





# PROJECTS FOR **BEIRUT**

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R e f l e c t i n g   o n   t h e   c i t y   a f t e r   t h e   2 0 2 0   b l a s t

Edited by  
Federico De Matteis  
Simona Salvo  
Nael Chami  
Yara Rizk



## PROJECTS

### FOR :

«Projects For:» is a book series dedicated to architectural design in international contexts. Looking at our own way of practicing architecture through the lens of “difference” can help magnify its identity, pointing out its most relevant characters and providing an appropriate ground for critical thinking. Creating designs – or reflecting on projects – conceived for “elsewhere” can, in our opinion, become a powerful tool to understand how to make architecture. The series wants to provide a space dedicated to this critical activity, where the pretext of a specific location around the globe can serve as the center of gravity for design-oriented considerations.

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## PROJECTS

FOR :

### **BEIRUT**

Reflecting on the city after the 2020 blast

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## BEIRUT 2020

### *Reflecting on the city after the blast*

Seminar and roundtable organised by the  
Postgraduate School for Architectural Heritage and Landscape  
Sapienza University of Rome

#### Introducing the conference

##### **Alessandro Viscogliosi**

Director of Postgraduate School for Architectural Heritage and  
Landscape Sapienza University of Rome

#### Speakers

**George Arbid** Arab Center for Architecture

**Mona Harb** American University of Beirut

**Yasmine Makaroun** Lebanese University

#### Roundtable discussion

**Mazen Haidar** Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

**Carole Lévesque** Université du Québec à Montréal

**Federico De Matteis** University of L'Aquila

**Simona Salvo** Sapienza University of Rome

**December 10th 2020**  
**17:30 CET**

The event will be recorded  
Free and open to the public  
To participate please contact :  
[nael.chami@uniroma1.it](mailto:nael.chami@uniroma1.it)

Organized by  
Yara Rizk and Nael Chami



**SAPIENZA**  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



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# PREFACE

Alessandro Viscogliosi

When speaking of Beirut, we are considering one of the most interesting cities of the Mediterranean, which over the past decades has suffered through a wide range of crises, destructions and reconstructions, each time coming back to life. The latest catastrophic event has happened on August 4th, 2020, and we have all seen the dramatic images of the explosion on TV. However, still now there is little information on what has actually happened on that day, and especially on what is going on in the aftermath, or on what the future could be for a city that has so many interesting architectural features coming from its very long history. Beirut has witnessed the whole of Mediterranean civilization, from the Phoenicians to the Romans, passing through the colonial period to the birth of Lebanon as an independent Nation, and the dramatic history that we all know of, all the way to high quality contemporary architecture.

There are countless connections between Italy and Lebanon: the Lebanese territory is full of vestiges of its illustrious Roman past, with a vast archaeological heritage, that is also suffering from the isolation caused by the long-lasting Syrian crisis, which has entered into its second decade. We know that often the isolation of archaeological sites can lead to problems in the conservation of heritage, especially if they are put on prolonged “hold” due to geopolitical crises or, at the worst, by armed conflicts. Archeology is by no means something dead, for it lives as a place for people to experience the past and can only survive and be duly protected in this way. Today the challenge consists in weaving back again the connection between people and their past, by means of memory, history and archaeology, perhaps also aiming at reconnecting sides of the Mediterranean that were once so close, as Rome and Beirut.

Fig. 1: Beirut 2020, Seminar and Rountable poster

Fig. 2: Beirut's Cultural Heritage, under threat before the blast (Source: Gaetano Virgallito / Flickr)

But in this book, the main focus is on the city itself. During the seminar, we have heard from Lebanese experts on the situation of Beirut, since our School has a keen interest on all the realities of the Mediterranean cities, and intends to further promote forms of research and collaboration on this magnificent heritage, especially if our expertise in the field can somehow help in process of recovery, conservation and recovery that will certainly be complex. Italy has a long tradition when it comes to the reconstruction after catastrophic events, and even in recent years, for example, coping with the damage caused by severe earthquakes has become one of the priorities for the field of architectural conservation. Exchange of knowledge is one of the best ways to discuss problems and identify solutions: this has been the main impulse to the organization of the seminar and to this follow-up book.

Alessandro Viscogliosi

Director

Post-graduate School for Architectural Heritage and Landscape  
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