BEIRUT SEASHORE

Through People's Eyes

Acknowledgements

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> "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights."
>
> David Harvey

I- Background

Naturally, beaches are unique coastal environments that shaped their socio-cultural, ecological, economic, and recreational values over time. Beaches are also a public good that should be protected and managed in a proper and sustainable way. In Lebanon, order 144/s of 1925 stipulates that public domain is inalienable, cannot be sold and cannot be owned over time. Land on the seashore is either a Maritime Public Domain (not parcelized into lots, farthest point on which winter waves break in addition to rocks, sand, and gravel), or maritime lots that are either privately owned, owned by the municipality, or owned by the state (government or republic).

However, Beirut seashore continues to shrink over time as this law has been gradually withdrawn and weakened by several subsequent decrees that granted real-estate developers the right to build on coastal lands and appropriate the seashore for private interests on the basis that investments and private management of natural resources would promote economic efficiency. Knowing that seashores are supposed to function as economic key drivers for the entire community and promote the understanding of the "public", "shared", and "common" notions, the seashore of Beirut represents a missed opportunity to both the city and the public; these constructions and practices did not only limit the free public access to the beach by forming physical barriers and visual obstructions making it more and more exclusive, but also have disconnected the city from its seaside and deprived it from one of its major assets. As a result, being a seaside city, Beirut is steadily losing its ability to attract tourists looking for the quintessential Beiruti seaside experience and citizens seeking a seaside promenade or a day out at a minimal cost.

The situation is exacerbated by the absence of alternatives to low and middle income classes; in a city like Beirut, where the lack of public spaces is shocking and the access to beaches and recreational amenities became a luxury confined to elites, reclaiming free public

access to beaches and preserving the seashore are ever more exigent. Thus, the increase of private developments along coastal lots (private and privatized), often accompanied with violations of building law and encroachment on the maritime public domain, sparked outrage among civil society activists, environmentalists, public space advocates, academicians, fishermen, and beachgoers. The activists' movements reached their peak following the erection of the 5,000 sq.m controversial Eden Bay resort on Ramlet el-Bayda beach, the last remaining public beach in Beirut. Needless to mention that Eden Bay, another five-star development referred to as "a sanctuary of luxury and refinement" by its developer, represents the last straw that broke the camel's back. In 2017, the opposition was met by a decision by Beirut Municipality to put part of the coastal line properties (stretching from the Movenpick Hotel in Raoucheh to the Summerland resort in Jnah) under study. This implies that all construction activities and permits are frozen until the issuance of a new Master Plan that redefines the zoning, and eventually, the building regulations and construction activities. Although this decision may have constituted a small victory for activists, the coastline remains far from safe yet as the municipal decision is open to various interpretations and many ambiguities and concerns surround the outcomes of the awaited Master Plan:

> Would it be able to preserve what is left of accessible beaches and how? How would it ensure public walkways down to the shore through private and privatized properties? What measures would it recommend in regard to existing violations and encroachments on what is considered maritime public domain in order to remove them, or at least, mitigate their implications and optimize the use of the seashore? How to deal with existing private properties and, originally, how property legal lines are drawn on naturally fluctuating sandy and rocky areas of the beach? To what extent would it take into consideration the ecological and socio-cultural sensitivity of the shoreline? What are its limitation?

Even though the master plan is expected to give answers for these questions, the municipal process itself remains questionable and cynical as it eradicates all public rights to take part in it either directly by means of town hall meetings and public discussions, or indirectly by means of surveys and data collection tools involving the community especially residents, beachgoers, fishermen, and investors along the seashore. This raises another set of questions revolving around the decision-making approach:

> Who owns the city? Who has the right to give away parts of it to the private sector? Why does the public have to pay for what is supposed to be a definite good belonging to all people with the right to access it, occupy it, and use it?

While the majority of studies and decisions are made in a top-down manner that is restricted to formal and powerful actors and decision-makers acting in favor of real-estate developers and often linked to politicians, NAHNOO strives to engage the public in the decision-making and development process of the Master Plan in a way that voices its needs, advocates its rights, and triggers its sense of ownership. This will allow the provision of a grassroots reflection that would accompany, complement, and solidify experts' inputs and guidelines on the Master Plan by means of participatory tools. To this end, NAHNOO mobilized and attempted at bridging the prevailing gap between the city's decision-makers and the public through several activities as part of its advocacy campaign to reclaim Beirut public beaches: Diverse Town Hall Meetings, different participatory mapping and research projects, creative protests and mobilization events.

Hence, this report intends to analyze the seashore survey conducted by NAHNOO in order to better understand the site and explore users' and visitors' perception and thus, offers a comprehensive analysis that addresses the socio-cultural, physical, management, and economic aspects of the seashore from this particular perspective.

II- The Survey

This section highlights the survey objectives, presents its structure and content, explains the methodology and limitations.

1- Objectives

As mentioned earlier, NAHNOO resorted to several participatory tools of information-gathering aiming at stimulating the public participation in planning activity. Knowing that the selection of methods to be used for data collection depends upon the local context, the survey, despite its limitations, is clearly deemed one of the most feasible and efficient methods that involves the public and allows an investigation on visitors' and users' insight of the seashore experience and perception.

In brief, on one hand, the direct and short-term objectives of the survey are:

- To collect data and trigger participants' imagination and critical thinking.
- To promote mutual learning process through the sharing of information and experiences between users and decision-makers through NAHNOO, being both the advocate and the mediator.
- To map the diversity of the users.

- To generate a set of recommendations that would ensure a better social inclusion and respond to users' aspirations and needs by mitigating the spatial socio-economic segregation in the use of public beaches.

On the other hand, and at a broader conception of the seashore, the survey indirect objectives are summarized as follow:

- To contribute to the elaboration of a master plan that is reflective of the citizens' real needs and aspirations.
- To endorse or reject any proposed Master Plan based on the survey findings and other collected data.
- To maximize the acceptance of the "valid" Master plan among the concerned parties and minimize resistance and disregard. By valid, we refer to a master plan that ensures the protection of the maritime public domain and the public access to it, protects the socio-cultural and ecological aspects of the seashore, and responds to people's needs and rights to free open public spaces.
- To make governmental and municipal representatives more accountable to the public.

As a final point in this regard, the survey aims also to empirically investigate the possibility of altering the conventional planning approach that marginalizes the public and considers it a passive subject and to build a know-how of how to upgrade planning in Lebanon to a more inclusive one based on the accumulation of experiences and lessons learned.

2- Form, Structure, and Content

The three-page survey questionnaire is organized in five main sections with a set of questions for each; it needs 5-6 minutes to be filled (refer to Appendix 1). The questions consist of a combination of close-ended (yes/no, multiple choice, one-word answer, etc.) and open-ended questions (opinion, experience, listing, impression, description, etc.) in a way that serves the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

1. The first section focuses on participants' profiles (gender, age, education level, nationality, occupation, home address, company, and mode of transportation), the use of the space (purpose of visit and frequency), and the local setting (place, date, time).
2. The second section explores the participants' general cognition of the seashore by addressing questions related to its uses, characteristics, problems, potential improvements, attractions, and spatial practices as well as the representation of its different zones.

3. The third section addresses the socio-cultural aspect of the seashore; it consists of open-ended questions naturally involving the history of the space and the transformation of spatial practices over time.

4. The fourth section investigates the economic aspect of the seashore and focuses on the different economic activities in terms of costs and affordability. It also explores the functionality of public beaches.

5. The fifth section measures the participants' knowledge of public rights and legislations related to the sea as well as their will to mobilize in the aim of claiming their rights.

The survey questionnaire ends up by an open-ended question addressing participant's aspirations: "how would he/she imagine the ideal seashore of Beirut?".

3- Methodology

To recruit the team, NAHNOO called on its social media pages for volunteers to participate in a 2-day workshops on 7-8 July 2018 to and accordingly, selected 17 applicants. During the first day the topic and the objectives of the workshop were discussed, a brief summary of the legislative framework of the seashore and the importance of the master plan as a regulatory planning tool were explained also. Following the presentations, NAHNOO team explained the survey questionnaire, questions were explained and discussed thoroughly which resulted in minor amendments to it. The first day closed by training the participants through simulations of the survey procedure.

On the second day of the workshop, the team and the participants met in Ramlet el-Bayda and the team received on-site training. Prior to the workshop, one volunteer piloted the survey in order to verify and test the questions before implementing it on a large-scale.

Following the workshop, the volunteers carried out the survey during different days of the week (working days, weekend, and holidays) and in different times (morning, noon, and evening). The survey was intended to cover the different parts of the coast: corniche, sandy areas, rocky areas, in front of restaurants, cafes, and resorts of the different areas (Zaitouna Bay, Saint. Georges/Ain el Mreisseh, Manara, Raoucheh, and Ramlet el-Bayda) as shows Table 1. The volunteers were asked to randomly select participants in the different zones of the seashore but were notified that all social groups (men, women, different age groups, disabled people, families, couples, friends, tourists, migrant workers, etc.) should be targeted. The aim was to fill a total number of 600 questionnaires distributed following Table 1. The survey closed in the first week of August after filling 427 questionnaires due to time limitation and volunteers'

other commitments. Yet, it is important to note that answers on some questions became shortly redundant. Each volunteer was responsible for the data entry of the questionnaires that he/she filled and three other volunteers were responsible for revising and cleaning the data as well as producing few graphics.

Ramlet el-Bayda	Raoucheh	Manara	Ain el-Mreisseh	Beirut Water Front		Wednesday	Friday	Sunday
					Morning (6 to 11)	10	10	10
					Noon (11-2)	10	10	10
					Afternoon (2-7)	10	10	10
					Night (7-12)	10	10	10

Table 1-Survey Distribution as planned

Zone	Time	Working days	Week end	Total
Beirut Port	7 am -12 pm	6	0	
	12 pm - 4 pm	0	1	
	4 pm - 7 pm	9	0	16
	7 pm -10 pm	0	0	
Ain el-Mreisseh	7 am -12 pm	32	33	
	12 pm - 4 pm	8	16	
	4 pm - 7 pm	19	7	139
	7 pm -10 pm	12	12	
Manara	7 am -12 pm	6	22	
	12 pm - 4 pm	1	0	
	4 pm - 7 pm	21	0	53
	7 pm -10 pm	3	0	
Raoucheh	7 am -12 pm	24	27	
	12 pm - 4 pm	10	0	
	4 pm - 7 pm	21	1	90
	7 pm -10 pm	4	3	
Ramlet el-Bayda	7 am -12 pm	16	52	
	12 pm - 4 pm	2	12	
	4 pm - 7 pm	21	16	129
	7 pm -10 pm	9	1	
				427

Table 2-Actual Survey Distribution

4- Limitations

As mentioned earlier, the survey method has considerable limitations especially when conducted by volunteers rather than professional surveyors. Most flaws were revealed in the data entry phase given that each volunteer has his/her own terminology which was hard to control. In addition, time and volunteers' availability represented another main limitation resulting in not covering all areas during the different times as per the original plan. The total number of the filled questionnaires reached 427 rather than 600 with several inconsistencies in terms of questionnaires number to be filled in the identified areas during specific dates and

times. Not to mention, a survey is often insufficient on its own to generate in-depth analysis especially that the questionnaire was designed to target the different zones of the seashore rather than focusing on the specificities of each to collect detailed information.

III-Results

This section reports the findings of the survey following the same order of the questionnaire. Yet, given that several questions are interrelated, cross-sectional analysis is required. The majority of questions provides credible quantitative findings given that the sample size of the questionnaire is 427 which refers to less than 5% margin of error assuming that the total population of Beirut and its surrounding regions count 2,500,000. Yet, as mentioned earlier, not all zones were equally covered; this implies that findings related to the specificities of each zone in terms of spatial activities are only indicative. Also, given that participants were randomly selected, findings related to nationalities and gender cannot be referred to quantitatively. The results, therefore, integrates qualitative and quantitative findings.

1- Respondents' Profiles

A. Who are the visitors of the seashore and its space users?

a- Age

Figure 1 shows that the seashore space users are of different ages whereas the majority are between the ages of 25 and 35 with a percentage of 31%. It also shows that 47% belong to the young working population between the ages of 25 and 45, and around 19% belong to the middle-age group ranging between 46 and 65. The results also point to the seashore potential to attract different age groups with a 6% of elderlies. These results are only indicative given the random selection of respondents and given that children were not addressed.
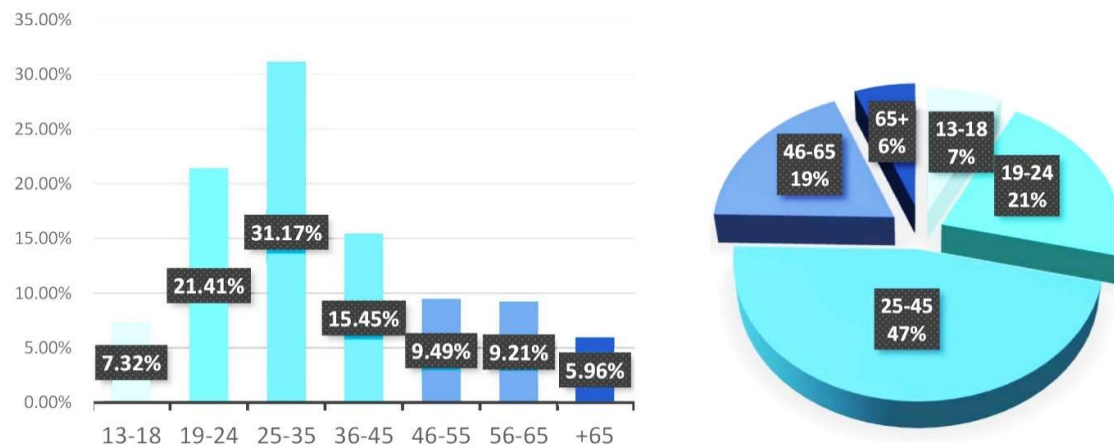
Figure 1-Age Groups of Respondents

b- Gender

70% of the questionnaire respondents are male whereas 30% are females. This can be explained by the fact that open public spaces in Lebanon are often socially labeled as men's spaces; women and young women are rarely seen sitting or taking a stroll along the seaside alone as the majority go for specific purposes, mostly to jog or walk as part of their daily routine physical activities. Others are often accompanied by their male partners or children or even the entire family. It is important to note that female foreign domestic workers are frequently seen walking the dogs of their employers.
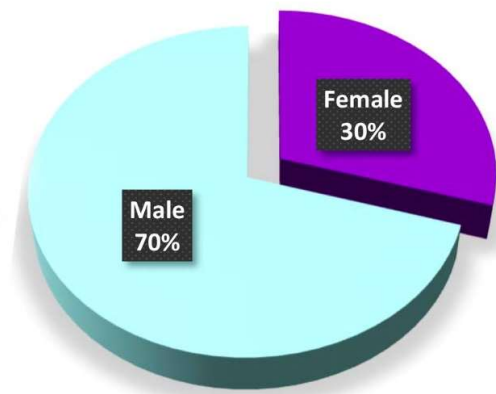
Figure 2-Gender of Respondents

c- Educational Background

46% of respondents have graduate school degrees and more than the quarter (12.8%) of this group have high degrees; 44% have received elementary and secondary education; 6.4% have received primary education, whereas only 3.47% have never attended school.
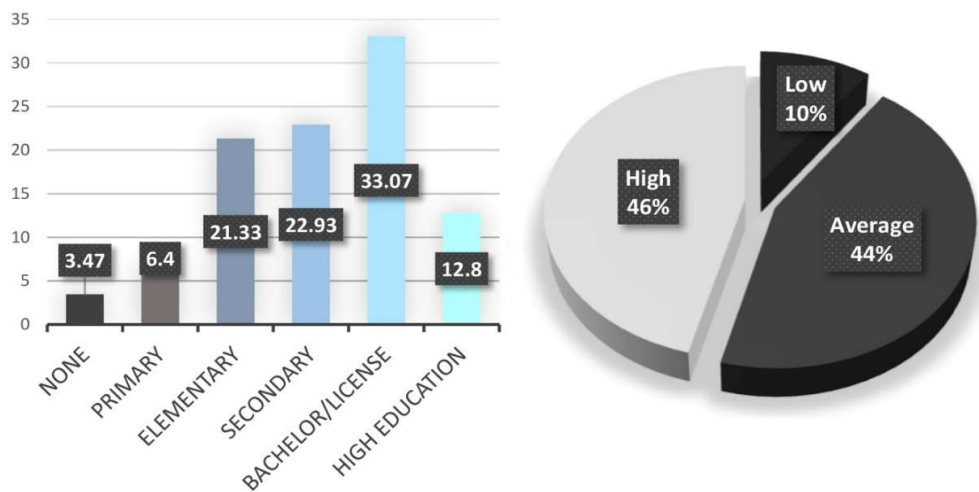
Figure 3-Educational Background of Respondents

d- Occupation

As shows Figure 4, 69% of the respondents belong to the different working groups whereas only 9% stated not being employed and 5% are retired. The figure also reflects a large diversity of professions. The vast majority of working groups belong to Major Group 2 (22.45%) consisting of professionals (such as medical doctors, engineers, architects, nurses, accountants, artists, lawyers, journalists, film makers, educators, researchers, college instructors, and school teachers) and to Major Group 3 (23.33%) consisting of specialized technicians and associate professionals (such as contractors, chefs, decorators, photographers, firemen, football players, public sector employees, etc.); 6.80% of the respondents belong to Major Group 1 consisting of managers and business owners (mainly of restaurants, hotels, companies among others) and 5.10% are fishermen. Craftsmen and construction workers constitute 14.29% of the respondents' working group whereas service and sale workers constitute 12.59%, among them a significant number of hairdressers and waiters. Major Group 8 involving technicians, mechanics, and drivers constitutes 6.46%, most of them are taxi drivers; 3.06% are affiliated in the Lebanese military sectors (Army, General Security, Internal Security, etc.); Major Group 9 consisting of elementary occupations (such as office boys, street vendors, delivery men, etc.) constitutes a minority (2,38%) and Major Group 4 comprising clerical support workers constitutes 3.74%.
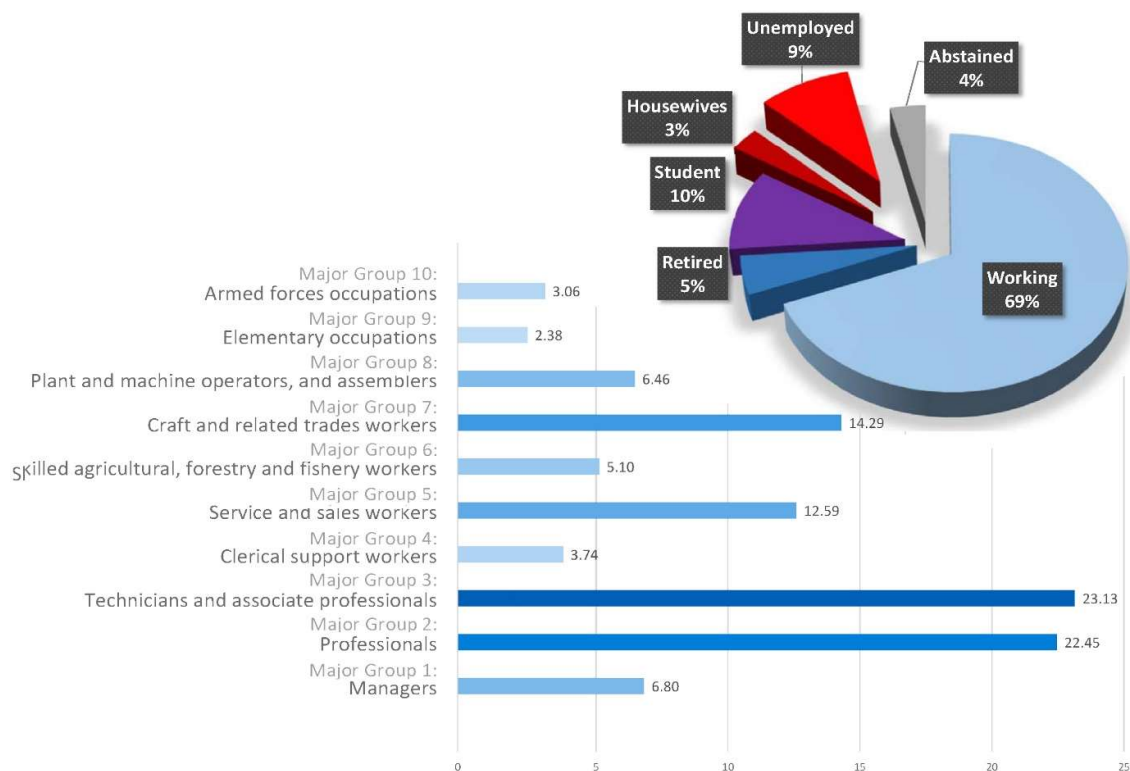
Figure 4-Occupation of Respondents

e- Nationalities

Figure 5 shows that 72% of the respondents are Lebanese whereas the remaining 28% consist of different nationalities respondents. The majority of foreign respondents (59%) are Syrian, not only due to the fact that Syrian migrant workers have always sought job opportunities in Lebanon, but also to the Syrian refugees' influx following the Syrian war of 2010. Iraqis' presence is, in turn, significant given the presence of several Iraqi restaurants in the area and given that Iraqis have always sought medical services at the hospitals of Beirut, namely the American University Hospital (AUH). Figure 5 also points to the diversity of nationalities (American, Egyptian, Saudi, Swedish, Dutch and others) and, eventually, to the seashore as a main national attraction to tourists.
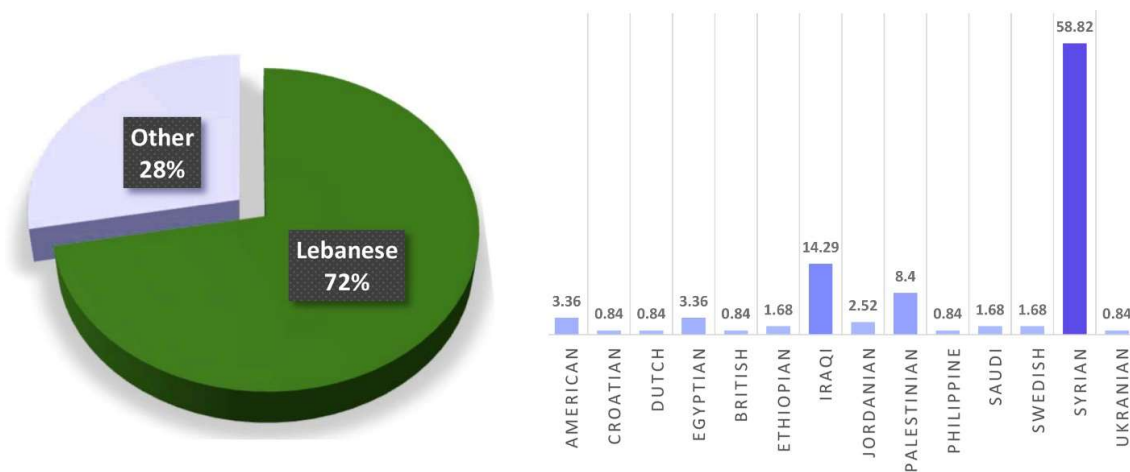
Figure 5-Nationalities of Respondents

f- Place of residences

As shows Figure 6, people come to the seashore from the different regions of Lebanon. Indeed, the largest fractions are from Beirut (39.9%) and Mount Lebanon (42.5%) which, together, form the rapidly growing Greater Beirut. 6.3% are tourists and thus, not living in Lebanon but rather staying in nearby hotels. The presence of people coming from all other governorates of Lebanon, except Akkar (given its geographical distance and the absence of any shared transportation), consolidates the seashore as a main recreational destination for Lebanese.

Figure 6-Respondents' Place of Residence

A closer look at the place of residence of respondents coming from administrative Beirut and Mount-Lebanon shows a significant diversity (Figure 7):
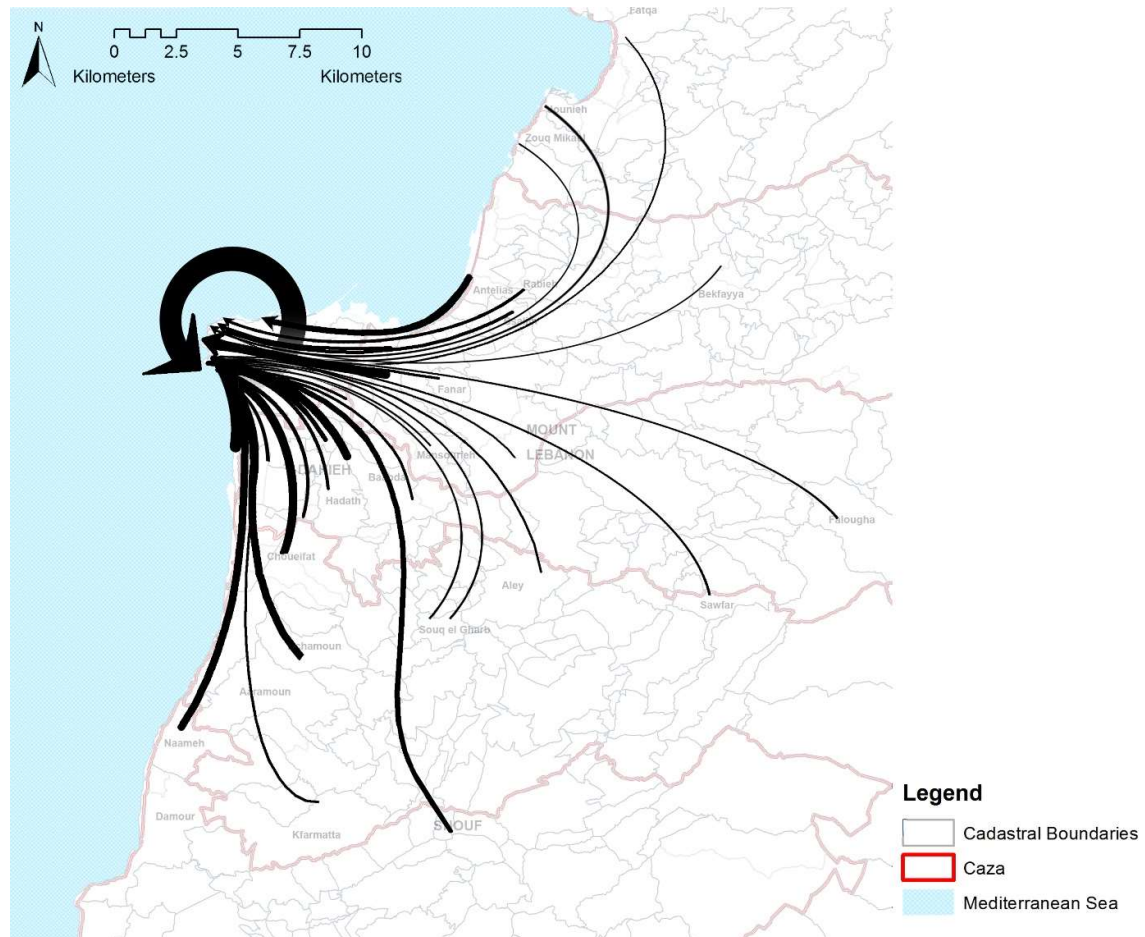
Figure 7-Place of Residence of Respondents coming from other Beirut areas and Mount-Lebanon

Respondents coming from Beiruti coastal neighborhoods - namely Marfaa (Port), Ain el Mreisseh, Manara, Raoucheh, and Ramlet el-Bayda – constitute 11% of the total respondents from Beirut as shows Table 3. The vast majority (24%) are from the peripheral Beiruti neighborhoods such as Tariq el-Jdideh and Mazraa which are known to be inhabited by low to middle income groups. 14% are also from other underprivileged neighborhoods such as Bashoura, Basta, Burj Abi Haidar, and Khandaq el-Ghamiq. Yet, as shows Table 3, the seashore considerably attracts people from affluent Beiruti districts such as Ras Beirut, Hamra, Koreitem, Verdun, and Tallet el-Khayyat (34%). This grouping is renowned to be socially mixed in terms of sectarian distribution whereas Ashrafieh (3.4%) is considered the most important Christian district of administrative Beirut.

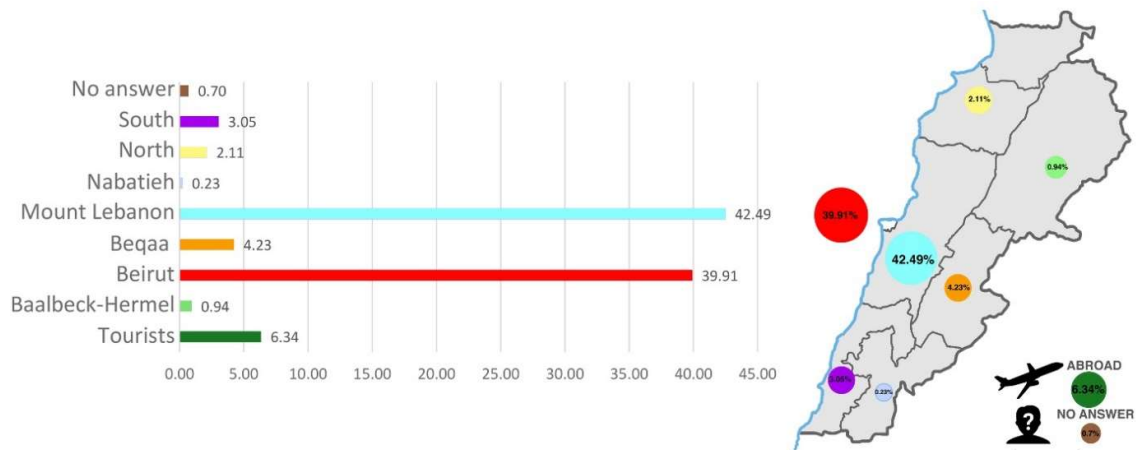| Areas of Administrative Beirut	%
Mazraa/Tariq el Jdideh	24
Ras Beirut/Hamra/Koreitem	18
Cola/Musaytbeh/Verdun/Tallet el Khayyat	16
Bashoura/Basta/Burj Abi Haidar/Khandaq	14
Beirut (did not want to specify)	14
Ain el Mreisseh	5.3
Ashrafiyeh	3.5
Raoucheh	3.5
Manara	1.2
Ramlet el Bayda	1.2
Marfaa	0.6
	100

Table 3- Place of Residence of Respondents from Beirut

Table 4 below shows that the majority of respondents (64,64%) coming from Mount Lebanon are from the southern suburbs of administrative Beirut (Ghoubeiry, Msharrafieh, Choueifat, Hay el Sellom, Burj el Barajneh, Ouzaii, Haret Hreik, Hadath, Baabda, Mrayjeh, Laylakeh, Chiah, Ain el-Remmeneh, and Furn el Chebbak). Not to mention, that these areas are divied on sectarian basis; for instance, Ghoubeiry, Msharrafieh, Choueifat, Hay el Sellom, Burj el Barajneh, Ouzaii, Haret Hreik, Mrayjeh, Laylakeh, and Chiah are mostly inhabited by Muslim Shiaa;[1] Baabda, Hadath, Ain el-Remmeneh, and Furn el Chebbak are mostly inhabited by Christians, whereas Choueifat's population is mainly Druze knowing that the majority of dwellers in the aforementioned areas, except Baabda, belong to the low and middle income

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[1] It is important to note that Ain el Remmeneh is within the administrative boundaries of official Chiah whereas the district of Chiah, the geographical and social entity referred to by the general public is mostly within the administrative boundaries of Ghoubeiry and partially within the administrative boundaries of Chiah. This implies that the toponymy adopted in this report consists of the names that the general public refers to rather than official and administrative ones. The same applies to other areas such as Choueifat and Hay el Sellom.

social groups. It is worth mentioning that many of the respondents are from nearby coastal areas that are outisde Beirut such as Ouzaii, Choueifat, Jiyyeh, Antelias, and Dawra.

The seashore attracts also people from the eastern suburbs of Beirut (11,6% of the respondents coming from areas in Mount Lebanon) such as Burj Hammoud, Dawra, Jdeideh, Sedd el Bouchrieh, Dekweneh, and Sin el Fil that are mostly inhabited by Christians. The areas listed in Table 4, as show Figure 6 and Figure 7, constitute a strong evidence of social mixity along the seashore given that visitors and users come from areas all across Lebanon, particularly Beirut and its urban extensions from the north to the south.

Areas of Mount Lebanon	%	Areas of Mount Lebanon	%
Ghoubeiry/Msharrafieh	17.13	Baabda	1.66
Dahieh (did not specify)	11.60	Burj Hammoud	1.66
Choueifat /Hay el Sellom	7.18	Dkweneh/Sin el Fil	1.66
Chiah/Ain el Remmaneh	5.52	Fanar	1.66
Burj el Barajneh	5.52	Bsalim	1.10
Ouzaii	4.97	Furn el Chebbak	1.10
Haret Hreik	3.87	Jounieh	1.10
Antelias/Jal el Dib	3.31	Mount Lebanon (did not specify)	1.10
Shouf	3.31	Rabieh	1.10
Jiyyeh/Naameh	3.31	Bekfayya	0.55
Hadath	3.31	Falougha	0.55
Bchamoun	2.76	Fatqa	0.55
Jdeideh Sedd el Bouchrieh	2.76	Kfarmata	0.55
Mrayjeh/Laylakeh	2.76	Mansourieh	0.55
Aramoun	2.21	Sawfar	0.55
Dawra	2.21	Souq el Gharb	0.55
Aley	1.66	Zouq Mikael	0.55
			100

Table 4-Place of Residence of Respondents from Mount Lebanon

g- Mode of Transportation

The majority of respondents (38,88%) go to the seashore by their private cars as shown in Figure 8. 12,34% of this category park their cars in privately owned parkings whereas the rest park along the sea sidewalk (corniche). A significant portion of respndents resorts to shared transportation means: 21.74% use taxi services especially people living in administrative Beirut where as 8.95% use buses and vans especially people coming from the southern suburbs, the Beqaa, Baalbeck Hermel, North, and South knowing that few use more than one transportation mode and eventually more than one shuttle. The fact that 18,67% of respondents walk to the seashore implies that a significant portion of the seashore users are residents of nearby areas. 11,76% of the respondents use the motorcycle and are people living either in administrative

Beirut or in the southern suburbs. Conversely, none of the respondents declared using the bicycle as a main transportation mode to the seashore, most probably because the mobility network in Beirut does not make room for this given the absence of any related facilities; yet, this does not indicate that no one comes to the seashore by bicycle but rather that these people are a minority. Not to forget that, when carrying the survey, NAHNOO's volunteers may have found it unethical to stop a cyclist and ask him to participate to the survey. In addition, it is important to note that many cyclists are seen along the corniche; yet, many of them are people who rent bicycles on site.

Figure 8-Mode of Transportation Used by Respondents

h- Company

As shows Figure 9, the majority of respondents declared visiting the seashore alone and are mostly daily users; 30% come with friends or partners and are not regular users, whereas only 21% come with their family and are people seeking an occasional day out.
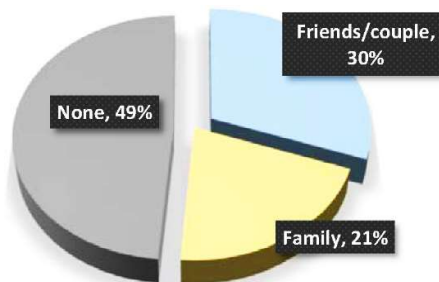
Figure 9-Company

B. Beirut Seashore, a space that cannot be subsumed into abstract generalizations

As we have seen in the detailed profiling of the survey respondents, Beirut seashore functions as an excellent gathering spot where social statuses and backgrounds can be ignored and strangers mix with each other in a way that prompts the importance of and need for public spaces. Contrary to all socio-cultural stigmas attached to the seashore, so often labeling it as a place for low-income social groups, and more recently for Syrian workers and refugees, the survey findings demonstrate, on the one hand, that Beirut seashore attracts people from

different social strata, different religions and sects, different nationalities, and different areas of Lebanon; and on the other hand, that the seashore has a great potential to attract more families, more females, and more people of different age groups especially elderlies, youths, and children if better management is ensured in terms of safety, security, equipment, facilities, and activities given that these constitute the main concerns and aspirations of these groups.

2- General Overview

A. Purpose and frequency of visits: Why and how often do people come to the seashore?

Figure 10 shows that when respondents were asked "why do they come to the seashore," the majority of their answers were intrinsic: 34% consider that people come to the seashore because it is "free of charge", 32% consider that the main purpose is to "enjoy the sea view", and 27% come to "walk and jog along the sea sidewalk". Around 18% seek a space to practice other physical activities on the seashore such as roller skating, ride on a scooter, cycling, and others. Yet, knowing that a seashore is a place to swim, fish, and play, results in this regard are substandard as only 13% deem the seashore as a place to swim, only 6% as a place to fish, and only 4% bring their children to the seashore to play. This raises questions on the seashore functionality and its inability to take advantage of its natural assets. Furthermore, apparently, the clientele of the restaurants spread along the seashore do not constitute a significant portion of the seashore public space users given that only 1% of respondents come to the seashore because of restaurants presence; this, in turn, calls into question the current ability of Beirut seashore to function as an economic driver to which everyone can contribute regardless of his/her socio-economic status; in other words, choices in this regard seem to be limited and this be will be further discussed in the following sections.[2]

Nonetheless, as shows Figure 10, answers were diverse as in addition to the aforementioned purposes and reasons, people come to meet each other, socialize, and take photos.

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[2] Respondents were allowed to provide more than one answers.
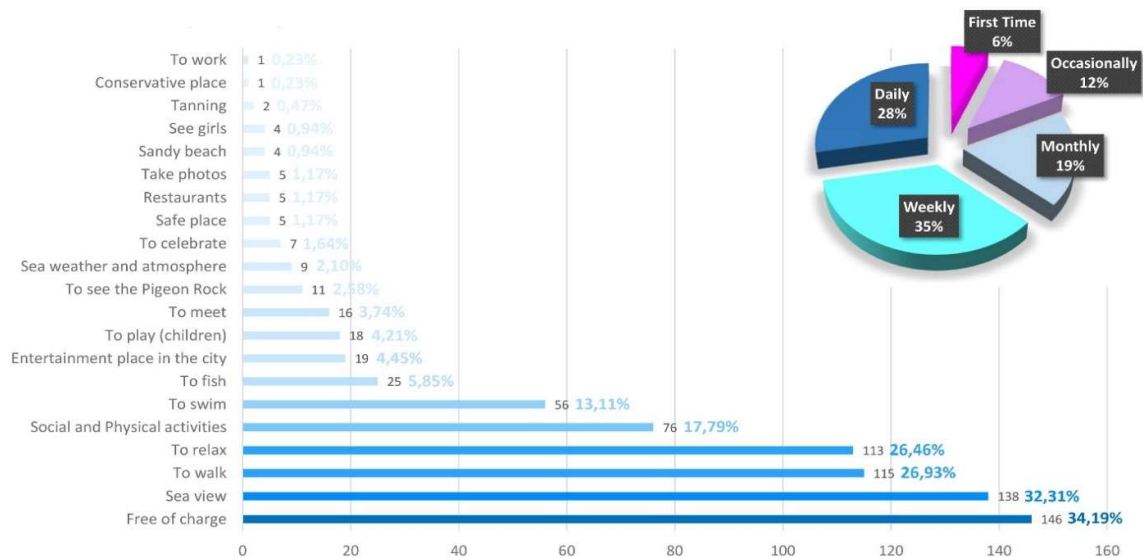
Figure 10-Purpose and Frequency of visits

The majority of people who visit the seashore are regular users as 28% are daily users and 35% are weekly users. Daily users consist mainly of people who come to meditate and walk (and/or jog) in addition to people who are simply attached to this place and come to sip a coffee while staring out to the sea as part of their daily routine; other few daily users are AUB students and fishermen. The majority of weekly users are people who come for leisure and relaxation, and a few come to exercise. 19% of the respondents visit the seashore on monthly basis and 12% occasionally; the majority of these two categories consist of people seeking a family day out as they perceive the seashore of Beirut as a main destination for domestic tourism, and few others to make a photo session. Few monthly and occasional visitors come to swim. 6% of respondents are people who went to the seashore for the first time and consist of tourists and Lebanese people coming from remote areas to discover Beirut, particularly to see the Pigeon Rock and watch the sea.
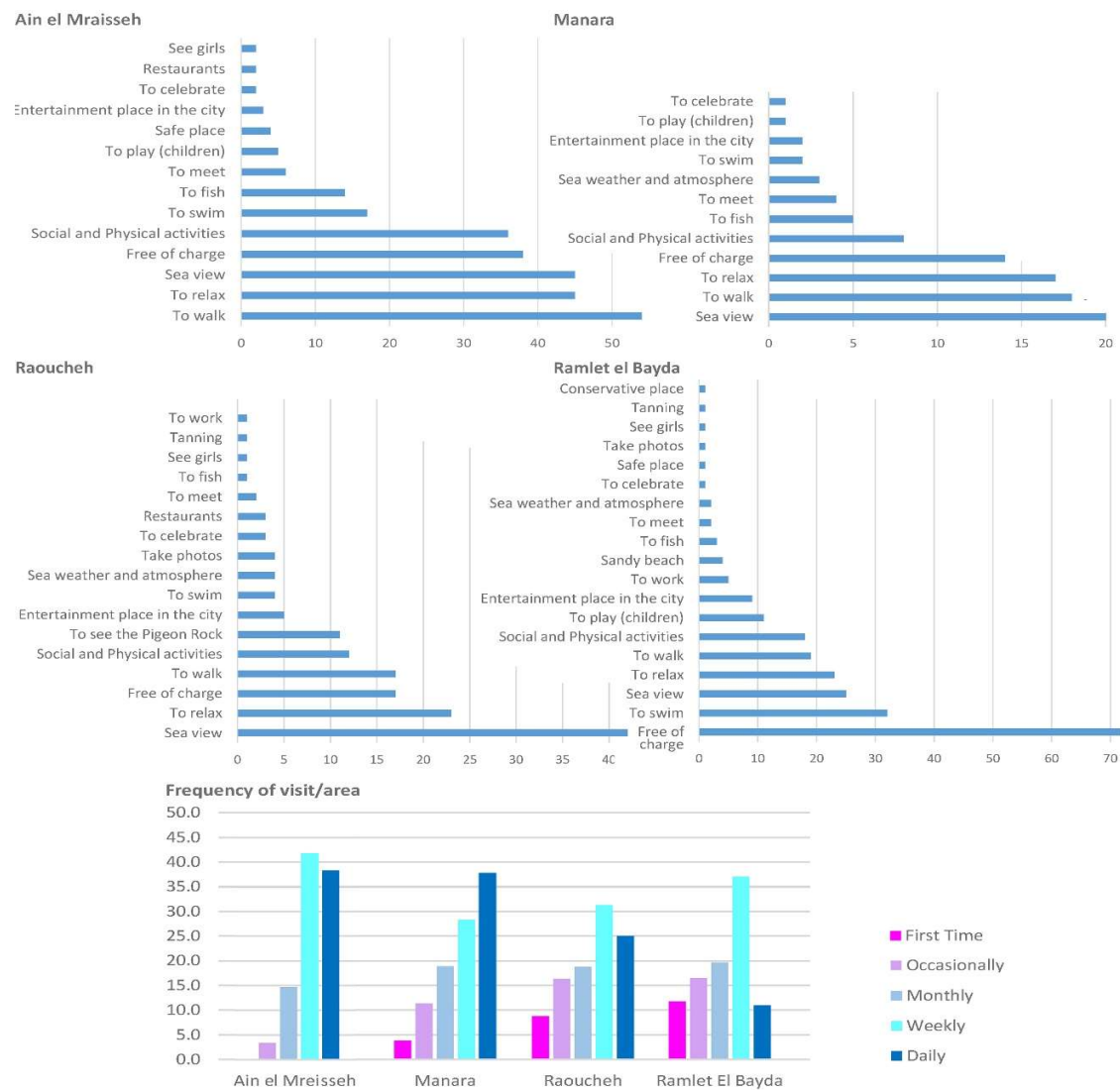
Figure 11-Purpose and Frequency of Visits to the Different Zones of the Seashore

Figure 11 above highlights the differences and specificities of the different seashore areas, why and how often do people visit each. Most of the respondents' answers regarding the purpose of visits to each area are almost similar as for instance "enjoy the sea view", "walk", and "relax" are common answers. However, given that Ramlet el-Bayda is the only remaining public beach in Beirut, the majority of respondents consider that people visit it because it is free of charge. Answers also show that Ramlet-el Bayda is the first destination for swimming, Ain el Mreisseh ranks second given that it incorporates a large open rocky beach, Raoucheh third as historically people used to go to the Dalieh not only to swim and enjoy the rich biodiversity but also to celebrate, and Manara ranks fourth most probably because it consists of privatized lands of public space turned into restaurants, gated beaches, and even private fishing ports. This is also reflected by the limited range of provided answers related to the

purpose of visit to it, unlike the case of the other seashore zones especially Ramlet el Bayda which exhibits relatively a large diversity of answers.

Results also show that Ain el Mreisseh visitors are mostly regular ones (weekly and daily users) whereas visitors of Ramlet el Bayda are mostly weekly ones which is normal for a public beach. People who come to the seashore for the first time are mostly concentrated in Raoucheh given the presence of a national Landmark (the Pigeon Rock) and in Ramlet el Bayda given that the survey was conducted during summer season when people seek free and affordable beaches.

B. The seashore in one word

When asked to describe the seashore in one word or using a single expression, shockingly the majority of respondents answered by "dirty" (92%) and "polluted" (57%). As shows Figure 12, answers are diverse and reflect positive and negative aspects of the seashore by tackling its different dimensions (social, economic, physical, legal, management, and environment). Many respondents' answers consist of contrasting descriptive words; for instance, "dirty" was not only frequently associated to "dirty" but also to "beautiful": "polluted and dirty", but "beautiful/nice". 15% of respondents deem the seashore as an inclusive public space; 43% of respondents expressed nostalgic and heartbreak feelings using the Arabic expression "diaano, ضيعانه" which means "what a waste" and "haram, حرام" which means "what a pity". 23% used extremely negative expressions such as "very bad", "miserable", "disgusting", and "catastrophic"; 19% highlighted issues of violations and corruptive manners; others shed light on different issues such as safety and cost, and few labeled it as "a Syrian place".
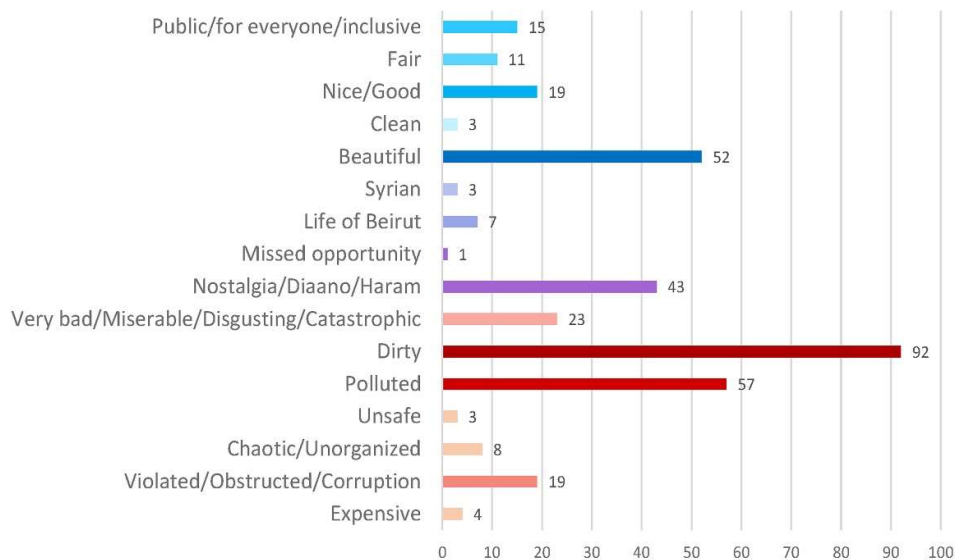

Figure 12-Beirut Seashore in One Word

C. How the different zones of Beirut seashore are perceived and branded?

In order to point out the characteristics of each seashore zone and better understand how people perceive the different zones, respondents were asked to answer the following cognitive question: "What is the first thing (landmark and impression) that comes to your mind when you think of each of the seashore zones?".

- Ain el Mreisseh

The majority of respondents consider that Ain el Mreisseh is "beautiful", many others highlighted that it is "a free breathing public space", and "a mixed area of Beirut". Also a significant portion expressed nostalgia stating that Ain el Mreisseh represents "the authentic Beirut" and only few mentioned issues of "pollution" and "dirtiness". Yet, several respondents associated it to existing landmarks such as "aamoud el jemaa, عمود الجامعة" (in reference to the vertical telecommunication steel structure placed in front of the enclosed AUB beach) and Ain el Mreisseh Mosque, and to other popular places such as Uncle Deek (a small old shop on the opposite side of the seashore selling cold and hot drinks) and Jamal Abdul Nasser's statue placed on the main roads intersection. Others linked it to natural elements such as "rocks", "sea", and "sky"; and many others to physical activities.

- Manara (meaning lighthouse):

The majority of respondents noted that they "love the Manara corniche, it is beautiful", yet another significant portion considered that there is "nothing so specific about it", and many others automatically connected it to the existing lighthouse, ships, and marine activities. Others associated it to existing private (and privatized) places such as Sporting Club, Long Beach, and Nejmeh Club, the fishing port, and the small fish market of Abou Mounir. A good number considered it as a "popular public space".

- Ramlet el Bayda:

As per the survey results, Ramlet-el Bayda is not only considered "the mother of poor" and "a place for all" and not only linked to its public sandy beach, but also to violations and encroachments on the public domain as many mentioned the "Eden Bay Resort" and/or the name of its developer "Wissam Ashour". In addition, many brought up issues of "pollution", "dirtiness", "lack of organization", and few pointed out the "lack of facilities and equipment". A significant portion expressed negative feeling towards it and declared that they do not go to it.

- Raoucheh:

The majority of respondents automatically associated Raoucheh to its notorious national landmark, the Pigeon Rock. Many others linked it to the existing recreational businesses such as Bay Rock and Petit Café. A few evoked the issue of Dalieh, the area in Raoucheh that is under threat of being turned into a private development project in a way that deprives the public from a historical and symbolic socio-cultural spot.

- Zaytouna Bay:

Although the survey did not cover this zone due to time and human resources limitations, respondents were asked about their space perception of Zaytouna Bay given its particularities and given that unlike the other seashore areas, is entirely managed by the private sector, namely by Beirut Waterfront Development Company. It is accessible to the general public, yet it includes many and various restaurants, cafés, retail shops, and activity centers that are deemed "expensive" and "unaffordable" to the vast majority of Lebanese. This is reflected through the different survey answers to this question as the vast majority noted that Zaytouna Bay is "exclusive", "private", "bourgeois", "luxurious", and "not for us". Many others stated that they have "no idea" about it as they "have never been there". Many others associate it to "real estate developments", "capitalism", "violations", "mafias", and "monopoly". Yet, a significant portion considered that it is "beautiful" and "organized". Others expressed nostalgic feelings and recalled the original "Zaytouneh, زيتونة" which was a very popular spot to Beirut night life before the Lebanese civil war (from the beginning of the 20th century to 1975). Few respondents mentioned that it is a place for "private boats" whereas others considered it a "dating spot" allowing "men to give good first impression".

D. Identified Problems of Beirut Seashore

As Figure 13 shows, 55,27% of respondents consider that pollution is the main issue of Beirut Seashore and 44,03% mentioned problems with rubbish; 13,58% highlighted the lack of organization, control, maintenance, and management; only few accused the central government and Beirut Municipality for being responsible for the resulting chaos, and 8,19% shed light on issues of violation and privatization acts along the seashore. Conversely, 7,49% pointed to "ill-mannered behaviors of visitors" consisting of throwing trash, verbal sexual harassments, drunkenness (excessive alcohol consumption), and untidiness. Fishermen were keen on stressing issues related to the sea itself and fishing activities stating that "the main problem is the loss of fishing resources and the death of fishes". In addition, several other issues

were identified such as the absence of security and safety measures, lack of public beaches, crowdedness, and inaccessibility to some of seashore areas.
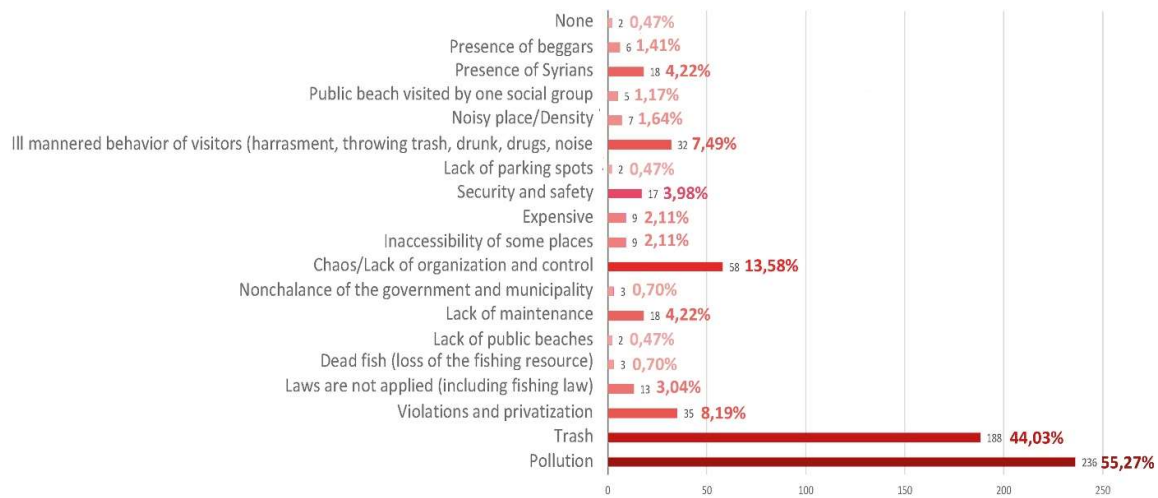
Figure 13-Seashore Problems Identified by Respondents

E. Suggested Solutions

Figure 14 shows a significant discrepancy between the identified problems and the proposed improvements except for the pollution and cleanliness as the majority of respondents considered that addressing them is a must. While only few mentioned the nonchalance of the municipality and central government towards the seashore, many considered that these two actors should take action and carry their respective responsibilities, and a significant portion noted that better management and more organization are to be ensured. Furthermore, the ratio of respondents that mentioned the violations as a main issue is greater than the ratio of those who suggested the removal of all violations along the seashore; yet, a significant portion suggested law enforcement to improve the seashore conditions. Many pointed to the importance of related awareness campaigns.

Figure 14-Suggested Solutions by Respondents

3- Historical and Socio-Cultural Overview

A. Activities along the seashore

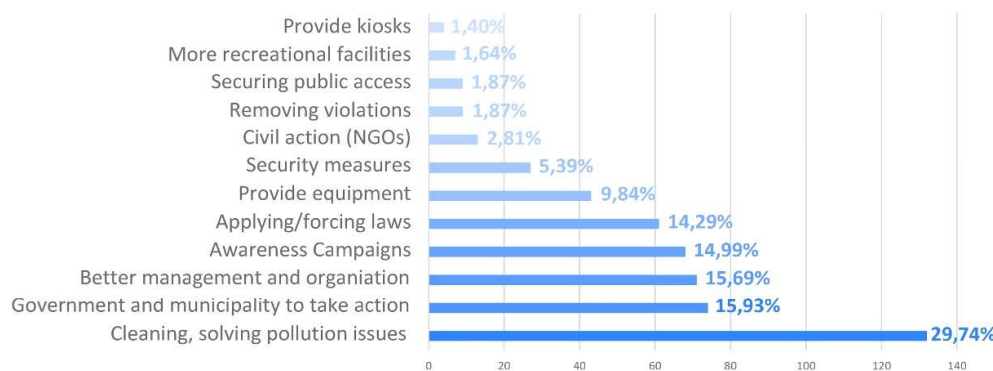Figure 15 shows that respondents who were notified about and/or watched events happening along the seashore constitute less than the half of the respondents' total number with a ratio of 48% consisting mainly of regular users, whereas the remaining 52% noted that they are not aware of any. As Figure 16 shows, the list of identified activities and events is rich and diverse; however, the majority of events and organized activities occur only occasionally as respondents were keen on stating "it happened once", "few times", "it stopped", "I once saw", etc. This points to another surprising finding in relation to users' involvement in these events as none of them noted having participated to any, but rather the majority provided passive answers. Yet, cleaning campaigns seem to be organized on regular basis as the majority of respondents mentioned them.
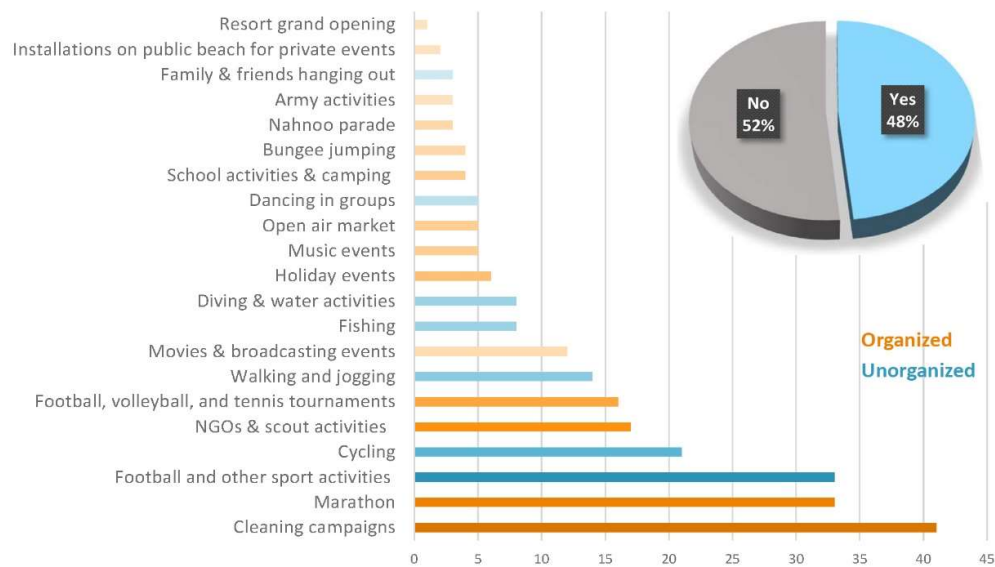
Figure 15-Identified Seashore Activities and Events

Beirut Marathon is another event noted by a significant number of respondents. Other respondents identified different events such as sports tournament, music events, open air markets, army activities, NGOs events, NAHNOO parade, and a resort grand opening.

In addition, a significant portion listed daily practices as main seashore activities such as sports activities, cycling, walking and jogging, fishing, diving and other water activities.

B. Historical use: Old rituals and practices

To answer the question related to historical practices and old rituals along the seashore, 73% of the respondents noted that they are not aware of any. Yet, the remaining 27% – mainly

consisting of old people, residents of the neighboring areas, and Beirutis – listed a wide range of activities and practices that either do not exist anymore or that occur occasionally in an attempt to revive them. Many of the old practices vanished following the seashore transformation in terms of management and organization. In addition, the densification and growth, often accompanied with demographic and population changes and a gradual loss of the collective identity, are other factors that altered these practices.
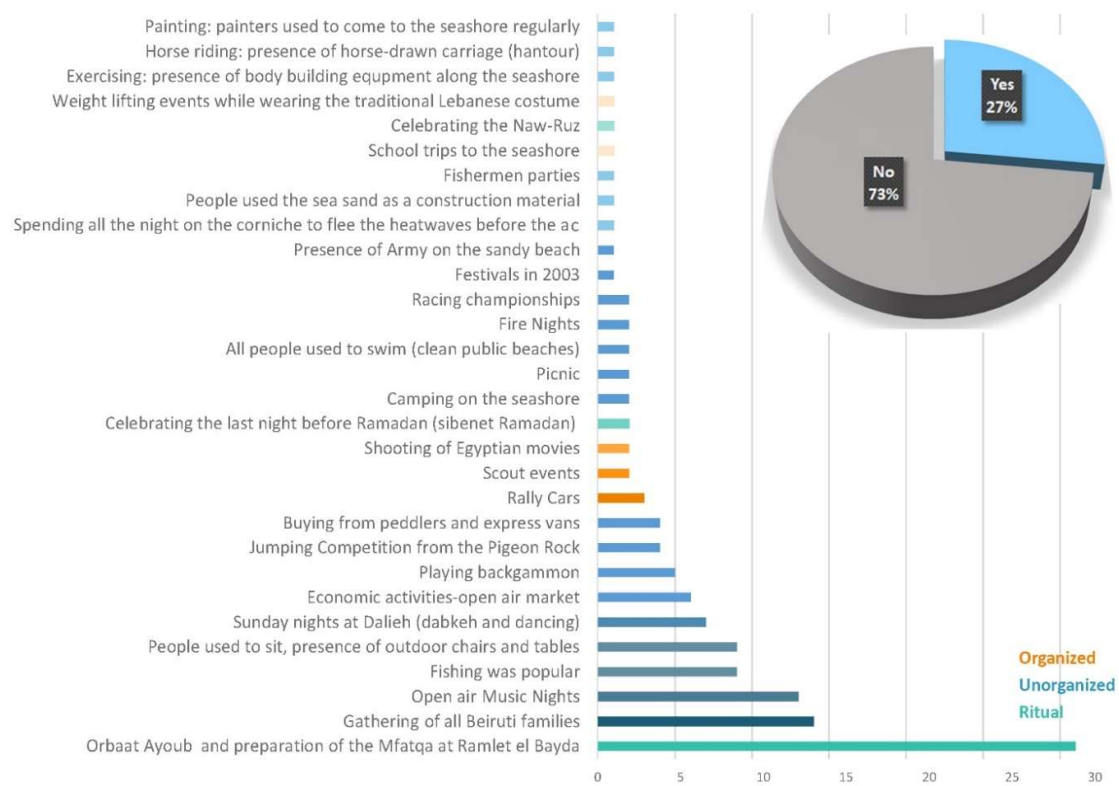
Figure 16-Old rituals and Practices

As Figure 16 shows, most of the old activities are unorganized and consist of regular spontaneous practices (such as open air music nights, family gatherings, Sunday nights at Dalieh, dabkeh, and others) and rituals (such as the celebration of Ayoub's Wednesday on the last Wednesday of April to honor prophet Ayoub, the celebration of the last night before Ramadan (sibenet Ramadan), the Naw-Ruz and others). Many respondents recalled the presence of an open air market at Raoucheh in addition to express vans and peddlers.[3] Comparing Figure 16 to Figure 15, one can easily notice not only the change of practices over time but also the loss of the collective ownership to the seashore, the loss of diversity and choices, and the loss of the authentic seashore experience.

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[3] Express vans were prohibited in the mid-1990s whereas the prohibition of peddlers occurred more recently.

C. The Seashore transformation over time

To complement the previous question, respondents were asked whether the seashore changed over time or not. The results show that the majority of respondents' answers were positive (79%) especially people aged 65 and over, who all confirmed this phenomenon. Almost the majority noted that, today, pollution and solid waste are taking over the seashore and the number of resorts and restaurants is rapidly increasing. Old people mainly highlighted physical changes stating that olive trees and other types of vegetation used to cover many areas; chairs and tables were available as well as kiosks; they also recalled how visual axes from the inner city towards the sea were numerous and wider whereas today high-rise buildings on the opposite site of the seashore are blocking the view. Several respondents argued that the seashore was significantly affected by the demographic change stating that Beirutis do not live anymore in the coastal neighborhoods which, in turn, became exclusive to well-off people and that many private developments are contributing to the gentrification of the coastal zone and the loss of the old urban fabric and public spaces. Many respondents noted that, "before, all seashore users were Lebanese unlike today as one might encounter Syrians more than Lebanese".

Only one of the respondent highlighted a natural change stating that "in 1934, the rocks of Raoucheh were farther away from each other".
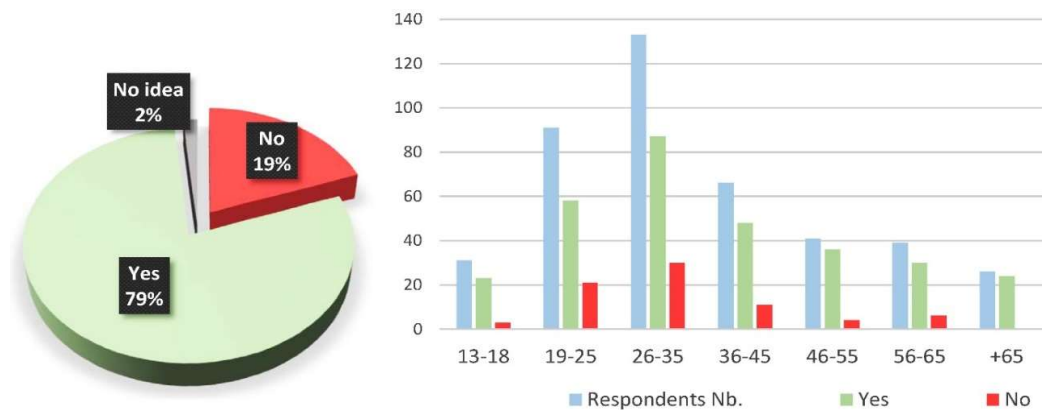
Figure 17-Did the Seashore Change Over Time?

4- Economic Activities

A. Public or Private Beach?

Figure 18 shows that 51% of respondents go to public beaches for swimming and 38% go to private ones in and outside Beirut. Among the 51%, only 9% go to public beaches outside Beirut and 42% inside Beirut. Yet, Figure 19 shows that 46% of the respondents have been to public beaches in Beirut. It also shows that the majority of females have not been to public

beaches in Beirut; it is important to note that the majority of females who go to Beirut public beaches declared that they go for leisure only and do not swim and, as shown in Figure 18, few women noted that they go to women's private beaches outside Beirut. The two figures show that Beirut public beaches have the potential to attract more users if improved to meet people's needs especially those who have been to the public beach only once or twice and those who go to public beaches outside Beirut.

Figure 18-Beach Preferences for Swimming

Figure 19-Ever Been Into a Public Beach in Beirut

Figure 20 shows that the majority of respondents who confirmed having been to public beaches in Beirut mentioned Ramlet el Bayda as their prime beach destination followed by Raoucheh and Manara. It also shows that the presence of males in public beaches is dominant.

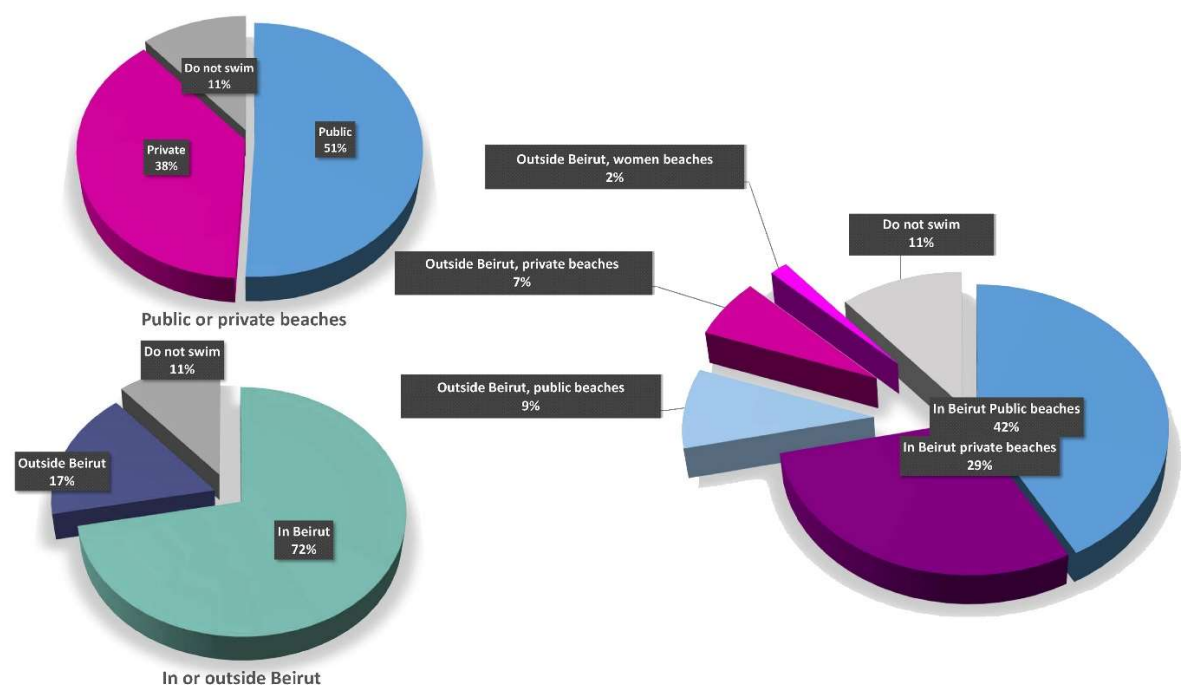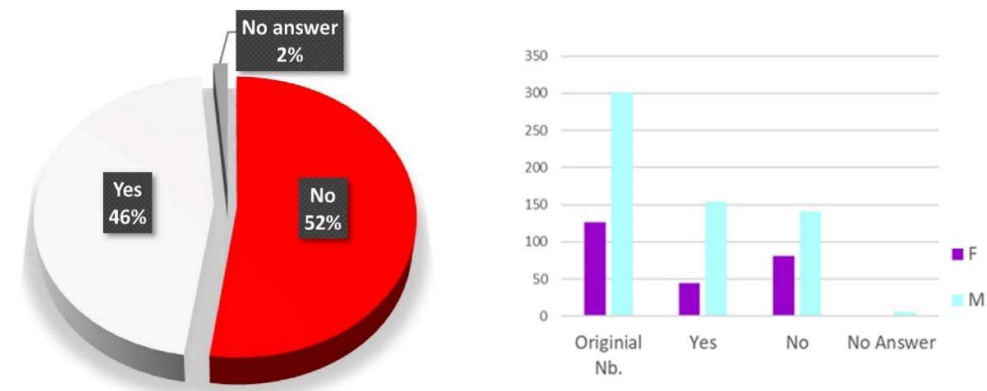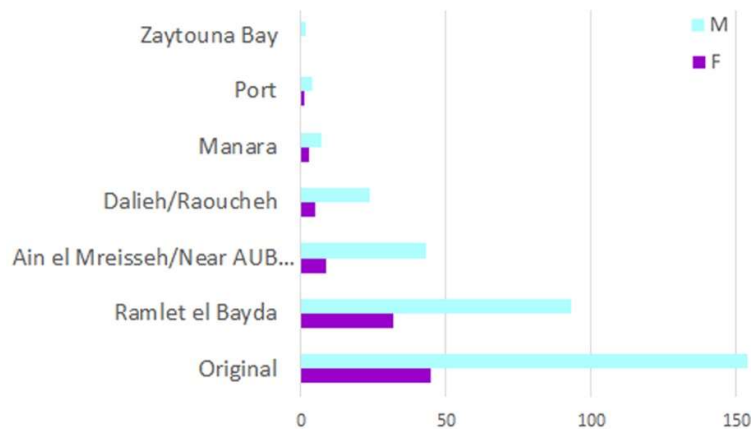*Figure 20-Public Beaches Preference in Beirut*

B. Cost

Ramlet el Bayda is considered the only large public beach in Beirut and the only sandy one. Thus, no entry fees are required to access it; yet, one has to pay in order to use available facilities, mainly beach furniture. A sun bed or a chaise longue is charged for 10,000L.L. whereas renting a table with four chairs costs 20,000L.L. A kiosk and a cafeteria are available on site, run by Operation Big Blue Association (OBBA) which is originally responsible for protecting and monitoring the coastal and marine environment.

Thus, respondents noted that the cost of spending a day with one's family in a public beach may reach an amount of 75,000L.L. considering that the family may need to rent one or two tables and buy food. Respondents who go to the rocky beach of Ain el Mreisseh stated that they do not pay for anything as they may bring their portable chairs.

Entrance fees to private beaches ranges between 20,000/person (Military Beach) to 55,000L.L./person (Madame Bleu/French Riviera). This explains why small families and single people prefer going to private beaches (such as the Military Beach, Long Beach, and Sporting Club) given that the entrance fee/person to some costs as much as renting a table in Ramlet el Bayda.[4]

C. Restaurants and coffee shops

64% of respondents declared that they go to coffee shops and restaurants spread along the seashore on both sides of the adjacent main roads. However, as shows Figure 21, the results of respondents' answers are peculiar as more than the half (55%) stated that, in general, they do

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[4] Especially if access is ensured to the military beach which entrance fee is the cheapest is ensured given that only people in the military sector are allowed in addition to medical doctors and engineers.

not go to the seaside restaurants and coffee shops and 53% stated that they do not go to the ones on the opposite side. Among these 2 groups, 63% noted that they go to both sides restaurants and coffee shops, 31% noted that they only go to the opposite side ones whereas only 6% stated that they only go to the seaside ones.
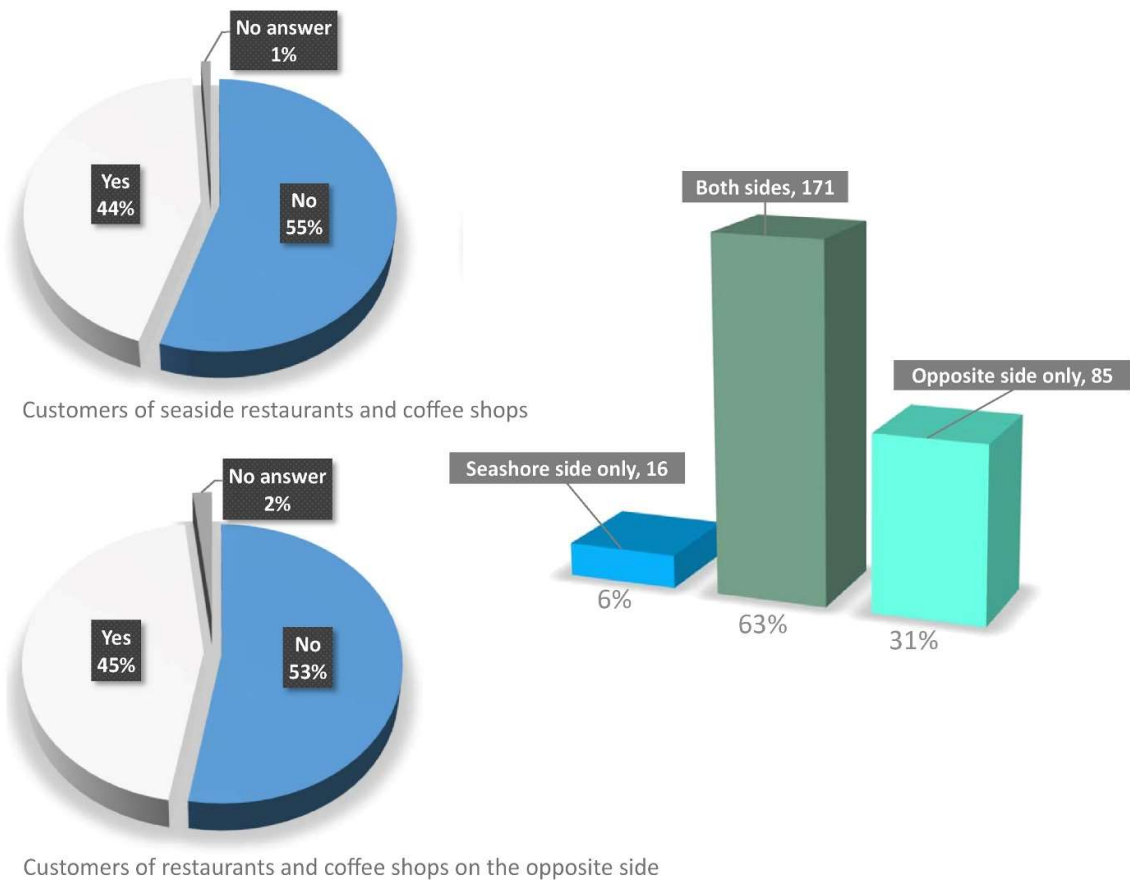
Figure 21-Restaurants and Coffee Shops Customers on the Seaside and Opposite Side of the Sea

This shows that, in general, people seek mostly the sea view when going to restaurants and coffee shops; this puts into question the alignment of these along the shoreline in a way that denies public access to the sea and blocks the view. Not to mention that many of them are illegal and are encroaching the public domain.

However, as Figure 22 shows, the majority of respondents (66%) asserted that they support the presence of recreational businesses (resorts, restaurants, and coffee shops) on the seaside given that they "contribute to the economic development and create job opportunities", "give life to the place", and "prevent chaos and disorder". 14% stated that they are against their presence as they are "expensive", "illegal", "violating the seashore", and "blocking public access". Only

4% noted that their presence should be conditional stating that "they should respect the building law and other laws related to the public domain" and "prices should be controlled".
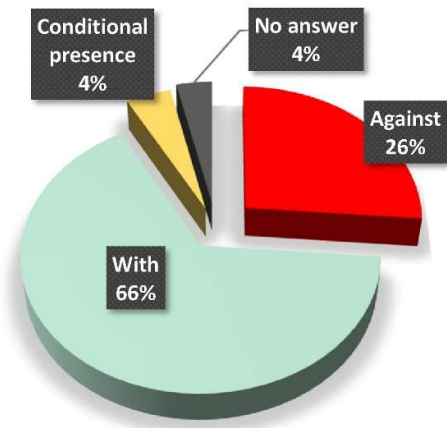
Figure 22-With or Against the presence of Seaside Resorts, Restaurants, and Coffee Shops

D. Street vendors

The presence of street vendors and peddlers along the sea sidewalk was prominent years ago. Today, there are only few given that Beirut Municipality often chases them away. The survey results show that, when asked whether they buy from street vendors or not, 64% of the respondents answered negatively whereas 34% answered positively (Figure 23). The main reason of not buying from them is that "the food may not be clean" and others claimed that "they do not buy from non-Lebanese vendors".
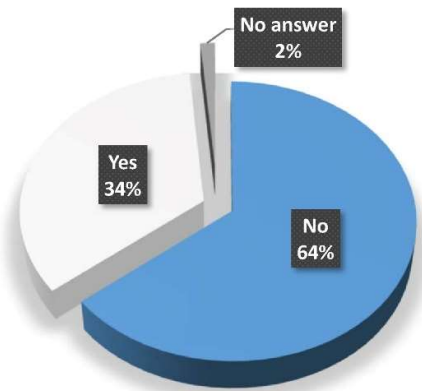
Figure 23-Buying from Street Vendors

5- Right to the Sea

This section aims at figuring out the degree of awareness and knowledge related to public domain and access to the sea.

A. Illegalities

Respondents were asked whether they know if there are illegalities (violations of the building law and infractions on the maritime public domain) along the seashore. The majority (61%) stated that they do know about them, 34% do not, and 5% abstained from answering the question as shown in Figure 24.

Respondents were asked to mention the illegalities they are aware of; as shows Figure 25, the majority noted that all of the resorts, restaurants, and coffee shops are illegal; a significant number of people named Eden Bay Resort, others named almost equally Bay Rock Café, Movenpick Hotel, and all Zaytouna Bay restaurants.
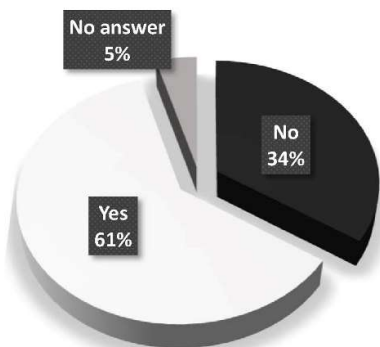
Figure 24-Awareness of Illegalities along the Seashore
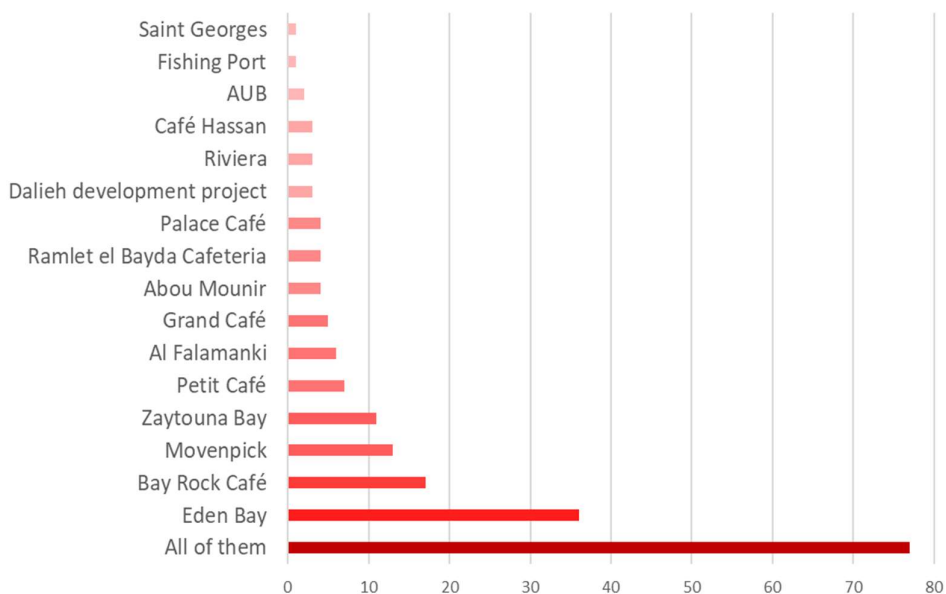
Figure 25-Identified Illegalities

B. Law awareness

As show Figure 26 and Figure 27, the majority of respondents noted that they are aware of their right to access the Maritime Public Domain (MPD) and that private investments do not have the right to prevent public access to it (Decree 4810 issued in 10/6/1966) knowing that all sandy, rocky, and gravel areas of the seashore are MPD as stipulates Order 144/s of 1925. Results show that 87% of respondents are aware of the definition of the MPD whereas 66% are aware of their right to access the seashore.
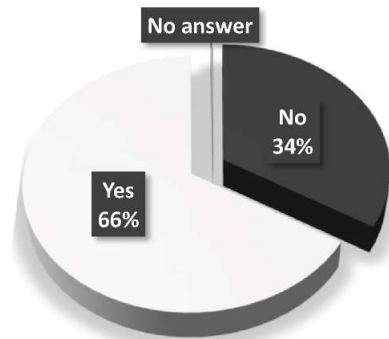
Figure 26-Awareness of the Right to Access the MPD (Decree 4810 of 1966)
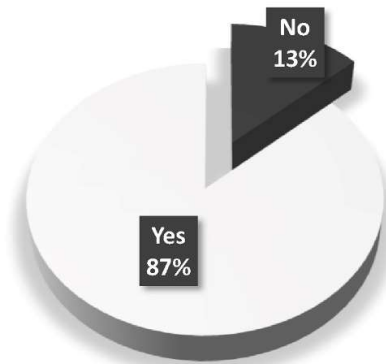
Figure 27-Awareness of the MPD Definition (Order 144/s of 1925)

Conversely, Figure 28 shows that only 44% of the respondents are willing to mobilize and participate to events aiming at defending and claiming the public rights to the sea.
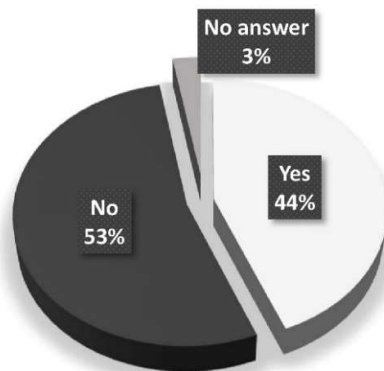
Figure 28-Will to Defend the Public Right to the Sea

Aspirations

To end up the questionnaire survey, respondents were asked about their aspirations:

"How do you imagine the ideal seashore that you wish to have in Beirut?" and if any other seashore comes to mind when reflecting on this question:

As shows Figure 29, the vast majority of the respondents declared that an ideal seashore is "a clean seashore with clean water". A significant number of people considered that an ideal seashore is "a well-designed and organized seashore with seating areas, children areas, sports areas, pedestrians paths" and "with good services such as kiosks, water parks, public wc, showers, changing rooms, and lockers; equipment such as lighting, and furniture such as sun shades, sun beds, and trash bins". Others considered that the ideal seashore should be inclusive and ensure free access. Others pointed that the removal of all violations would pave the ground for the establishment of the ideal seashore.

Among the respondents that named coastal cities and seashores, the majority cited Turkish cities such as Marmaris, Antalia, and Bodrum and a significant number named Tyr in Lebanon given the recent improvement and upgrading of the city's public beach. In addition, many respondents named Syrian cities such as Lattakia and Tartous. Other Arab cities were mentioned such as Alexandria and Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt, and Dubai Marina. Figure 29 shows that many other worldwide cities were mentioned such as Ayia Napa in Cyprus, Male in Maldives, Nice and Cannes in France among others.

Results also show that many respondents were keen on naming Lebanese coastal cities such as Naqoura, Byblos, Batroun, Anfeh, Chekka, Mina, Tabarja, and Jiyyeh.
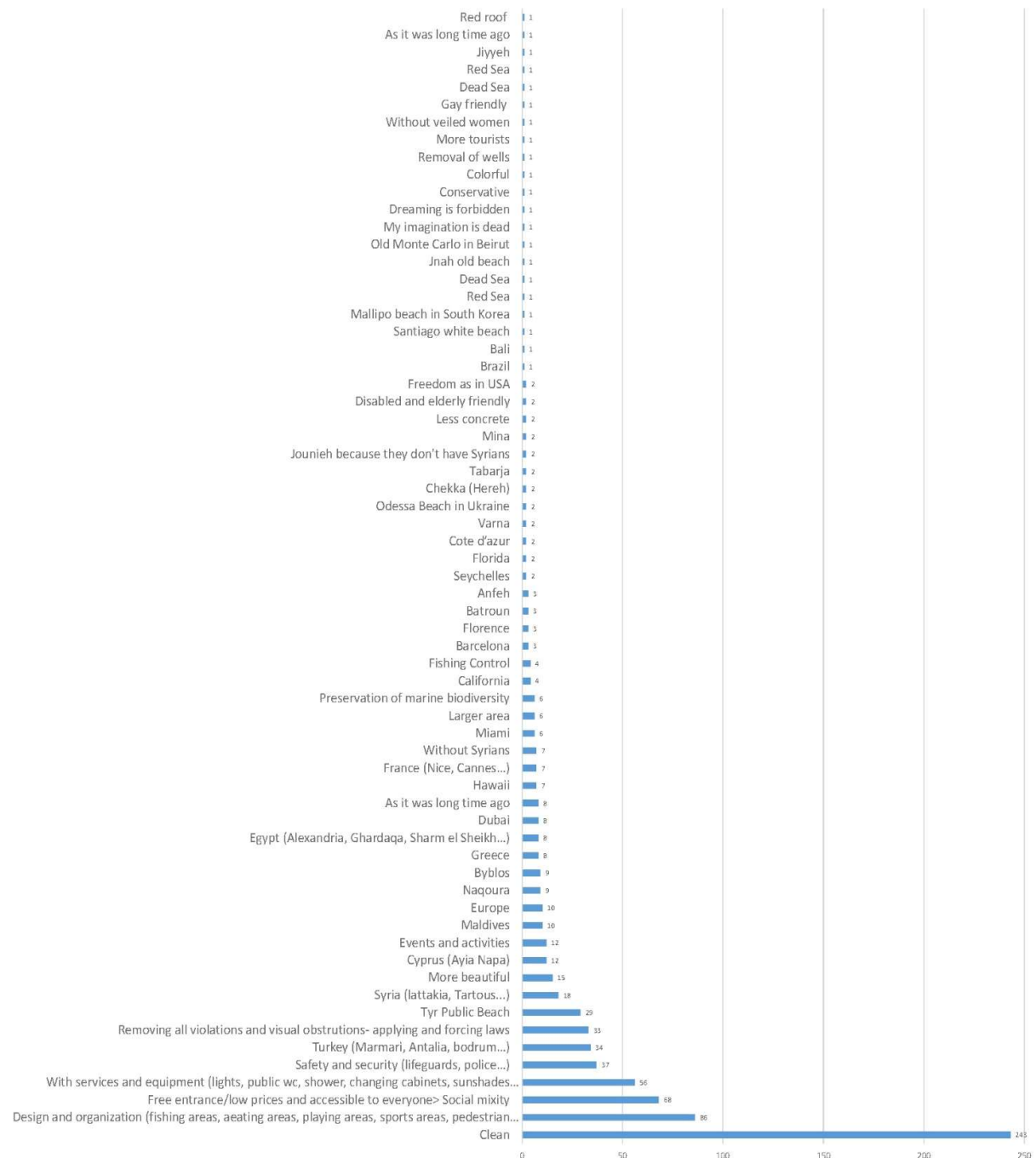
Figure 29-The Ideal Seashore from Users' Perspective

IV- Conclusion

To many, the character of a city is revealed through its public spaces; great cities have vital piazzas and parks, great coastal cities have well designed waterfronts and well managed seashores. Hence, landmarks and public spaces frame the image of the city. In a city like Beirut, often stigmatized on the basis of sectarian segregation and social classes stratification, reflecting on public spaces brings up issues of inclusivity; but what makes a public space inclusive, and more particularly how to enhance Beirut seashore inclusivity, and how to restore the image of Beirut, represents a main question that this report attempted at answering.

Knowing that inclusive public spaces are conventionally referred to areas that are open and accessible to everyone regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, nationality, race, or ethnicity, Beirut seashore is deemed inclusive. Yet, the survey findings highlighted that the notion of inclusivity is subjective and contingent to one's perception and need; even if the city's decision-makers (Beirut Municipality and its commissioned experts) ensure a safe, open, and accessible seashore, some users might not have a place for them and eventually, might consider the seashore exclusive. Thus, the provision of inclusive public spaces requires reciprocity and two-way planning to ensure that planners and decision-makers respond to the different needs of the different users. Furthermore, as we have seen, many respondents highlighted issues of safety, which in turn, puts the inclusivity of the seashore into question, and so does the presence of the private investments preventing public access to it.

The survey findings show that people in general may not be concerned about the presence of illegalities but rather are claiming their rights to a free, clean, well designed, well managed, and well equipped seashore. They mostly care about the image of their seashore, the way they use its space, how to safely spend a free memorable journey, and, to some, the revival of social ties, connection to the seashore, and the practices that vanished.

To wrap up, on the first hand, a regulatory master plan may not merely respond to all people's aspirations and needs, but may guarantee their rights to access the seashore, protect the maritime public domain, preserve the culturally sensitive areas such as Dalieh, and ensure the setting up for a commercial zone. On the other hand, survey findings show that urban design and landscape planning as well as municipal action and management on the ground may directly respond to people's aspirations by means of safety and security measure, control, equipment, and attractive zones for all social groups. Thus, any Master plan is to be complemented by urban design and landscape interventions as well as a set of rules to manage the space.

Appendix 1

NAHNOO
The Seashore Project-Questionnaire Survey   Date: …………………………………….
Volunteer's name: …………………..…….…   Location: ………………………………….…

I-Profile

Time:
Gender:
Morning □   Noon □   Afternoon □   Night □   F □ M □

Age:
13-18 □   19-24 □   25-35 □   36-45 □   46-55 □   56-65 □   Above 65 □

Education level:
none □   primary □   elementary □   secondary □   license/bachelor □   High education □

Nationality: …………………………………………………………   **Occupation:** …………………………………………………

Home address: ……..

Visit purpose: ……………………………………………………   **Company:** ……………………………………………………

Transportation mode:
Walking □   Bicycle □   Motorcycle □   Bus/Van □   Service/Taxi □   Private Car □

If bus/van: Stop location …………………………………………… Bus/Van number:
……………………………………………………

Of private car: Parking location:
……….

II-General Overview

1- Frequency of visits
Daily □   Weekly □   Monthly □   Occasional □   Other: ……………………..

2- In your opinion, people come to this place:
………
………

3- Describe the seashore in general using one word or one expression.
………

4- In your opinion, what are the main problems of Beirut seashore?

………

………

……

5- What is the first thing (landmark and impression) that comes to your mind when you think of:

Zaytouna Bay: ……..

Ain el-Mreisseh: …….

Manara: ……

Raoucheh: ……

Ramlet el-Bayda: ……

III-Socio-cultural aspect

1- Do you know any activities and/or events that are organized along the seashore?

………

………

2- Do you know any of the old rituals/practices along the seashore?

……

……

3- Did the seashore change over time? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, how?

……

……

III-Economic activities

1- Where do you go to swim in Beirut? ……………………… **How much do you pay?** ………………………

2- Have you ever been to a public beach in Beirut?

Yes ☐ Please specify: ……

No ☐ Why? ……

3- Do you visit the cafés/restaurants/resorts spread along the corniche?

Yes ☐ Please specify: ……………………………… How much does your visit cost: ………………………

4- Are you with or against their presence?

Yes ☐ Why? ………

No ☐ Why? ………..

5- Do you buy from street vendors on the corniche?

Yes ☐

No ☐ Why? ………

Right to the sea

1- Are you aware of any illegalities along the seashore?

Yes ☐ Please specify: ………………………………………………………………………………………….

No ☐

2- Are you aware that all sandy and rocky areas of the seashore are considered public properties?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3- Are you aware of your rights related to the maritime public properties?

Yes ☐ Can you list them: …………………………………………………………………………………………

No ☐ Right of free access? ☐ Right to the see the sea? ☐

4- Would you like to participate in events to defend the public rights to the sea?

Yes ☐ contact details if the interviewee would like to be informed: …………………………………………

No ☐

Aspirations

1- How do you imagine the ideal seashore that you wish to have in Beirut?

………

………

………

………

………

………

………

………

………