

ARCHITECTURE_media_politics_society

Vol. 10, no.1. Author: Richard Becherer.

September 2016

Affiliation: Independent Academic

Title: Postscript: Beirut Life and Debt Version 2.016

Abstract:

This essay continues a project begun a decade ago with the article, “A Matter of Life and Debt: The Untold Costs of Rafiq Hariri’s New Beirut”. This new article, or “Postscript”, begins by examining the reception of that first investigation and responds to one criticism directed to the original essay, specifically, that it proffers an unfairly pessimistic profile of the reconstruction effort generally and of its prime mover specifically, the now-deceased Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. This paper follows a cost/benefits analysis of the project and the company behind it, Solidere, and examines two of other Solidere-styled developments abroad, both results of the company’s attempts to monetize its so-called “brand.” The first of these, *Abdali* is in Amman. The second of these comprises a trio of projects that SI prepared for Sheikh Zayed City in metropolitan Cairo. The paper argues that Solidere’s failure to disclose the dubious financial dealings behind such projects further erodes the credibility of a company for whom the notion of ‘business as usual’ works first and foremost to benefit the few at the expense of the many.