

## [Street Art as Placemaking in Beirut?]

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### **Abstract:**

Street art is a generic term that covers a diversity of artistic interventions in the city's public space. In urban studies, interest in street art is not new. Art has been used historically in planning and designing of cities and urban spaces in terms of beautification or as a vessel for expressing the authorities' values and power. However, in the last decades, a revived interest in street art is linked to the rise of the concept of placemaking. The latter encompasses an approach to urban design that puts forward two ideas: the production of quality spaces in terms of livability, and the involvement of citizens in the design and production processes of these spaces and their later appropriation. Street art is mobilized in this process of urban space fabrication/transformation through its animation and by giving room for alternative uses and discourses. This paper aims to understand the role the street art scene is playing today in the placemaking of urban spaces in Beirut. It focuses on three types of arts expressed in three artistic intervention forms: "Beirut Street Festival", "La Fête de la Musique" and graffiti art. It studies the geography of street art interventions, their spatial manifestations, the discourses of artists and event organizers and citizens' interaction with these interventions. Methodologically, it is based on a review of publications and documents (including press), direct observation during events and interviews. The paper advances that a strong tension resides today in the street art scene between the ambition of holding a progressive social message and the need to adapt to sponsorship and security constraints, undermining this ambition. It stresses also that, geographically, street art is concentrated in areas knowing strong gentrification dynamics, hence amplifying these dynamics.

## [فن الشارع كلاعب فاعل في تشكيل الحيز العام في بيروت]

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ملخص:

فن الشارع هو مصطلح عام يشمل مجموعة متنوعة من التدخلات الفنية في الحيز العام للمدينة. والاهتمام بفن الشارع ليس جديدًا في الدراسات الحضرية، فقد تم استخدام الفن تاريخيًا في تخطيط وتصميم المدن والفضاءات الحضرية من حيث التجميل أو كوسيلة للتعبير عن قيم ونفوذ السلطات. ولكن الاهتمام المتجدد بفن الشارع، في العقود الأخيرة، ارتبط بظهور مفهوم **صناعة المكان**. يشمل هذا المفهوم نهجًا للتصميم الحضري يطرح فكرتين: إنتاج مساحات ذات جودة من حيث قابلية العيش، وإشراك المواطنين في عمليات تصميم وإنتاج هذه المساحات وتملكها لاحقًا. يتم تعبئة فن الشارع في هذه العملية من تصنيع/تحويل الحيز العام الحضري من خلال تنشيطه وإتاحة المجال للاستخدامات والخطابات البديلة.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى فهم الدور الذي تلعبه مشهديات فن الشارع اليوم، في صناعة الحيز العام في بيروت. ويركز على ثلاثة أنواع من الفنون والتي تتجلى في ثلاثة أشكال من التدخلات الفنية: "مهرجان بيروت للشارع"، و"عيد الموسيقى" وفن الجرافيتي. وتدرس جغرافية تدخلات فن الشارع، وتجلياتها المكانية، وخطابات الفنانين ومنظمي الفعاليات وتفاعل المواطنين مع هذه التدخلات. من الناحية المنهجية، تستند الدراسة على مراجعة المنشورات والوثائق (بما في ذلك الصحافة)، والملاحظة المباشرة أثناء الفعاليات والمقابلات الشخصية.

يشير البحث ن هناك توترًا قويًا في مشهد فن الشارع اليوم وصراعًا بين الطموح لحمل رسالة اجتماعية تقدمية والحاجة للتكيف مع رعاية الفعاليات والقيود الأمنية المفروضة، مما يقيد هذا الطموح. كما تؤكد أيضًا أنه من الناحية الجغرافية، يتركز فن الشارع في مناطق محددة تشهد نشاطات وتحسينات مدينية قوية، مما يضخم الصراع الطبقي ويكرس مفهوم التحديث الحضري "Gentrification".

### Introduction:

Art has always been used in planning as a tool to enhancing cities form and to organizing urban spaces in terms of beautification or as a means to express the authorities' values and power. However, art is increasingly recognized as an influent factor in shaping cities. This is especially the case for what is now recognized as a particular form of art that takes place directly in the public space of cities and known as "street art" and its link with the concept of "placemaking". In this paper, the aim is to understand street art as a placemaking activity through the case of Beirut.

Beirut is a city in transformation. Transformations and changes in this city can be reflected in different aspects and manifestations and on many levels.

Beirut can be described as the city of continuous reconstruction; the city has seen in its modern history a large reconstruction movement at different levels; on the cultural, economic and especially on the urban and infrastructure levels. Beirut has known many periods of prosperity and recession, booming

and wars, depending on the multiple stages, making the scene of the city in a permanent change in recent decades.

Beirut is also considered as a polarized city; on one hand, the city contains traditional, popular neighborhoods and heritage buildings, on the other hand, we see large gentrification dynamics sweeping the city, and the old buildings are demolished to be replaced by modern buildings, towers and large projects (Solidere, Saifi Village, Zaytounay Bay, etc.), making an obvious contradiction in the city's scene. As we see the phenomenon of pubs gripping the traditional buildings and residential streets, turning the function of these places to other functions.

On the cultural and artistic levels, Beirut has been identified as a leading city in the surroundings, because of its history in higher education and the emergence of several universities since the nineteenth century. The press houses knew gangbusters because of the diversity and freedom of expression from a long time, Beirut was known as the capital city for printing and the production of books in the Arab region. The city was the appropriate place to launch various types of arts, avant-garde and political thoughts, and libertarian ideas that influenced the Arab world, especially in the fifties and sixties. But this role historically played by the city has been weakened so much. Artistic and cultural productions have seen a big drop with the closure of the most theaters in the capital and the declining activity of the press and the media; therefore, the city has lost its role as a producer of new thoughts and avant-garde approaches.

But in spite of that, the city is witnessing today the emergence of diverse culture activities, represented by underground and alternative art scenes like graffiti, performance art, and street music. Art is taking place more and more in the city space, especially street arts.

In light of this fact, Beirut is experiencing today two contradictory images; an image of the modern city and image of the traditional city on different levels, and a tension between a neoliberal aseptified gentrified city and traditional popular neighborhoods. Here comes the street art to contribute to the growth of both dynamics; as it is sometimes used for beautification, and sometimes for revendication of the city. From here comes the question that arises:

### **In what way street art is contributing to the shaping of the city of Beirut today?**

#### **1. Street art and Placemaking**

Place-making and cities are becoming increasingly, the most important challenge to confront with more than half of the world's population living now in cities. The academic literature on place and the related idea of place-making is growing rapidly across a spectrum of the sciences and the professions, including geography, social anthropology, landscape architecture, architecture, environmental psychology, planning and philosophy (Freedman, 2010). Many approaches deal with the place, place-making and the role of art in place-making. Many authors and researchers have dealt with these topics; we can sum up their points of view in two types of approaches: the enthusiastic and the critical approaches.

Before treating the two approaches, different synonyms terms are used to denote art in the city: public art, street art, urban art and even urban cultures.

The first is an **enthusiastic approach**, it considers the place-making in cities as an assemblage where different kinds of actors, dispersed spaces, and diverse objects come together in a network, around a

way of being & doing (Farias and Binder), while public art contributes to a creative place-making and artists are considered as partners in urban policies. Public art provides new political prospects and plays a critical role in the constitution of political collectivity (Buser, Bonura, Fannin, Boyer, 2013) and (Sharp, Pollok, Paddison, 2005). The street art, for this approach, is an action to create a link between the social and political life in an anti-individualistic logic (Chaudoir, 2004) it's a way to raise awareness of social and political issues (Castleman). Supporters of the enthusiastic approach give an important role to the art in shaping cities, for them artists are partners in urban policies and public art contributes to creative placemaking (Karkusen, Gadwa, 2010), (Project for Public Spaces, 2012). Street art also enhances social inclusion, community building and collective memory (Bertshe, 2013), (Puleo, 2014) and (Gibson, 2010). It's an original intervention in public space which has an important impact on quality of places (Bertshe, 2013). Street arts create deeper values in the communications they create and the connections they build between individuals, communities, and systems.

The second is a **critical approach**, it believes that a city is just a place of production and wealth and a relationship between complex forces where no places for art and artists. Lefebvre says that the urban process is essential to the survival of capitalism. What excludes completely everything that has to do with simple aesthetic.

Street art is considered for critical approach supporters, as a tool of domination that uses artists to serve as a “cache-misère” in the cities and suburbs (Boulanger, 2002), a powerful platform for reaching the public, an instrumentalization of artists (Chaudoir, 2004) or sometimes a domination with acceptance (Regnier). Even DIY is acting, for them, as a catalyzer of gentrification (Deslandes, 2013).

Based on the academic literature and the foregoing analysis, street arts and placemaking can take six forms, starting from beautification aims and arriving at the radical artistic expressions, following conditions and art's forms.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Public actor State vision → Beautification (top down decision)	Public or private Actor Using artists → Reaching the public	Public or Private Actor + Artists → Partnership (top down decision)	Public or Private Actor + Artists → Partnership (bottom up decision)	Artists + Population → Local Place making	Radical Artists

The state may have a vision or a plan to beautify the city in a top-down decision without any discussion with the private sector or the people involved. Or it may be a kind of deal between the public and the private sectors to reach the public or to impose particular situation by using artists. In other cases, an agreement may be acquired between three actors: the state, the private sector, and artists to enhance the city. These three players can be partnerships in a public affair but this time in a bottom-up decision in which the decision comes out from artists.

Sometimes the state is totally excluded and the decision is confined between the artists and the public. Finally, a radical expression could be imposed by artists to express themselves.

In order to understand the tension experienced by Beirut and identify the different positions that street art can take, we had to be relying on the above table so that we can determine the different classifications that could be understood through these four axes: the geography of street art interventions, the spatial manifestations, the discourses of artists and event organizers, and finally the citizens' interaction with these interventions. These hubs allow us to understand the form of interventions on place, the impact of discourses and practices on spaces, and especially with whom they share them.

## 2. Case study: Street art in Beirut

Beirut is a city rich in diverse and alternative culture activities, with a noticeable increasing of the street art scene's phenomenon in recent years.

Our study aims to understand street art as a placemaking activity through the case of Beirut, and the role of the street art scene in the urban spaces of the city. We would like to understand how street art is acting in public spaces in Beirut and how it is related to the quality of place and social inclusion among the different groups of people in the city.

In order to understand this issue, we focused in this paper on three types of street arts that are expressed every year in Beirut in three artistic events: "Beirut Street Festival", "La Fête de la Musique", and graffiti art.

### 2.1. Beirut Street Festival

"Zico House", the organizer of the event, started the "Beirut Street Festival" back in 2002, with participatory outdoor happenings accessible to all types of audience. The first year of the BSF was a pilot festival to feel both the streets of Beirut and the residents' reactions to cultural events set in the public open air. BSF became an annual date, scheduled for the autumn, and has been constantly running to this date, only to be interrupted in 2006, in the aftermath of the Israel-Hezbollah war.

Over the past thirteen years, the "Beirut Street Festival" presented more than 100 street performances from Lebanese, Arab, Eastern and Western companies (Lebanon, Cameroon, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, the United States and the United Kingdom). Manifestations are specially created for public spaces: musical interventions, Movement Theater, puppets, one-man shows, parades, street installations, street performances, musical interventions, workshops and dance performances. These events were presented in different streets of Beirut: Ain el Mreisseh, Nejme Square (Place de L'Étoile), Al Maarad Street, Hamra, Sanayeh, Sasseen Square, Verdun, Gemmayze, Mar Mkhayel, etc.

### 2.2. Fête de la Musique

The "Fête de la Musique", also known as Make Music Day or World Music Day, is an annual music celebration taking place on 21 June.

The concept of an all-day musical celebration on the days of the solstice was originated by the French Minister of Culture, [Jack Lang](#). The festival later became celebrated in 120 countries around the world.

"Fête de la Musique" in Beirut, is an annual event similar to what is organized around the world on June 21; it was launched for the first time in 2000.

Many free concerts, of amateurs and professionals' artists, are organized in the streets of Beirut for the large public, presenting different styles of music: rock, jazz, pop, traditional music and even spiritual.

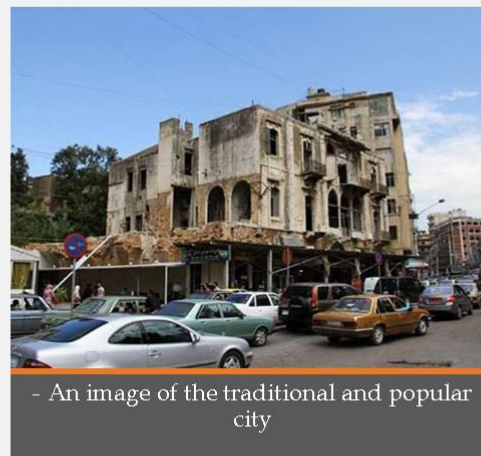
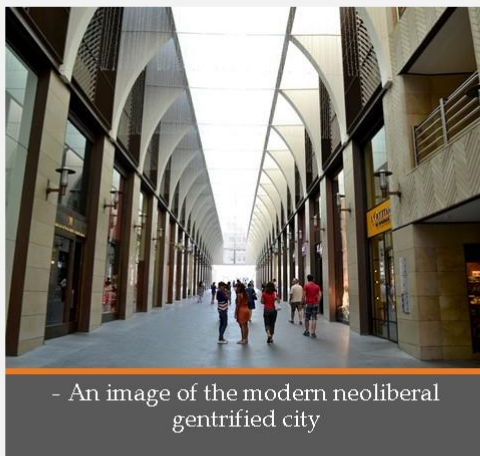
### 2.3. Graffiti art

Graffiti is a complicated mixture of writings and drawings, made by an artist or a group of artists, and applied generally with spray-paint to walls, buildings, bridges, and other areas. Each artist has a signature or a special shape.

Graffiti is considered as a part of urban cultures which includes all the hip-hop movement practice or street protests, like break dance, rap, and slam (Chaudoir, 2004).

It is often considered illegal but not always. Today, Graffiti is related to the new urban explosion, some

Beirut is experiencing today two contradictory images:



Source: Wikimedia

people consider it as something bad others as something attractive and good, it's a modern way to express and to reach the public spaces with paintings and colors.

### 3. Methodology

Our task aims to understand street art as a placemaking through “Beirut Street Festival, “Fête de la Musique” and graffiti art in Beirut and what is the influence of public art on public places.

We need to know what is the role of street music on quality of place, and how public art contributes to creative placemaking and rejuvenates public places.

To reach our goal, we adopted the following methodology:

## Documentation

An internet review was essential to have a global idea about the three artistic intervention forms, their history, their organizers and their progress in Beirut.

Through this review, we could know the bodies that are organizing “Fête de la Musique”, “Beirut Street Festival”, and the name of artists who participate in graffiti art in Beirut. And we could know the programs and the locations of the events that took place in recent years.

Since the BSF is going to occur in late October; the internet review helped us to know the event’s full programs for 2014 and 2015 editions, thus we could know more details about every performance and its participants and having pictures of the performances, and watching them on YouTube as well.

## Direct observation

In order to cover all the aspects of “Fête de la Musique”, we did a broad coverage that included different locations: Saifi Village, Samir Kassir Garden, Tijara Street, Abdel Malak Street and Gemmayzeh stairs. All those sites were different from each other in terms of the character and form of the place as well as the performance form and its relation with the place.

We also toured the neighborhoods of Beirut to monitor the places that contain graffiti drawings and to take pictures.

## Interviews

In addition to this, we did nine semi-structured interviews with different kind of participants we met in “Fête de la Musique” event, including main organizers, stage organizers, technicians, performers, and spectators.

Semi-structured interviews were held with “Beirut Street Festival” organizer and the artists representing the five groups participating in the event’s 13<sup>th</sup> edition-2015.

Semi-structured interviews with five graffiti’s artists were important to complete our study and to obtain essential information about this “speak out”, and about these drawings or writings.

We also did some semi-structured interviews with people living or interacting with graffiti’s area.

## Cartography

We did a cartographic map that shows the different locations of “Fête de la Musique” events that occurred in 2016, in addition to a map that covers the five locations of the event that we visited and made interviews in.

Different maps showing the locations of “Beirut Street Festival” events for the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> editions. And a global map that covers all the event’s locations from 2002 to 2005. In addition to two maps that show “BSF” locations by a number of seasons and by periods.

A map showing the spread of graffiti in the entire area of Beirut and identifies the graffiti’s drawings locations for each artist.

The aim of this cartographic approach is to make a comparative study that helps us to draw a clear synthesis concerning the geographic situation of the street art in Beirut.

#### 4. Results

The aim of this study is to understand the role of the street art scene in the placemaking of urban spaces in Beirut, for this, we focused on the four axes that include all aspects of this subject: the geography of street art interventions, the spatial manifestations, the discourses of artists and event organizers, and finally the citizens' interaction with these interventions.

##### 4.1. Geography of street art interventions

The map of "Fête de la Musique" (Fig 1) locations shows that most of the event's places have been concentrated in the downtown area, due to the lasting partnership between the French institute, which is the main organizer of the event, and Solidère.

Since "Fête de la Musique" is organized by the French Institute in Beirut, it is normal that this event takes an institutional form, and uses areas that do not constitute any organizational difficulties; and so, we can see that the partnership between the French Institute and Solidère offer to both institutions what they want without any discomfort.

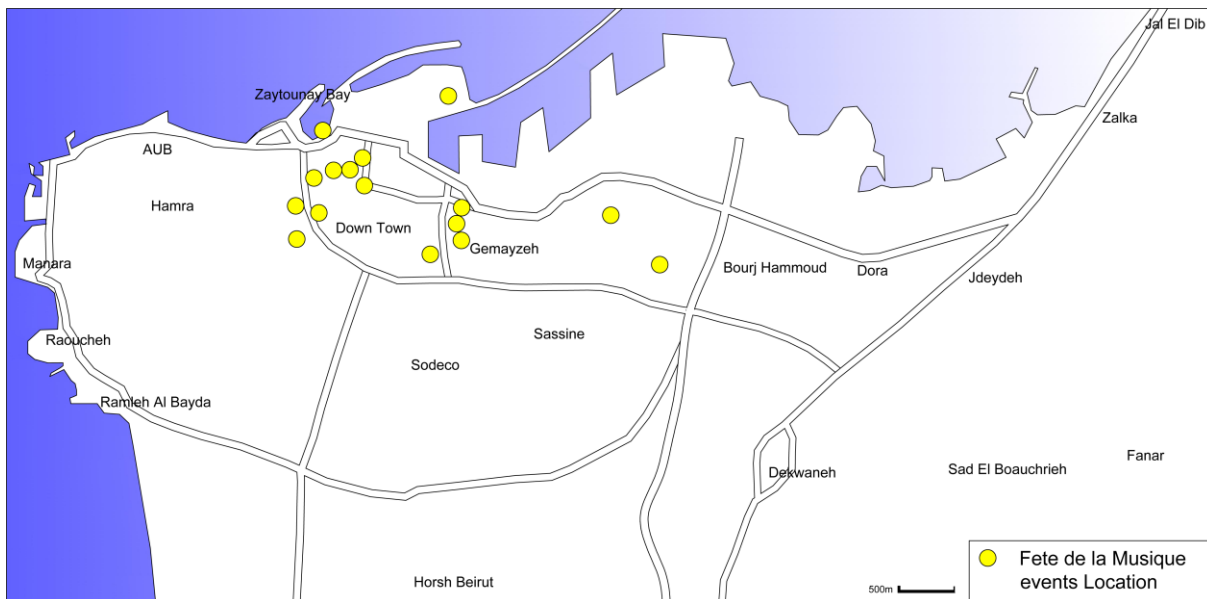


Fig. 1 : « Fête de la Musique » 2016 stages location in Beirut. Source: author.

As for "Beirut Street festival", its performances used to be distributed over many areas in Beirut, but in recent years they tended to be concentrated in one area, which is the Solidère area, due to the presence of the appropriate squares and sidewalks for street performances, and facilities provided by the company to the organizers (Fig 2).

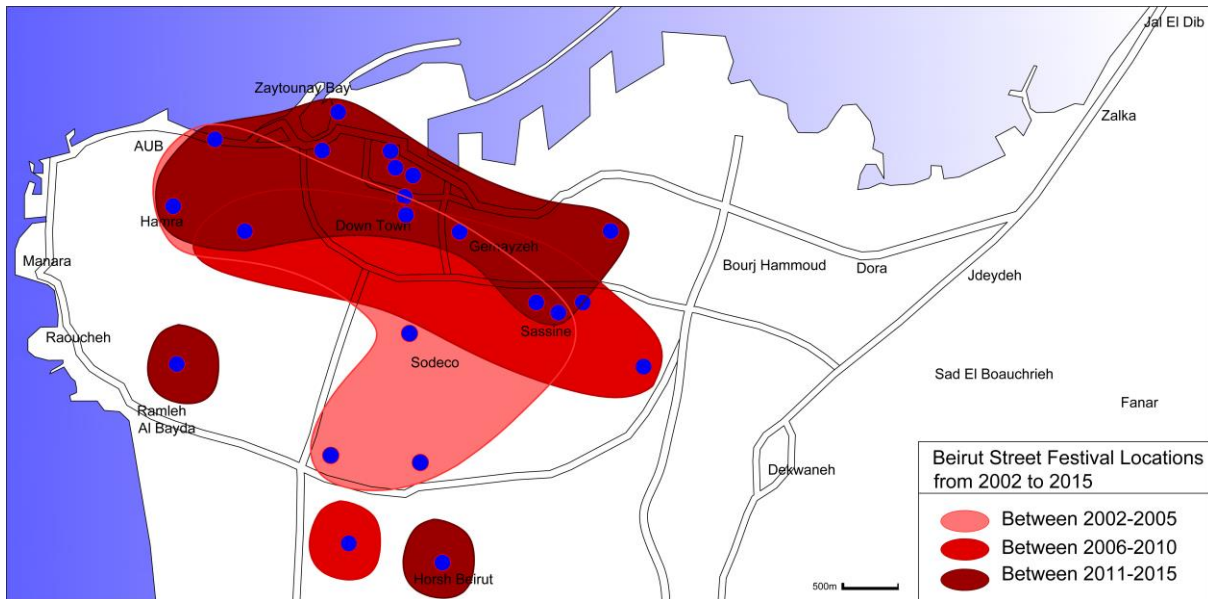


Fig. 2: “Beirut Street Festival” locations in Beirut from 2002 to 2015. Source: author

So, we can conclude that the idea that public art enhances social inclusion, by bringing different kinds of people together, is not totally correct through “Fête de la Musique” and “BSF” events in these areas. It is true that these events bring people together in one place, but the idea of social integration is much exaggerated because most of the attendees were from well-off social groups in these places, and we don’t think that an important interaction between different social segments occurred there, and the approach is very limited because of the bodies and institutions that are funding these events.

As for the graffiti art, although it is distributed over many parts of Beirut, because of the ease of moving through it, but their artists are focusing on specific areas such as Hamra Street, Ras Beirut, and Ashrafiieh areas; which reinforces the hypothesis addressing that the geography of the street art in Beirut appears as a geography of gentrification (Fig 3).

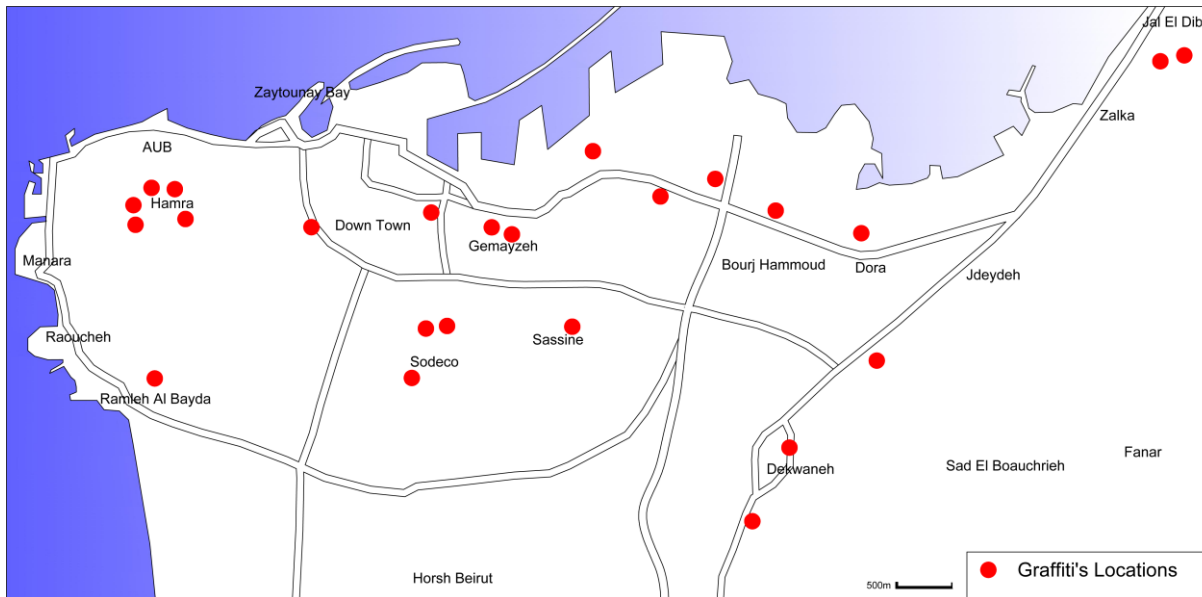


Fig. 3: Graffiti locations in Beirut. Source: author.

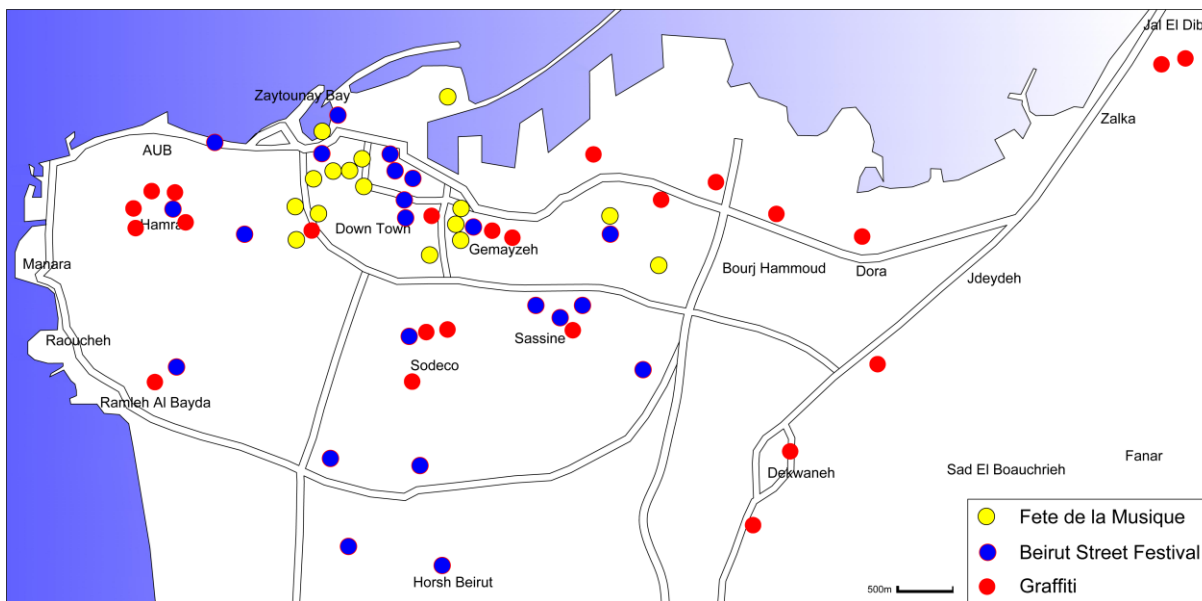


Fig. 4: Locations of the three artistic interventions in Beirut. Source: author.

#### 4.2. Spatial manifestations

During “Fête de la Musique” several traffic lanes becomes a pedestrian street, in order to make people participations easier and more flexible. Different forms of interventions have exploited the alleyways, the places and the old stairs of Beirut. Concerning the equipment, participants have sometimes used the public space without any modification except adding speakers and amplifiers as happened in Saifi village and with the “Communauté des Béatitudes”; and other times they placed temporary stages as it has been in Beirut Souks. There was, as well in some places a bar that served cocktails and drinks, a way to make some profits.

The street, without any modifications or added elements, is used as a theater by “Beirut Street Festival”, to present different forms of street performances; in order to revive the public space and to create a creative artistic atmosphere in the city. Some traffic lanes are blocked during the event.

In the case of Graffiti, public space is promoted by drawings and writings, every abandoned wall, every old building, and every strategic façade may be a target for graffitiists, especially in the main streets frequented by a large number of people and cars.

The manifestations differ from an event to another, but it’s certain that the additions in all cases are so light and simple.

### 4.3. Discourses study of artists and events’ organizers

The survey that we did with some organizers and performers during “Fête de la Musique” 2016, and our interviews with “Beirut Street Festival’s” organizer and with some artists who participated in this event in its 13<sup>th</sup> edition – 2015, in addition to a number of interviews with many graffiti’s painters; all this gave us some important clues and many social and political indicators concerning the role of street art in Beirut. Thus, we could draw the basic concepts according to the respondents.

A transversal reading of the interview’s tables belonging to the three types of street art covered in this paper shows several entrances summarizing the ideas that were addressed by the respondents, and which can be summed up in four entries:

#### 1- Street art enhances social inclusion and community building;

The academic literature has addressed the issue of the relation between the street art and the social concerns. Many authors have written about this subject, studies have shown that street art contributes to improving social inclusion and community building among different groups of people; street art is a space for the convergence of different classes of people and a possibility for recognition of social difference and removing the barriers and prejudices among them, it engages the public audience in place (Gibson, 2010), (Bertsche, 2013). Humanistic activities enable place-making by helping to restore relations among mind, body, and environment at an individual scale while also producing forms that circulate to help reinstate place at collective scales (Puleo, 2014).

In the interviews we held during the three artistic interventions, respondents focused on the relation between street art and the improvement of social integration. Each discussed his approach, according to his background:

Discourses of the participants in “Fête de la Musique”, from organizers and performers, were similar; all agreed unanimously on the idea that street music brings people together despite the differences, away from all religious and political rivalries: an obvious vision of people who have always dealt with music and prepared such music events.

The discourses of some actors and participants in “Beirut Street Festival” took a different approach from that of “Fête de la Musique” participants; they agreed that street performances gather people and allow communion and social inclusion, considering that one of the reasons for performing in the street is a sense of a lack of socializing, social sessions are decreasing between people, and the street is the place for interaction and dialogue between people. A participant in “Beirut Street Festival” considered that there is a noticeable difference between performing in Solidère and performing in the popular places;

Poor people are not afraid of participation and interaction in the middle of the performance, while in high-end areas, people remain wary and they don't interact easily.

As for graffiti's artists they consider that their non-sectarian drawings can reach a big number of people and have a unifying effect on them, they can also raise the awareness about social issues.

Through our observation after the survey that we did on site, we can conclude that the idea that public art enhances social inclusion, by bringing different kinds of people together, is not totally correct in "Fête de la Musique" event. It is true that the event brings people together in one place, as most of the respondents have pointed out, but the idea of social integration is much exaggerated: Most of the attendees were from well-off social and cultural groups who speak foreign languages.

We did not see that any form of social integration has occurred in this event; especially we didn't notice any of the popular categories in the place. Maybe because of their ignorance of English language dominant on the festival, or because there is a lack of adaptation with these places considered as upscaled and belong to certain groups of people. What was considered as public spaces in Beirut downtown cannot be considered as well for the popular classes that do not have any links to those places. We haven't noticed any marked interaction between different groups of people.

As for "Beirut Street Art", we noticed that most of the event's locations, in recent years, have been concentrated in Solidère area, thus we don't think that an important interaction between different social segments has been occurred there.

While the situation could be different in other places of the event's locations like Cornice Ain el Mrayseh, Sanayeh Garden, and Horsh Beirut that combine several groups of Lebanese society, performances in these places could be more effective in social integration and community building.

## **2- Street art Promotes public space;**

Street art is an effective tool that can transform neglected spaces into living and active areas filled with activities and used by people on a permanent basis. Art can contribute to creative placemaking, which is the engagement of communities in creating a common vision for livable and inviting urban spaces (Markusen, Gadwa, 2010), (Project for public spaces, December, 2012), (Kent, Nikitin, 2015), (DIY Artscape, 2016).

Respondents in "Fête de la Musique" agreed unanimously on the concept that street music promotes public space and reinforces the idea of appropriation of the streets by people, and the role of street art in creating social practices in public spaces.

We see the idea that public art promotes public space, and the street belongs to people; is not applicable to the situation of "Fête de la Musique" and "Beirut Street Festival" areas. These places cannot be considered as real public spaces, especially in Solidère area where a lot of social practices remain prohibited to people. It is hard to talk about the appropriation of the people of these spaces that are already owned by a private company and has certain management systems on its spaces. And these events cannot contribute to creating social practices in public spaces, due to the fact that performances, which took place today, are unique and they don't occur on daily basis, Although the actors in "Beirut Street Festival" are well aware of the public space's issue and they are working according to this principle, which seeks to enhance public space and make it available to people as a place for discussion

of social and political issues; the Organizer thinks that Street performances increase the ability of the existence of free places for people use and they draw attention to the diminishing public space in Beirut year after year. Another participant in “Beirut Street Festival” considers that one of the reasons for the interest in the street performances that the public space is the property of t people, which is taken of them.

### **3- Public art as promotion and city image enhancer;**

Public art can be a tool for boosting city image, creating an appealing urban environment (Bertshe, 2013), it generates new forms of employment in cultural work (Gibson, 2010), as well as a powerful platform for reaching the public (Chaudoir, 2004) and (Lefebvre, 1972).

“Fête de la Musique”, “Beirut Street Festival”, and graffiti art provide promotion on different levels;

For some musicians, actors, and graffiti painters who don’t earn any money from these events, these interventions constitute a promotion for their work.

For the French institute, it’s a cultural and political promotion, prompting the founder of “Fête de la Musique”, the former minister "Jack Lang", to come to Lebanon on the music festival day to promote his country.

The organizer of “Beirut Street Festival” declared that all foreign teams are funded by their countries. A participant from Switzerland said that his funding comes from his home country, where the work receives touring support from city, state, and country. So BSF is considered as a platform for reaching the public for European countries which are funding their artists for cultural and political promotion.

For Solidère, which is participating in the events’ funding, these events constitute a promotion for the downtown area, which is suffering from depression, such event plays a role of beautification and could enhance the city image.

### **4- A Space for artistic, human and political expression;**

Street art provides many kinds of expression.

First, it provides a space for artistic expression and appropriating spaces in the built environments of our cities for artistic expression. Professional concerns of artists themselves to produce creative expressions that advance practice, experiment, and challenge prevailing norms (Gibson, 2010).

As artists need to express themselves through their work, these events present for them an opportunity to share professional experience. For some participants in the three artistic interventions, art is their only issue, they are not interested in other social or political concerns, and they only want to express their artistic inclinations through these events.

Street art can also be a tool for political and social expression; it could provide political prospects and plays a critical role in the constitution of political collectivity, Place can explore the subjective and political dynamics of collectivity (Sharp, Pollock, Paddison, 2005). Public art is a contributor, but also antidote, to the conflict that typically surrounds the restructuring of urban space. The blending of creative practice with social/political activism can serve as an important means of creating enthusiasm for particular urban sites as spaces of resistance (Buser, Bonura, Fannin, Boyer, 2013). In line with this

framework, comes the approach of an artist who participated in “Beirut Street Festival”; she considers that street art is not only a way to express the opinion of the artist, but a place for questioning for the artist and for the people, for her street theater offers a direct dialogue with people, It is the place where artist speaks with people and faces them and he allows them to face him. Hence questioning starts and thinking about public issues.

As for the street art as a tool for political and social expression, we do not see that this idea has been realized in “Fête de la Musique”; after our interviews with a lot of artists, we were able to note that they do not hold any political or social issues and that they only have a promotional aim. Most of the songs played at the concert were occidental, having no links with the local issues in Lebanon. Respondents in this event stated that under the current situation in Lebanon, people need to have an emotional release from the political and social situation and music provides this release.

The expression of political and social issues usually stems from the popular areas, which express the pulse of people and civil movement as well as the concerns of the citizens. Areas where these events have occurred in Beirut are luxurious ones and business districts, mostly do not include housing. These streets cannot be a place for popular and political expression.

#### 4.4. Citizens’ interactions

The “Fête de la Musique” event gathers people together in one place but most of the attendees were from well-off social groups. The popular categories were totally absent in the place because of sites selection confined in the downtown of Beirut. As for attendee’s participation, it varies from one place to another, it seems timid in Gemmayzeh, a little more animated in Mar Mikhael. Scenes in Beirut Souks and especially Saifi Village have received most of the young public participation. Religious institutions were not far from the event, their participation add a spiritual touch to the festival. Important to notice that people from any background were responding to the public music in the same way.

The “Beirut Festival Street” attracts obviously different social groups and gets more people’s attention. Which is related to the different and vast performances’ locations. It created a direct interaction between artists and citizens.

As for Graffiti, the streets of Beirut have witnessed the birth of many graffitists trying to change the image of the city. Some people consider these drawings as something bad others as something attractive and good. Their attitudes ranging between supporters of these drawings with some conditions or rejecters. But in general, all of them prefer colors and paintings as a replacement to political or sectarian messages. Some are not interested at all; they simply didn’t understand their contents.

Through the three artistic interventions that we studied, we can determine the position of all the players participating in these events, according to the street art and placemaking table:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Public actor State vision → Beautification (top down decision)	Public or private Actor Using artists → Reaching the public	Public or Private Actor + Artists → Partnership (top down decision)	Public or Private Actor + Artists → Partnership (bottom up decision)	Artists + Population → Local Place making	Radical Artists

The situation in the “Fête de la Musique” is limited between the second, the third and, the fourth case: The French Institute in Lebanon is the main private actor behind this event, “Fête de la Musique” presents for it an important opportunity to reach the public and to promote the French culture. “Solidère” declares itself a second local private actor beneficiary of the event, especially as it takes place in its space, this event plays for it a role of beautification and enhances the downtown image.

Amateurs or professional artists, aim for popular recovery or long-term promotion.

In the context of the economic and security crisis in Beirut, private organizers aim to promote their economic works by this varied musical event in a festive, original and attractive shape.

The situation in “Beirut Street Festival” can also take many positions: Solidère that provides facilities and contributes to funding, especially as it takes place in its space; this event plays for it a role of beautification and enhances the downtown image.

The institutions representing the foreign countries that are funding their teams, “Beirut Street Festival” presents for them an important opportunity to reach the public and to promote for their cultures. Radical artists, whom their attention is confined exclusively to the art without other issues, these artists consider the event as a way to reach the public through their performances. Finally, organizer and some participants who hold social and political issues, are aware of public space’s concerns and the role of street art on it, “Beirut Street Festival” offers for them a chance to address their messages and a place for political and social change that could be done through art performances.

As for the Graffiti’s situation in Beirut, it is limited between the second, the third, the fourth and the fifth case, there is a multiplicity of actors behind the graffiti canvas in Beirut: a group of graffitiists pushing and taking initiative to find their place in the city, to express themselves (or to express people’s reactions) or to beautify city streets. A private sector using artists to reach the public for promotional approaches. A public sector trying to prove its existence and reaching the public by making easy the graffitiist initiatives. And finally, local private and public volunteers trying to win popular recovery or long-term gains.

## 5. Conclusion

Street art generally contributes to improving social inclusion and community building, but we see that social integration has not been achieved in the case of Beirut; social integration cannot be efficient through an event which is mainly geared to a certain category of people, as what especially happened in

“Fête de la Musique”. Therefore, street art events in Beirut did not succeed to connect different groups of people.

Street art promotes public space; it’s an effective tool that can transform neglected spaces into living ones. This concept wasn’t totally applicable to the case of “Fête de la Musique” and “Beirut Street Festival”; because most of the chosen places for the performances were upscale places belonging to well-off social groups or private places that have a specific order, where a lot of public practices are prohibited, and the geography appears as geography of gentrification. These events didn’t contribute to creating social practices in these spaces; it can be concluded that street art can succeed to improve the public spaces if these places are opened to all public activities and without restrictions, and more importantly, people must feel related to these places.

Although some of the participants and actors in these events hold social and political issues and aware of public spaces’ concerns and the role of street art on it, and they are aiming to create some change in the city; but we see that these artistic interventions didn’t succeed to be a space for political and social expression in Beirut; few political and social issues have been addressed through, and the approach was very limited because of the bodies and institutions that are funding these events.

Conversely, these events have provided a space for artistic expression; a lot of artists have expressed themselves through their works. Street art in Beirut also succeeded in being an emotional release from the political and social situation in Lebanon. There is no doubt that these events have played the role of city beautification and enhanced the city image, and were a promotional way for many institutions, bodies, and artists.

As a result, we can conclude that Street art is, in general, a powerful platform for reaching the public and a potent form of political expression, as well as economic intervention in the cities. It’s a way to raise awareness about social issues and build community, and to promote and add values to the public space outside the traditional context. But these values envisaged from street art cannot be achieved in all situations and in all places and social contexts that don’t have the necessary conditions to achieve them. Otherwise, Street art will stay limited to play the role of beautification and enhance the city's image and a way for promotion, just as it happened in Beirut case, without achieving the desired values like social inclusion and a place area for political, social and artistic expression.

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