

THE HOME OF
BEIRUT/REFLECTION

BEIRUT

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REFLECTION

Relation between research and design

As someone from the educative sector, the research part of the architectural sector was always very interesting to me due to the interactions with all the professions available. To understand the challenges in a city, one should partially understand the context, and the context of Beirut is very different to ours.

My approach to understanding this context was through literature, videos and interviews with locals. One thing that came out of all these sources was the great impact of the past century and the different solutions to these consequences. The connecting part of these solutions were almost always community led and bottom-up strategies, in the past and present. This convinced me to focus on the community driven aspect of Beirut and relate it to my community housing project.

This research was aimed at finding solution to help communities unify and help each other growing back into the community. The current situation in Beirut is focussing on self-sustaining factors like gardening.

Relations between graduation topic and studio topic

Complex projects was not my first encounter to the problematic context of Beirut. Through the means of an elective, I did some research to the harbour area of Beirut called Karantina. While doing this research, I came to the conclusion that the general community suffered the most due to the past of Beirut and received the least help. This triggered me to read a lot about the living conditions of Beirutis and the different communities living there. Therefore, I associated the city of Beirut with interactive communities.

Complex projects really challenges students to be critical about the implementation of strategies fitting to its context, on different scales. Understanding these different scales would allow me to form a strategy for the community to offer them not only housing, but also give them anchor points to reconnect and redevelop further into society.

Relation of research method and approach to the graduation studio

The research method that was mainly applied was the use of literature and case studies. Complex projects aim to broaden the vision of the student by looking at different projects, while at the same time being critical about its implementation in the right way. Learning and getting insight into these different case studies, taught me to better interpret why a certain strategy is applied in its context.

During the execution of this method, I found many interesting topics that I wanted to dig more into, especially on social, historical and economic level. Oftentimes, I have been called back from trespassing to the role of a socialist to know the boundaries of the architectural profession.

Being able to do proper research is a challenge on itself but maintaining constant focus on the research from the perspective of an architect was a bigger challenge for me. Complex projects studio has made me sharper in the aspect of roles in our profession and how to relate findings to spaces.

Relation between graduation project and wider social, professional and scientific relevance

The main goal of this project was to find a solution to community housing for people in the social class. The social class is an exponentially growing class in the middle east for the past decades due to many different reasons. While the social class is growing and their problems stacking, no good solutions to help this class has been proposed and the social housing project that are developed, are just cheap apartments that do not add to the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the class.

While these projects are becoming more common and successful in the west, the middle east is still a stranger to the concept as we know it in very dense urban areas. While shared housing, spaces and facilities has always been a main part of community forming in the middle east, the direct relation of housing and shared spaces is still fragile in this context. This research project is an example of how community housing can work in the context of the Beirut.

Ethical issues & dilemmas encountered during graduation

To start off social housing has always drawn my attention. During my master programme, I again confirmed for myself that my intention is to help people from the social class through architecture. The middle eastern context is in this case close and dear to me because of my family and friends, whereas it has led to some discussion about how we feel entitled to work on such topics, while they are suffering from the remnants of war and the explosion.

It also confronted me again with the capitalistic nature of humankind and the results of this. Finding through research and study that solutions to many of the problems are already present, but not possible due to profit of a certain landlord or 'investor'. Looking through a glass screen and seeing it happen is part of this issue but knowing that there are people that can directly help the situation without losing anything (in most cases even gaining over long term) even puts more responsibility on the shoulders as architects.