beirut urban lab
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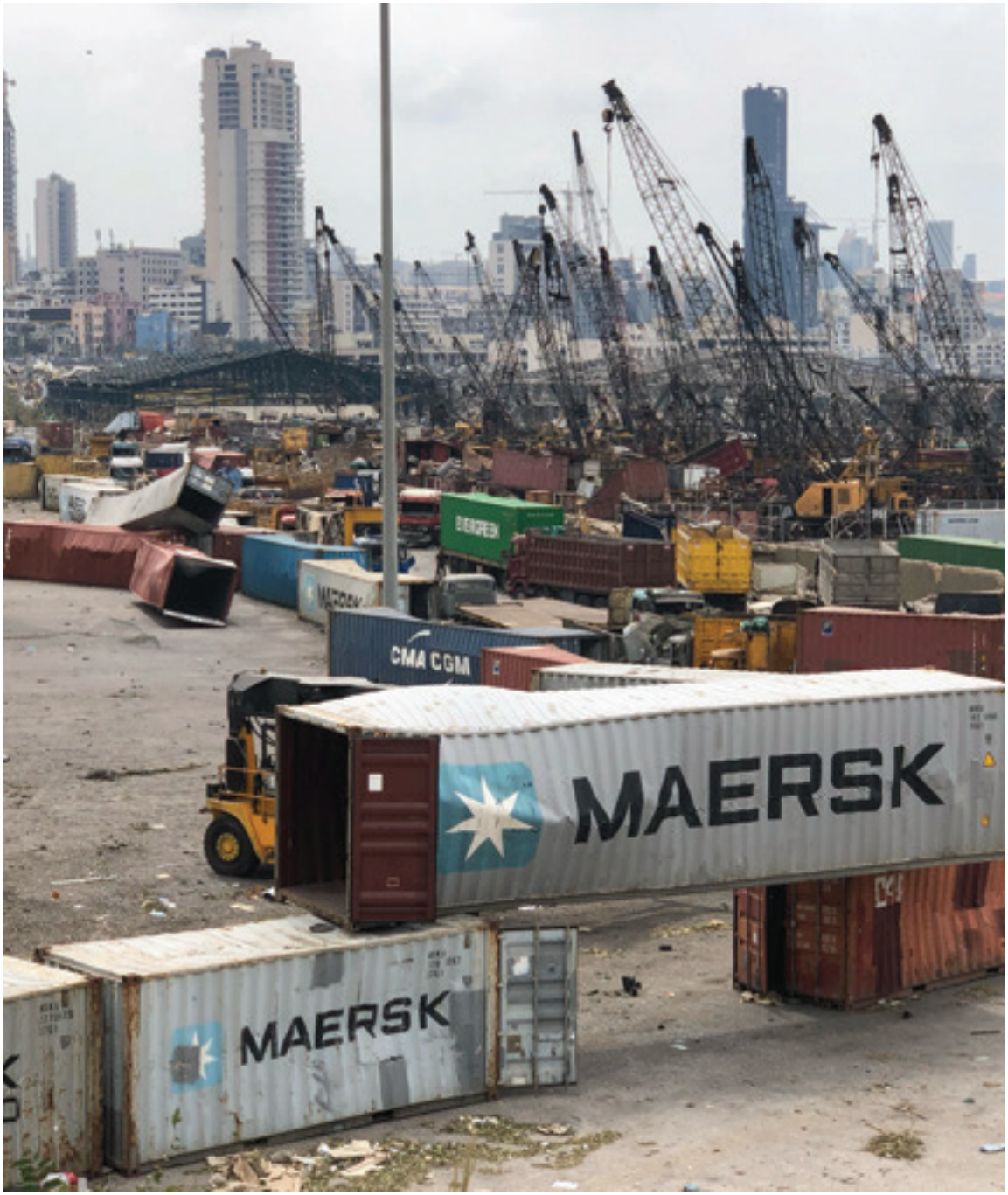

Recovering the Port-City: The Implications of the Port Proposals on Beirut's Future

POLICY REPORT

06.2025

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1. Introduction

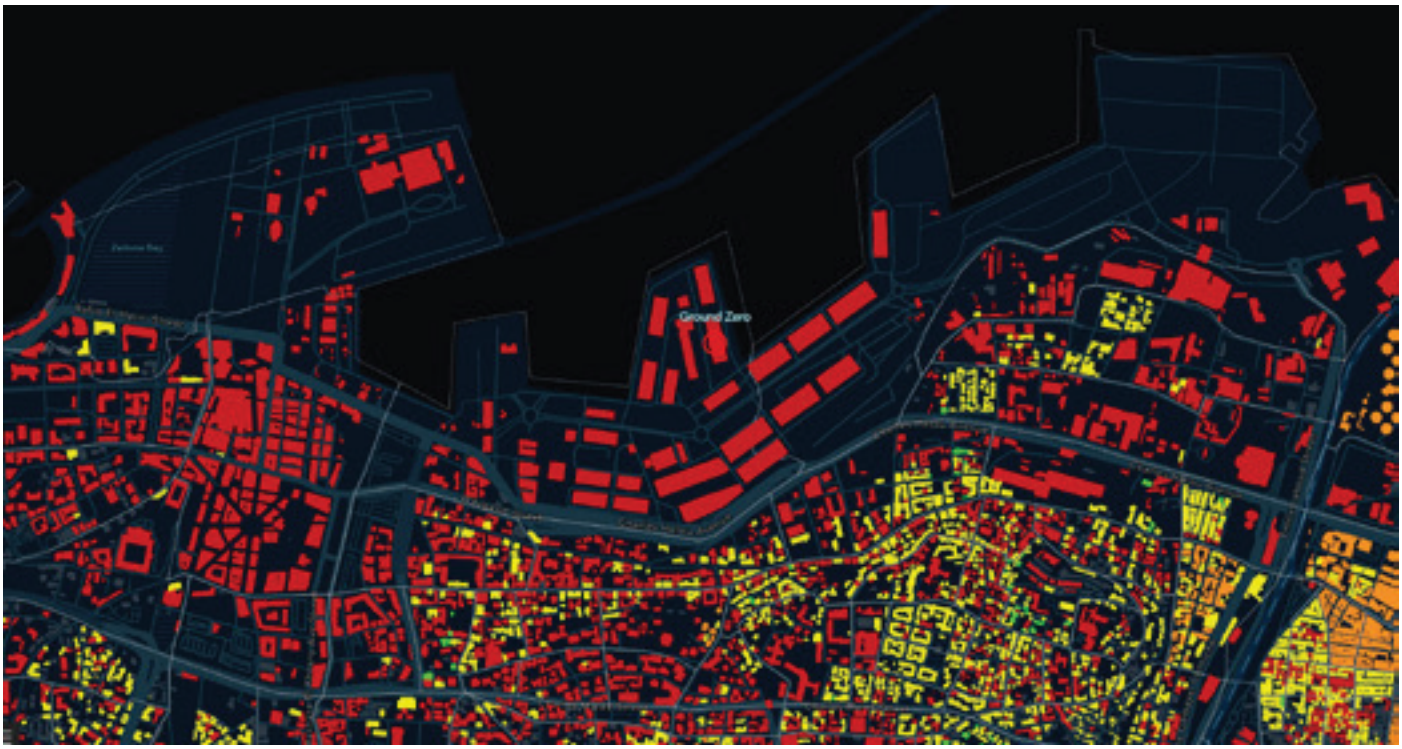
The August 4, 2020, Beirut Port Explosion wreaked havoc across the city of Beirut and its port. At least one third of the city's buildings were damaged (with different levels of severity) and numerous lives were lost (Map 1). For the past five years, the public debate about how to rebuild the city's port was relatively limited and behind closed doors. Yet, there is ample evidence that the framework in which the city's port will be rebuilt and developed, the institutional and regulatory arrangements that will govern its functions, and the port's future position in relation to the city and within the country will have impacts of national importance.

The explosion embodied the culmination of years of neglect and fragmented oversight for the port of Beirut. It also exposed the long overdue overhaul of the port's governance and its organization. Left to an ad-hoc committee that monopolized decisions and profits in allegedly extra-legal ways, the port had expanded functions that operated independently of the city. Instead, the city acted as a throughway or backyard without any investment or synergic developmental relation that could benefit the local economy.[1] Moreover, the callous storage of explosives left unattended for almost a decade further betrayed the blatant corruption, poor management, and a deeply dysfunctional institutional framework that allowed for a catastrophe of this size to unfold. Thus, the long-decried public losses incurred by the city and national coffers under private port management were further compounded by the risks posed by ill-managed storage practices.[2]

Since August 2020, the Beirut Urban Lab has been actively involved in efforts to support the post-disaster recovery of the city and its port from its position as a research center. To this end, the Lab organized closed door and public discussions about the port recovery, attended and hosted deliberative and public meetings for several proposals, and participated in numerous private discussions and public events. The Lab has also sought to bring to the public every proposal and secure a needed transparency that is the first step towards accountability and good planning.

In this vein, BUL publishes today a short comparative note of the two main proposals for the port recovery that we name after their main sponsors: The World Bank Proposal (hereafter WBP) and the French Proposal (hereafter FP). We conclude with a few recommendations that should be upheld by any recovery scenario.

It is noteworthy that that while the World Bank proposal was largely accessible, debated publicly and published online, the French study was never officially published and remains largely inaccessible and our analysis rests on the material we were able to obtain. We have also published online the recordings of the two public presentations held in June 25-27, 2024 and co-organized by the Lab in partnership with Arab Center for Architecture (ACA) and the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut. We are also publishing the comments given by the former president of Beirut's Order of Engineers and Architects, Jad Tabet, during this event.

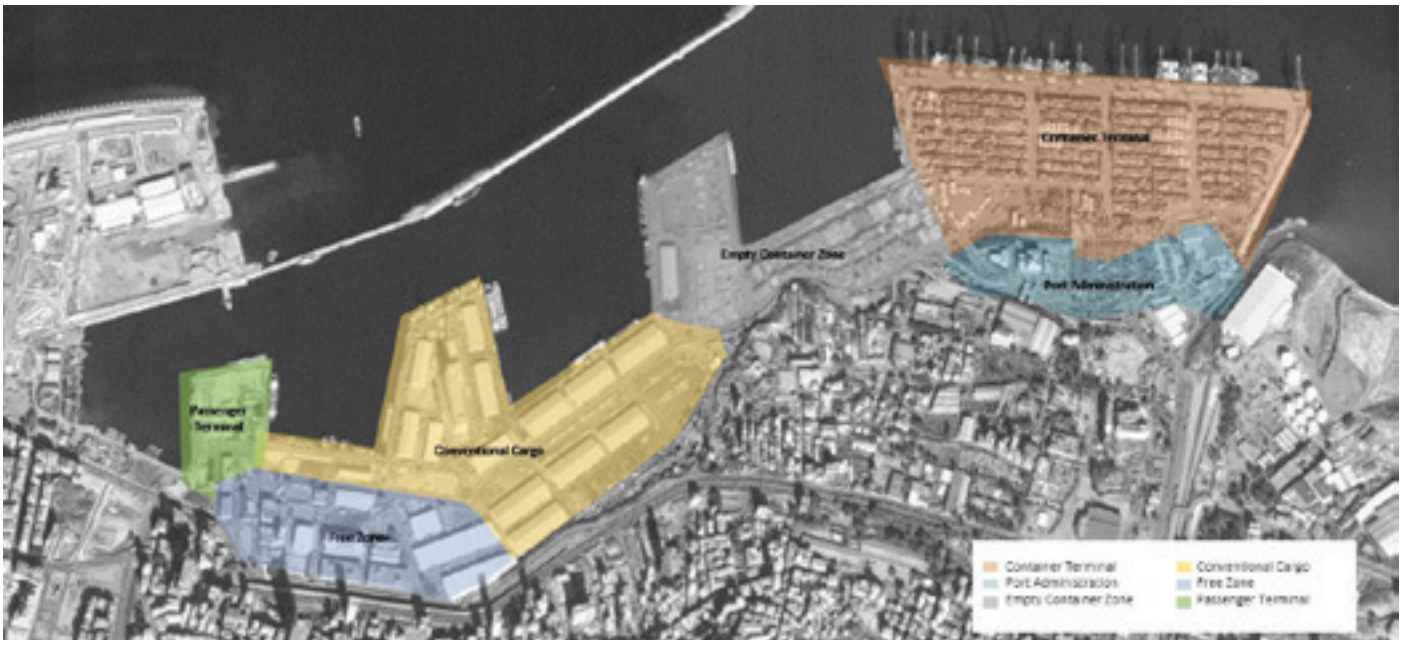


Map 1. Map of Destruction and Location of Port Blast, BUL Observatory (Beirut Recovery Map), Source: https://beirutrecovery.org/

Blast Damage within the Port
Damage inside the port domain severely impacted the non-container areas, particularly the mole separating the first two basins where the grain silos were left irrecoverably damaged (Map 2). By all professional accounts, the damage to the mole separating basins 2 and 3 is structural, and its repair is prohibitively costly if it were to support a heavy infrastructure as it once did[3]. In addition, the cargo area, which included mostly hangars (including the one where the blast was ignited), a free zone, and the passenger terminal were all severely affected, as were the military installations in the area.

Conversely, the container terminal that accounted for an estimated 80% of the port's activities was relatively spared. In the weeks following the blast, the container terminal returned to function. It was commissioned by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Works and Transport to the global freight company CMA-CGM, and, in February 2022, the company was awarded a 10-year concession to manage, operate, and maintain the Port of Beirut's container terminal (CMA CGM 2022).[4]

Consequently, most discussions about the long-term development of the port today revolve around the damaged cargo zone where vital imports to the country are channeled (e.g., cereal, automobile, liquid and solid bulk), and where possible redevelopment could bring additional economic activities and investments to the city. Furthermore, given the traumatic circumstances in which the city's port and its surrounding neighborhoods were destroyed, popular demands have been put forward to plan for spaces of collective grievance, commemoration, and accountability. Repair and redevelopment are impossible without an overhaul of the institutional framework and a large-scale modernization of the entire port infrastructure. In sum, the reconstruction of the port of Beirut will need to address multiple challenges that respond to institutional, technical, economic, and social imperatives.



Map 2. Map of Port Functions Pre-Blast, Source: Map by The Beirut Urban Lab

2. What are the two main proposals today for the post-recovery

As noted above, several proposals were advanced in the aftermath of the port blast. The earliest proposal was put forward in April 2021 by four expert firms: Hamburg Port Consulting, Colliers International, Fraunhofer IMW, and Roland Berger. It proposed a large-scale real-estate residential redevelopment of large sections of the port. The proposal was, however, rapidly dismissed for its inadequacy. In the years later, two additional proposals were put forward, and they remain to date on the table without implementation. Below is a short summary of each of these proposals followed by a few points of comparison.[5]

Proposal 1: World Bank Proposal (WBP)
This proposal locates the port of Beirut within a wider national vision for Lebanon's port sector. It articulates a long-term development strategy where the Beirut Port's role is developed relationally with four other ports along Lebanon's coast (Tyre, Saida, Jounieh and Tripoli). The proposal positions the port of Beirut as a "regional gateway port that acts as a catalyst for national economic recovery" (WB Report, April 2024, p.50), shifting from an isolated hub to an economic engine with governmental and administrative functions that spill over to the city. Consequently, the proposal recommends that the port only receives high value cargoes to limit environmental, hazard and negative land traffic impacts while the remaining traffic is deviated to ports located in the hinterlands.

This shift allows the port to capitalize on the opportunity to attract higher value-added functions that serve national interest and enhance Beirut's development as an economic hub.

The main contribution of the proposal is to expand and diversify the economic value of the port. Following a thorough forecast of the port's future growth and spatial needs until 2050 as well as detailed spatial audit, the study found the port to be oversized for its current uses and it proposed to introduce additional functions such as recreational and leisure facilities designed to attract tourists (waterfront and cruise terminal), a special economic zone, an innovation hub, and a sanctuary area while maintaining industrial and logistical activities to expand and optimize socio-economic benefits at both urban and national scales (Map 3). Through this intervention, the proposal recovers the historical port/city integration that had characterized Beirut for centuries. In addition, the proposal introduces sustainability measures in the port's design and its long-term operations.

Finally, the proposal overhauls the existing port governance by introducing a revised port law, the Port Sector Governance and Management Reform that establishes a port authority (Landlord Model) with a board representing multiple stakeholders including municipal authorities.

The study was conducted by a Lebanese Dutch consortium, Royal Haskoning DHV in collaboration with Rafik El-Khoury and Partners. Developed over two years, the proposal was championed by the World Bank transport team who brought on board several international experts (e.g. urban designers) and held multiple participatory meetings that involved local professionals and community groups. The study was funded by the Lebanon Financing Facility (LFF), a multi-donor trust fund established in the aftermath of the port explosion to pool grant resources from international donors including the governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, and Norway as well as the European Union. Further details can be found in the World Bank reports, which are publicly accessible.[6]

Zone	Estimated Area (m^2)	Estimated Area (ha)
Waterfront/ Public access	200,000	20
Passenger/ Cruise Terminal	35,000	3.5
Ro-Ro and General Cargo	173,000	17.3
Grain Terminal	69,000	6.9
Container Terminal	510,000	51
Special Economic Zone/ Free Zone	145,000	14.5
Innovation Hub	16,000	1.6
Administrative area/ Governmental	69,000	6.9
Land reserve	40,000	4
Ro-Ro Car Park	48,000	4.8

Table 1. Zone Areas World Bank Proposal

Map 3. Reconstruction and Development Plan for the Port of Beirut (The World Bank Proposal), Source: Map by The Beirut Urban Lab

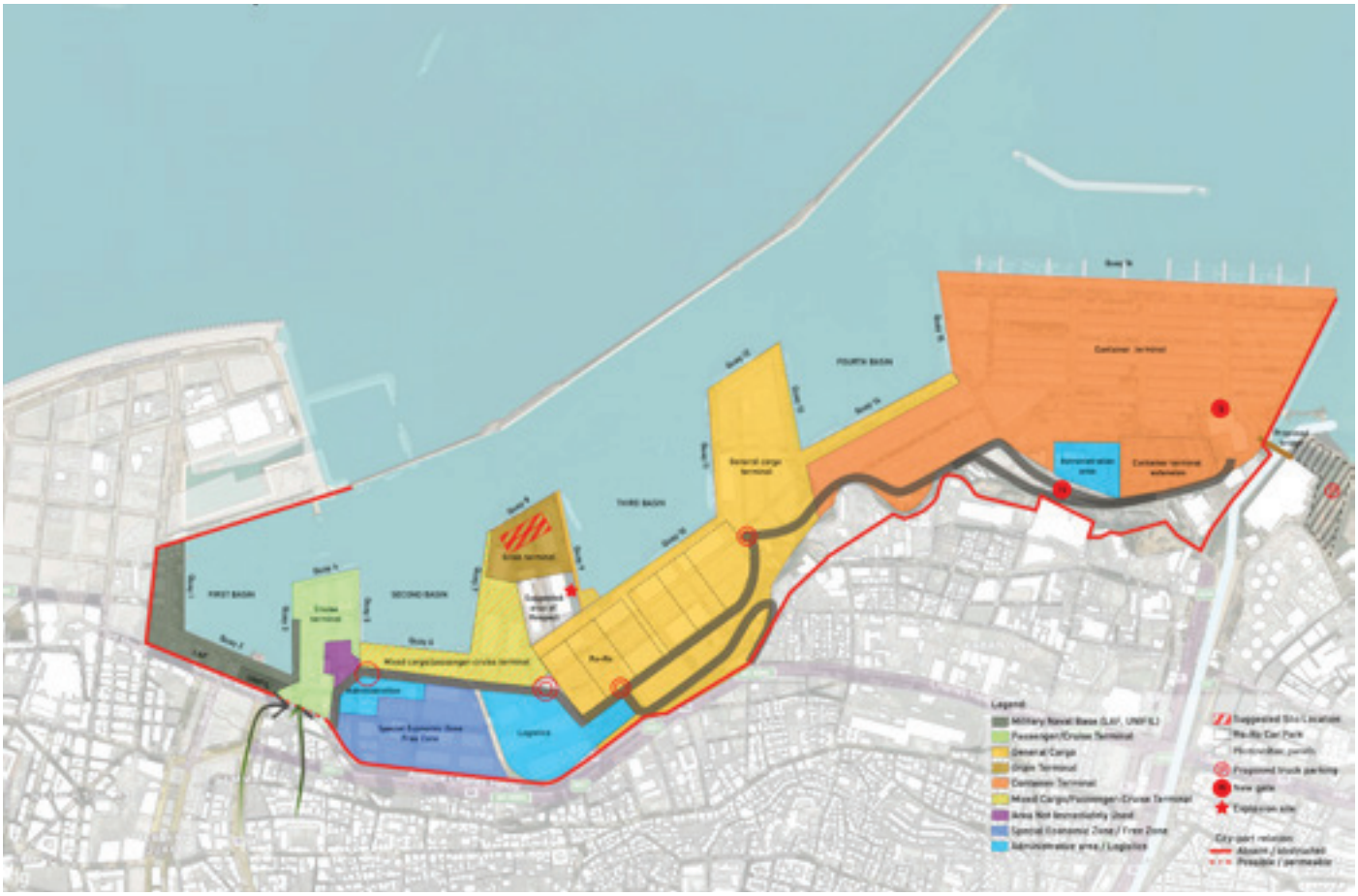
Proposal 2: The French Proposal (FP)
Developed two years later, the French Proposal (Map 4) was presented as an emergency interim intervention that responds to the need for a punctual and urgent intervention to repair the port cargo areas that had suffered the most substantial blow. The project proposes seven interventions (in the form of work packages), infrastructure works, based on a master plan presented as the "converging option" of earlier studies. The packages introduce substantial construction works that expand one of the port's existing moles (quay 9, basin 3) where new grain silos will be located, and it proposes to undertake marine works to support it. The proposal also rearranges the port's circulation and entries/ exits by way of improving its internal functioning.

The study further forecasts the ability of the port authorities to self-finance these interventions over the forthcoming period.

The study emerged from the collaboration between the Inter-ministerial Mission for the Coordination of International Support to Lebanon (MICOL) and Expertise France. It mobilized a team of experts among leaders in the field in France, the ARTELIA-EGIS consortium, and formulated actionable recommendations. Aside from this study, a general cooperation agreement was signed in June 2022 between the Port of Beirut (PoB) and the Grand Port Maritime de Marseille-Fos (GPMM), focusing on technical assistance and strategic planning, particularly for the general cargo zone.

Zone	Estimated Area (m^2)	Estimated Area (ha)
Military Naval Base	132,000	13.2
Passenger/ Cruise Terminal	53,000	5.3
General Cargo	356,000	35.6
Grain Terminal	40,000	4
Container Terminal	580,000	58
Mixed Cargo/Passenger-cruise Terminal	69,000	6.9
Area not immediately used	9,000	0.9
Special Economic Zone/ Free Zone	80,000	8
Administrative Area/Logistics	99,000	9.9

Table 2. Zone Areas French Proposal



Map 4. Reconstruction and Development Plan for the Port of Beirut (French Proposal), Source: Map by The Beirut Urban Lab

3. A Comparative Reading

Although presented to the public as complementary, the World Bank (WBP) and French proposals (FP) dictate fundamentally different futures for the city, its port, and their relation particularly in the potential to generate socio-economic development beyond freight activities. Indeed, the two proposals diverge significantly in their conception of the port's national and regional roles, the port-city relationship they put forward, the scope and scale of future development, projected costs, and the infrastructure and spatial allocations required to meet traffic forecasts through 2040. As such, readers need to be careful in understanding that while the two studies are incomparable in their respective scopes, they are incompatible with their recommendations. The table below summarizes the main differences between the two projects. We further develop some of the critical points of difference in the text and tables below.

As noted above, the two studies diverge considerably in their scope. With the ambition to situate its intervention within a national port strategy and the framework of a new port law, the World Bank Proposal (WBP) sought to emulate the model of Mediterranean cities that capitalize on technological advancements and declining industrial activity to introduce new functions with positive externalities to the wider urban and regional contexts. By integrating recreational, commercial, and technological functions, the proposal aims to reclaim Beirut's historical identity as a "port city." In this regard, it presents a long-term, aspirational, and developmental vision for the city and its port. Conversely, the French Proposal (FP) is framed as an interim intervention meant to respond to immediate needs. However, its components effectively commit Beirut to a continued rupture between city and port for decades to come.

- How do the visions translate spatially into masterplans?
This difference in approaches and scopes translates spatially into two radically different port proposals that usher different future possibilities for the city/port relations, and consequently the city's development. These distinctions are particularly salient because, in line with earlier space audits that found the port area to occupy a larger space than needed, the two studies found the port to be oversized for its current and future needs. The critical distinction between the two studies is whether the recovery of the port will serve to take Beirut and its port towards a new model of economic integration and prosperity, or whether the recovery will assume a return to the previous status.

Below, we propose a point-by-point comparison of some of the project's proposed masterplans.

- Use of Excess Land
While both proposals acknowledge that the port is oversized for its actual needs, which amount to roughly 30ha in the WBP and 9ha in the FP, they treat it differently. The WBP views these spaces as an opportunity for integration, introducing new uses such as a memorial park, recreational areas, a free zone for value-added logistics, and a business and innovation hub. In contrast, the FP labels these as "spaces not immediately used," retaining them within the port boundary without proposing new functions or public access (Table 5).

- Cargo Forecasts and Allocations
Both studies present long-term cargo forecasts that align broadly with those found in the 2018 Port of Beirut Masterplan 2037. These include projections for containers, steel, automobiles, grain, and cruise passengers. However, the WBP describes a detailed forecasting methodology developed by the Dutch partners, using complex models and local economic trends. In contrast, the FP references estimates from the 2018 plan, particularly its most "optimistic" scenarios (largest volumes). Despite differences in methodology, the resulting cargo volume estimates are approximately similar.

- Grain Terminal, Cruise Terminal, and other functions
Despite forecasting relatively similar volumes of cargo, the two proposals differ significantly in how they allocate space. We provide here a few examples. Readers can refer to the tables below for further details.

Both studies include substantial areas for vehicle imports: the WBP estimates 120,000 cars per year, while the FP estimates 140,000. These figures are aligned with the pre-crisis figures of the Moffatt and Nichol forecast (2018 Masterplan, Port 2037) for 2022, and likely assume a similar pattern of private car dependency. (We note that pre-owned cars are typically transited through the Port of Tyre, so this volume reflects new cars which volume has considerably dipped since the financial meltdown of 2020.)

FP significantly reduces the size of the grain terminal, likely due to the constraints of rebuilding on an unsuitable mole, while allocating 4.25 hectares to general cargo functions, 2.5 times more than in the WBP.

Another marked difference lies in the cruise terminal. The FP retains it in its original location and expands it into a mixed-use zone with cargo, occupying an entire mole and a half. Meanwhile, the WBP limits the cruise terminal to one quay, despite forecasting a significantly higher number of visitors.

Category	World Bank Proposal (WBP)	French Proposal (FP)
Scope & Vision	Part of a national port strategy under a new port law (landlord-model) which aims for long-term transformation and integration of the port with the city, in line with other Mediterranean cities, and the introduction of activities with positive economic spill over to Beirut.	nterim solution focused on immediate repair, no national vision, and an assumed but unaddressed governance reform. The study takes for goal the restauration of the pre-explosion status-quo and makes it the long-term vision for the city.
Ports' functions	Aside from the main port functions (i.e., industrial, logistical), the study introduces new recreational and tourist functions (i.e., waterfront and cruise terminal), a special economic zone, an innovation hub, and a sanctuary area.	The port's central function is for containers and cargo. The cruise terminal is maintained with limited tourism outside the port areas.
Port-City Relationship	Aims to reconnect port and city, open space for public use, and introduce new recreational and commercial functions as well as a memorial.	The plan commits the city to a long-term rupture between port and city and concentrates its recommendations on enhancing the efficiency of circulation within the port area.
Governance	A full fledge port-law is proposed, following the landlord-model. The public-private partnership in this formula includes city representation in port governance, aligning with successful European models like Barcelona and Genoa.	The proposal is based on the existing legal framework enforced at the time of its development (i.e., an exceptional ad-hoc committee) but notes that the adoption of the WB proposed governance law will eventually produce changes.
Cargo Function	The study presents space-efficient options, designing with lower berth occupancy to allow multi-use of quays and flexibility in land use.	Large areas and berth spaces allocated to Ro-Ro and general cargo functions. It also includes livestock handling and solar panel installations.
Recreational and Tourism Functions	Central to the new port plan, with a large cruise terminal, parks, recreational spaces, and more.	Very limited, includes only a cruise terminal with the port as site of passage and not a destination.
Marine and Structural (berth) Works	No additional marine or structural works are proposed.	A new quay is proposed (extension of quay 9) in Basin 3 to repair the damage incurred by the explosion, expand the berth with a new quay, and conduct additional marine works to secure the needed depth.
Silos	Recommend moving the silos to Quay 11, hence freeing the severely damaged berth from reconstruction works on the basis of a space allocation analysis. Includes a forecast of the costs of reconstruction.	Proposes the reconstruction of silos in proximity to the currently demolished silos to account for the preference of port stakeholders.
Environmental Impact	Aims to limit environmental harm by routing high-risk cargo to hinterland ports and introducing several reforms.	Limited to solar panels.
Space Audit	Roughly 30ha of excess land reallocated for new functions including the port/city integration.	Roughly 9ha of excess land allocated as "spaces not immediately used" and kept within the port's enclosed boundary.
Cost Allocation	Main ticket is the port's technological development.	Infrastructure works to rebuild Mole 2 and conduct consequent marine works.
Memorial	Proposes preserving destroyed silos and integrating a memorial site into the port redevelopment.	Locates a small and inaccessible area for a memorial.

Table 3. Point by Point Comparison between WBP and FP

Additionally, the WBP introduces new port functions such as an innovation hub, which are excluded from the French study that instead allocates a space as currently unused and for long term development. Both studies assume that Basin 1, currently under army control and owned by Solidere, will eventually be repurposed for public waterfront use.

- Silos and Commemoration

The proposals differ significantly in their treatment of the damaged silos and quay. The WBP responds to public calls for memorialization by designating a "sanctuarized area" (WB document, p. 62) an open public space preserving the site of the explosion. The FP, in contrast, complies with the Mikati government's insistence on rebuilding the silos on Mole 2, despite studies showing this to be more expensive and less effective. To accommodate this, the FP proposes constructing a new quay in Basin 3 and undertaking the necessary marine works.

Importantly, the FP does not present this option as a technical decision. Instead, noting that "a large majority of port representatives prefer to keep the location of the grain silos on Mole 2" (p. 14). Although the FP allocates a designated "Area of Respect" at the site of the explosion, the zone is enclosed by grain, Ro-Ro, and cargo terminals, rendering it effectively inaccessible to the public.

Zone	WBP (m^2)	WBP (ha)	FP (m^2)	FP (ha)
Container Terminal	510 000	51.0	580 000	58.0
Grain Terminal	69 000	6.9	40 000	4.0
Passenger / Cruise Terminal	69 500	6.95	53 000	5.3
General Cargo (incl. Ro-Ro)	221 000	22.1	425 000	42.5
Special Economic / Free Zone	145 000	14.5	80 000	8.0
Administrative / Logistics / Gov.	69 000	6.9	99 000	9.9
Waterfront / Public Access	200 000	20.0	–	–
Innovation Hub	16 000	1.6	–	–
Military Naval Base	–	–	132 000	13.2
Area Not Immediately Used	40 000	4.0	9000	0.9

Table 4. Area Comparison of WBP and FP

	World Bank Proposal (WBP)	French Proposal (FP)
Area (1st Basin)	**Waterfront / Port-City integration**	**Military base (Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL)**
Mole 1	Waterfront / Recreational activities Adjacent lands: Special Economic Zone	Passenger/Cruise terminal, TOTAL oil research logistics (temporary), LAF naval base, and new customs building Adjacent lands: Special Economic Zone and Administration
Area (2nd Basin)	**Waterfront / Port-City integration**	**Mixed Cargo/Passenger-Cruise Terminal**
Mole 2	Memorial park «Sanctuarized area» and cruise terminal Adjacent lands: Special Economic Zone, Mixed-Use Business and Innovation Hub	Grain terminal, Mixed Cargo/Passenger terminal, and Area of Respect on the explosion site Adjacent lands: RoRo and Logistics
Area (3rd Basin)	**RoRo and General Cargo**	**General Cargo**
Mole 3	Grain terminal Adjacent lands: Ro-Ro and General cargo, administrative governmental offices	General Cargo terminal Adjacent lands: Ro-Ro terminal
Area (4th Basin)	**General Cargo / Container Terminal**	**General Cargo / Container Terminal**
Mole 4	Container terminal Adjacent lands: ContainerFreightStation, administration and customs	Container terminal Adjacent lands: Administration

Table 5. Functions' Distribution on Moles and Births/ Clustering WBP and FP

Feature	Port Pre-Blast	World Bank Proposal (WBP)	French Proposal (FP)
Grain Terminal and Silos	Located in Mole 2, where the silos are also situated.	A new grain terminal was proposed in Mole 3, with the silos suggested to be located on Quay 11	The silos rebuilt on the redeveloped original quay location (Quay 9, Mole 2)
Cruise/Passenger Terminal	Located in Mole 1	The cruise terminal was relocated from Mole 1 to Mole 2, with a reduction in its allocated area.	The cruise terminal remains in its original location and extends over all Mole 2.
Free Zone		The free zone remains in its original location, new functions are proposed to repurpose areas that may no longer be required for the port's traditional activities.	The Free Zone remains and is supplemented with a newly designated logistics area.
Container Terminal	Located in Mole 4	Retained and expanded	Retained and expanded
General Cargo Area (incl. Ro-Ro)		Consolidated with Ro-Ro terminal	Expanded to reach mole 2 and 3
Public Waterfront Access		Extensive public access at First and Second Basins	Very limited public access and closed-off waterfront
Commemorative Use of Blast Site		Preserved as a "sanctuarized" space for memory at mole 2	A designated area of respect is proposed at the explosion site.
Military Naval Base		Not mentioned in the planning	Located in Basin 1 and the road network extended throughout the entire area to enhance connectivity.

Table 6. Spatial Comparison of WBP and FP

Zone	World Bank Proposal (WBP)	French Proposal (FP)
Ro-Ro (Vehicles)		
Number of Berths	1	1.5 dedicated berths 3 berths in total, shared with the cruise terminal and bulk cargo
Quay Length	250 m	300 m
Cars Capacity	100,000 cars (20% berth occupancy rate, meaning the quay can be used for other cargoes)	140,000 cars (38% berth occupancy rate)
Allocated Area	10.3ha (required area = 9.55ha)	14ha including a 10ha parking area (6 ha will be covered with solar panels)
General Cargo		
Number of Berths	2 berths	Break bulk (steel and iron): 5 berths General cargo: 4 berths
Quay Length	180 m	242 / 350m
Capacity	1.3 million tons break bulk	1.8 million tons break bulk 160,000 tons general cargo 140,000 tons livestock
Allocated Area	2.67ha	10ha (approximately, excluding quays)
Allocated area for Ro-Ro and general cargo	12.5ha	24ha
Grain Terminal (Dry Bulk / Silos)		
Number of Berths	1	1
Quay Length	230 m	230 m
Silos Static Capacity	16 silos / 780,000 tons per year	16 silos / 900,000 tons per year
Allocated Area for Grain Storage	6ha	22ha
Flat Storage Area / Capacity	7.2ha	3.6ha / 90x40m warehouse
Container Freight Station		
Required Area	15.8ha	N/A
Net Storage Area	10.5ha	N/A
Allocated Area	20ha	N/A
Free Zones		
Private Logistics Area	34.5ha	N/A
Total Free Zone Area	Existing total area = 10.8ha	N/A

Table 7. Spatial Comparison of WBP and FP

- Economic Implications for the City
Both proposals affirm the strategic economic role of the port and highlight the need for improved governance to enhance productivity. Each refers to value-added and income-generating activities but neither outlines how the City of Beirut could directly benefit from these revenues or how redistribution strategies might yield tangible gains for the local economy. There are nonetheless clear avenues in the WBP which suggests that port-city integration on the site's western edge could serve as a catalyst for economic revival by generating new revenue streams without undermining the port's industrial core.
By contrast, the FP does not anticipate significant revenues beyond port functions. Nonetheless, the study notes that net investment income will be transferred to the Lebanese state, implying that proper management could improve public services and infrastructure. Its treatment of the city as a "backyard" of the port remains nonetheless alarming in the port's impacts on Beirut.

- Project Costs
Given the differences in the scope of the study, it is impossible to compare the projects' costs. However, it is critical to understand where and how costs are allocated. By abiding by the demand to relocate the silos on Mole 2, the FP imposes a cost of almost 67 million USD for the development of a new quay and consequent marine works that are completely evaded by the WBP that relocates the silos on Mole 3. In addition, the broader logistical interventions proposed by the French team such as road deviations, a new gate for the container terminal, and non-priority projects like a PV canopy, are absent from the WBP.

- Further Readings
Readers who want to learn more about the projects can review the recordings of the public presentations of the projects held at AUB in June 2024 at this link. The BUL is also publishing the discussion notes presented by former president of the Order of Engineers and Architects, Jad Tabet, who presented the main position of the Beirut Urban Lab in this reconstruction.

Jad Tabet Discussion note 1 (World Bank Proposal)

Jad Tabet Discussion note 2 (French Proposal)

Cluster		
Grain Terminal	**- Infrastructure: approx. 8.9M$** - Superstructure: approx. 22.5M$ - Equipment: approx. 16.78M$ Total estimated cost: 48M$	**- Infrastructure: 66.9M$** #Priority Marine Works on basin 3: 60.3M$ (restoring third basin and quays) #Non-priority works: Dredging 6.6M$ - Superstructure: Not accounted for. - Equipment: Not accounted for. Total estimated cost: Not computed.
RoRo + General Cargo	**- Infrastructure: 1.5M$** - Superstructure: approx. 16.5M$ - Equipment: 12.35M$ **Total without equipment: approx. 18M$** Total estimated cost: 30M$	**- Infrastructure (landside + road deviation): 18.1M$** - Infrastructure (Marine works): Refer to Grain terminal (3rd basin restoration) - Gate 9: 6.5M$ - PV canopy 13.4M$ (non-priority works) **Total priority works without equipment: approx. 24.6M$** Total works without equipment: 38M$
Cruise Terminal	- Superstructure: 3M$	None-priority works. Costs for landside works to be decided.
Container Terminal	- Infrastructure: 31,800$ - Superstructure: 16.4M$ - Equipment: 5M$ Total estimated cost: 22M$	New gate container terminal (gate 15): 18.1M$ (non-priority works)
Container Freight Station	8.5M$	N/A
Digital Port infrastructure	59M$	N/A

Table 8. Project Cost Comparison WBP and FP

4. The Beirut Urban Lab Position

Having benefited from its participation in closed and open workshops, and following a careful reading of the two proposals, the BUL concludes this short report by putting forward four points that formed a consensus among local experts and stakeholders in the city. Our recommendations are articulated on the ground of an ethical position: while the Beirut Port recovery faces numerous technical challenges, solutions will be guided by a value system. We need to make sure that the values of inclusion, redistribution, productivity, ecological viability, social cohesion, and human dignity are at the center of the project in the process in which it is developed, the regulatory and institutional frameworks it adopts, the tools it deploys, the visions that are drawn, and the modalities of implementation and future management it proposes.

- The Port as an Engine of City-Wide and National Development

The rehabilitation of the Port of Beirut Port will involve significant investments. Each of these should have the public good of the city, the nation, and its citizens as its main priority. Consequently, the WBP to ground the national port strategy within a clear economic model that prioritizes redistribution and inclusivity and capitalizes on new opportunities that serve the wider common good is a key positive point to be endorsed. Development should move away from the rentier approaches of the past and instead focus on generating decent employment and dignified livelihoods at both national and urban scales. Success must not be measured solely by container traffic or profitability for a few men. The port's redevelopment should serve the broader public interest, benefiting all Lebanese citizens rather than enriching a select few and indebting future generations.

- Port-City Integration

A chief priority is the spatial, economic, and institutional integration of the port with the city, hence reclaiming the historical identity of Beirut as a port city and ensuring that the port's long-term development is prioritizes national development rather than the narrow profits of a single port authority. By restoring the historical relationship between the neighborhoods surrounding the port and the sea while optimizing the functioning of the port as a priority for the national economic recovery. As noted above, neither of the two proposals fully champions the demand for an integrated port/city. The WBP clearly endorses the principles of port/city integration, but it limits its scope to the boundaries of the official port area, hence inadvertently reinforcing the harmful separation between the port and the city. This practice risks perpetuating spatial fragmentation, environmental harm, and missed opportunities for integrated development. Conversely, the FP cements the division between the two with the pretext of a short-term emergency fix. Consequently, the recommendation is to expand the master plan of the World Bank Study to surrounding areas and revisit its recommendations and their implications in terms of the port/city relation.

In planning terms, a multi-scalar intervention is needed, with a holistic strategy, beginning from the sea and moving through the port, the city, and the hinterlands. Such a vision would allow for coordination across scales, connecting geopolitical dynamics to urban life and ensuring development is inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the broader public good. Functionally, the integration of port functions requires the diversification of its activities. This was present in the WBP which recommended the introduction of smart technologies, intermodal connectivity, value-added services, and income generating activities related to tourism and recreational activities.

Spatially, the intervention should link the port to its surrounding area, considering carefully how to de-enclave the port and reappropriate the large spaces and the basin allocated to the private company Solidere and occupied by the Army as well as the infrastructure break generated by the highway and the Charles Helou Station. It should also pay close attention to the neighborhoods disadvantaged by the industrial functions of the port, particularly the area of Karantina that has borne the brunt of the negative externalities of the industrial functions of the port, all the while housing a vulnerable population that has served the port for decades.

Institutionally, the port/city connection should translate in the governance of the port, as put forward -albeit in a shy form- by the proposed legal framework that invites the city authorities to have seats on the port governance body. This model of governance has been successful in Barcelona, Genoa, Rotterdam, and Marseille to name a few port/city models.

Conversely, stakeholders expressed wariness about the privatization of the land where the port stands, as had been proposed by an earlier proposal, including areas to be connected to the city- hence urging for a departure from the earlier models adopted in Beirut Downtown and other private marinas in the past thirty years. The successful example of the port of Genoa was recurrently mentioned, whereby full public land ownership was secured granting 51% of the port company to the city authorities who received rent scaled in relation to profit, hence encouraging the development agency to reinvest fully its profits in the project with a program designed to enhance the city rather than compete with it.

- A Long-term and Transparent Approach to Planning
Planning the port's future should not fall as an emergency response but rather endorse a long-term approach. Emergency conditions must not be used to justify a reconstruction that overlooks the structural planning failures that contributed to the crisis. Since the end of the civil war, exceptions have become the norm, on the ground that urgent and temporary measures are needed, while delaying holistic planning ad-infinitum. Rebuilding must go hand-in-hand with efforts to address deep-rooted governance failures, uncontrolled urbanization, and the prioritization of elite interests over the public good. This includes prioritizing public transportation and assessing the port's impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, the coastline, and the national hinterland.

Securing good planning will require solid and professional oversight to counter the pressures of narrow private interests. While Lebanon's public planning has been notoriously weak, a handful of citizens and experts have expressed strong interest to take responsibility and play an active role in the recovery. In addition, local and international professionals have shown committed support to Lebanon and willingness to play a role in an advisory capacity on a regular basis. Involving such actors in an advisory role can provide oversight, voice, and the ability to force transparency, create knowledge, and generate awareness around what is at stake.

- Planning with Memory and Accountability
A good recovery cannot happen without accountability, transparency, good planning, and a commitment to remembrance to ensure such a tragedy will never happen again. A loud demand from civil society, all its members: a memorial as a tribute to all those who lost their lives, providing a space for reflection and healing, and a constant reminder of our community's solidarity just like Hiroshima, the September 11 Memorial in NYC, the Mémorial de Caen in Normandie, and others.

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The Beirut Urban Lab – AUB

The Beirut Urban Lab is a collaborative and interdisciplinary research space. The Lab produces scholarship on urbanization by documenting and analyzing ongoing transformation processes in Lebanon and its region's natural and built environments. It intervenes as an interlocutor and contributor to academic debates about historical and contemporary urbanization from its position in the Global South. We work towards materializing our vision of an ecosystem of change empowered by critical inquiry and engaged research, and driven by committed urban citizens and collectives aspiring to just, inclusive, and viable cities.

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