

في إطار مبادرة قائمة بين استوديو أشغال عامة
ونقابة المهندسين في بيروت، وبرنامج الأمم
المتحدة للمستوطنات البشرية،
وتحت رعاية المؤسسة العامة للإسكان

Jointly organized by Public Works Studio, the
Order of Engineers and Architect and UN-Habitat,
under the auspices of the Public Corporation for
Housing

فكر إسكان

أول مسابقة
لتصورات بديلة
للسكن في بيروت

The first
competition
for housing
alternatives
in Beirut

Think Housing



UN-HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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With the support of Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and the AUB Neighborhood Initiative

بدعم من روزا لوكسمبورغ ومبادرة حسن الجوار في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

THINK HOUSING

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1. OVERVIEW

In an effort to advocate for affordable housing and more inclusive cities, this competition seeks innovative proposals for inclusive urban housing options that challenge the dominant models of urban development by reversing ongoing displacements of low and middle-income residents from the city. Teams of multidisciplinary practitioners and/or students (graduates and undergraduates) are invited to articulate feasible proposals that respond to the imperative of inclusive housing by reacting to one of 5 case studies profiled in Beirut (Lebanon) with an integrated feasible development scheme in line with the competition guidelines. The competition seeks to address the affordable housing shortage in Beirut, one of the most expensive cities in the world.

1.1 Framing the Competition

For the last year, a group of professionals in the fields of urban planning, architecture, economics and law have come together to set in place a joint “Affordable Housing Initiative” – in partnership with the Public Corporation for Housing - that advocates for the formulation and adoption of urban policies and the development of projects that counter ongoing practices.. Given the limitations of the current legal framework in relation to land and housing policies, the initiative operates as a short term advocacy platform informed by studies and surveyed cases, while it acknowledges the need for long-term novel policies and legislative changes towards affordable housing and an inclusive city.

Jointly organized by Public Works Studio, the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut and UN-Habitat, the “Think Housing” competition is conceived as a pilot intervention for the “Affordable Housing Initiative”. It seeks to place housing at the forefront of the local debate on the possibilities of inclusive cities and affordability, by inviting innovative proposals and alternative ideas that challenge the dominant model of urban development and address the displacement of low and middle income residents from the city. Through five localized case in five neighborhoods of Beirut, the competition highlights the lack of alternative housing programs and planning practices that prioritize high profit generation, at the expense of all other parameters of urban inclusivity and sustainability.

The public sector in Lebanon lags behind in its responsibility to set and enforce affordable housing strategies or programs, governed by comprehensive housing and land policies. Housing provision is thus relegated to private developers. More specifically, Beirut’s real estate landscape is characterized by unjustified high prices, and a vertical expansion at the expense of diversified types of housing. The glaring lack of adequate legislations and the disruptions of powerful private interests lead to an unbalanced growth, within avoid in urban and social policymaking. Since 1997, housing interventions have been restricted to subsidized loans through the Public Housing Corporation, a public agency under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), while the Ministry of Housing has been abolished. This move reflects a thin institutional and legislative framework to putting forward housing solutions, and, more importantly, with the lack of political will to consider housing a priority despite dire social repercussions.

Due to the unbalanced housing supply, a substantial number of residents are forced to dwell in inadequate conditions, often in substandard living environment, lacking both tenure security and

access to basic services. Others spend a disproportionate percentage of their income on rent, and remain trapped in the vicious circle of poverty. The constant fear of eviction for life-long residents of the city that has recently emerged in the aftermath of the rent law amendments and the lack of alternative solutions have strong consequences on tenure security, and cause social, psychological, economic, and political torments. The displaced population is pushed towards the peripheries, losing the remaining social and confessional mixity in the city, in an already divided post-conflict context. The recent termination of rent control (8.5.2014, amended 28.2.2017) that removed a controversial mechanism protecting thousands of vulnerable households, combined with the influx of urban Syrians refugees, keep on straining the market with an increasing demand for affordable housing.

In summary, in order to address the affordable housing and an inclusive city questions, the key challenges that need to be respected and addressed in the context of any intervention include the following (an elaborate description of these challenges are available in Section 2):

FIRST, there are institutional and legal challenges that stem from the lack of land or housing policy. Ongoing building practices and development patterns prioritize large scale urban renewal projects at the expense of social, historic, and cultural factors.

SECOND, there are economic challenges that emanate from unaffordability, in a context of skyrocketing land prices and escalating rents compared to overall household earnings and expenditures.

THIRD, there are challenges pertaining to the vulnerability to displacement resulting from market forces, and since 2014 from the new rent law.

FOURTH, growing socio-economic inequalities, class and sectarian segregation, and spatial fragmentation inside Beirut's historically and socio-culturally rich neighborhoods.

These challenges signal the necessity of rethinking ongoing patterns of development, land use, functions, and institutional organization, in ways that can protect the urban fabric, secure affordable housing, and maintain a sufficient supply for the flow of new residents.

1.2 Competition Objectives

We urge colleagues, friends and city dwellers invested in the possibilities of an inclusive, socially responsible, and socially diverse urban future to respond to this call. We expect these proposals to be starting points for visionary exercises that can build broader coalitions advocating for livable and inclusive cities, ruled by the principles of social justice.

The competition is a platform for an open-ended debate about an important development issue in the city.

Its objectives are:

- To position the proposals as the starting point of a public debate about affordable housing and an inclusive city.
- To develop alternatives in which the existing fabric of the city continues to exist and play a role in the housing of all city dwellers.
- To situate the debate on the new rent law within a broader debate on the right to housing and the city.
- To engage professionals in the cause against displacement through their contribution
- To inform city officials and governmental bodies of possibilities for the future of Beirut's residents and engage them in the debate about the right to housing.
- To provide exposure to professionals' work that engages urban issues, hence expanding their presence and role in contributing to the future of the built environment in Lebanon.
- To broaden our collective understanding of the meaning of place within a highly individualized profit-driven urban geography in Lebanon.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES IN BEIRUT'S OLD NEIGHBORHOODS

2.1 Urban challenges

The housing landscape in Beirut's neighborhoods and existing fabric is characterized by the following:

- Rent is the primary means of accessing housing in Beirut. According to a UNDP survey conducted in 2008, the percentage of households accessing housing through tenancy in Beirut is 49.5%. However, public policies that have been adopted are mainly geared towards homeownership, leaving the rental market severely unstructured.
- Long-time residents (tenants and owners), living in their neighborhoods since before 1992 account for an average of 35% of Beirut's residents, reaching up to 60% in some neighborhoods, and have become an essential part of the city's life.
- The average share of old rents in the sample of old neighborhoods covered by Public Works (PW)'s research is 20% of total households.
- Religious and/or civil institutions contribute to providing housing in some neighborhoods and to stabilizing the old population, however it is restricted by sectarian parameters.
- The rate of evictions is very high, with an average rate of 200 cases of eviction in a block of 300 buildings. These evictions have a significant impact on the population, particularly on fragile and vulnerable groups with no recourse to justice and alternative housing options.
- A high percentage of old buildings and apartments are empty in the neighborhoods covered by PW research, but when one adds the rate of empty apartments in new buildings, it reaches record numbers (20% in the surveyed neighborhood of Ras Beirut). In both cases, this is much higher than the average 3 to 5% to reach a balance in the market between supply and demand. This stock of empty apartments constitutes an important potential for Beirut's affordable housing landscape.
- Transfer of land ownership from old owners to developers and/or real estate companies has become a common and abundant practice in the city. In a number of cases, a development agreement is signed between the owner and the investor for demolition and reconstruction.
- Sale and demolition motives are usually linked to various factors, including the income level of the owners of the old property who prefer to liquidate their property as they reach retirement and are in need of income sources, the state of the dilapidated building, or disputes between heirs.
- The majority of buildings in the old neighborhoods are owned by a large number of heirs or multiple shareholders in the same property. It is often difficult for the owners/heirs to subdivide the property due to the high incurred fees. Thus, they are left with no option other than selling the entire property to investors and real estate developers. Sometimes sales happen in stages, starting with the shares of those who do not live in the concerned property, until they reach all other owners and/or heirs.

In order to enable the existing urban fabric in Beirut to maintain and enhance its potential in securing an affordable housing stock in the city, any interventions needs to address the aforementioned challenges which resulted in growing socio-economic inequalities, class and sectarian segregation, and spatial fragmentation inside Beirut's historically and socio-culturally rich neighborhoods.

2.2 Economic challenges

The increase in real estate prices over the last decade has been accelerating at much higher rate than the increase in real income for most working residents in Greater Beirut area. A rule of thumb indicator for housing affordability is that in a well-functioning economy, a third of the monthly income of an average homebuyer should be able to support a monthly mortgage payment for housing. A simple calculation of this indicator in Lebanon, or in Beirut in particular, uncovers a grim reality. The average monthly mortgage payment for a small apartment in a Beirut's suburb is \$1208 for a property valued at \$300,000 (this is calculated based on 25% down payment, 5% annual percentage rate, and 30-year maturity). For a homebuyer to be able to afford such a mortgage payment and get approved by the lender, their monthly salary is supposed to be three times larger, i.e. about \$3,600. However, the average monthly income in Lebanon is nearly \$1,500, which makes housing ownership in the suburbs of Beirut beyond affordability to most households, let alone within Beirut itself. A more realistic example should assume a property price of \$450,000 for 100 square meters in Ras Beirut area, one of the 12 quarters in the city of Beirut. This implies a monthly mortgage payment of \$1,812.

In the previous example, only mortgage cost was considered. However, one would want to include other housing overhead such as utility bills and property maintenance to reflect real housing cost. Residents in Beirut rely heavily on the private sector to buy electricity and water. Therefore, housing cost is estimated to reach 40% of the household disposable income.

If we use annualized mortgage payment for reasons of conformity with data on GDP per capita, Beirut appears in the top four cities with highest housing price in a sample of selected 40 major cities around the world. Housing in Beirut proves to be more expensive than in cities like Paris, Tokyo, Rome, or Dubai, when using mortgage-to-income ratio based on income data provided by the World Bank.[1] This fact can only contribute to widening inequality and pushing out a large proportion of Beirut residents out of their home city to seek housing in more affordable areas in the outskirts of Beirut and beyond. Given the lack of proper infrastructure and reliable public transportation, commuting to and from Beirut prohibitively burdens most people to choose to live far from the capital city.

In terms of government intervention in the housing sector, Lebanon does not have a ministry of housing.[2] There are two semi-governmental agencies that are in charge of providing subsidized mortgage loans up to a certain limit. These are Banque de l'Habitat and the Public Corporation for Housing (PCH). Whether subsidizing mortgage loans through a reduced interest rate or exempting public servants from paying down payments on their home purchase, this housing allowance enhances the demand for housing and leads to increasing housing prices in the long run. The effectiveness of this kind of demand-side policies has long been debated by economists when compared to supply-side policies. Additionally, research on housing subsidies in the U.S. concludes that "a housing allowance program could further destabilize the housing market by further inducing households to move out of areas with high vacancy rates and low-quality housing and move into areas with low vacancies and strong upward pressure on rents. In this context, a housing allowance arguably could both add to abandonment pressures in some neighborhoods and stimulate excess demand pressures in other neighborhoods and still not evoke, at least in the short run, a positive supply response that would limit price increase." [3] From here, we can see how the adopted policy

in Lebanon, mainly tackling demand-side management through interest subsidies, can have its limitations and often negative repercussions on the housing market.

Supply-side policies vary from building public housing by the government to subsidizing housing production. The reason why supply-side intervention is more favorable is that it does not cause a housing price increase. While demand-side policies impose costs on non-participants by raising prices, supply programs may confer benefits on non-participants by lowering or holding in check market price increases. Most governments in industrialized and emerging economies have intervened to varying extent in providing public housing to the underprivileged. Each country presents a unique experiment in learning the best practice in order to devise a viable housing policy for Lebanon.

[1] Monthly mortgage payments are calculated based on 5% fixed mortgage rate on a hypothetical 120 square meter- apartment across the forty cities, using price-rent ratio as the maturity period.

[2] There was a Ministry of Housing in Lebanon prior to the 1960s.

[3] W. Apgar (1995), "Which Housing Policy Is Best?", Housing Policy Debate, V. 1, Issue 1.

[4] M.P.Murray (1983), "Subsidized and Unsubsidized Housing Starts: 1961-1977", Review of Economics and Statistics, 65, pp. 590-97.

2.3 Legal challenges

Only a holistic housing policy framework with a long-term approach can tackle housing related issues. Along with an improvement/upgrading of the institutions, an effective planning guidelines and taxation scheme should be pushed for, in order to produce sufficient affordable housings. The introduction of a variety of new tools is to be considered in an improved urban framework, such as density bonuses, value capture, inclusionary planning, adequate zoning, and more. Besides, other modes of access to housing need to be acknowledged, especially when renting is the first entry to housing in Beirut/Lebanon. The schemes that are always put forward by the current interventions are too centered on homeownership and downsize other successful strategies, many tools can be used that have been proven useful to allow housing for vulnerable groups, in Lebanon and abroad. In fact, by using Usufruct practices, in principle similar to *rente viagere*, the beneficiary will be allowed to use and live in the home for as long as they live. Another tool, known as *Wakef* freezes the transfer of ownership of property over several generations in such a way to guarantee the remaining of residents in the same house for these generations. Furthermore, the creation of real estate companies can assure the sustainability and longevity of a housing project. Cooperatives also provide that sustainability in addition to other benefits with regards to taxation, ownership and decision making.

Old rents law : Two different renting systems coexists, with different specific dynamics. The first one, is a system of fixed rents, covering rent agreements signed before 1992, which allows tenants to keep low renting housing, in spite of a rather high increase of the rents in the past decades. The second system covers rent agreements made as of the 23rd of July of 1992, which let the prices be decided freely by the tenants and the landlords, where a high increase of the prices was observed. The “old rent system”, as it is called, the system used before 1992, is widely seen as a problem, as it is strongly protecting the tenants, at the expense of the landlords. In 2014, and later in 2017, a very controversial law addressed this issue. It would eventually put an end to the rent gap in the housing market, by gradually increasing the rent, where after a period of six years, the rent value will become equal to the fair market valuation. Leaving aside the debate around the possible bubble forming on the Lebanese real estate market, it is though sure that the prices are disconnected from the reality of wages and the mechanism will lead to the displacement of a portion of the population.

3. CASE STUDIES

The case studies below have been chosen from 5 diverse neighborhoods in Beirut, are part of the existing built fabric, and have been part of the affordable housing stock in the city.

The cases embody challenges that all city dwellers are facing, the complexity of the issues put forth in this competition and the housing crisis in Beirut. More specifically, these cases reflect the direct impact that the rent deregulation law had on the urban and social fabric of the city, and the repercussions on residents given other existing legal and economic challenges.

The cases also offer varying scopes of intervention, be it at the level of the building, or the level of the neighborhood.

In the maps numbered (a, b, c, d, e, f) provided with each case study, we contextualize the sites within their social, economic, legal, and urban issues. The maps make up a guide for all that needs to be taken into consideration, which are:

1. Social composition of the building (number of residents and landlords, their socio-economic conditions, type of access to housing, etc)
2. Neighborhood morphology (around 300 surveyed buildings)
3. Neighborhood occupancy rate and modes of accessing housing (around 300 surveyed buildings)
4. Building or Cluster or Neighborhood Property Map (provided depending on the case)
5. Zoning map
6. Land price, rent price, and average apartment size in the neighborhood

1. Ras Beirut: one property and two buildings

Background on the neighborhood:

Ras Beirut is a neighborhood known for its social, economic and cultural diversity. The fast-moving urban transformation is increasingly jeopardizing the social diversity in Ras Beirut. Nowadays, the properties in this area are considered one of the most expensive in Beirut. These properties offer a beautiful sea view through AUB's gardens thus allowing real estate agencies to sell luxury apartments at exorbitant prices that only a few can afford.

Around 85% of the new buildings were built on the ruins of old houses in Beirut after they were evacuated or abandoned or demolished [1].

Still, according to a study conducted in 2010, the vast majority of buildings in Ras Beirut are more than 40 years old for they were built before 1975. However, investors interests in Ras Beirut are not

limited to new constructions, there is a growing trend of vacating old buildings to turn them into new investments such as luxury shops, hotels and furnished apartments being rented at a very high cost to a narrow group of tourists or students who can afford it. While threatening sustainable housing in the neighborhood, these transformations also do not account for a large portion of students studying at AUB and LAU and who cannot afford renting in such new developments.

Moreover, Ras Beirut contains a high percentage of vacancy (around 20% of the housing stock according to a 2017 study by Public Works), some of which are new vacant buildings illustrating the discrepancy between the new apartments put up for sale or rent and the demand for affordable housing in Ras Beirut. There is a high percentage of buildings that have been abandoned since the civil war, and the ownership of a number of them belongs to the investors who bought these historical and abandoned premises and left them unoccupied.

Background on the case:

There are two buildings located on one lot in Ras Beirut that were built during the 1960s by the architect Sami Abdel Baki. The first building consists of 6 floors with two apartments with a surface area of 250 m² each; 3 of them are vacant, 1 is occupied by one of the owners and the rest are rented by old tenants including elderly single women. The ground floor also consists of 2 apartments; one of them is occupied since 1967 by the Sudanese Cultural and Social Club (old rent) and the second one by new tenants. The Ground floor also includes two shops: Meridian Travel Agency that was recently turned into a cell shop (new rent) and a small grocery shop (old rent).

The second building consists of 7 floors with one apartment on each floor of 300 m². All of them are occupied by old tenants, 4 of which are middle aged women living alone.

All tenants are facing the threat of eviction after one of the investors purchased most of the property shares incrementally from the owner's heirs. The heirs' lawyer, who was also responsible for collecting rent, played the role of the mediator in this transaction. However, one of the heirs is being pressured to sell the remaining shares but the transfer of property has yet to be published in the real estate registration. The investor's interest in the new property lies in the fact that it's located on a corner and the potential built-up area that the site allows: Currently, the total built-up area is around 7000 m² while the permitted building area is 11877 m². In the meantime, some tenants are negotiating the eviction indemnity while others weren't even notified about the property transfer and the possibility of an eviction. This is an example of several contentious cases including the distribution of the estate, a divided decision within the same family and the pressure that affect people's lives as well as the urban environment in Ras Beirut. It's expected that the

building will be sold again to another investor at a higher price, who plans to demolish the 2 buildings and build a set of luxurious apartments in their place. How can we reverse this practice and protect the old residents, increase affordable housing in the neighborhood and make a sustainable project while taking into consideration the high demand for student housing?

2. Mousseitbeh: 48-apartments Vacant Building

Background on the neighborhood:

Mousseitbeh has been known over the years for its population diversity. The area experienced various waves of demolition and eviction at different stages. The first one goes back to 1972, when the government decided to build Salim Slem road in addition to other new roads as the neighborhood became denser, entailing expropriations and the moving out of many families. That was followed by the construction of the Salim Slem tunnel in 1982 which negatively impacted the neighborhood. A lot of houses were demolished and the Mazraa area was separated from Mousseitbeh area. The residents tried to reconnect the 2 areas but weren't able to reverse the impact of the highway in separating the 2 neighborhoods. Currently, a number of old neighborhoods in the region are threatened with complete demolition and eviction such as Abla St, al Sofh St, Al Bacha St and Al Forn St. All of them are old residential blocks that survived demolition for different reasons. But its old tenants are still under a lot of pressure and are threatened with eviction.

Background on the case:

This case is based in Mousseitbeh, it consists of a building dating from 1955. The building consists of 13 floors and 47 residential units (4 apartments per floor mainly). Being located at a hill, it was the highest building in Beirut at the time and was used as a security control point. All of apartments were occupied by families who were still living under the old rent law but were evicted between 2014 and 2017 for demolition reasons. The total built-up area is currently 4125 m² while the total permitted building area is 5582 m². The property is divided as follows: 75% of the shares are owned by a real estate company established since 1968 and belongs to the same family of heirs who won 13% of the shares; whereas the remaining 12% belong to an owner from a different family. According to an investigation conducted by the Order of Engineers and Architects, the building structure demonstrates. The problematic in this case lies first in evicting tenants under the demolition pretense without critically addressing the reasons behind the demolition, why it is permitted if the structural conditions of the building are good, and second, in securing an affordable housing stock that allows these tenants to afford staying in this neighborhood.

3. Al Bachoura: An Old Alleyway with 14 Structures

Background on the neighborhood:

Al Bachoura area is located at a 5-minute walk from Downtown Beirut and a 10-minute walk from Monot Street. The neighborhood is characterized by old houses once owned by wealthy families and old gardens located in alleys near the main streets, where kids can play safely and the elderly can retreat. These common spaces and open areas, which sometimes include gardens, are often surrounded by small adjacent rooms. This building typology flourished following rural-urban migration flows during the 1950s and provided housing for workers either in the port area or in Downtown Beirut. Al Bashoura is surrounded by 4 highways: Fouad Chehab/Ring (North), Salim Slem (West), Independence (South) and Bechara El Khoury (East). This has resulted in enclosing this region and separating it from its surroundings. The trade sector in the region is flourishing and consists of small shops, artisans, woodwork, antiquity dealers, mechanic garages, small print shops, meat shops as well as stamp, carpet and glass manufacturing. The area is characterized by its prime location, attracting investments and thus land speculation activities. The expansion of Beirut Digital District is an example of how the ongoing investments in the area are erasing the diversified urban and social fabric.

Background on the case:

The case is an Dandan alley located in the old part of the neighborhood. It consists of 13 buildings of 1 or 2 floors built during the 1940s and 1950s. The majority of them are in need of a renovation or maintenance. Old tenants, owners and new tenants from different nationalities are currently living in these apartments. Nowadays, the residents are receiving offers to sell their properties, as it's possible to multiply the built-up area in this neighborhood in accordance with its current zoning. However, the existing fabric and urban morphology make it impossible for an investor to buy and develop a plot inside the alleyway without having to buy and/or intervene on all the other plots.

It's also important to note that buildings located on the outskirts of the alleyway - some of which are vacant - pose a different set of conditions, as construction machines and vehicular access is feasible.

The purpose of this case is to come up with innovative solutions to safeguard the alleyway and its residents in order to improve living conditions and benefit from the surplus of investments in a just and sustainable manner that could provide housing for the different social classes.

4. Tariq El Jdide: 28 apartments, 7-story building

Background on the neighborhood:

During the French Mandate, Tariq el Jdide counted very few buildings scattered between sand dunes. With the urbanization of the capital, urban growth began to reach this area that was gradually populated with Beiruti families and endowed with a number of public buildings and institutions such as the Municipal Stadium and the Beirut Airport in Bir Hassan. Over time, other migrants followed, most notably families coming from the area of Iqlim el-Kharoub and searching for education and employment opportunities in the capital city.

The neighborhood kept growing with the arrival, during the early 1950s, of many Palestinian families to the neighborhood. They were attracted by the available empty residences in Tariq Al-Jadidah, at that time a newly developed neighborhood. The Arab University, established during the 1960s, attracted a large number of Arab students to the area and contributed to diversifying the population of the area with the arrival of Arab students who settled in the neighborhood as students.

Today, the neighborhood is mostly known for its amenities for it comprises a large number of social and educational institutions in Beirut in addition to abundant restaurants, shops, small businesses, historical buildings and the Municipal Stadium.

According to Public Works' survey conducted in 2015 of 381 buildings in Tariq El Jdide, 62 families were evicted and 98 others were threatened with eviction. Also, 27 buildings were demolished or threatened with demolition and 88 new buildings were built during the last 20 years on the ruins of old ones. This area is characterized since the early years of its construction by mid-rise and multi-story buildings. Changes in the building laws only affected a number of lots with low-rise and/or historic buildings, allowing a higher built-up area. That has resulted, after the rent deregulation, in investors seeking to make profit by evicting old tenants and either selling the same apartments or renting them at much higher rates.

Background on the case:

This case consists of a 7-floor building with 4 apartments each (ranging between 65m² and 90m²), built in the mid-50s by architect Khaled Al Yacherti. The building was recently sold to two local investors who had promised to renovate the building. However, they resorted instead to selling all the building sections (the apartments, the concierge room and the roof) and giving the tenants two options: either buy the property at a price deemed unreasonable, determined by the investor, or evict them. The price ranges from 75 and 110 thousand dollars. However, the other apartments were pressured to evict in exchange for minimal indemnities (around 15 thousand dollars). Some tenants weren't given the option to buy the apartments in which they were residing and that the

investors sold to new owners without their knowledge. This arrangement led them to settle for buying apartments evicted by their neighbors in the same building as they did not want to leave the neighborhood nor had other housing alternatives within their means in the vicinity. There are still five apartments housing vulnerable old tenants who have no means to buy, so their apartments have been sold to buyers unknown to the residents. It is expected that the new landlords will resort to enforcing the new rent law, hence increasing rents in ways that could be unaffordable to the residents. Residents of the building are left feeling binded by the investors' decisions regarding their building without their consent. A building committee has formed recently in an effort to manage the chaos that the investor left behind.

5. Mar Mikhael: old hidden cluster

Historically, a number of institutions established in Mar Mkhael have attracted residents to live in the area: the train station in 1891, schools, hospitals and churches established by French missionaries, as well as a number of factories. In addition, Armenian refugees sought shelter in Karantina Camp at a close vicinity to Mar Mikhael. After the independence and during the 1940s, Mar Mikhael Street became a primary trade and crafts street, and the neighborhood housed many middle and low-income workers' families. Al Roum hospital neighborhood - located at the hilltop adjacent to the street and once known for being a summer gateway for wealthy families - welcomed newcomers in the 1930s such as railway workers, workers of Beirut port, EDL employees and brewery workers. The property owners in Al Roum neighborhood narrate that they bought the lands and built houses near their workplace. During the 1950s and 1960s, the owners built new apartments above their house to rent them to newcomers due to the growing demand for housing. By 2006, Mar Mikhael was still a trades and crafts street located on the outskirts of the city and mainly populated by woodworkers, cobblers and craftsmen. Ten years ago, the neighborhood became a destination for restaurants, pubs and galleries because of low rent and the unique social and urban nature of the area. In 2014, around 50 new shops owned by designers and artists were counted in the neighborhood in addition to more than 50 art exhibitions, pubs and restaurants (GAIA Heritage Report).

As a result of this urban change, the apartments prices in Mar Mikhael increased from 2,100 dollars per square meter to 4000 dollars between 2007 and 2015 (Mona Fawaz, Marieke Kreijnen, Daria Samad, article under publication). The increasing prices of properties had a significant gentrifying impact on the neighborhood including the residential hill known as Al Roum neighborhood. Looking at the property map of the region, we note a huge number of land and properties purchases.

Residents who are leaving their apartments in the neighborhood are moving outside of Beirut specifically to the Northern Matn areas.

Background on the case:

This case is located on Mar Mikhael street and extending up to Khazinein Street in Roum Hospital area. It consists of 16 properties/buildings of roughly 5 floors. The ownership of some of these buildings was transferred to investors while other apartments were emptied for demolition reasons. Some families are being pressured since 2014 to leave their houses. Currently, the majority of the properties are occupied by new tenants from diverse nationalities. The total built-up area is 920 m² while the permitted building area is 1103 m². The problem with these residential units is that the majority of the buildings are owned by several heirs. Most of the times, it's hard for the heirs to proceed with the subdivision of the property because of the high incurred fees. Therefore, it's easier for investors and real estate developers to convince the owners/heirs to sell especially the ones who are not living on the actual property, thus forcing the small shareholders to sell their shares. Owners on their part resort to selling their property to use the proceeds to pay for retirement with no alternative sources of income or social services for the elderly, or in the case low-income earners needing to supplement their earnings.

[1] Mapping New Constructions in Beirut (2000-2013), Hayat Gebara, N Mona Khechen and Bruno Marot

4. INTERVENTION GUIDELINES

The competition guidelines are drawn from the extensive research undertaken by members of the steering committee on the legal, spatial, social and economic landscape of housing in Beirut. The guidelines herein proposed are not mandatory, but seen as necessary to imagine what affordable housing in Beirut could mean, how the social fabric can be preserved, what spatial form it can take, and what program / institutional framework can supply it and sustain it economically, politically and environmentally.

The market-led changing urban context [and financialization of the housing sector] renders the selected cases for the competition as vital examples of valuable home for the families inhabiting them and reflects the important role of the existing housing stock in the making of a just city.

In short, interventions should consider:

1. Existing Social Fabric

- Recognize, Protect, and Enhance the features and modalities that contribute to making the neighborhood socially, economically, religiously and culturally diverse.
- Stabilize the elderly, retirees and persons with disabilities
- In case of eviction, provide a decent relocation and housing alternatives

2. Affordable Housing Strategy

- Develop a strategy to enhance the existing affordable housing stock and expand it, while ensuring economic feasibility for landlords.
- Define what affordable housing could mean in the neighborhood and provide affordable units for diverse social groups
- Propose socially inclusive and spatially meaningful schemes for apartment sizes and actual (market) demands
- Propose innovative programming, functional multiplicity and long term adaptability

3. Urban Sustainability

- Propose an alternative model of urban development
- Integrate the proposed project with the surrounding neighborhood and city context
- Avoid demolition unless the structure compromises the safety of residents
- Promote quality design (if applicable to your proposal) that caters for diversity, inclusion, and sustainability
- Improve existing contextual and accessibility conditions

4. Legal Feasibility

- Use all available resources within the existing legislature that can be used to develop realistic solutions meeting the social and economic objectives listed above
- Recognize the shortcomings of the existing legal framework. You could suggest innovative legal solutions and tools for the future that could enhance the existing legal framework and ensure the sustainability of your intervention, but in any case the proposed projects for this competition should abide by the existing laws and regulations.

5. COMPETITION CONDITIONS

5.1 Structure and Jury Deliberation

5.1.1 Competition Organizer and Supporters

The competition is organized as collaboration between Public Works Studio, The Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut, and UN-Habitat. The coalition of these three entities, referred to herewith as the 'Organizer', is the organizing and awarding party of this competition. The competition is under the patronage of the Public Corporation for Housing (PCH).

Steering Committee:

The Organizer formed a steering committee to help develop the competition brief and oversee its overall content. Working on a pro bono basis, the role of this committee also includes:

- Nominating the jury members- Developing a proposed list of evaluation criteria to facilitate the work of the jury members
- Meeting with jury members prior to the jury deliberations sessions to share ideas about the competition challenges
- Seeking the support of key members and establishments in the society for sponsorship and/or endorsement of the competition
- Participating in formulating the responses to competitors questions
- Attending the jury deliberation sessions, but as silent advisory with no voting rights, to provide advice to the jury on various issues, upon request
- Advising on the exhibition and publication

The committee is comprised of multidisciplinary professionals with expertise in planning, architecture, cultural heritage, law, economics, and communications, some of whom are members of the Organizer's team. Members of the Competition Steering Committee* are, in alphabetical order:

Monica Basbous - Architect and Spatial Analyst [Public Works]

Nadine Bekdache - Designer and urbanist [co-founder of Public Works]

Habib Debs - Architect and Urban Planner [Urbi]

Desirée Feghali - Legal Consultant [DF Legal Practice]

Tala Kammourieh - Urban Planner and Policy Analyst [UN-Habitat]

Mona Khechen - Independent Urban Development and Planning Consultant, Senior Lecturer at AUB

Souheir Assi Mabsout - Architect, Urban Designer, and an Expert in Competition Management

Abir Saksouk - Architect and Urban Planner [co-founder of Public Works]

Dounia Salamé - Urban Researcher [Social Justice and the City, AUB]

Ali Termos - Professor of Economy [American University of Beirut and American University in Bulgaria]

** Biographies of steering committee members can be found on the competition website Thinkhousing.org*

Competition Professional Adviser

Ms. Souheir Assi Mabsout volunteered to provide professional guidance on the management and conduct of the competition, as well as on the formulation of the *competition's* General Conditions.

Competition Coordinator:

The Organizer hired Ms. Acile Sfeir as the Competition Coordinator, referred to here with as the 'Coordinator', whose role is to coordinate the competition activities and disseminate related information to the participants, organizing committee, and jury members. The Coordinator may be contacted at the following email address info@thinkhousing.org

Competition Supporters:

The competition is financially supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the AUB Neighborhood Initiative.

5.1.2 Competition Type

The competition is a single-stage design 'Ideas Competition' open to national and international interdisciplinary professional individuals, teams, firms and academic institutions and students.

It is an open call for design proposals that will be curated in a public exhibition with a publication. The competition entries will be reviewed by a jury panel of local and international experts that will select a number of projects to be included in the publication and exhibition. The exhibition and publication aim at raising awareness and starting a public discourse about affordable housing an inclusive cities through the alternative design proposals for the different cases. The competition is a platform for an open-ended debate about an important urban issue in the city.

5.1.3 Eligibility

The competition raises issues that call for skills in urban *planning, urban design, public policy, architecture, economics, legal policies, and the social sciences.*

Thus, we encourage interdisciplinary thinking and a holistic approach of teams (of professionals, students or combination of both) who are willing to engage all of these disciplines. The team should at least include an urbanist / urban planner.

We are soliciting creative, sensitive, and feasible visions that include spatial configurations as well as programmatic and institutional proposals capable of balancing between social, legal, and economic needs.

Members of the Organizer team, Competition Steering Committee, jury, as well as their associates or and relatives, or any person who has been involved with the preparation or organization of the competition, shall not be eligible to enter the Competition or assist a participant in this competition.

5.1.4 Jury Panel

A jury of multidisciplinary professionals and experts will work on a pro bono basis to review the submissions and select a number of projects to be included in a publication and an exhibition.

Members of the Jury* are, in alphabetical order:

Hiba Abou Akar – Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University.

Kawthar Dara – Independent Consultant and Public Financial Management Advisor

Marwan Ghandour - Professor and Director, School of Architecture, Louisiana State University

Elie Harfouche – Assistant Professor of Architecture at the Lebanese American University

Adrian Lahoud - Dean of the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art

Rony Lahoud – Chairman and General Director of the Public Corporation for Housing

Maysa Sabah – Urban Planner and Housing Specialist

Nizar Saghieh – Lawyer, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Legal Agenda

Jad Tabet – Architect and Head of the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut

** Biographies of jurors can be found on the competition website Thinkhousing.org*

The jury members shall agree to and sign the **Housing Competition Jury Member Agreement** (appendix D).

5.1.5 Award

The competition is a starting point for visioning exercises that can build broader coalitions advocating for livable and inclusive cities, ruled by the principles of social justice rather than individual interests. The competition entries will be reviewed by a jury panel of local experts who will select a number of projects to be included in a publication and an exhibition. The proposals will also be disseminated through the [Housing Monitor](#), an interactive platform that monitors housing conditions and evictions in Beirut. The exhibition, publication, and monitor aim at raising awareness and encouraging a public debate about affordable housing and inclusive cities through the alternative proposals for the different cases.

The winning schemes will also be disseminated to local and international actors concerned with housing in Lebanon, and will act as pilot projects for the forthcoming PCH housing initiative.

The competition will include a monetary award, certificates of achievement, and honorable mentions, publications and exhibition.

A total of USD 4,000 will be awarded to the winning team(s).

5.1.6 Evaluation Criteria

The successful scheme will be selected primarily to the extent it meets the requirements set in this competition brief and in the addendum that could be made available as a result of the question and answer period.

Participants are encouraged to explore and present innovative, creative and sensitive designs that best respond to the site's needs and the Organizer's requirements as outlined in this

competition brief. Participants are equally encouraged to reflect on the legal aspect and propose alternative possible solutions that are conducive to opening a constructive debate in support of crucial law reforms.

To this end, evaluation of the entries will be based on the following criteria, among other factors as deemed necessary by the Jury:

- Economic feasibility
- Affordability and diversity
- Replicability potential
- Adequacy of planning tools and legal mechanisms
- Sensitivity to urban context
- Clarity and completeness of the submission

5.1.7 Timeline

A. Schedule

The competition schedule and the due dates of respective milestones are listed in the table below.

ACTIVITY	DATE
Soft Launch of Competition during the Beirut Design Week	Friday, June 22, 2018
Official Launching of Competition at OEA-Beirut	Tuesday, July 10, 2018
Start of Registration and posting of the Competition Brief on the website	Monday, July 23, 2018
End of Registration	Saturday, September 1, 2018
Advisory Session*	Monday, September 10, 2018
End of Question Period	Saturday, September 15, 2018
Reply to Questions	Wednesday, September 19, 2018

Deadline for Submission of Proposals	Monday, December 10, 2018
Jury Deliberations*	Saturday, December 15 (+16 if needed), 2018
Announcement of Finalists/Press Release*	Monday, December 17, 2018
Exhibition Opening *	January, 2019
Exhibition Period*	January, 2019

**The exact date and time will be confirmed and communicated at a later stage.*

B. Detailed Descriptions of Competition Activities

B1. Launching of Competition and Registration

The official launch date of the competition is **July 23, 2018**. It is the date on which registration is officially open and the electronic copy of the Competition Brief shall be posted on the website from which it can be downloaded. Hard copies will not be available. Individuals, firms or teams wishing to participate in the competition will need to complete their **registration online prior to the closing date on September 1, 2018**.

A launching event/press conference will be held on **July 10, 2018** at 12:00pm at the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut to publicize the competition and answer questions by media.

B2. Registration

Please follow the below guidelines when working on your interventions:

1. **Form your team.** Teams should preferably be interdisciplinary and include expertise bridging planning, architecture, finance, economics, law, development. It is recommended to have at least one urban planner/designer on each team.

2. **Pick one of the 5 cases** identified by the steering committee.

Read the cases' descriptions (refer to section 3.3) and select the one you are most interested to intervene on. (You will need to have made your choice before logging onto the registration form).

3. **Fill and submit the online registration form:** you will then receive a "starting package" according to the case you selected.

It is a list of documents that can be used as guiding tools; they cover the following:

- a. Legal: including a property map and zoning, ownership legal status and info on existing legal disputes if applicable

- b. Market: the price ranges in the area (for buying and renting) and what is being planned or underway development if applicable
- c. Social: background on the residents of the building or street, including socio-economic profile of residents, tenants and landlords
- d. Urban fabric: overview of the context in which the case is located in terms of building typologies, urbanization process, open spaces, etc.
- e. Neighborhood history

B3. Question and Answer Period

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) is included in Appendix E . In addition, Participants may send their queries to the Organizer starting the date of the registration of the competition on July 23, 2018. All communication between Participants and the Organizer with regard to the competition is to be submitted in writing (either in English or Arabic) to the Coordinator. The closing date for receiving questions is September 15, 2018. Questions received after this date will not be considered. Queries addressing specific clauses of the competition brief must contain reference to the clause in question. All questions shall be sent to the Coordinator by e-mail to the following address: info@thinkhousing.org

B4. Reply to Questions

The Coordinator will acknowledge receipt of queries and will respond to questions asked by each participant in writing in a timely manner. All questions and answers will also be compiled in a summary document and dispatched to all Participants through the website and by email at the end of the Q&A period. This document shall be considered as an addendum to the competition brief, thus an integral and officially binding part of the competition.

B5. Submission of Proposals

The deadline for the submission of competition entries is **4:00 PM Beirut time on December 10, 2018**. Entries may be delivered by hand or by mail using fast courier service to ensure prompt delivery. Entries sent by mail must be received by the fast courier service and postmarked no later than December 10, 2018. The tracking number of entries shipped by fast courier service should be emailed to the following address: info@thinkhousing.org Participants are responsible for all postage, shipping, and insurance charges, and for ensuring timely delivery. The Organizer will not accommodate for delays due to mailing service or for any damage or loss caused in the mail or handling in transit. Entry packages shall respect the Anonymity Procedure (refer to section 5.3.2). A detailed guideline for the submission procedure (labeling, submission address etc.) will be distributed to participating teams at a later stage.

B6. Jury Deliberation

The Jury members will convene on December 15, 2018* to judge the proposals. Jury deliberations will be hosted by the Order of Architects and Engineers in Beirut.

**Preliminary date; the exact date and time will be confirmed and communicated at a later stage.*

B7. Announcement of Finalists and Press Release

The organizer will notify the participants of the results of the competition, and send them a copy of the jury's report (which shall be signed by each member of the jury). The selected entries and jury reports will be simultaneously announced in a press release prepared by the Organizer on December 17, 2018*. The jury report will also be posted on the competition website.

**The exact date and time will be confirmed and communicated at a later stage.*

B8. Exhibition Opening

After announcement of the results of jury deliberation, all entries will be exhibited for public viewing, together with a copy of the signed report of the jury. The aim is to involve the community at large (including but not limited to site users, the site's current owners, concerned public officials, professionals, etc.) in the visioning process and to solicit their feedback in order to help guide future development of the proposed ideas.

B9. Exhibition Period

The public exhibition will be over a period of 10 days. A touring exhibition will follow and the selected entries will be exhibited in multiple venues and events to promote wider public awareness. The exact date and venues will be confirmed by the Organizer in due time.

5.2 Submission Requirements

5.2.1 Submittal List

Participants are required to submit one copy of each of the following:

- *Vision Statement* text, up to 1500 words .
- Two A1-size panel boards for graphic visualization of proposals and/or data, displayed in portrait orientation.
- CD-ROM

All texts could be in either English or Arabic.

The submitted entries should remain anonymous. No identification of any sort of the Participant is accepted to appear on any of the submitted documents. Refer to Section 5.3.2 below for more information about anonymity rules and procedures to follow.

5.2.2 Vision Statement

The purpose of the vision statement is to state the principles and intentions addressing issues raised in this brief and the Reply to Questions document or any other document or information to be communicated by the Organizer as addendum to this brief. . This document shall also include the proposed intervention scenario that develops a clear institutional framework based on which the project may be implemented. This intervention scenario could include a policy recommendation, a spatial/design intervention, a development plan, a program or a combination of all. Keep in mind that whatever the submitted entry's intervention is, it needs to cover the following aspects:

- a. The implementation mechanism: including the legal framework that allows the proposed intervention to be applied.
- b. The funding mechanism: is it through public or private funds (individuals or investment groups) or donations from local/ international groups or a combination of multiple sources?
 - c. The actors to involve.
 - d. The impact in relation to the competition objectives: how did the proposed intervention achieve one or more of the competition objectives?

5.2.3 Two A1-size Panel Board

Whether submitted in the form of planning solution or in the form of a design intervention, entries must be presented on two (2) A1-size panels boards. Panels should be mounted on lightweight foam core boards for display in portrait orientation.

For proposals with a planning solution(s), Participants are requested to include clear references to each law being used.

For proposals with a design intervention, participants are encouraged to include plans/sections or any relevant drawings at a scale adequate to clearly communicate the design idea and help the jury understand the details and special interventions of the proposed scheme. All drawings should indicate the North orientation. Scaled drawings must follow the metric scale. A graphic scale should appear on all scaled drawings. All plans and sections must be clearly labeled and referenced.

The following list identifies recommended drawings:

- i. Site plan. This drawing must show the site area within its context.
- ii. Conceptual design plans, sections, and elevations.
- iii. Partial plans and sections through the site
- iv. Perspectives.

5.2.4 CD-ROM

Participants will need to include all above listed items and any additional material, in soft copy on a CD that will be handed in with the rest of the deliverables.

5.3 Terms and Conditions

5.3.1 Official Language

Participants may choose to submit their entries using either English or Arabic languages.

5.3.2 Anonymity

To ensure objectivity and impartiality, the submitted entries will remain anonymous. As stated in Article 7 of the UIA competition guide:

“All competitors’ designs shall be submitted and judged anonymously.

It is essential that the anonymity of the competitors be maintained until the final adjudication has been terminated and, in the interest of the competition, rigorous measures should be taken to ensure that this principle is observed scrupulously. The competition regulations shall stipulate that all documents shall be submitted anonymously. The name, logo or any other mark that may identify the competitor, must not appear under any form. Anonymity shall be guaranteed by requiring each competitor to place an alphanumeric code of his/her own choice- composed of 4 digits + 2 letters, for example, 1 cm high on the upper right corner of each plan and accompanying document that constitute the entry, including the identification envelope (that will contain the identity and complete contact details of the competitor(s)). On receipt of entries, the Professional and Technical Advisor will be responsible for masking these codes with a serial number. The codes and corresponding serial numbers will be recorded in a register which will be kept in a safe until the jury has reached its final decision, selected the winners and signed the official report to the Promoter. The competitors’ identification envelopes will also be placed in the safe until the results have been declared and anonymity lifted”.

Failure to abide by the anonymity requirement will result in disqualification and exclusion from the competition.

5.3.3 Communication

Throughout the competition duration, all communication regarding the competition shall be carried out through the competition Coordinator on the following email: info@thinkhousing.org. Phone calls will not be accepted. Participants shall under no circumstances contact or be contacted by other members of the Organizer team, jury members, or steering committee members throughout the competition period. Such attempt will result in the disqualification of the team’s registration and entry.

5.3.4 Confidentiality

All Participants are advised discretion during the length of the competition to ensure confidentiality of the proposals they will be developing and all data communicated to them. The Participants commit to maintaining strict confidentiality regarding the exact location of the listed case studies and the identities of its residents, owners, tenants and any other concerned party.

5.3.5 Ownership of Entries

No submitted materials including executive summary, drawings, and any other optional material will be returned to Participants.

5.3.6 Authorship and Originality of Entries

Submitted entries shall be the original work of the participating team. Inauthentic, copied and/or plagiarized content shall result in the disqualification of the team.

5.3.7 Exhibition, Publication, and Promotion

By submitting their projects for the competition, teams acknowledge granting the Organizer the right to exhibit and publish their entries in full or in part in reports, books and advocacy material or exhibitions. In every case, full credit will be given to the authors of the published material.

5.3.8 Submission of Entries Deadline

Submissions received after the deadline will be automatically disqualified.

5.3.9 Changes to the Competition

The Organizer reserves the right to alter, suspend or cancel the competition rules at any stage if that is deemed necessary for any reasons outside of its control, in consultation with the competition steering committee members.

5.3.10 Handling of Deliverables

The Organizer will exercise due care with respect to all documents and materials submitted by the participants. The Organizer will not be responsible for any damage caused in the mail or by handling.

5.3.11 Indemnity Clause

Participants who enter this competition automatically agree to release the Organizer from any claims, losses, damages, expenses and liabilities resulting from their participation or any competition-related activities, including those inflicted by a third-party due to the participants' submission. Unless otherwise stated, the Organizer does not claim nor commits to implement the proposals put forth during the competition.

APPENDICES (download from website)

Appendix A: Economic Tools

Appendix B: Legal Tools

Appendix C: List of Institutions

Appendix D: Housing Competition Jury Member Agreement

Appendix E: FAQ