

# beirut house of fashion

fashion creation office





## FASHION CREATION CENTRE

Gina Goedert

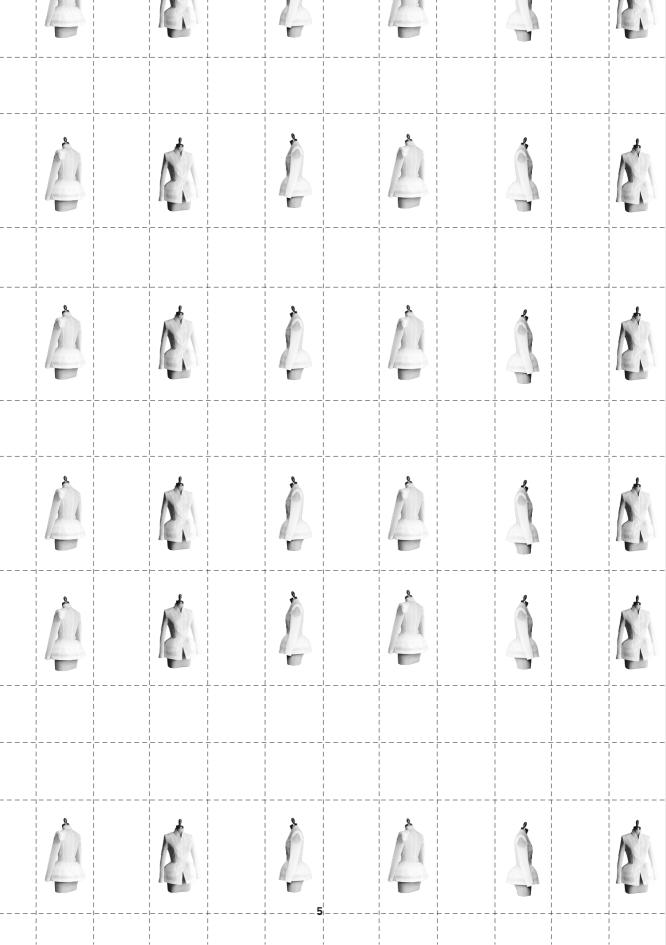
Msc graduation project

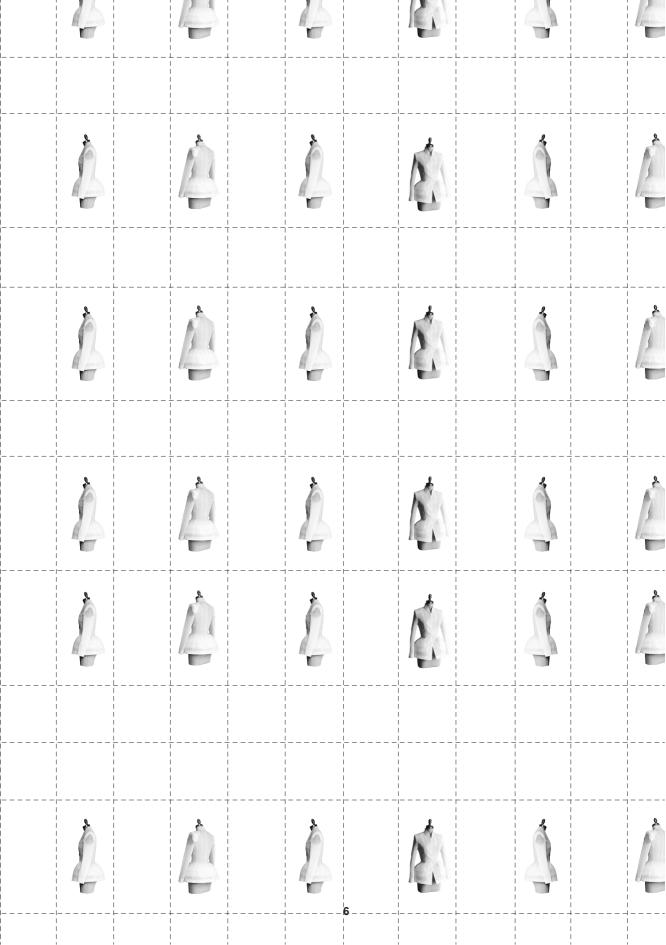
Chair of Complex Projects

Delft Technical University

2022









#### abstract.

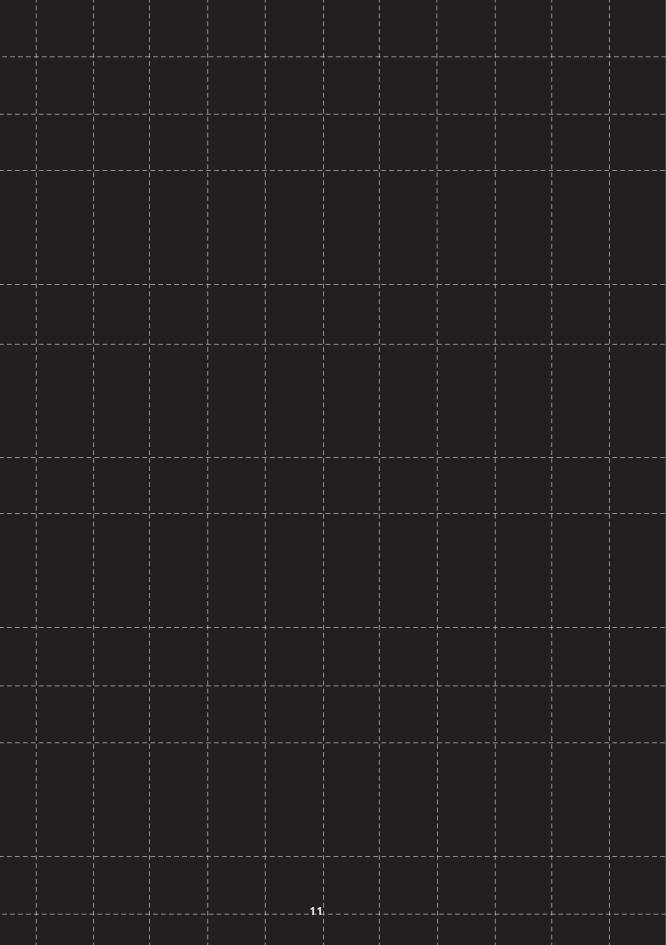
Once, counting as an important banking hub and capital for fashion design within the Arabian countries, Beirut's favorable economic positioning was weakened by social unrests, political standstill and economic volatile. Beirut's population has been facing severe socioeconomic challenges for the past decades, also reflecting on the fashion industry. This thesis aims to analyze how workspaces can be reimagined and redesigned towards a future-proof fashion industry in Beirut.

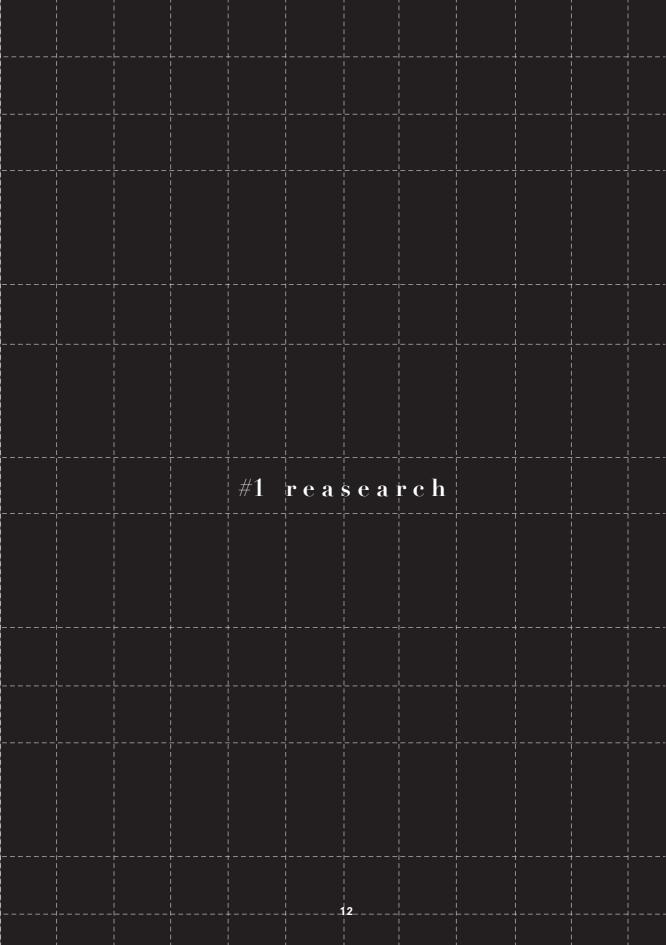
The destruction of infrastructure due to the Port Blast in 2020, and last aspect of a triple crisis, forces local designers to adapt their hitherto habits and seek alternative economic opportunities in order to sustain the country's fashion industry. As a result, ongoing changes have been observed in Beirut the way businesses operate and how people perform their work: telecommuting and remote work became a daily routine leading to a need for reimagination of workspaces. Ever since the outbreak of COVID-19, these tendencies have been increasingly observed global-wide.

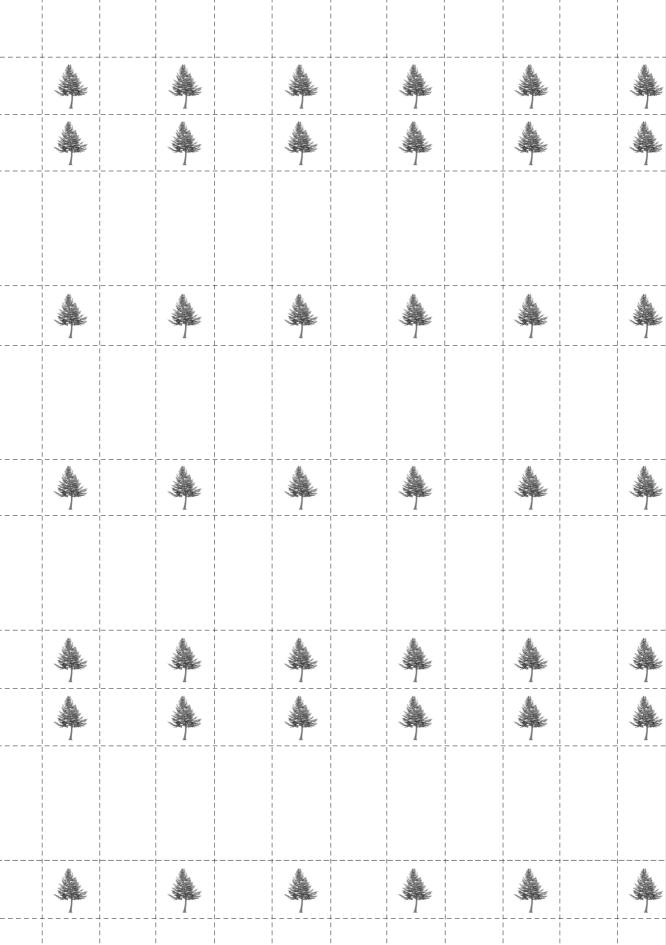
The proposed building "Fashion Creation Office" will function as a centre for local fashion designers and entrepreneurs that seek to operate within the Lebanese economy while tackling social and environmental issues. Functioning as a spatial incubator, the building will become a place of exchange where talented people are given the opportunity to launch and realize innovations and business ideas that enhance the sustainable rebuilding of the Lebanese economy. Identifying the spatial needs of start-up entrepreneurs and designers, the building will incorporate the architectural answer of how workspace will evaluate in the future with the fashion industry functioning as a case study.

## Content

#1	research	beirut		
		impact fashion industry	02	
		problem statement	03	
#2	design brief	ambtions	0 5	
		site	0 6	
		program	0	
#3	project design	concept	0.8	
		plans	0.9	
		building technology	10	
		visualisations	1 -	







### BEIRUT

paris of the middle east?

#### Lebanon

Lebanon's long history of occupations together with its location between Europe and the Arab countries, resulted in a unique blend of Arab, Hellenic, Ottoman and Western cultures. Beirut's nickname "Paris of the Middle East" reflects the long post-colonial relationship with France and the great influence it had on the cultural heritage and economic development of Lebanon. 1 Also serving as a gateway between the Western World and the Middle East, Lebanon's strategic location was not only used for cultural exchange, it's ports and airports served as a prime location for the transit of goods from and to the Arab countries. The oil boom starting in the 1960th and the country's free economic and foreign exchange system contributed to a dynamic and fast-growing economy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Luiza do Prado Lima. Lebanon's fashion Industry Is Suffering a Triple Hit-But It Is Still Alive and Hopeful. Moderated Newsletter. https://medium.com/moderated/lebanons-fashion-industry-is-suffering-a-triple-hit-but-it-is-still-alive-and-hopeful-9d6f7d1b2735. August 12 2020. Accessed Oktober 28 2021.





























#### Beirut

As capital of Lebanon, Beirut once called "Paris of the Middle East", has been a culturally and economically interesting city within the Mediterranean connecting cultural riches of Europe with the Middle East. The city was able to position itself as a strong banking centre and its unique cultural heritage, allowed the city to become a hub for business, fashion and culture1 attracting numerous international businesses to base their offices or headquarters in the city. In addition, Beirut possesses a great human capital with one of the most educated populations in the region with good employment opportunities from which the rapid growing regional development profited. The combination of these listed factors positioned Beirut as a profitable environment for international companies and local entrepreneurs resulting in an accumulation of businesses, in the middle of the 20th century

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Armani Sharif.. "How Lebanon is One of Middle East's Strongest Fashion Hubs". Culture Trip. https://theculturetrip.com/middle-east/lebanon/articles/how-lebanon-is-one-of-middle-eastsstrongest-fashion-hubs/ Published September 19 2017. Accessed November 1 2021





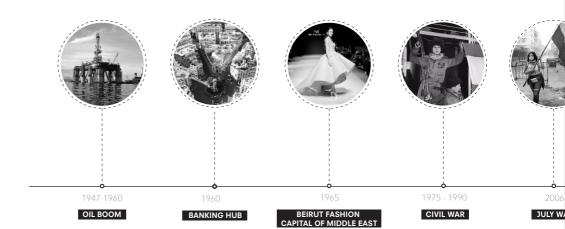
Since the Ottoman period in 1500, its capital Beirut functioned as a gateway between the Western World and the Middle East and the city's harbour was considered the main trading center in the region.

As a buzzling trading centre for all kinds of goods and materials, the harbour's functionality allowed Beirut to prosper and gain an excellent international reputation. The latter together with the oil boom in the 60s, led to the development of a strong economic system providing a fertile ground for international banks and other industries resulting in Beirut becoming a strong business and banking hub





With the new prosperity, people came to enjoy a high standard of living including the growing interest in high quality fashion as a fulfilment of materialistic needs and the desire of self-representation. Known, as "Paris of the Middle East" Beirut become a renowned hub of art and fashion allowing the unique fusion between the tradition and modernity of both the Easter and Western World. A waste number of fashion designers emerged and well-knows fashion designers as Elie Saab and Zuhair Murad contributed to Beirut becoming a worldwide fashion metropolis. Consequently, Beirut became a popular shopping destination for Middle Eastern visitors, also contributing significantly to the country's economy.



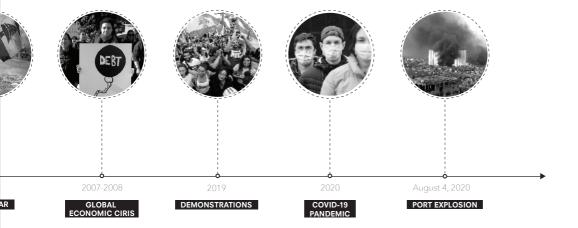
#### economic & political unrests

During the Civil War (1975-1994), with the dead of 5% of its population and several hundred thousand skilled professionals emigrating to find employment outside,

the human capital that beforehand was essential for Lebanon's development, was severely reduced. In being in a state of war for decades, Lebanon missed the once so favorable opportunities from the oil boom, resulting in the loss of foreign investment and the relocation of companies doing business in this area to other countries.<sup>1</sup>

The following events, the July War in 2006, the economic crisis (2007-2008) and the 2019 Protests, worsened the economic

<sup>8</sup> Naila Nauphal.



infrastructure and the country's position as a banking and fashion hub was seriously weakened.

Consequences include massive business closures, drastic increase in unemployment rates and an estimation of a third of the country's population to live near the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> T he streaking dissatisfaction within the society resulted in a row of demonstrations around the country. While being in a constant state on-and-off armed conflicts for decades, Lebanon was left with much limited opportunities for sustainable economic growth which resulted in the social, cultural and environmental issues, in being ignored by the government.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Joelle M. Abi-Rached. Ishac Diwan. The Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Lebanon: A Crisis Within Crises. European Institute of the Mediterranean. https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-socioeconomic-impact-of-covid-19-on-lebanon-a-crisis-within-crises/. June 22 2020. Accessed 20 October 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Tallie Hausser. "Lebanon's Start-Up Ecostystem: The Missing Link of Social entrepreneurship"... https://medium.datadriveninvestor.com/lebanons-start-up-ecosystem-the-missing-link-of-social-entrepreneurship-4708ad854139. October 10 2018. Accessed: October 27, 2021.





## COVID-19 pandemic



30 %

Lebaneses lost their jobs

42 %

between 20-24 years of age



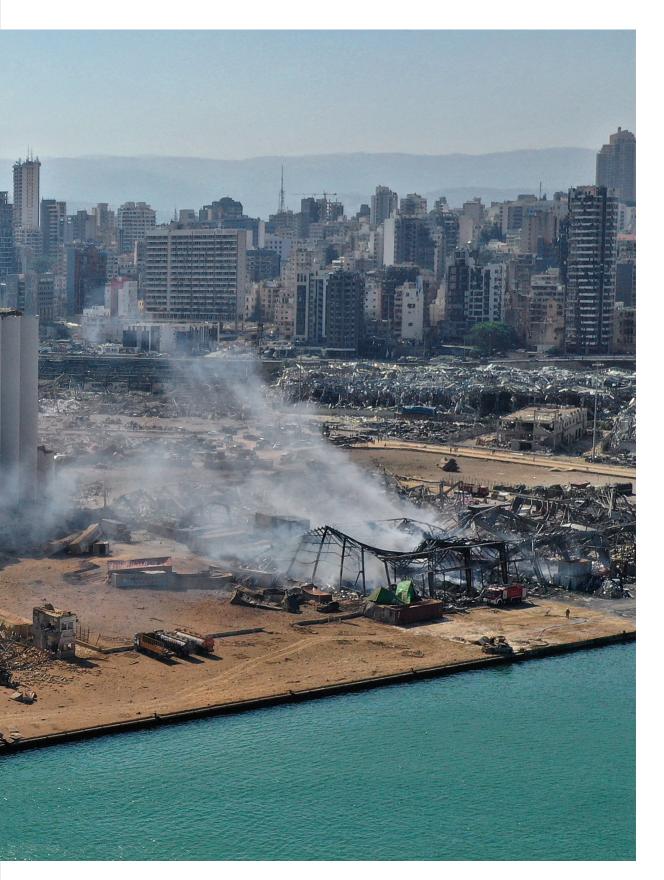
23 %

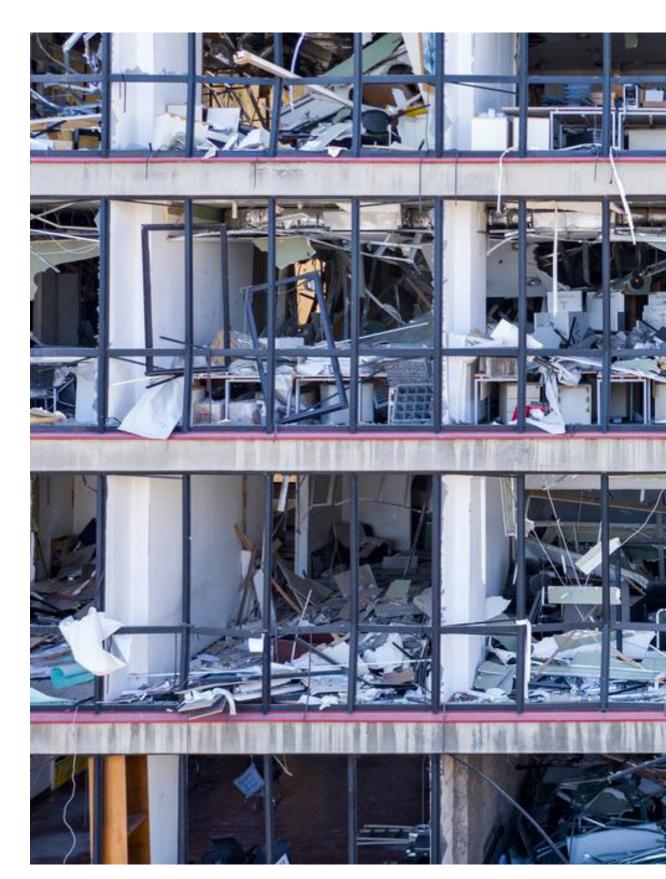
reported salary
 reduction

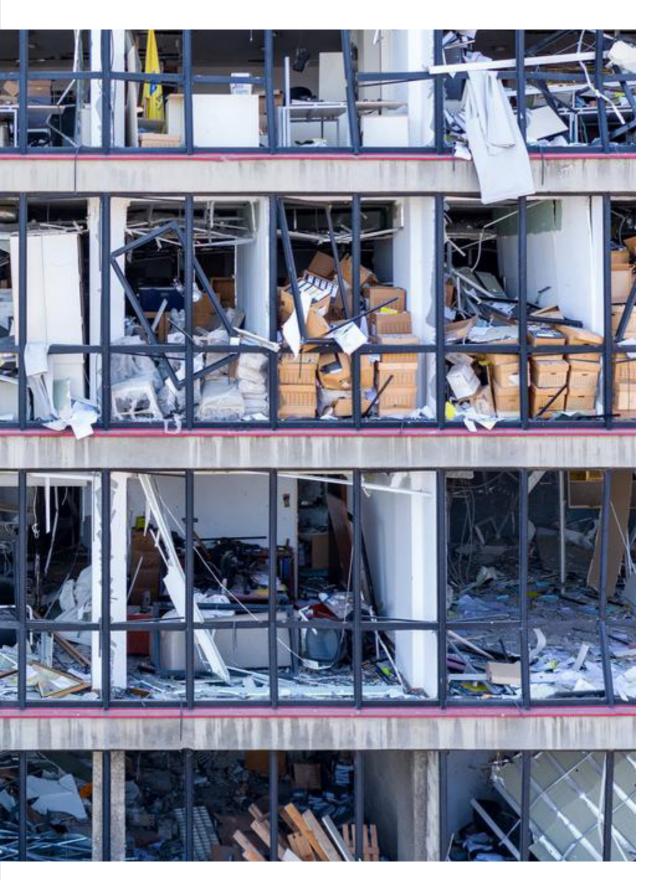
**18**%

of establishments have terminated

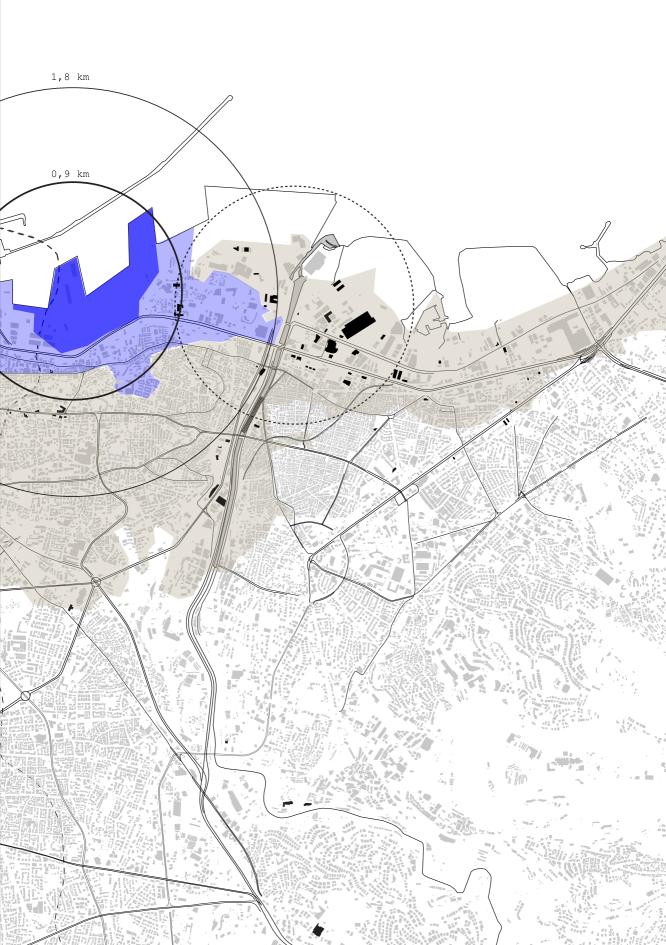














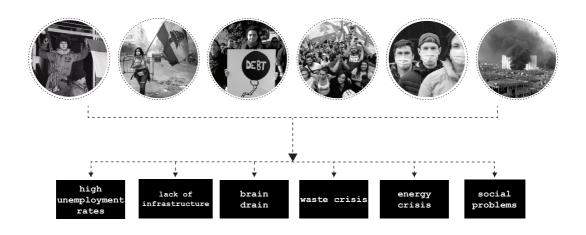
In the midst of economic and political instabilities, the worldwide onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the following 2020 port blast, left deep traces in the socioeconomic situation. Among 30% of the Lebanese population reported job losses since the outbreak of the pandemic, 42% out of which was affecting youth unemployment. ¹The explosion at the port of Beirut on the 4th August marks the top of the iceberg, killing 218 people, forcing the displacement of 300.000 people and impacting 56% of private businesses in the city. In addition to the humanitarian crisis, it is estimated that the blast produced 800.000 tons of demolition and chemical waste, deteriorating the already ongoing waste crisis by contaminating soil and water, causing a serious health threat to the people.2

These events contributed to discontentment and depression among the society, driving especially the young high-educated workforce in seeking stability and job opportunities abroad. This results in a massive brain drain, that has dramatic effects on Lebanon's already suffering economy.

<sup>1</sup> Santo Milasi, Ignacio Gonzalez-Vazquez, Enrique Fernandez-Macias. Teleworking in the EU before and after the COVID-19: where we were, where we head to. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/default/files/jrc120945\_policy\_brief\_-\_covid\_and\_telework\_final.pdf. 2020. Accessed October 15 2021.

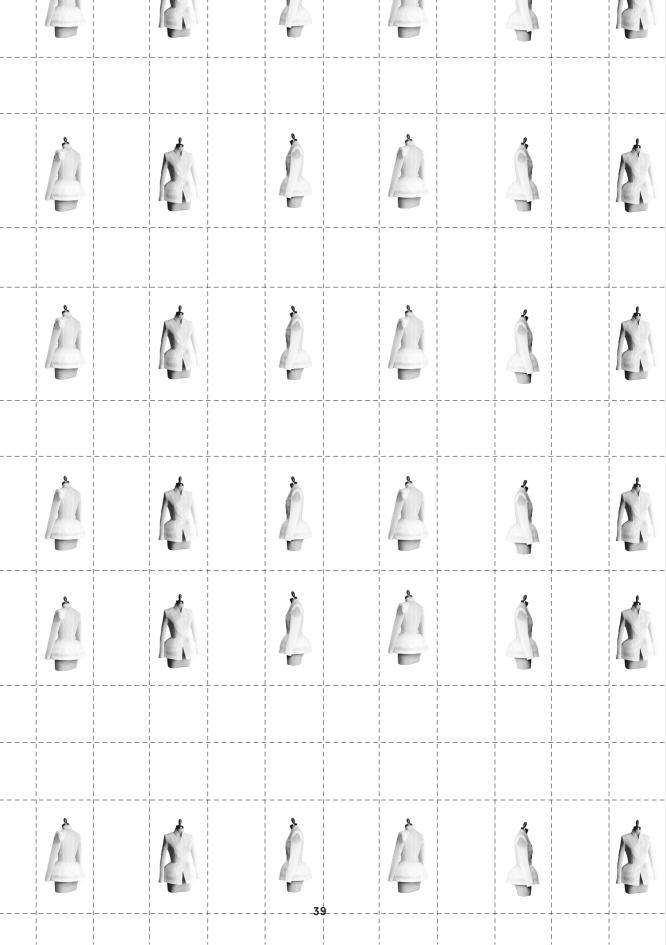
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch. They killed Us from the Inside - An investigation into the August 4 Beirut Blast. United States of America. https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast# . Published August 2021. Accessed October 25 2021.

## concquences



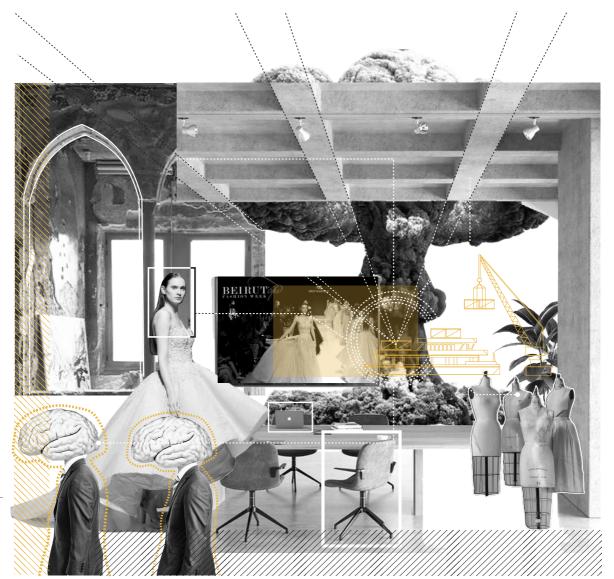


The consequence is a massive brain drain, leading especially the talented people that would be the most valuable for a rebuilding of the country, to flee the country and seek better possibilities. Lebanese fashion designer tend to relocate their businesses Dubai or other major cities, leading to a massive brain drain within the industry and a loss of value as a fashion metropole. The question raises of who will rebuild the city of Beirut?



# **FASHION**

impact on fashion industry



#### economic & social consequences

Giving home to an unusual high number of famous creative fashion designers, Lebanon's fashion industry was globally recognized and Beirut was considered the fashion hub among the Arabian countries. With the ongoing socio-political instabilities Lebanon's fashion industry is suffering, the devaluation of the currency has diminished the local purchase power significantly. The lack of support from the government after the preliminary economic crises, hemps young designers from recovering and developing, leading many of them to immigrate to other countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the industry again on a global level, global purchases and tourism sales were missing. Finally, the port blast caused actual physical damage to the industry. In being in an approximate distance of 800 meters from the explosion epicentre, Beirut's main locations in Gemmayze and Mar Mikhaiel were heavily damaged by the explosion. Before, Beirut has been proven to be a great incubator for especially the young fashion industry in the past. Lebanese designers were eager to support the local industry, by creating job opportunities and producing textiles in Lebanon instead of relocating them to Turkey or Europe. Nowadays the creative community is progressively abandoning the city.

<sup>1</sup> Newsdesk. The fashion industry in Lebanon hit by a triple crisis. EXBulletin. August 7 2021. Accessed November 8 2021. https://exbulletin.com/fashion/273960/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Sujata Assomull.Beirut Fashion Rises from the Ashes. The voice of fashion. https://thevoiceoffashion.com/centrestage/news/beirut-fashion-rises-from-the-ashes-3989. Published September 2 2021. Accessed November 5 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Emily Farra. A Year After the Beirut Explosion, Lebanon Is Still Suffering—Here, 3 Designers Share Their Stories. https://www.vogue.com/article/lebanese-designers-beirut-explosion-one-year-anniversary. Published August 4 2021. Accessed: November 10 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Newsdesk



This blast has set us back even further than covid and the economic crisis."

- Eli Rezkallah, Plastic Studios



Social unrests resulted in economic crisis causing devaluation of the Lebanese currency. These events slowed the industry down as the local purchasing power diminished significantly."

-Roni Helou



### textile waste crisis through covid-19 pandemic

With the Covid-pandemic in 2019, the world then came to a standstill and only increased the devastating situation including a rise in unemployment especially among young people and termination of thousands of businesses and establishments. Besides the low purchase power and closure of businesses, the pandemic caused a huge waste crisis in the fashion industry. Because of the pandemic, sales were diminished causing a huge leftover of unused textiles that were not sold, resulting in huge piles of textiles being burned or dumped into a waste landfill.

Globally, there's one garbage truck of textile waste dumped at a landfill or burnt every second.

The previously outlined challenges, proved the resilience of the people and forced them to adapt their habits. In the fashion industry, leading Lebanese fashion designers are setting examples for the resilience, strength and creativity of Lebanon's population. Zuhair Murad returned to Beirut shortly after the Blast prepare for the Autumn Fashion week in Paris. Since his headquarters were heavily destroyed, his team will design and work from their homes and in temporary working spaces. Ellie Saab, another famous designer, shows the same resilient mindset: "It does not become us as Lebanese to give up".¹ Also young fashion start-up designers are standing strongly together to revive the creative community of Beirut.²

Same as Murad's staff, the lock-down and the destruction of office spaces lead the workforce of most industries to alternate their routines and to rethink the hitherto concept working in dedicated offices. Instead, the activity of work is increasingly disconnected from a dedicated centralized place. People rather tend to relocate their working activities into public spaces, cafes or their own homes, supported by growing digitalization in the working process and the advanced virtual connectivity.<sup>3</sup>

The resilient and adaptive thinking of the population and business sectors is also reflected in the increased interest of start-ups in the social and environmental field. The damaged economic environment seeks alternative business opportunities as the hitherto position as a banking or fashion hub is destroyed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Melissa Watt. "It does not become us as Lebanese to give up": Rebuilding Lebanon's Fashion Industry. Fashion Roundtable. https://www.fashionroundtable.co.uk/news/2020/8/25/rebuilding-lebanons-fashion-industry. Published August 25 2020. Accessed November 5 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Sujata Assomull.Beirut Fashion Rises from the Ashes. The voice of fashion. Published September 2 2021. Accessed November 5 2021. https://thevoiceoffashion.com/centrestage/news/beirut-fashion-rises-from-the-ashes-3989. Published September 2 2021. Accessed November 5 2021

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Nada Richa. "Remote working in Lebanon in the age of COVID-19". Beirut Today. https://bei-rut-today.com/2021/06/16/remote-working-in-lebanon-in-the-age-of-covid-19/. Published June 16 2021. Accessed October 20 2021.







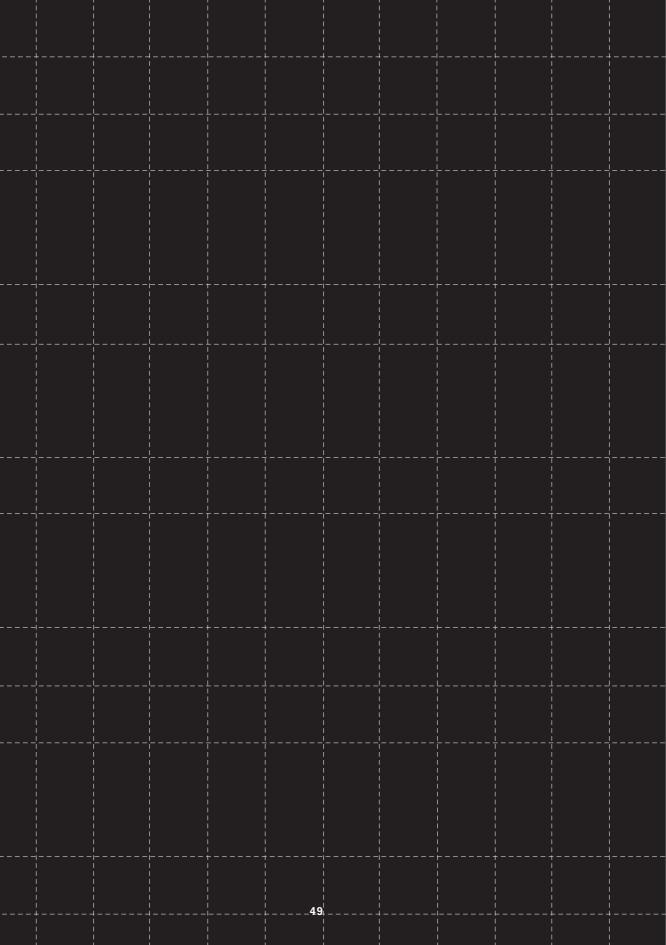


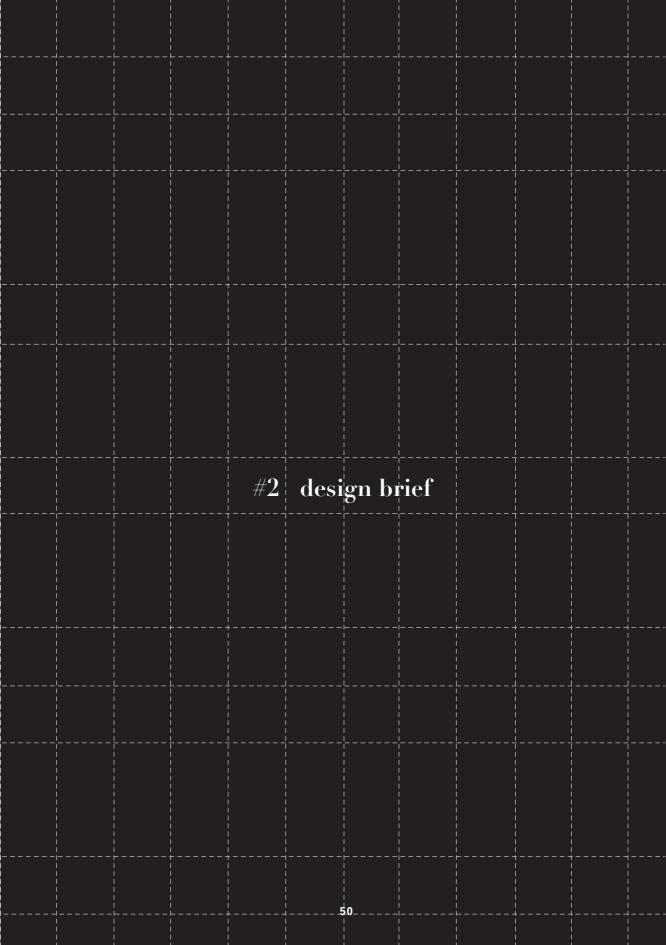
Despite the problems and brain drain, some young Lebanese fashion designers and entrepreneurs still believe in the possibilities of their country and they are trying to present a different picture of Lebanon. With their fashion collections, young designer intentionally want to shedd light to the current problems of the country in order to create awareness while solving on social and environmental issues.

Sarah's bags for example enables and gives jobs to suppressed and underprivileged woman while drawing attention to for example the Port explosion with her designs.

Roni Helous fashion label preserves values as eco-responsibilitiy and ethical practices while broaching the issue of waste crisis in his collections.

And as a last example FabricAID is a social enterprise that sorts, upcycles and resales second hand clothes to draw attention to the practice of sustainable fashion, while reinvesting in social communities.







## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The accumulation of drastic events in Beirut resulted in current high unemployment rates, increasing poverty, business closures and humanitarian problems. The privatization after the war weakens public institutions leading together with the ignorance of the government in social interventions and the port blast, to a lack of infrastructure. These factors have caused a massive discontent in the society, causing brain drain as the talented and creative workforce increasingly emigrates. A great part of the problems in Lebanon are localised, and the government is not taking action in the socioeconomic and environmental field, changes will need to occur in another way. The economic environment requires adaptation and the identification of an operative niche market that could complement the needs of Beirut, while tackling social and environmental issues as well. The fashion industry, which once played a significant role in the local Lebanese economy, showcases an example for how local industries were hit by this triple crisis and how they are willing to adapt in the future.

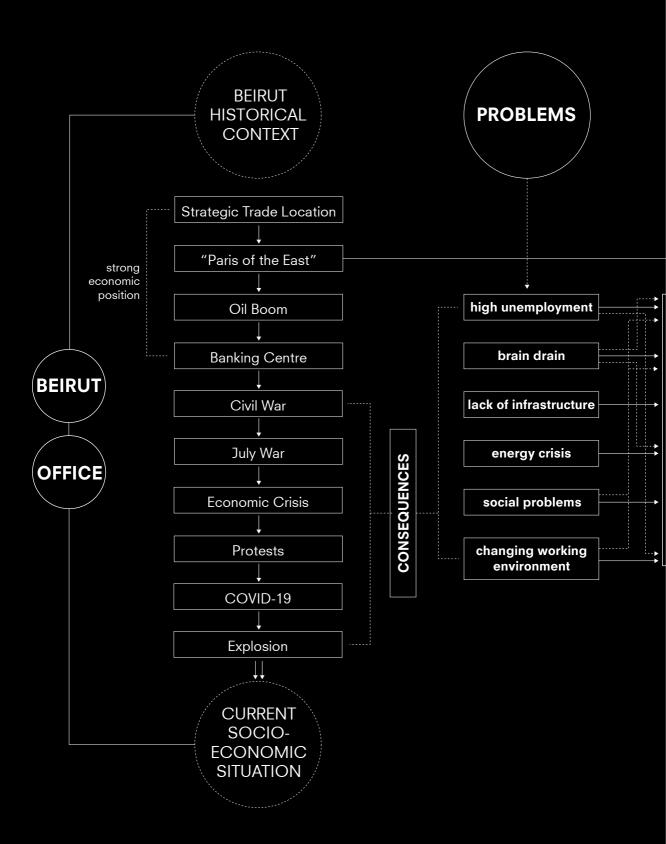
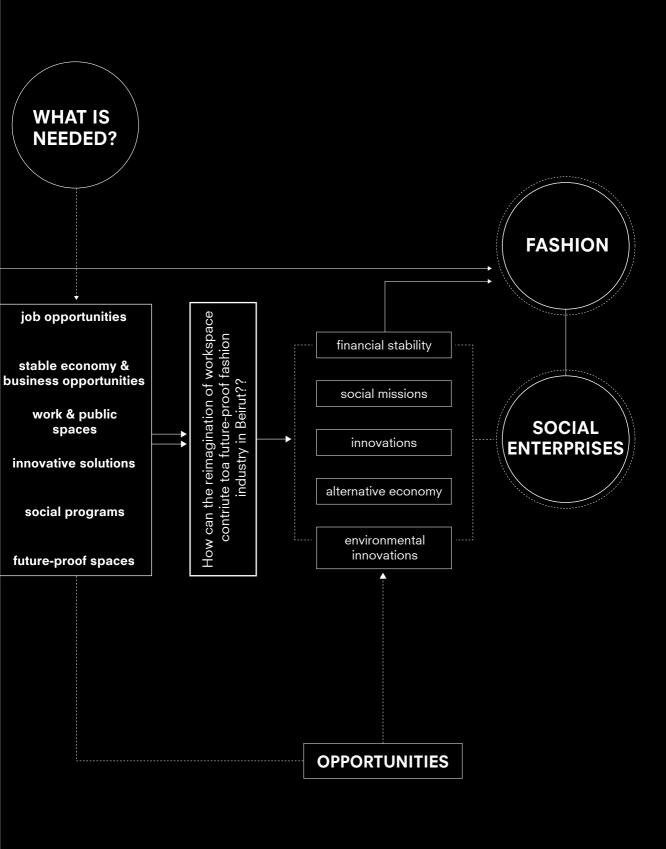


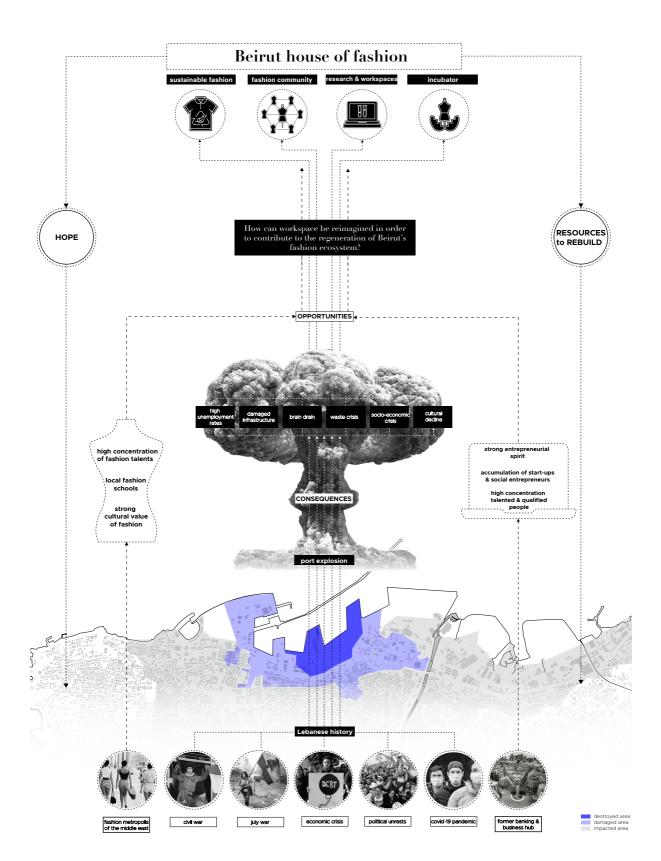
Fig. 9. Research Towards Project Proposal (Goedert, 2021)



How can workspace be reimagined in order to contribute to the regeneration of Beirut's fashion ecosystem?



Creative Centre providing workspaces & resources for innovations and growth of Beirut's Fashion Ecosystem



### research & conceptual formulation

The previous research revealed that since the 20th century, Beirut was a regional hub for banking, business and fashion. The accumulation of drastic events however weakened the economy significantly, resulting in high unemployment rates, increasing poverty same as currency inflation, business closures and humanitarian problems. These problems also hit hard on the fashion industry, that has been largely neglected by the government, despite its great influence on the economy. Beirut once has been home to a myriad of fashion designers that were able to successfully establish their businesses, however today especially young designers and entrepreneurs are struggling to do so, most notably since the economic crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the port explosion. Consequently, the economy seeks alternative and adaptable methods also within the working environment, in order to rebuild Lebanon's industries.



support young local fashion talents, start-ups and social entrepreneurs



provide
workspaces & recources



promote
sustainable fashion



centre for Lebanese fashion industry

## project ambitions

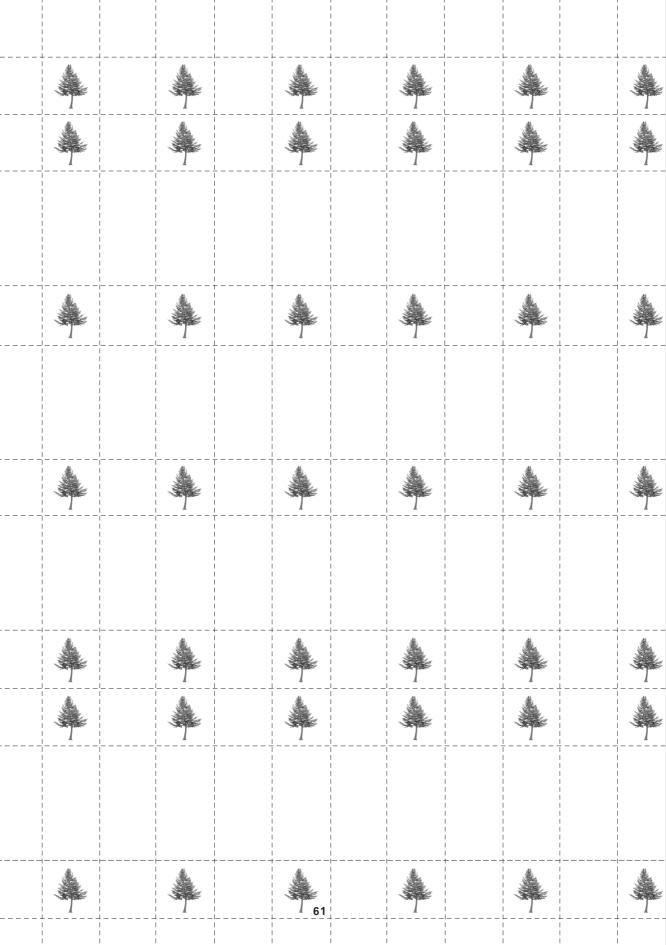
The main ambition for the project is therefore to position Beirut as a fashion hub again. Within the given challenging economic conditions, Beirut can only fulfil this position again through the sustainable development of a healthy and selfnurturing ecosystem. The building therefore will function as a centre for the fashion ecosystem, an entrepreneurial system that consists of interactions between the individual parties of an industry such as entrepreneurs, investors, costumers and suppliers. Functioning as a user centric point of knowledge exchange, mentoring and business incubation, the building will provide workspaces and resources that are allowing entrepreneurs and designers to found their businesses while creating jobs and value for their community.











SITE



The chosen site is located in the north-east of Karantina, left handed from the Beirut River estuary, adjoining the container terminal of the harbour. Historically, the Karantina neighbourhood was built in 1835 and functioned as the quarantine and isolated area on the edge of the city that should shield Beirut from epidemics. In the 20th century, the area became a sanctuary for Armenian refugees also serving as a centre point of cheap labour for the nearby port and industries. The neighbourhood holds heavy burdens that include militarization, the previous function as a refugee camp, heavy pollution due to the port and industries and detachment from the rest of the city. The process of reconstruction and recovery supported by the Fashion Creative Office project will tackle these challenges.

As such, the site is dominated by hard borders, which include natural boarders such as the initial shoreline and physical infrastructure as the port and the highway. The river is one of the main features on the site. Presently suffering from heavy pollution through trash disposal and sewage drainage, it creates a natural boundary on the east site of the location with a height difference of approximately 2 meters. On the north side, the hard border towards the port truck parking and container terminal dominates the site in being 1 to 3 meters higher than the site altitude. These topographic differences were caused by land reclamation in 2011 for the port's new container terminal and in a second phase of its extension in 2016. A strong industrial ambience dominates the ambience of the location, as a result of adjacency to the harbour.

Currently, the land is used by a slaughter-house and a fish market hall, all three buildings are currently heavily damaged from the port explosion. Two main vehicular accesses are connecting the site, one provides direct access to the Emile Lahoud highway while the other access is connected to a roundabout that is shared by the port truck traffic. Both approaches lead to the parking spaces and loading zones of the existing buildings. As a result of the areas historic background, the direct surrounding area holds an agglomeration of mostly industrial buildings with warehouses, production and storage facilities but also several office buildings and creative industries as architecture bureaus and art galleries are increasingly popping up in the close by area. The housing zones of Karantina are in approximate reach.



Fig. 13. Site Location Photo 1. (Goedert, 2022)

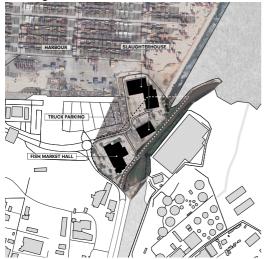


Fig. 14. Site Location Photo 2. (Goedert, 2022)

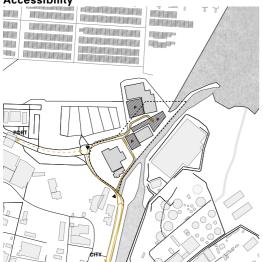


Fig. 15. Site Location Photo 3. (Goedert, 2022)

#### **Existing Structures**



## Accessibility



#### Topography

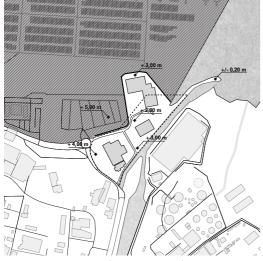
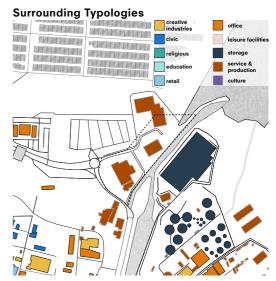
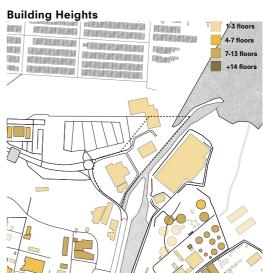
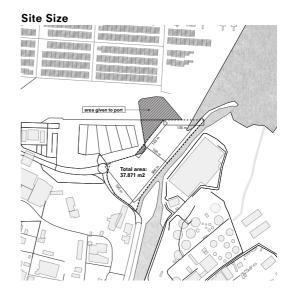
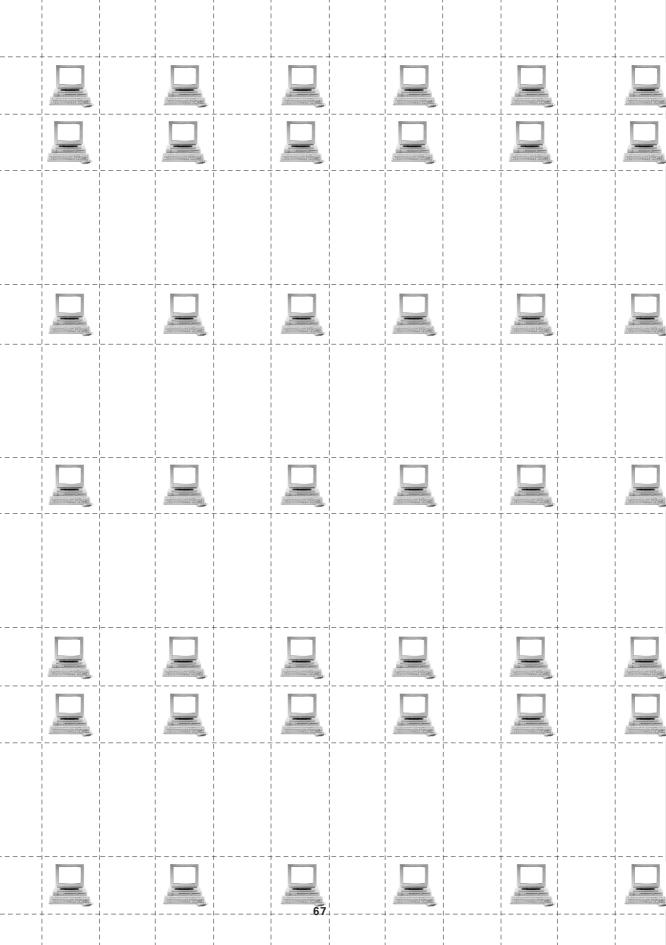


Fig. 16. Site Analysis (Goedert, 2021)

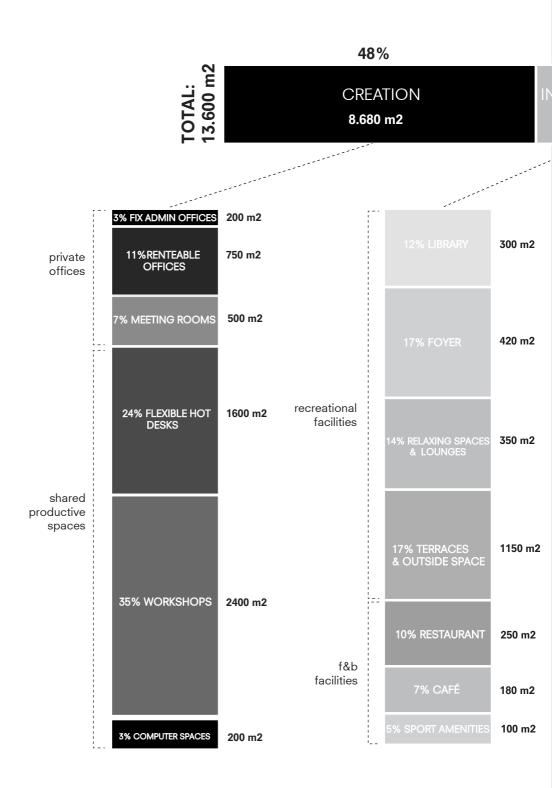


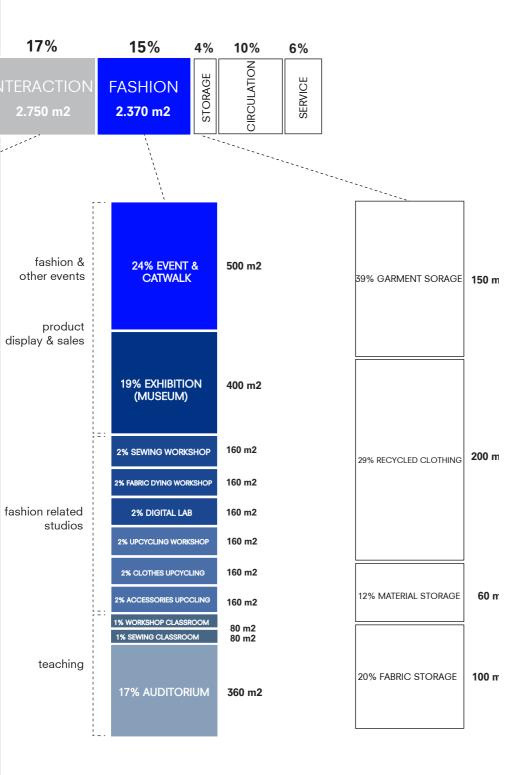


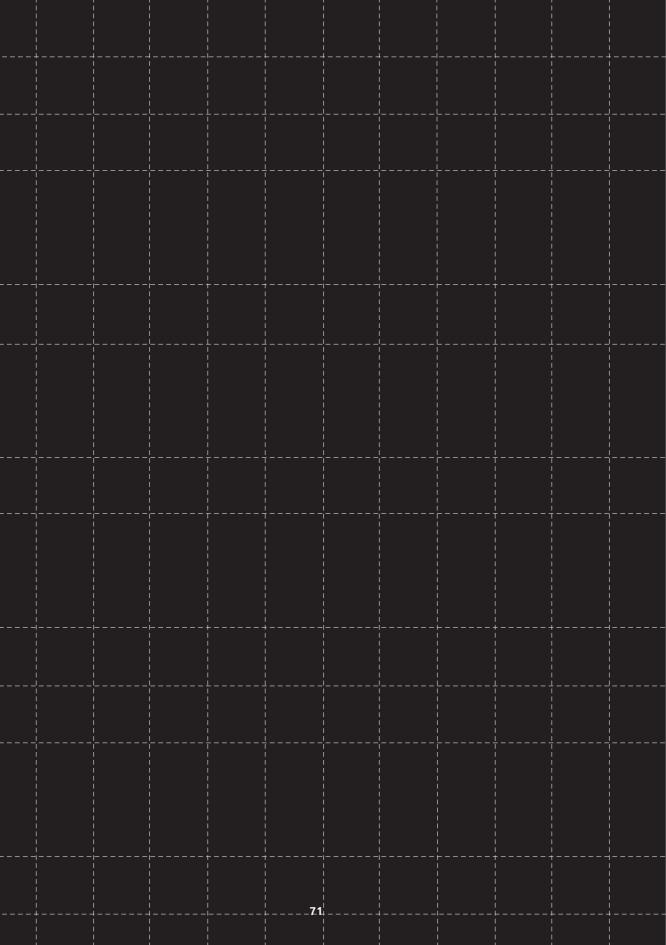


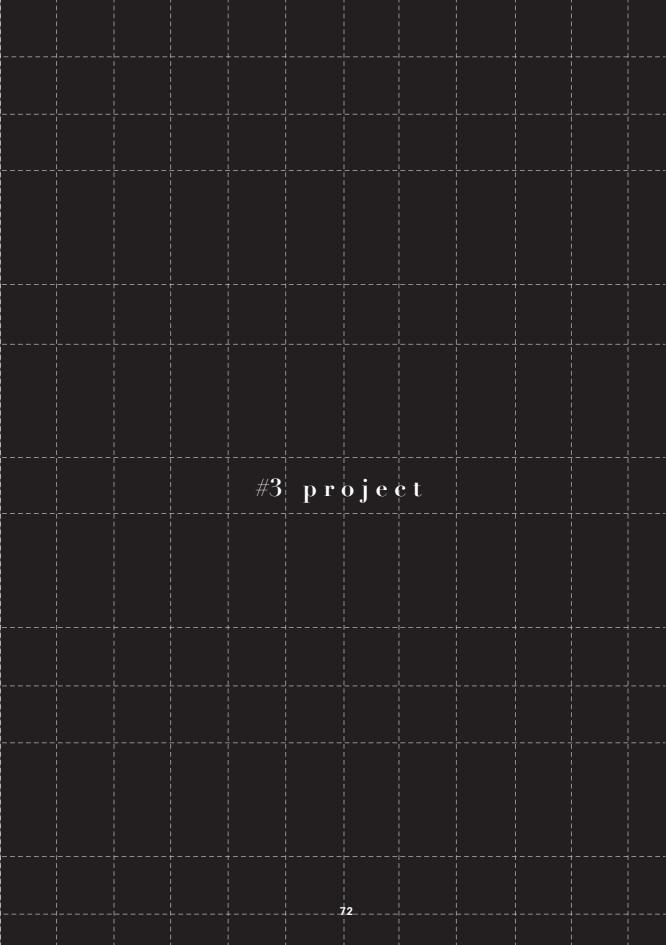


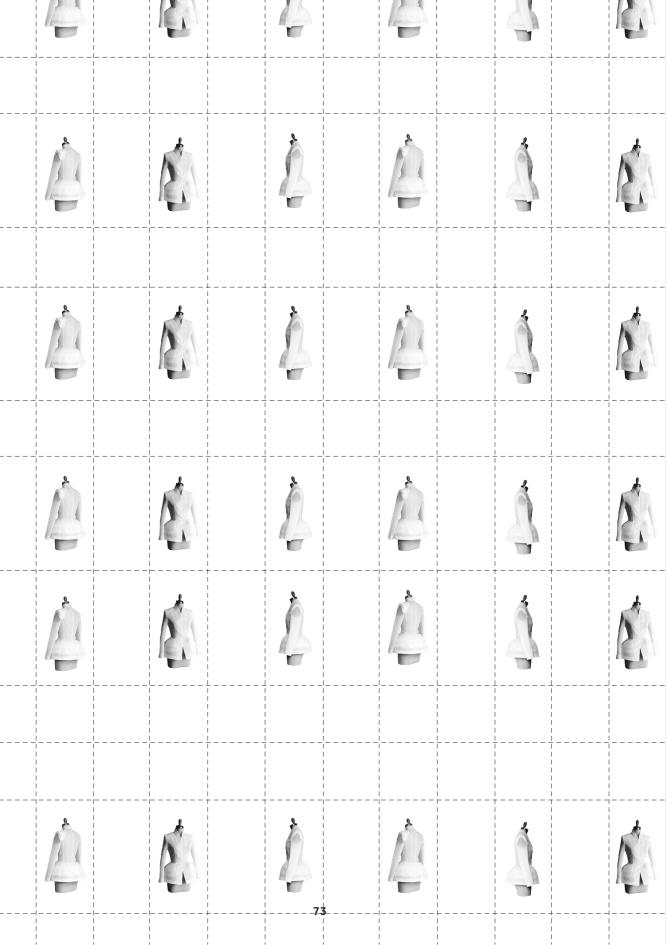
# PROGRAM



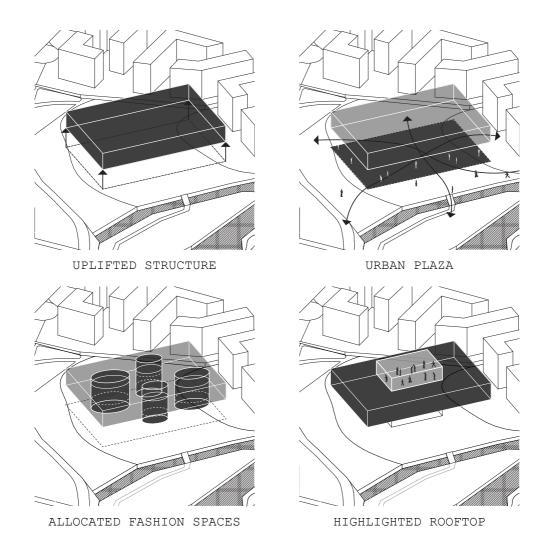








CONCEPT



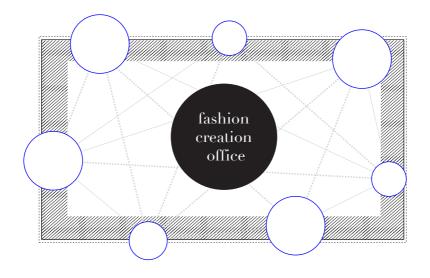
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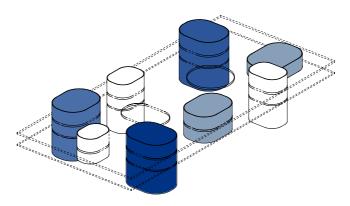
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# 3 project

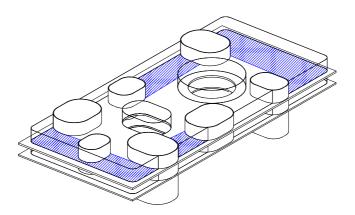
# spacial concept & functional division



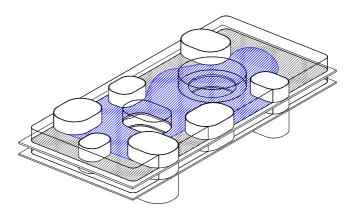
fashion related functions



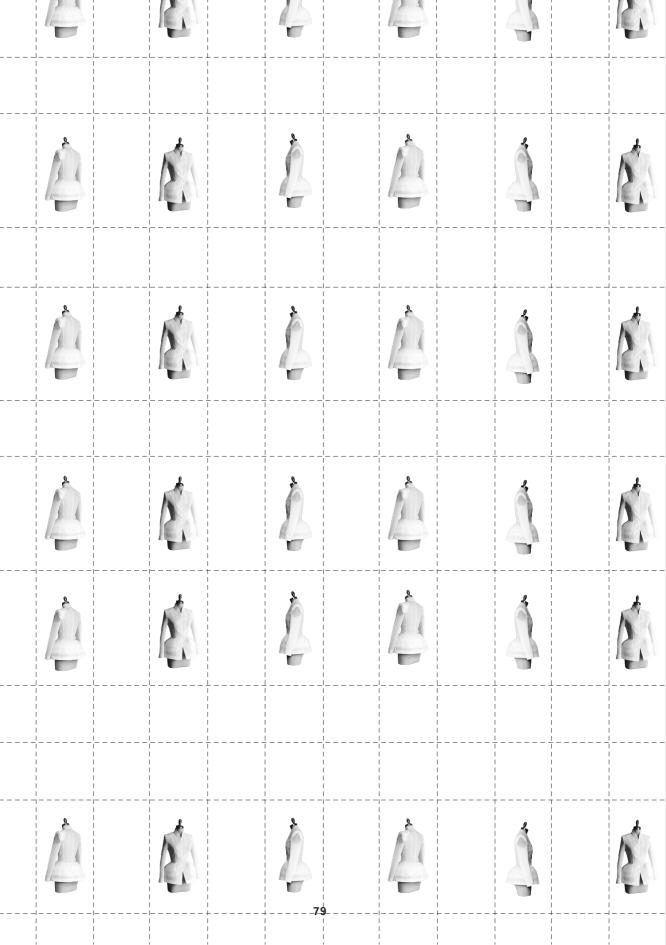
fashion related functions



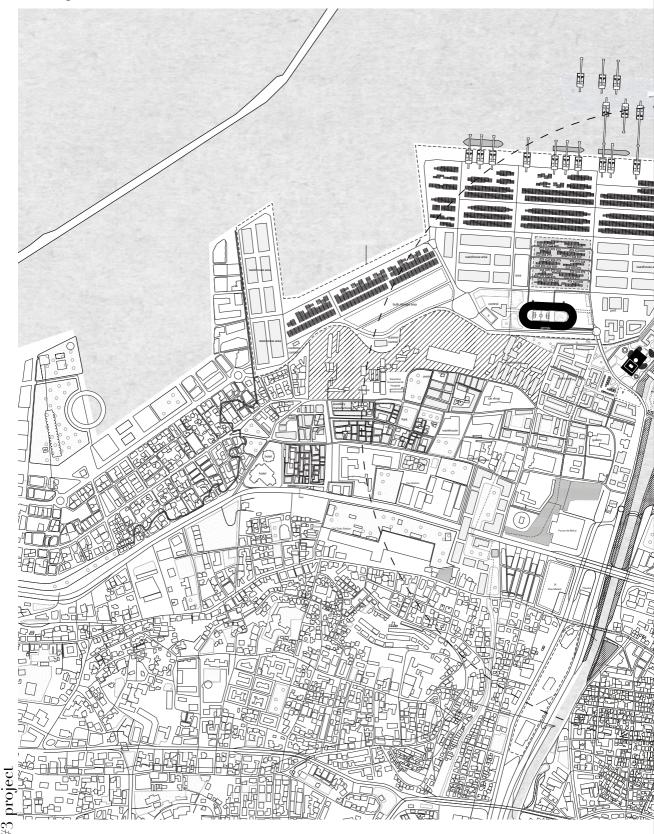
surrounding office spaces



linking interactive spaces



### THE BUILDING





site plan



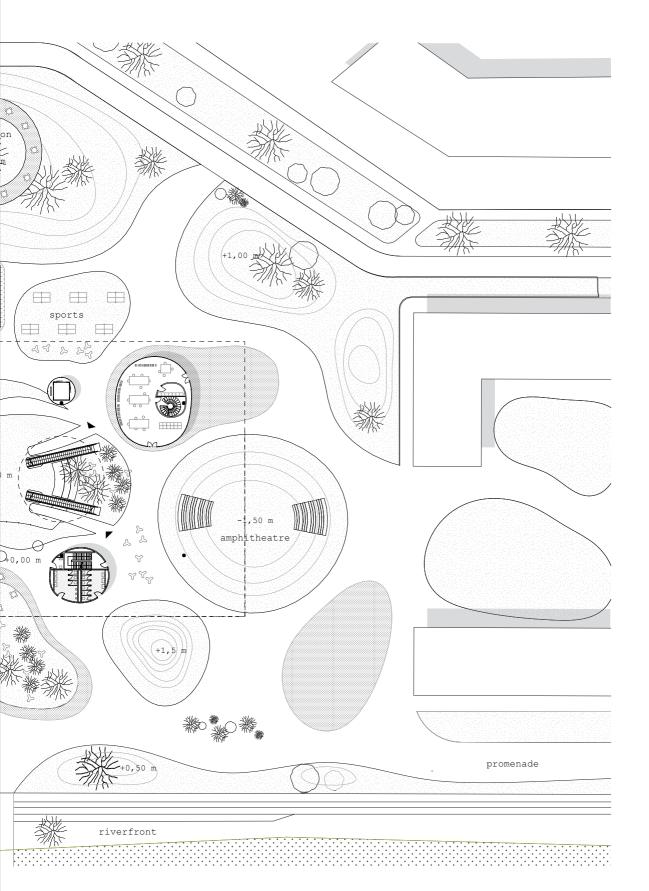
83

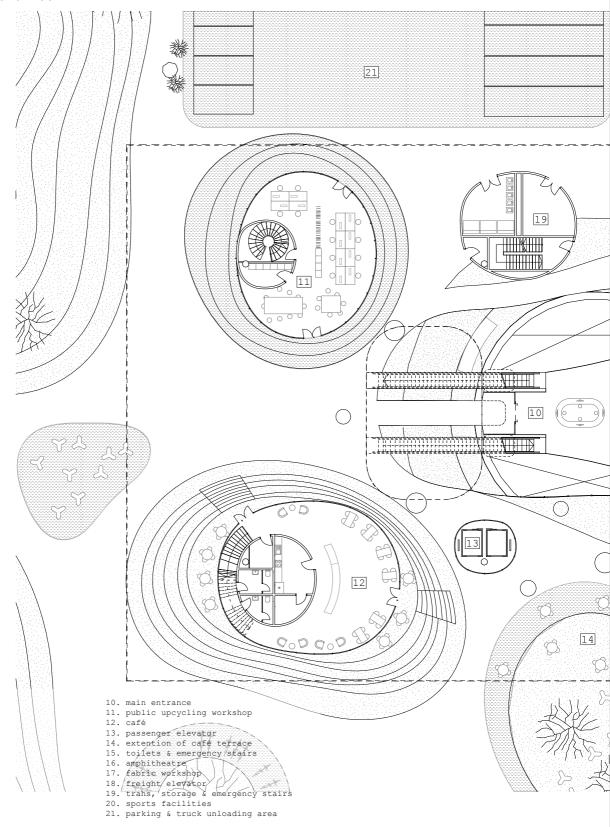
#3 project

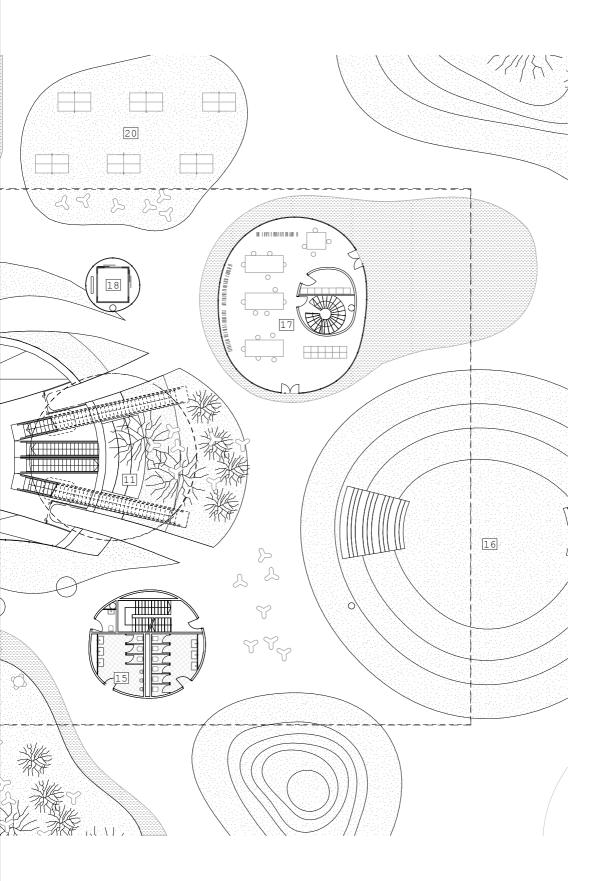


85

#3 project





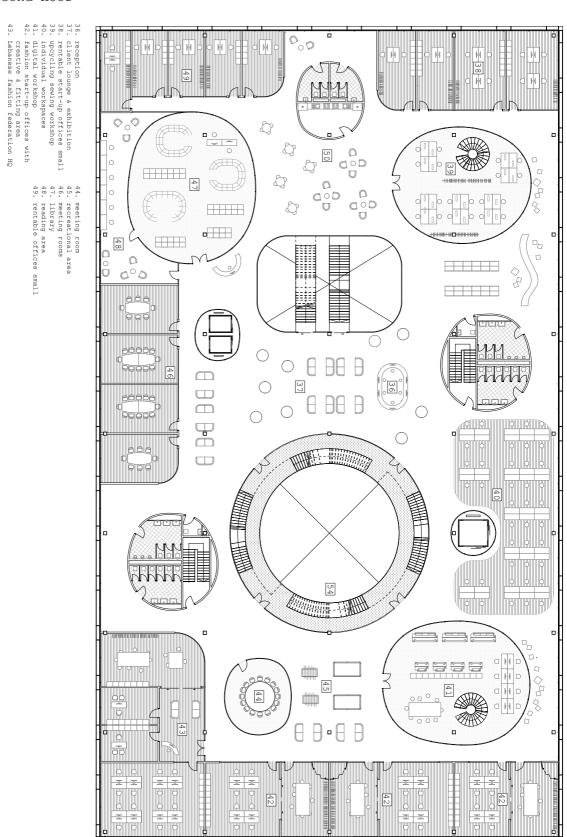


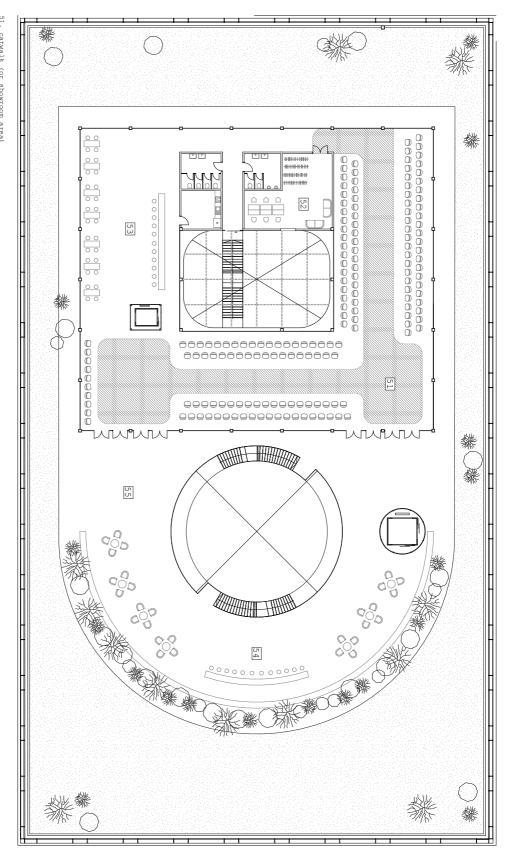
22. entrance & reception
23. group workspaces
24. upcyyling accessories w.
25. user storage
26. recreational area
27. sewing workshop
28. group workspaces
29. auditorium
30. computer workspaces

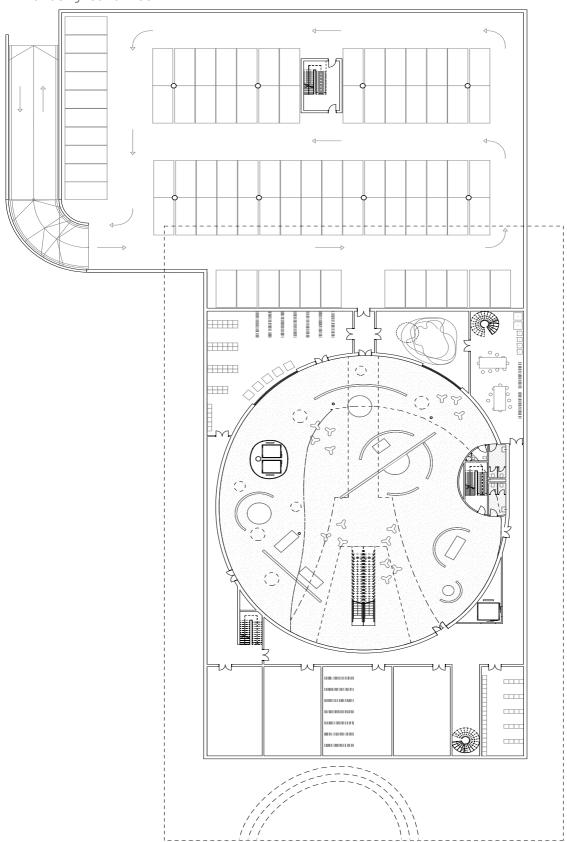
workshop

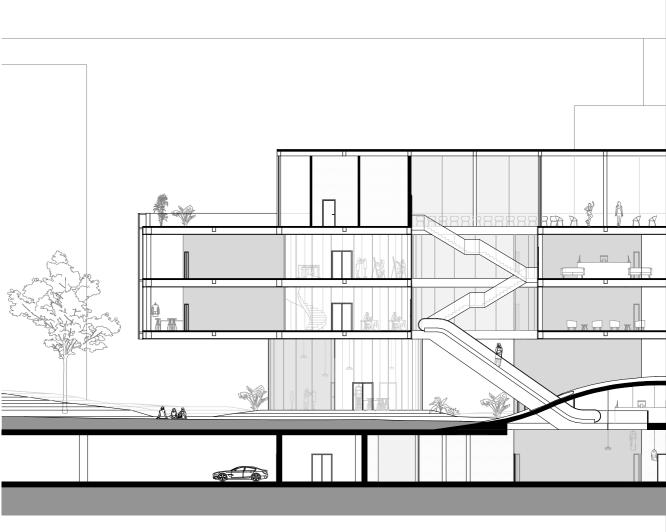
33.

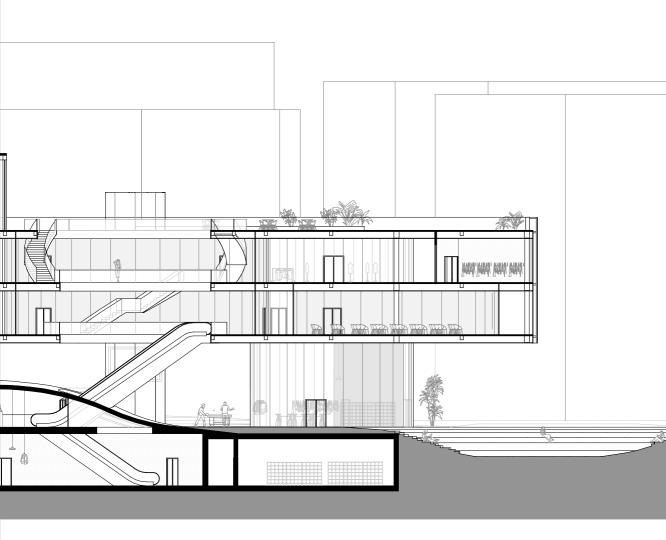
1. individual workspaces
2. restaurant bar & kitchen
3. restaurant
4. exhibition area
5. second entrance & atrium

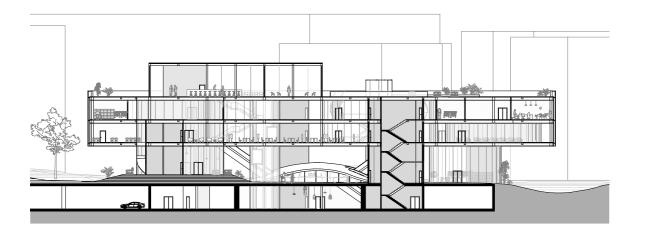


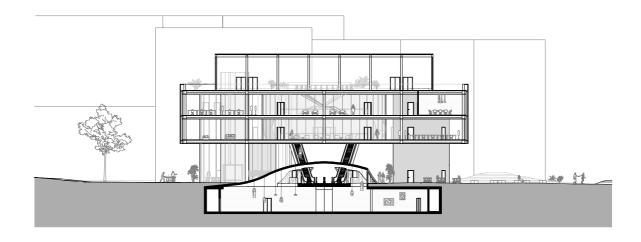


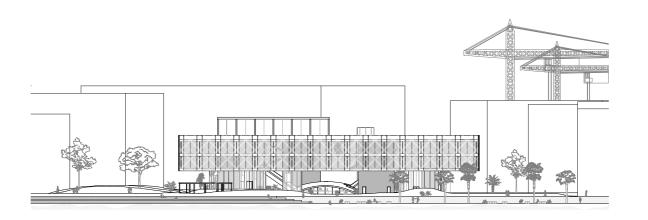




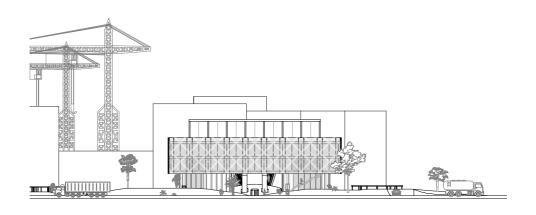


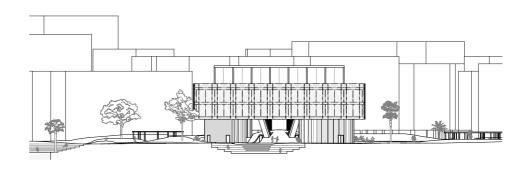






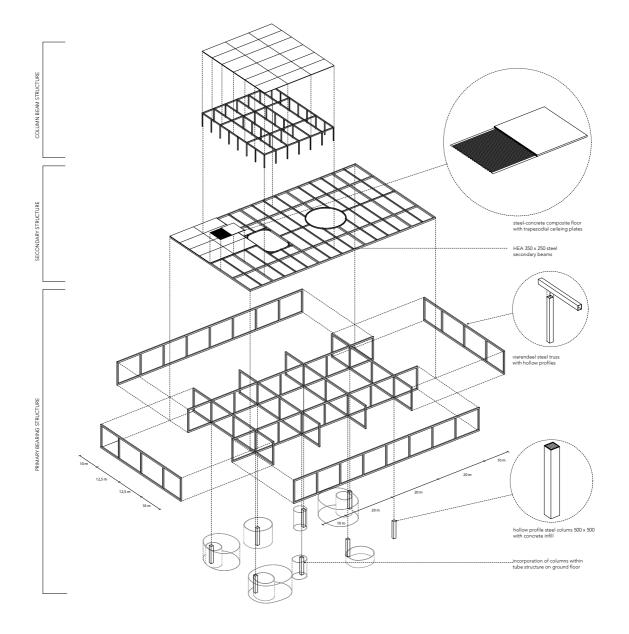


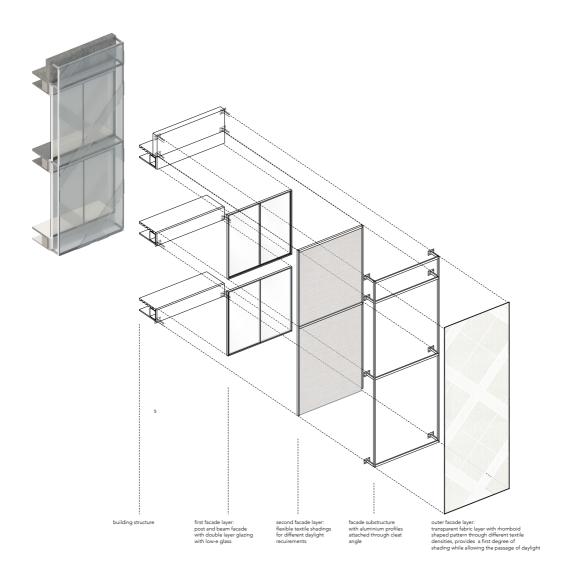


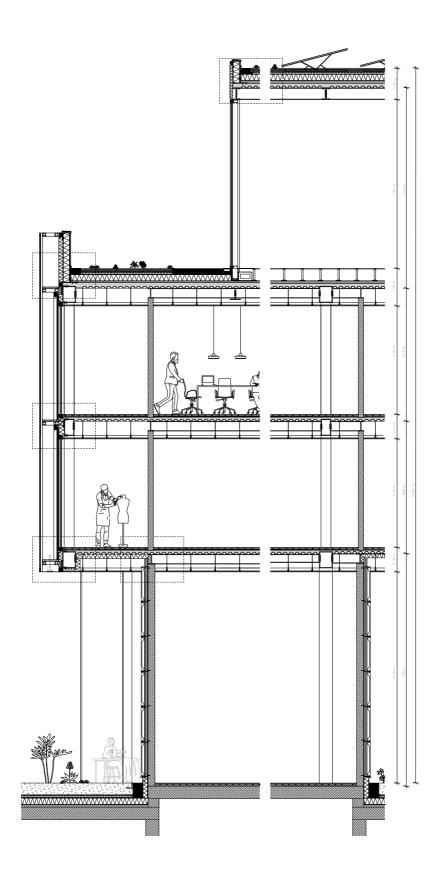




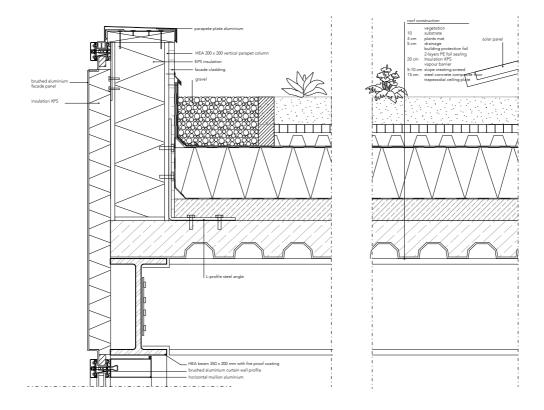
# BUILDING TECHNOLOGIE

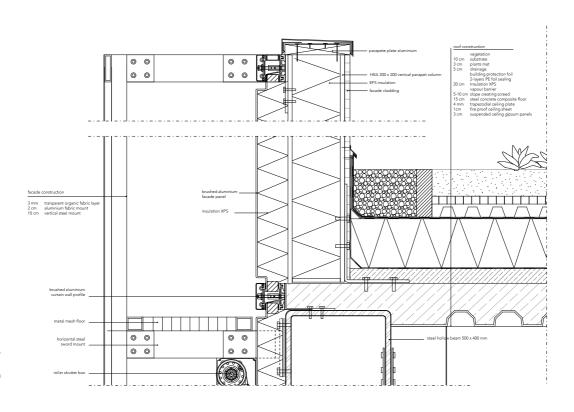


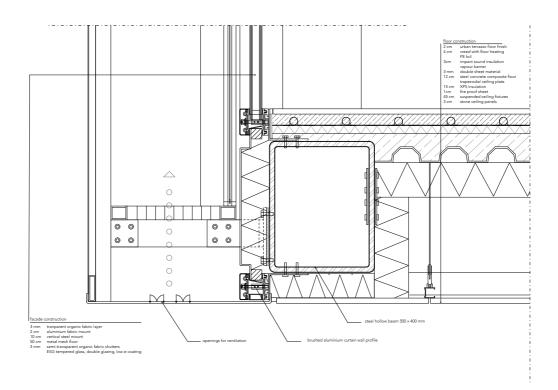


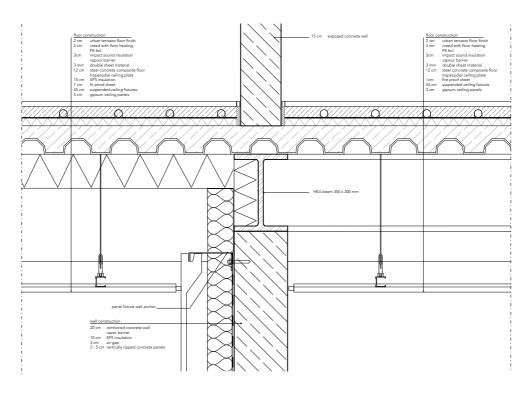


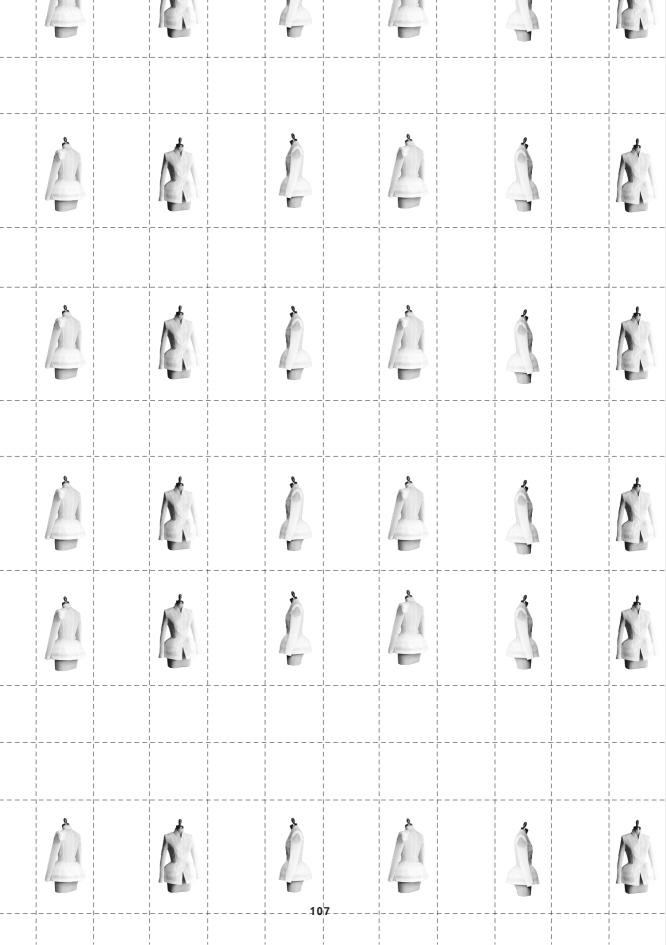












### IMPRESSIONS









