do not respect nature) and developed (beautify it in terms of landscape and benches and facilities). Even now with the hospital, the vision is to still develop the park. He also talked about the I'lle de France design that it is to be conserved. And the same narration as B. Hamad story of what happened to it during the Israeli invasion.

21.   I don't have any more questions; would you like to add something before we end this interview?

Suggestion: Look at an "underdeveloped" area next to the very well developed Downtown Area. This area requires a lot of urban planning and it is an opportunity to generate more jobs and economic benefits. It has a huge potential because it is next to the Harbor. Many people (poor) living there are selling and some are building new houses. He thinks this is an urban planning project, but the park also but it is related more to nature.

Interview with Bilal Hamad

1.   How does the municipality perceive Horsh Beirut?

 The green space per citizen in Beirut is one of the lowest ratios in the world. Beirut is a highly populated city. 20-22 km2 occupied by 1 million residents apart from the daily users that amount to half a million each day (a quarter of the Lebanese population if the latter is considered to be 4 million). Horsh Beirut (including the Hippodrome) amounts to 500,000 m2 is the lung of the city.

Therefore, we were keen to protect the Horsh from any abuse. In the early 90s the former prime minister Rafic Hariri established a link/partnership between the municipality of Beirut and that of I'le de France (Region) and UCLG they signed a partnership contract with Beirut municipality. The aim was to help the municipality in many sectors such as urban planning, lighting, soft mobility, plus Horsh Beirut esp Ile de France. They brought in experts and they started designing the Horsh and improving/rehabilitating its landscape and the trees after the fire when the Israeli invasion happened in the late 80s. The municipal council from 1998-2010 decided to close the park in order to allow for the pine trees to grow (it requires 20-25 years) and to protect the trees it is like a "mi7miye". They only allowed the "mature" people to go in especially that they are afraid that its location can be used as a gathering place for people and for protests and the abuse by people that would enter the park and do barbecue, burn, steal, litter, burn the trees, allow for diseases…

When I became a mayor in 2010, I realized that the study done for the park was not completely executed. There were no toilets in the Horsh, not enough benches, no facility to attract people to the Horsh, no tracks for biking, jogging. So we met with the French people and they said that the project was not implemented because of long procedures. I am for public space let us still allow for the policy of not allowing everyone in the park but reduce the age of admission to the park from above 35 (according to the former municipal council) to above 30 and I allowed for parents to bring in their kids. The talk that only foreigners (western) are allowed is a lie. This decision did not specify the nationality.

I brought people from my friends; engineers, landscape designers and we did a study as an update to the former study. We did a masterplan for the Horsh with tracks and a space for a botanical garden and I did an agreement with Switzerland, the municipality of Genève that resulted in a partnership to establish a botanical garden in the Horsh. The masterplan was for free by the way and the study of Genève was for free also because of the trust in who I am, a university professor. I have a lot of friends. Then I brought another company APAV technical control office that gave us a donation, a tender document. In my imagination, the management and maintenance and security of the Horsh was to be controlled by a private company. The access to the park through a card that you tag the card and enter. Inside if you do anything that is considered against regulations such as smoking, littering and so on, you get penalty points. So many penalty points you will be denied entrance to the park for a certain period. Just like the civilized world. In order to preserve this natural reserve "ma7miyeh" [is it a public space, natural reserve, or what??]. I did a tendering document (daftar shorout) of how to transfer this project to a private company. The master plan was done as well as the other documents. The executive officer in Beirut is the Governor. This is very odd and awkward. This is a case of democracy. It is stupid. Stupid. It was established in order to allocate positions among religious sects. The roum would take the Governor position and the Sunni the mayors position. But the mayor cannot implement anything. The people hold him accountable and he is not responsible. This is the dilemma.

So I sent him the studies done after the council's approval, he puts them in one of his drawers and he never executes them. This is very stupid. We reported him to the ministry of Interior, we sent him a request to implement the project. Because there is religion in the issue. The minister of Interior never used what the law gives him to tell the Governor that he should implement no matter what (very authoritative). No mou7asabe. The law states that the decisions by the municipal council are valid as is, except for the laws that require the approval of the Ministry of Interior. The Governor just has to implement. The Governor considers himself as the head of the municipality. And so just like that. He is not elected. It is stupid. After my experience, I advise the people of Beirut not elect anymore a council in Beirut unless the law changes because it is not democratic. It is against democracy. The rights of the people of Beirut are splintered because the mayor that they elect is not given consideration by the Governor.

He opened the Horsh (with the juridical decision from Nahnoo) even though the council has the right to decide on whether to open or close the Horsh. It is a property of Beirut municipality. We went to the Minister of Interior to say that he cannot open the Horsh but the latter did not do anything. He opened the Horsh without the presence of a maintenance contract without having a specialized company to manage it. We don't have enough security guards in the municipality. The Horsh became a place for abuse. People are smoking, eating, doing unethical stuff until the trees were hit by a disease. The last maintenance contract I did ended in 2016 (I thought they opened it without a maintenance contract haha) in the summer. The new council did not do biddings for a new maintenance contract as if they are absent minded. No one including the Governor realized that. The trees that we have spent 25 years protecting are now in danger because of the irresponsible governor who opened the Horsh in a decision that was not legal and in a decision that was not studied.

People say, Bilal Hamad has closed the Horsh. I did so for you and for me. This is not mine. I am protecting this nature reserve from abuse until I find the proper solution. I always used to address people on the media; I was to give this project to a private company. I finished the tendering documents and the study. They are at the Governor's desk, he has to implement them. Let him do a bidding for the companies to bid and implement the project. So that they turn the Horsh into a "paradise". We then establish a partnership with Geneve to start establishing the botanical garden. I already gave the botanical garden project to a company. When the new council came, the project was set aside.

I did 3 things: I prepared tender documents for a private company for management, maintenance, and security, I completed the masterplan, and I offered (commissioned) the botanical garden study in collaboration with the Swiss. 3 things I did. Nothing happened. Now the Horsh is open without any supervision.

All the blame is on the Governor. The new council has to be aware of that but it seems they need time to know what is going on. The problem is this changing of councils which requires time for the work to start again because of the change in politics. It depends on how smart the council members and the mayor are to understand what is going on. The new council has not taken these projects up in an effective way.

2.   What do you believe that the best solution is through privatization?

Privatization is the solution because the public sector fails in management. They fail in maintenance. From my experience in the public sector and my partnership with other public sectors for 6 years, I realized that ministries and institutions, I can say with great confidence that the public sector in Lebanon is inefficient. There is a lot of bureaucracies, corruption, and ineffectiveness. They don't value time or deadlines. I always used to be told "why are you in a rush, let the things take their time". I like to work, as here [his consulting company] in a timeline/roadmap with deadlines to deliver on time. If I don't follow up my decisions with the Governor to implement they would take a lot of time [irrelevant example blaming the governor

again] but if I was the governor the next day I would implement because I took the decision and I know its importance to the people of Beirut. The governor has to first agree on its implementation. There is no law that establishes a time for the Governor to implement the decisions. This is a fault in the law. The Governor is a dictator in Beirut. [irrelevant]. You report him to the Minister of Interior saying that he is not implementing, The minister should "order" him to implement, but because of the religious and sectarian issues in the country and the political and so on…

The public sector is not qualified. The people I worked with around 10% only are qualified. They are not motivated. The pay is low, there is a lot of corruption. They take money in order for things to work. They take on bribes. There is a lot of routine in terms of communication (sending mozakara). They don't understand that we can meet. I started the idea of meeting with different stakeholders but the problem is that I am not the one to follow up the implementation. This was a sad and discouraging experience [as a mayor] and I am writing about it now because my visions were blocked by these challenges, because of personal interests.

Once I gave a project through bidding to a contractor from a certain religion. I get a call from a politician that this contract cannot work because it should be awarded to someone with the same religion as the area. What? Everyone is referring to their own territories. There are religious issues resulting in this inefficiency. There are many projects that were stopped because a bunch of hooligans would start saying that they oppose this project. No one can stop them saying that there are elections I don't want to lose these votes. Our country is one where political and religious interests interfere in developmental projects (do we always have to see it as an interference?). Therefore, development is slow and weak. Everything is controlled by politics and religion.

I had a grant for a garden as a study. I brought so many grants from my friends. I gave the USJ a section along the campus for free in exchange to do this garden. The Governor did not allow for it because the university represents one sect they can't use the garden because they are not from this other sect. Among sects; they are all Christians. Catholic and Maronites. This is crazy! Divisions and one can't work here or go to this area because he has a different religion. This is silly; however, this is Lebanon. This is how things are. You don't see these things until you are inside. Everyone say that. This is my territory. One politician calls me saying that you can't do anything in my territory without my approval. How am I expected as a mayor to plan and develop a city? If I need the political/religious approval of each territory. Even within the council they would say that to do this project you need to talk to the religious head in order to fix it. This is Lebanon. It has been like this for years. I was shocked. This impedes development. Because Beirut is the capital, everyone including the politicians want to interfere. We don't have [as a council] the authority to execute. Not a local government even the members of parliament representing Beirut want to interfere. But we are an independent authority supposedly. Even if I want to name a street. We took the decision but no you have to consult us. One has to be smart. I was smart. But when I was certain about something I would go forward. I was

working based on my values, at times people would tell the politicians about me saying that I am not coordinating with them. But I am proud to say that 95% of the decisions I took were unanimous. This means that I was doing my homework well. When I used to see that there is a bit of an opposition, I would postpone. I would establish a subcommittee to restudy and take another look at things.

If these 3 already studies projects were implemented, then the Horsh would now be a paradise under the private sector because the latter is much successful than the public sector in Lebanon. Don't compare the public sector here to that in France or Switzerland or Denmark. Don't compare the municipality there to that of Beirut municipality. The mayor of New York has more authority than the President of the US. He could take a decision in his city in opposition with what the President want and an example is now with the refugees. The mayor is the "ruler" of his city.

The opening of the Horsh as executed by the Governor has led us to the problem with the disease of trees. The report states that one of the reasons the trees caught up the disease is the wrong field practices like cutting, maintenance. There is not a specialized company doing the work, but amateurs instead. If specialists were taking care of the Horsh, the trees and the land-scape they would have identified the disease right away. We wouldn't have lost 500 trees and it is closed. God protect the Horsh!

3. Why can't the municipality recruit qualified people and specialists?

Can't recruit experts and specialists because of the low payments in the municipality. For instance, in the department of transport in the municipality, there is no transport engineer. Because if I want to get a traffic and transportation specialist, h/she will be a graduate student with a mater's degree. His salary ought to be 2500-3000$ we don't have these salaries. The salary of an engineer would start in 1000$ with overtime and stuff it might reach 1500$. How can you bring experts? You can bring them through collaborations and contracts. I can't raise the payments of municipal employees. It is a public sector. We contract experts. But I can't hire. We don't have qualified engineers in the municipality to inspect cracks in building for safety [some citizens were asking for it after one building fell some years ago]. Engineers can finish permit work and they can supervise violations based on building code. We don't have specialized people. You need a role model in the public sector. So there is a solution by the leader.

There is no supervision and inspection in the public sector. There is not. Because we can allocate people or fire some if their religious and political background is compatible with those in power. This is stupid. Unbelievable. For instance, the new governor appointed an unqualified person for the position of manager of engineering department or so because this person is recommended by his religious background. (marja3iye al ta2ifiye). This same person is now the vice president of the current municipal council. Unbelievable how people are out in certain

positions, though they are completely unqualified. When religion and politics interfere in development work, the city won't develop.

Historical buildings example..

4.   How does the bidding happen?

Bidding documents published in the newspaper. Lowest bid wins. Bids discussed in the council. In case of 1 bidder, we repeat. If again 1 bidder no bidding biltaradi. At the end the governor signs the contract with the contractor. He follows up on the project.

5.   How was the idea of the field hospital proposed?

Field hospital story: This is not a pleasant topic. The field hospital was in the Arab University in Tarik El Jdideh. After 2006 they were giving free checkups and medication to 10,000s of people. The University said that they can no longer afford this space and asked them to relocate. A field hospital means that it is related to the army which means that the government in Egypt is involved and this relates to the ties between Lebanon and Egypt. They asked the municipality to find another space for this facility to provide services to the people of Beirut. We proposed a lot in Sabra even though this place was dear to our hearts we wanted to do a health related project and an educational one for Sabra. They said security wise it is not suitable because it is close to the Palestinian camps. Then we proposed another location in an abandoned school, we said that we will fix it. I was surprised later on that they decided behind my back, as a mayor of Beirut and the council, with the Governor that they would choose Verdun in the school of Chakib Areslan they would take a basement to do the field hospital. I said that this is a field hospital and it is for free for the poor people, you want to do it in "Verdun" (an area for the rich) but the Governor and the Minister of Interior has agreed upon this. They would say that if you don't take the decision as a council we would do it anyway (the importance of the decision? "This is Lebanon"). So we decided that we would give them this floor in that school. They did not implement it. Later on, I hear that they no longer want to go there, they want to be facing the Khashikji Mosque. There is a parking lot. There are no plantations there, no trees, asphalted road. It is used as a parking lot for the municipality and for the mosque every Friday [no mention of the Horsh]. They wanted to establish the field hospital there. Egyptian officials visited him and he asked them why do you want to go there? If Sabra is not secure, this area is "out in the open". Go inside if you want to benefit the people and the neighborhoods. They said no this is better and we have agreed with the Minister of Interior and the Lebanese-Egyptian relations rest upon this agreement and whether you agree or not we will build it anyway. The Lebanese government authorized and enforced this decision on the municipality through politics. They want to sustain the Lebanese-Egyptian relations whether you approve or not. So take a decision on this issue. So what I did, in a smart way, I said go to the edge of the parking and we decided that they build a temporary structure/facility. Next week, they erect concrete columns in a different location that the one the council decided on. They appealed to the Governor that this is not a temporary building. They did not reply to his claims as if they don't care. The

media and civil society started complaining. They removed the concrete columns. Who paid for them? You have to ask the governor. Now they are doing a steel construction that is temporary until they find another location. I am against this location and I proposed that we discuss another location. However, the hegemonic politics is stronger than me in this country. They politically agreed on this location. The discussions were made between the Lebanese government and the ambassador of Egypt and they agreed on the location without taking the opinion of the council. [This is not to be published here, publish it outside]. They did not care about the council. They did the deal and came for the council. Still no mention of the Horsh. It is possible to have a hospital in front of a mosque? And also the location is not appropriate in front of the Horsh [He mentions it!!]. A had a visit from 20 (a couple) of 3ameed Egypt. Political calls and pressures. I said make it temporary. Now it is an ugly, bulky steel structure. Everything in Lebanon that is temporary becomes permanent. This is the problem.

He was hesitant that there is a monetary profit from this project. The cost of construction is not that much. It is just a warehouse and clinics. The entire construction does not cost 1 million dollars. Compared to other illegal profits generated in the city, this is not that much. It is a case of political relations. We were told take a decision in this location for us to sustain the relations with Egypt. The location of the hospital is illegal as in opposition to the municipal decision. The latter states that it is to be constructed at the edge of the parking now it is being built in a different place.