

# LEBANON'S NATIONAL URBAN POLICY SYNTHESIS REPORT

## INTERSECTION OF HOUSING & TRANSPORT

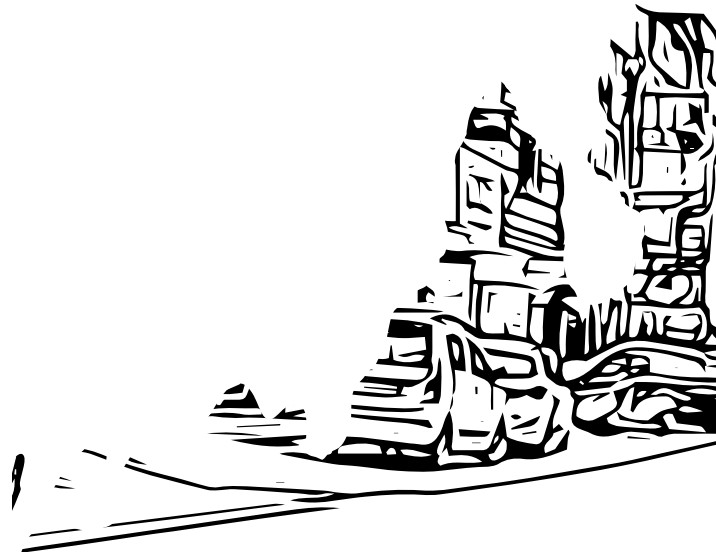
2021



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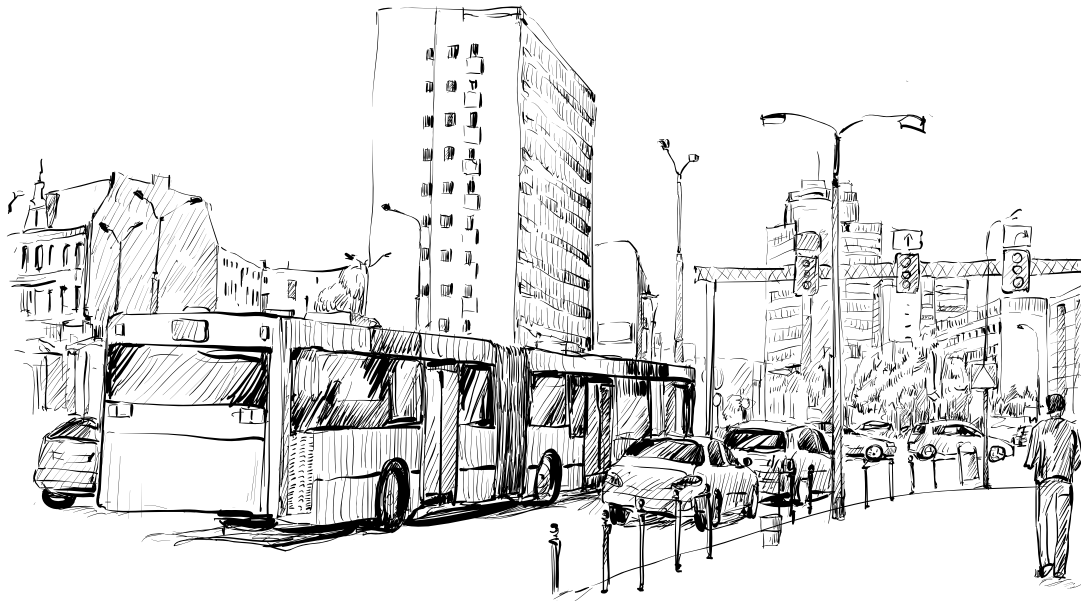
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# LEBANON'S NATIONAL URBAN POLICY SYNTHESIS REPORT

## INTERSECTION OF HOUSING AND TRANSPORT

2021





The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. UN-Habitat's programmes are designed to help policymakers and local communities get to grips with human settlements and urban issues and find workable, lasting solutions.

For more information:

UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme  
UN House, 5th Floor, Riad El Solh, Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel.: +961 1 978000  
Email: [unhabitat-lebanon@un.org](mailto:unhabitat-lebanon@un.org)  
Website: [www.unhabitat.org/Lebanon](http://www.unhabitat.org/Lebanon)



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# CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**AUTHORS:** Marc Haddad, Tala Kammourieh, Bruno Marot, Rami Mehio

**EDITING/COPYEDITING:** Nanor Karageozian

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT:**

UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme: Taina Christiansen, Nanor Karageozian, Tarek Osseiran, with support from UN-Habitat Headquarters: Grace Githiri, Remy Sietchiping

**PROJECT COORDINATION:** Tala Kammourieh, Nanor Karageozian

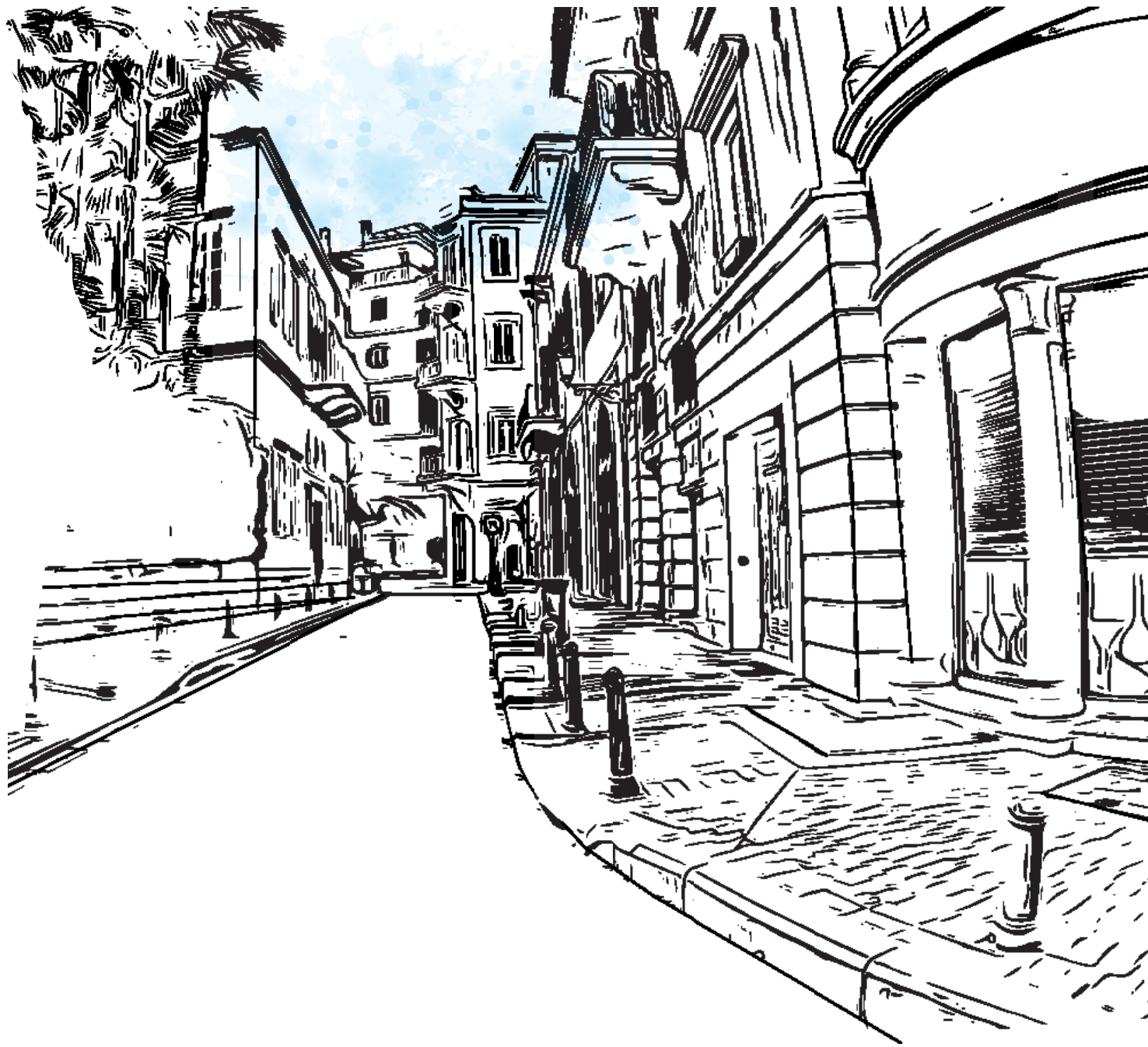
**TECHNICAL REVIEW:**

- UN-Habitat Headquarters – Land, Housing and Shelter Section: Alessandro Ecolani, Francesca Lionetti
- UN-Habitat Headquarters – Urban Basic Services Section: Debashish Bhattacharjee
- UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States – Urban Governance, Policies and Legislation Programme: Amr Lashin
- UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme: Mehmet Akdogan, Taina Christiansen, Tala Kammourieh, Nanor Karageozian, Tarek Osseiran

**REPORT DESIGN:** Team from the Conference Management Section at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>3RF</b>	[Lebanon] Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
<b>AUB</b>	American University of Beirut
<b>BRT</b>	Bus rapid transit
<b>CAS</b>	Central Administration of Statistics
<b>CEDRE</b>	Conference for Economic Development and Reform through Enterprises
<b>GBA</b>	Greater Beirut Area
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ITS</b>	Informal tented settlement
<b>K2P</b>	Knowledge to Policy
<b>LCRP</b>	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MoPWT</b>	Ministry of Public Works and Transportation
<b>MoSA</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs
<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>NUP</b>	National urban policy
<b>PCH</b>	Public Corporation for Housing
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>TOD</b>	Transit-oriented development
<b>UN CESCR</b>	United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN OHCHR</b>	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>WaSH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1. INTRODUCTION



The ethos of the National Urban Policies (NUPs) programme,<sup>1</sup> as defined by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), is a cross-sector approach, highlighting collaboration among different stakeholders and sustainability of the proposed policies. It entails involving all relevant stakeholders – ranging from national government to private sector and community actors – in the process of policy development, ensuring that policies ultimately formulated through the NUP programme are comprehensive in addressing the needs of the country, and are sustainable through the network of collaboration established throughout the NUP process. This makes NUP a key tool for addressing contemporary urban challenges, such as dramatic urban sprawl, informal urban expansion, climate change vulnerability, and inefficient infrastructure. Through this framework, NUP manages to capitalize on the opportunities of rapid urbanization, while mitigating its potential drawbacks. This entails cultivating local economies and safeguarding social and basic urban services, including the provision of adequate housing and transport options. Steering urbanization towards inclusive sustainable growth requires strengthening policy and planning capacities at subnational, regional and national levels. Through this approach, NUP manages to empower stakeholders at every dimension, including national and local government representatives, field experts, private sector actors, academic institutions, and members of civil society.

The NUP is a key tool for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and for delivering and monitoring the progress towards achieving the urban dimensions of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides an overall framework for policymakers and ministerial representatives, alongside key stakeholders of the private sector and civil society, to lead a consultative and data-driven process for the formulation and implementation of policies as needed and applicable in the national context. These policies would accelerate the actions to be taken for the achievement of sustainable urban development, as outlined in the NUA.

The diagnosis phase of the five-phase NUP process – consisting of feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation – is undertaken in order to understand a country's context and identify urbanization challenges, opportunities and recommendations. This phase was completed in Lebanon in 2018 with support from UN-Habitat.<sup>2</sup> It was conducted through a consultative process involving experts in the field and relevant stakeholders, including the government and public sector representatives, civil society organizations, private sector and academia. The diagnosis report published during this phase found that cities across Lebanon have been shaped over the years by rapid demographic changes (through internal

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1 NUP is "a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, inclusive, and resilient urban development for the long term" (UN-Habitat, 2015).

2 The phase culminated into the publication of the *National Urban Policies Programme in Lebanon: Diagnosis Report* (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018).

migration, displacement from neighbouring countries and immigration), intensive private investment into the built environment, local and regional geopolitical conflicts, and poorly practiced governance. These challenges have meant that planning efforts in Lebanon are often overlooked and characterized by being reactive to shifting circumstances, making the establishment of pathways for development all the more difficult. Much of the planning that has been done in Lebanon has been undertaken in a highly centralized manner and today the majority of planning authority still falls onto a few establishments. These establishments often have limited technical and financial capacities and have overlapping or unclear mandates. The multiplicity of legal frameworks, coupled with the absence of a specialized ministry responsible for urban planning or urban affairs, has resulted in the fragmentation of planning responsibilities on multiple institutions mandated with the implementation of various laws and regulatory frameworks (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018). Commercial interest has also had a strong influence on Lebanon's planning, with urban development being driven by a strong role of the country's prevalent private sector. These gaps in comprehensive and effective planning institutions and mechanisms, and a lacking development vision, leave space for the NUP programme to aid in the promotion of planning that is more goal-oriented, and specific to the needs of different contexts across Lebanon.

The diagnosis phase of the NUP process also aims to identify the needs and gaps in the sectors that are crucial to the sustainable development of cities in a country, and the well-being of their residents, but are inadequately addressed by fundamental policy and planning. After completing this phase in Lebanon, UN-Habitat identified housing and transport as priority sectors to be mainstreamed in the country's NUP to be developed in future phases, due to these sectors' relationship with a wide range of urban issues in the country's context. By thoroughly examining the local context, identifying its main planning challenges, and encouraging a process that is inclusive of all stakeholders at all levels, the

NUP framework can provide sustainable and effective solutions to the challenges faced by the housing and transport sectors in the country. In this regard, UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021b, 2021c) has produced two guides that detail how to mainstream housing and transport-mobility into a future NUP in the country.

The objective of this synthesis report is to provide insights into Lebanon's NUP programme by exploring the interlinkages of the two sectors it will address as a priority (housing and transport), based on a general analysis of the housing-transport nexus in urban planning and development. It will also briefly discuss the additional considerations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic on these two sectors in Lebanon, as one example of a crisis that has policy implications. A better understanding of the challenges and opportunities a crisis such as COVID-19 creates for urban planning might help enhance the resilience of cities in the face of other crises caused by natural and human-made shocks and disasters. This report is meant to contribute to informing the NUP process in the country, along with the housing and transport-mobility mainstreaming guides developed by UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021b, 2021c). Collectively, these three reports may also contribute to future medium- and long-term development plans and reforms – such as the World Bank-European Union-United Nations Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) (World Bank, European Union and United Nations, 2020) – in addition to national priorities and strategies of sectors under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2021).

## 2. THE INTERSECTION OF HOUSING AND TRANSPORT: GENERAL FRAMING AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FROM A GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE



### 2.1 Changing cities and shifting demands

As cities expand, it becomes increasingly clearer that the decisions made in one sector have repercussions on other sectors. Policymakers are confronted with the difficult task of trying to decode the way **different aspects of the city interact**.<sup>3</sup> An important shift in city development is through putting forward a **human rights-based approach** – putting the needs of human beings at the forefront of development projects, and understanding that it is the intrinsic right of humans to live in a city that helps them thrive by prioritizing the quality of urban life (Jonsson, 2016). Crucial to this approach are people's places of habitat, and their ability to navigate them, highlighting the importance of the relationship between adequate housing and transport in city governance.

With the turn of the 20th Century, rates of urbanization shifted radically around the world, as new economies that were less industrially focused and more service-based developed (Eisenburg, 2001). Shifting economies

changed modalities of life, and with them the urban landscape. Some cities witnessed large movements of people into suburbs, and the transition of the city centres into thriving social and economic hotspots. These new lifestyles necessitated the formulation of new housing development plans and arrangements, to enable populations to navigate and have access to all that urban centres had to offer (Eisenburg, 2001). Unfortunately, most cities engaged in this expansion haphazardly, with a focus on demand-driven growth, and not necessarily from a holistic, sustainable planning and vision-oriented perspective that could lead into a **balanced system of cities**. One significant consequence of this is that planners missed the opportunity to see the synergy between housing and transport. Another result is that the set priorities for directing internal and external financing are oftentimes geared to infrastructure with little reference to integrated development.

<sup>3</sup> This multisectoral way of viewing urban planning and development are at the core of UN-Habitat's emphasis on an area-based approach (Sanderson, 2019; Sanderson and Sitko, 2017; Urban Settlements Working Group, 2019, 2020). In Lebanon, this has been reflected, for example, in multisectoral, multicohort data collection and synthesis as part of city and neighbourhood profiles (UN-Habitat Lebanon 2017a, 2017b, 2021d; UN-Habitat and UNICEF Lebanon, 2020) as well as multisectoral urban upgrading projects. See also UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021a).

## 2.2 The gap between housing and transport planning

The consequences of not orienting housing and transport policy towards accessibility, connectivity and inclusivity are widespread. Access to housing and transport services are often co-dependent in a way that adequate access to one of these needs can be reliant on access to the other. For example, an individual may be able to find affordable housing on the peripheries of a city, but lack of coordination in the planning phases results in that individual's inability to commute to an available job closer to the centre of the city. In fact, the location of housing is one of the housing adequacy criteria as provided by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR).<sup>4</sup> Conversely, prohibitive transport costs also contribute to this situation, as one may have transport options available to him/her, but he/she may nonetheless be unable to pay for the long commutes to work.

Planning cities without an understanding that the housing and transport sectors, among others, are interlinked can have serious economic and social consequences. Urban development projects planned in an unintegrated way may put marginalized communities at risk of displacement or spatial segregation. Newly planned or implemented transit systems can have an impact on the level of affordability of neighbourhoods adjacent to the transit system. In other cases, transport infrastructure that is planned around or through low-income neighbourhoods due to the low cost of land often has a negative impact on the quality of living in such areas. Housing developments are sometimes planned in remote areas, necessitating a car-centric mode of transport in order for the community to commute, at least prior to the uptake of remote work modalities following the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup> Enabling access to cities through the



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<sup>4</sup> UN CESCR General Comment No. 4 states: "Adequate housing must be in a location which allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities. This is true both in large cities and in rural areas where the temporal and financial costs of getting to and from the place of work can place excessive demands upon the budgets of poor households" (UN CESCR, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> See Section 4 in this report for information about reorienting urban housing and transport policy in times of crises, based on insights related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

reduction of spatial segregation means, for example, that fewer people have to sacrifice employment opportunities due to the added cost of commuting in order to be able to live in an affordable home (Glossop, 2008). Having happier, stable and service-sufficient citizens typically means greater productivity, and greater contribution to the economy. More affordable and better targeting of subsidies in transport fees may lead to a more efficient use of public and private transport, which, for example, can contribute to a city's economy through fare sales and job creation (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). In general, private transport has hidden subsidies (e.g. air pollution, use of road and parking space, and traffic accidents) whereas public transport, a public good, is often suffering from lack of funding and insufficient subsidies. Resolving the restraints of inadequate housing and transport options can lead to building more inclusive communities.

Despite these interlinkages between the housing and transport sectors, it is common to see a lack of a policy and organizational framework that encourages the connection between the two sectors, such as the existence of planning authorities with jurisdiction over transport and land use. Failing to see this connection between housing and transport is also preventing the development of and access to adequate housing. Mandates are often separated between ministries in charge of housing and urban development on one hand, and transport infrastructure, on the other hand. This is reflected in legislators' inability to respond through integrated policies to the needs of these two sectors (Cozart, 2017). Similarly, for example, cities often have separate departments for housing and transport; this is an issue especially when there is a lack of understanding of what makes housing adequate. This gap has even made its way into non-profit advocacy, with organizations and coalitions attempting to highlight either agendas for housing, or those for transport, but rarely both.

The disconnect between planning in these two sectors has continued to grow despite alternatives being available. Transit-oriented development (TOD), for example, is a

concept that began to take traction during the 1980s, when the shortcomings of car-focused cities were becoming more apparent – transit in particular becoming difficult, inefficient and inaccessible (Ibraeva et al., 2020). Urban researchers at the time were inspired by the “New Urban” approach, which emphasized the importance of walkability, public spaces, and proximity between urban facilities, such as residential and commercial districts in cities (Ibraeva et al., 2020). TOD attempts to apply these concepts by planning cities around transit nodes that would be substantial transit-accessible urban hubs with a diverse functional composition (Ibraeva et al., 2020). It also capitalizes on opportunities for land value capture, possibly reinvesting the captured income towards both sustainable mobility and affordable housing. At its core, TOD attempts to facilitate access between all the services a city has to offer, bridging the gap between livelihood and necessity, encouraging planning that does not prioritize accessibility to one need over another. Equitable TOD (eTOD) places housing affordability at the centre of transit development, adding mixed-used affordable developments near transit hubs to mitigate gentrification (MZ Strategies, LLC, 2016).

The absence of effective and inclusive housing and transport policy can be explained by analysing the global approach to development starting from the mid-20th Century. City planning was typically done with the aim of appeasing standards of growth – to have more houses and more means of transport, rather than making sure that access to these services was fair and that they were adequate (Ibraeva et al., 2020). This required planning that in many ways, was appealing to growth-focused development with an emphasis on, for example, bigger development projects and more capital gain. These decisions were often biased in their objectives and dismissive of the needs and participation of marginalized communities. Growth-focused planning has even seen the destruction of entire neighbourhoods of marginalized communities. This was the result of transit projects needing more area to build, and the primary option being low-income neighbourhoods that were deemed as “bad neighbourhoods.” These neighbourhoods would essentially be erased, gentrified and

remodelled to accommodate dismissive planning visions (Margono, Zuraida and Abadi, 2020).

Growth-oriented planning is a particular trademark across different development projects in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the past three decades, which have been labelled by some as “neoliberal restructurings,” with development projects in Beirut standing as no exception (Daher, 2013). The MENA region has seen the development of large-scale commercial flagship projects with a high emphasis on privatization, attracting foreign investments and tourism, and expanding high-end real estate. The Palm Jumeirah and Palm Jebel Ali Islands in Dubai, Dreamland in Cairo, the Pearl Island in Doha, and Downtown Beirut in Lebanon are notable examples expressive of this type of development. Largely lacking a social dimension, this kind of urban planning was undertaken at the expense of the safeguarding of other important sectors, such as education, social security, and affordable housing (Daher, 2013). These projects are implemented despite their impact on urban geographies and social fabrics, pushing marginalized communities further into the peripheries of cities, threatening and shifting livelihoods, escalating socioeconomic and spatial divisions, and in some cases creating greater financial burdens by, for example, disrupting commuting systems and lengthening others (Daher, 2013). During the MENA region's rapid growth and drastic socioeconomic shifts since the 1950s, urban development failed to promote integrated transport systems (Delatte et al., 2018). As such, private vehicle transit has been the primary mode for transport in the region, resulting in dense traffic congestion, high air pollution, and increased commuting time (Delatte et al., 2018). However, over the past decade, public transit authorities in the Middle East, mainly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, have implemented or announced a collection of transport development projects to shift away from this norm. Some examples are new and expanded bus rapid transit (BRT) and metro systems in Saudi Arabia and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and the launch of a BRT system in Amman, under the Transport and Mobility Master Plan for Amman,

Jordan, with the hope of providing efficient and accessible sustainable transport (Ramadan, 2016).

The negative consequences of growth-oriented planning are particularly concerning given that the United Nations estimates at least 90 per cent of urban growth by 2050 to occur in low-income countries (Jonsson, 2016). But growth-focused planning has contributed to discriminatory practices in developed countries too. In the United States, for example, such practices are exemplified by the fact that three fourth of low- and middle-skilled jobs cannot be accessed via a 90-minute one-way commute, and the bottom 90 per cent income bracket of the population spends twice as much money on transport as the top 10 per cent (Cozart, 2017). A 2015 study found that low-income commuters in London were spending 9.2 per cent of their individual income on transport, compared to the 6.1 per cent spent by higher-income earners (BDRG Continental, 2015). Within London's Zone 1, this is for a hefty average commute time of 45 minutes, which can increase up to 57 minutes for anyone commuting from an area outside of this zone (BDRG Continental, 2015). Studies in the South American cities of Cordoba and Montevideo found that the lowest-income quintile of households spends five times as much on transport as the highest quintile (Falavigna and Hernandez, 2016). In the United Arab Emirates, the Masdar City, a zero-carbon sustainable development project in Abu Dhabi, had set a goal of 90,000 residents including 40,000 commuters, which was deemed unsustainable by itself but was justified on financial grounds due to the uneconomical cost of building cheap housing for the 40,000 commuters (mainly service workers), thus limiting the accessibility of low-income workers to these newly developed areas (Caton and Ardalan, 2010). Overall, transport has been recorded by the World Bank as the fourth in categories of household consumption, following energy, housing, and food and beverage (Rivas, Serebrisky and Suarez-Aleman, 2018), deeming the lack of accessibility to this service a serious hindrance to underprivileged families around the world.

Figures from 2018 show that the MENA region is suffering from a serious unemployment issue, with 7.3 per cent of the

population being unemployed, 10.8 per cent excluding GCC countries (to account for the large migrant worker population in the GCC) (ILO, n.d.), and with 30 per cent of the youth in particular being without jobs – the highest rate in the world (Kabbani, 2019). This both qualifies and quantifies the need for better modes of transport and housing that are affordable and that are tailored to the needs of this population.

## 2.3 Approaches focusing on accessibility, connectivity and inclusiveness

### Integrated approaches

One of the most important steps to take towards equitable and fair housing and transport is to codify these qualities and an understanding of their necessity into policy. This can be done by establishing an integrated approach that assesses labour market organizations, cultural preferences, land and housing market dynamics, migration patterns, economic difficulties, risks of displacement, and barriers to social and economic opportunity in a community (Cozart, 2017). This data can ensure that evidence-based and inclusive policies cater for the needs of communities and avoid straying away from them.

### Governance and financing

An integrated approach to housing and transport is in tandem with the adopted financing schemes and existing governance structures. Governing the shared interest between housing and transport necessitates a well-established decentralized structure and intermunicipal governance, whereby municipalities have the human and financial capacities to engage in local housing and transport projects. The administrative boundaries of cities and the institutional boundaries of line ministries become less relevant with the shift towards a cross-sectoral strategy. Additionally, such a shift entails properly functional urban land markets and the introduction of financing schemes that ensure the

sustainability and affordability of this approach. For example, the establishment of intermunicipal public land banks can stabilize land prices and increase the acquisition of land by local authorities, which, in turn, can catalyse community development projects at reduced costs (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021b). Value capture is another policy approach that can be applied to recover and reinvest the generated value (in land, for example) towards the public benefit and needs (Germán and Bernstein, 2020). Another approach bridging governance and financing is through the establishment of a municipal finance institution, which would allow a sustainable institutionalization of long-term financing solutions and allow low-cost resources for local authorities, facilitating public interest projects (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021b).

### Data dissemination

Making sure that population and other data is readily available empowers residents and actors to make informed decisions that can help develop their neighbourhoods. This requires the proactive involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as central and local authorities, to survey and collect important data from the communities they are responsible for and facilitate access to it (Cozart, 2017). Empowered members within these communities who have access to collected data can create efforts of their own to shape their neighbourhood, or can be better equipped to participate in decision-making and demand for their rights to be upheld by local officials.

### Connectivity measures

Within the transport sector in particular, it is important to shift away from development concepts that focus on growth and instead adopt a new approach where proper connectivity and non-motorized means are emphasized. For example, instead of measuring the success of a transport system by the length of railways that have been constructed, focus would shift to how many people find using the railways accessible and use them for their daily



commute. UN-Habitat sees that this requires changing the understanding of transport from being just a means to an end, from transport to *mobility* (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). Under the Avoid-Shift-Improve framework,<sup>6</sup> avoidance of transport (or its reduced demand) is consistent with the idea of sustainable urban mobility. Progress can be made towards this goal through better/compact city planning, the promotion of non-motorized means (such as walking, bicycling, small-wheeled transport) and through incentivizing end users and the private sector to engage in the public transport system delivery and use. As such, there is a need for transport and land-use planning to work in tandem. This shift in understanding mobility is also in line with the NUA (UN-Habitat, n.d.-c). UN-Habitat also encourages looking at transport from a holistic perspective, considering that improvements to transport systems can have consequent benefits for a city's infrastructure, economy and public well-being (from a social inclusivity and health perspective). Encouraging sustainable transport becomes all the more necessary as urban sprawl continues to increase and more space is occupied, necessitating focused planning that responds to its needs.

## Human rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach means recognizing that access to adequate standards of living (including housing and services) are at the core of people's basic rights, and urban planning must reflect that.<sup>7</sup> This means making sure that planning is made as inclusive and accessible as possible, and that no one community or demographic group is excluded in the interest of others. A *housing at the centre* approach suggests that housing policies can be

formulated with human rights as the focus by prioritizing basic human needs and the protection of habitats. This requires assessing a range of components – from land access issues, infrastructure and housing finance, to building materials and construction – in order to have effective policy creation (UN-Habitat, n.d.-b). All of these are necessary to ensure the provision of sustainable and adequate housing for all, especially for marginalized groups. One way to engage with this process is to create a housing profile outlining the housing situation in a city as well as all the variables contributing to that situation. This tool developed by UN-Habitat is used to guide the creation of new policies, again, in an attempt to approach the issue from a holistic perspective.<sup>8</sup> The profile looks not only at the previously mentioned fundamental aspects – such as infrastructure, finance, labour and materials – but also at more pervasive aspects, such as legal and institutional frameworks and policies that contribute to the situation. In the case of Lebanon, a housing profile can serve as an important resource to inform policymaking alongside the guide for mainstreaming housing in NUP (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021b).

<sup>6</sup> For more information about this framework, see UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021c).

<sup>7</sup> Access to adequate housing, as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, is an international human right enshrined in many international treaties and conventions, including Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN OHCHR, 1966). On the latter provision, the UN CESCR clarifies that adequate housing location is one that does not place excessive demands on the budgets of poor households with respect to temporal and financial costs of getting to and from the place of work (UN CESCR, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> For more details, see *A Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles* (UN-Habitat, 2011).

### 3. HOW HOUSING AND TRANSPORT INTERSECT IN THE CONTEXT OF LEBANON



#### 3.1 A brief overview of key transport and housing issues in Lebanon<sup>9</sup>

The status of urban development in Lebanon, including the housing and transport sectors, can be studied through the Greater Beirut Area (GBA).<sup>10</sup> Urban development in the GBA has roots in development policies and approaches that began with the post-war (re)construction of the city. At the time (1990s), liberalization policies that prioritized the real estate sector and encouraged foreign investment and capital were pushed forward (Saksouk-Sasso, Bekdache and Ayoub, 2015). In 2015, 70 per cent of foreign investments to Lebanon were being directed towards the construction and real estate sector (Saksouk-Sasso, Bekdache and Ayoub, 2015). Legal frameworks were frequently shifted to prioritize subsequent real estate projects and strayed away from policies that safeguarded effective access to land and housing.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the focus became large-scale commercial projects, such as the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut. Speculation-driven developments extended into the rest of the city, impacting the residential and social fabrics – particularly the most vulnerable communities and neighbourhoods

– and advertising economic prosperity (Saksouk-Sasso, Bekdache and Ayoub, 2015). Since then, Beirut has seen the continued diminishing of its public spaces and services, growing housing insecurity (in particular after the fall of state-controlled rent control), limited options for transport, and the displacement of communities due to inadequate planning, among other factors (Saksouk-Sasso, Bekdache and Ayoub, 2015). Despite the various influences, urban development in Beirut, as the main urban agglomeration, is indicative of the situation in other major cities across Lebanon. These cities face a weakening socioeconomic infrastructure. Their planning opportunities are hindered by poor governance, political and economic motivations, and lacking progressive vision (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018), presenting substantial opportunities for sustainable policy interventions.

The transport sector in Lebanon is plagued by a multitude of challenges affecting its efficiency and effectiveness, even compromising its ability to meet the basic mobility needs of regular commuters. These challenges include high mobility costs for individuals and society at large,<sup>12</sup> significant air pollution,<sup>13</sup> inadequate public transport due to the lack of a formal public bus system and the complete absence of

9 For more details, see the two guides for mainstreaming housing and transport-mobility in Lebanon's NUP (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021b, 2021c).

10 The GBA, constituted by the capital city of Beirut and the broader metropolitan area of Mount Lebanon, is the largest region by population in Lebanon (CAS and ILO, 2019; UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2021d). It is home to more than 40 per cent of the population (UNDP and IPTEC, 2016).

11 The concept of "accessibility of housing" is in reference to specific features as provided by the UN CESCR in General Comment No. 4.

12 The losses incurred by the Lebanese economy from traffic congestion was estimated by BLOM Bank in 2017 to be USD 2 billion annually (The Daily Star, 2017).

13 For example, the city of Jounieh was ranked by Greenpeace in 2018 as the 23rd most polluted city in the world due in part to heavy traffic (Gedeon, 2018).

rail, and poor infrastructure for alternative transport modes, such as walking, bicycling and shared micromobility. At the same time, the transport sector has long been deprived of the needed resources for infrastructure maintenance and development, and has been left without proper oversight and long-term planning. As a result, road networks in Lebanon have become highly unsustainable and a major devaluating element in the quality of life of urban residents, with direct negative impacts on mobility, such as substantial travel delays and serious accidents, and indirect adverse consequences to health and the enjoyment of urban space.

Similarly, the housing sector in Lebanon faces long-standing challenges that inhibit access to adequate housing. With lack of a ministry for housing or urban development, the mandate to regulate and govern the housing sector has been fragmented among multiple public and private stakeholders, with a lack of a clear vision on how to organize this sector. Major challenges are faced in the main urban centres in Lebanon, namely GBA, Tripoli and Saida. Lax land and real estate regulations, limited housing finance schemes, and property-led policies have resulted in a mismatch between supply and demand and a disconnect between income/purchasing power and housing/rental prices, and a high cost of land in urban areas. Additionally, an informal housing sector is widely responding to the increasing needs of low-income households – including poor Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees and migrant workers – leaving these groups to live in low-quality settlements with substandard living conditions and insecure tenure arrangements.

### 3.2 Interconnectedness of housing and transport issues

The links between housing and transport are manifold in Lebanon. These two dysfunctional sectors are embedded in a vicious circle that fuels the vulnerability of low-income communities and aggravates socioeconomic and spatial inequality and exclusion.

In general, there has been a continuously growing demand for mobility and housing as a result of demographic and economic growth since the end of the 15-year Lebanese Civil War in 1990, in particular linked to the surge from the influx of Syrian refugees since 2011. But above all, it is the ad hoc urban sprawl across the entire Lebanese territory that has put the most pressure on road transport, as the sector has to continuously try to catch up with unchecked housing development amid inadequate zoning control. Figure 1 illustrates the situation in Lebanon over the past half century, where rapid urban sprawl has incentivized people to relocate further and further out into suburban areas, leaving them to rely on the use of their cars for commuting in the absence of other effective transport alternatives. This has driven the construction of more and more roadways to satisfy the continuously rising demand for motorized travel at the expense of proper land-use and environmental planning, which has only served to further encourage motorization and urban sprawl, linking housing and transport in closed vicious cycles of unsustainable development.

More specifically, the interconnectedness of the two sectors is illustrated in several ways, including the following:

- Traffic congestion and the lack of mass public transit contribute to reinforcing the attractiveness of central areas, where most job opportunities and urban amenities/resources (e.g. shopping, culture, leisure, etc.) concentrate in major Lebanese cities. The difficulty for urban dwellers to commute indirectly supports the rapid growth of land and real estate values, which make housing in urban centres unaffordable for a large portion of the population. This generally leaves low- and lower-middle-income households with two choices in the absence of proper affordable housing policy: Either they access relatively more affordable homes in peripheral areas, facing long commuting distance and time, or they settle closer to the economic and social opportunities offered by city centres but live in relatively low-quality dwellings with limited tenure security, sometimes in

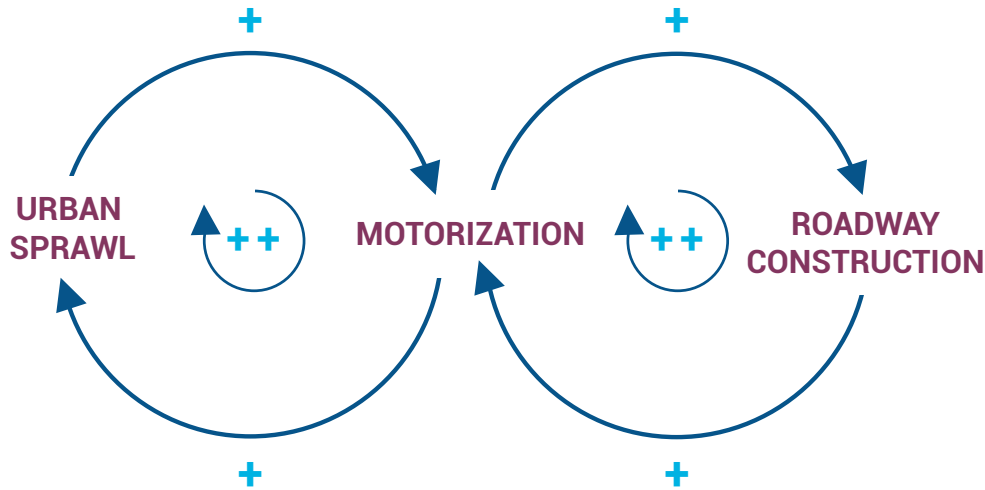


Figure 1. Housing and transport in Lebanon linked through vicious cycles of unsustainable development

the informal housing sector. Both options cannot be considered as adequate housing.

- Hyperinflated and poorly regulated land and real estate markets hinder the building of major transport infrastructure projects by making land expropriation more expensive and uncertain.
- The rapid development of subsidized homeownership, which was the prevailing channel to formal housing in the past 20 years, has led to accelerated urban expansion in the suburbs of GBA, as well as in other major cities. In the centralized Lebanese economy, the concentration of job opportunities and urban amenities in Beirut and its close suburbs forces, however, those first-time homebuyers to commute to work. For a number of reasons,<sup>14</sup> (upper-)middle-income

households are reluctant to use shared transport (e.g. vans, buses) and prefer individual cars, contributing in turn to heightened traffic congestion and pollution.

- The push effects of property-led development generated the same implications, as a large number of old tenants who are finding themselves forced to relocate from their residences in Beirut's (peri) central neighbourhoods had no choice but to relocate further to the periphery to access affordable housing, following the issuance of the 2014 new rent law (Mehanna, 2019a) and its amendments in 2017 (Mehanna, 2019b).
- The sustained increase in housing expenses observed over the past two decades (reaching about 50 per cent of low-income household earnings in GBA) (Fawaz

<sup>14</sup> For example, Lebanon's informal transport sector is stigmatized by perceptions that it is badly maintained and not operating while fully respecting driving safety measures (Rahhal, 2019).

et al., 2018) represents a major constraint limiting the capacity of lower-income communities to afford regular use of transport.

- The lack of efficient and affordable transport (physical mobility) is a major obstacle to residential mobility and then, ultimately, to upward socioeconomic mobility.
- Access to transport facilities (e.g. roads, buses, vans, etc.) is one of the key criteria considered by households that look for accommodation solutions. This category of amenity generally affects the formation and geography of land and real estate prices.
- Shortcomings in promoting inclusivity through policy instruments and urban design standards have led to inhibiting the accessibility of persons with disabilities to public spaces, impeding their full participation in society, and deepening social and economic inequality by limiting access to equal opportunities. Lack of a user-friendly and retrofitted built environment and accessible public transport stands in the way of achieving inclusive urban development (United Nations, 2016).
- The institutional set-up in the country contributes to the weakening of the interconnectedness between transport and housing. Mandates over these two sectors are separated, respectively, at the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MoPWT) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the latter being the custodian of the Public Corporation for Housing (PCH). With no joint commission or task force or an interministerial platform to regularly and systematically exchange plans and mainstream intersectoral considerations within projects and strategies, the disconnect between the two sectors is likely to remain. The disconnect is also reflected at the municipal level with no regional commissions to advance cross-municipal urban development and intersectoral planning at the local level, particularly given the underresourced nature of unions of municipalities.

### 3.3 Interconnectedness of the two sectors in the formulation of policy solutions

In order to reverse the current unsustainable trends in the country described above, it is necessary to develop integrated mitigation measures across the housing and transport sectors. These include, for example, the provision of a modern public transit system that can start reducing reliance on privately owned cars. This, in turn, would allow municipalities to reclaim sidewalks from automobiles and provide the necessary infrastructure for ultimately reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the use of emerging green mobility technologies, such as shared electric micromobility devices.

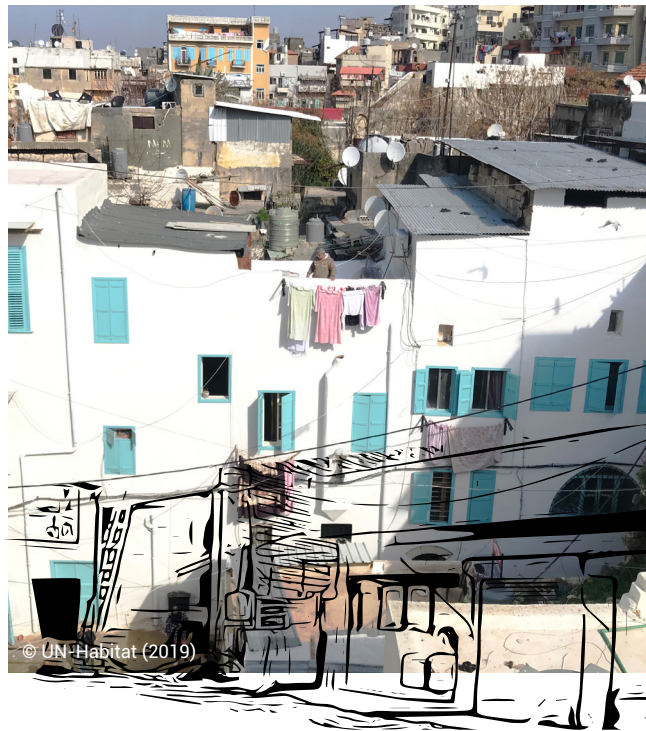
However, more fundamental change is also needed to steer the Lebanese transport and housing sectors towards a sustainable future, namely at the planning level. The formulation and implementation of integrated housing and transport strategies can be considered a key policy lever to reduce people's vulnerability and socioeconomic inequality, foster community empowerment, and ensure sustainable urbanization. But the interconnectedness of housing and transport remains largely ignored in public policy in Lebanon. One of the most recent illustrations is the Conference for Economic Development and Reform through Enterprises (CEDRE) investment programme that plans to dedicate significant financing to the construction of transport facilities without any consideration of related housing and urban development dimensions. Such a unilateral approach to development risks instigating additional urban planning bottlenecks that might be difficult to rectify or reverse in the longer term.

Since policy formulation generally starts with the identification of key guiding principles and values, it is advisable to legally and formally **recognize the right to adequate housing and the right to mobility as two connected pillars of people's right to the city and central to sustainable and inclusive development in Lebanon.**

On this basis, integrated urban strategies/programmes aimed at dealing with both transport and housing challenges should be formulated at various levels:

- At the metropolitan level, development of affordable and efficient transport solutions (e.g. BRT on highways connecting Beirut to its northern, eastern and southern suburbs) can be a response to the unaffordability of land and housing in central urban areas. It can indeed increase the capacity of low- and middle-income people to find adequate housing further to the periphery without increasing commuting time and cost. However, careful land-use planning should be formulated and enforced to prevent accelerated urban sprawl. As such, the corollary of integrated housing and transport policies is probably the densification of urban areas adjacent to major transport infrastructure (i.e.TOD). Recent studies (e.g. Knupfer, Pokotilo and Woetzel, 2018; Kurvinen and Saari, 2020) show that the elevated cost of building and operating mass transit facilities requires high-density residential development to ensure a sufficient number of users, since users' financial contribution covers a significant portion of investment and operation costs. Densification would decrease the reliance on unsustainable transport (e.g. private car use) whose full costs – due to hidden fees and subsidies – are often not considered. Subsidies for public transit as part of a densification plan should thus be seen from a social equity perspective.
- At the local level, the construction of transport infrastructure is likely to boost the much-needed regeneration of the older housing stock in (peri)central areas of Beirut, Tripoli and Saida. This is particularly the case of public transit solutions (such as trams and BRT), which – besides being an alternative to cars – contribute to reclaiming public space, developing local modes of active transport (walking, biking, etc.), and stimulating cultural and economic activities. That way, the development of a rapid, reliable and affordable public transit network would significantly contribute to the efforts of producing affordable housing by

facilitating access to peripheral areas where land is cheaper, but also by reducing the pressure on central land and real estate markets. It would contribute to the increase of the housing stock (i.e. the supply), with descent commuting distance to job opportunities and urban amenities, expanding the scope of housing solutions for city dwellers.



Moreover, addressing the housing–transport nexus at various levels stresses the need to formulate and implement policy solutions through cross-municipal efforts. More concretely, the convergence of housing and transport policy objectives can materialize in traditional policy instruments in the hands of Lebanese municipalities. In parallel to the development of transport infrastructure projects, a number of initiatives could be considered, including:

- Issuance of residential building authorizations, as well as access to inclusionary zoning measures for developers, could be conditioned to accessibility of new residential developments to public transport solutions – and similarly to the obligations existing for parking lots.
- A new local transport tax on residential development activity – potentially targeting the higher-income population segment only – could be established as part of the larger reshuffling of local taxation. Collected fiscal revenue could be then earmarked to finance public transport solutions at the municipal and cross-municipal levels. Likewise, the possibility to apply additional taxation on land and real estate capital gains (albeit this tax goes to the Ministry of Finance) in areas serviced by specific transport infrastructure projects could be investigated.
- Incentives can be provided to increase density near and around transportation hubs whereby housing developers building affordable projects and households purchasing a home close to transit facilities could benefit from additional subsidies.
- Mixed-use development and mixed-income communities (achieved through specific zoning regulations) with improved mobility choices can help bring back the transport sector as a backbone of economic growth, while positively contributing to the improvement of the quality of urban life and realizing the right to adequate housing.

However, it is important to note that targeted taxation and subsidies, if not accompanied by mitigation mechanisms, are likely to have a regressive impact affecting micro and macroeconomic trends and to generate negative economic spillovers (Fearnley and Aarhaug, 2019; OECD, 2018; Oxley and Haffner, 2010).

Lastly, promoting tight coordination between the housing and transport planning authorities can make it possible to redesign Lebanese cities according to “new-urbanism” standards. This can be achieved through organizational development or restructuring of existing public institutions (e.g. with the goal of empowering transport authorities with jurisdiction over land use, on one hand, and expanding the role of the PCH beyond the financing of homeownership, on the other hand), triggered by an overarching legislative reform. To initiate this dialogue and common work between housing and transport policymakers, representatives from the MoPWT, as well as transport operators (e.g. taxis, vans, buses, etc.), could join Lebanon’s Council of Housing – a new multi-stakeholder consultative institution that could be established to develop housing policy recommendations and monitor housing policy.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, a number of housing actors should contribute to policy discussions and decisions in the transport sector. More generally, the establishment of an Interministerial Committee for Cities or a National Habitat Committee involving not only governmental representatives but also other relevant stakeholders (such as international organizations, research and academic actors, civil society, and private sector) is also likely to contribute in a more concrete way to the actual inclusion of the housing–transport nexus in the formulation of strategic orientations and actionable solutions. In general, the creation of such a platform or body dealing with cross-sectoral urban issues can facilitate the coordination of the NUP process in the country. Finally, mechanisms can be devised to enable citizen participation in the urban planning process, supporting the coordination of joint housing–transport authorities. This entails enabling and facilitating the engagement of communities in decision-making processes through different means, such as structured town hall meetings, deliberative polls and participatory budgeting (Gilman, 2016).

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<sup>15</sup> For more details, see UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021b).

## 4. REORIENTING URBAN HOUSING AND TRANSPORT POLICY IN TIMES OF CRISES: SOME INSIGHTS RELATED TO THE CASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LEBANON



One of the key drivers for achieving the SDGs and implementing the NUA is the integration of health in all phases of the NUP development. Urban policies that guide infrastructure investments and urban development have been proven to impact health indicators and, when properly formulated and implemented, can protect urban communities from public health threats (UN-Habitat, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed the Urban Health Index tool, which aims to capture the determinants of health and intersectoral relationships in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2021); the tool can be used to diagnose the health implications of policies in urban areas and devise better health-enabling policies.

Given that an estimated 90 per cent of all COVID-19 cases have been identified in urban areas (United Nations, 2020), this pandemic is likely to lead to previously established systems of inhabiting and planning cities to be rearranged or at least reconsidered. Despite the challenges that come with urban public health crises, opportunities to learn from mistakes or gaps are also presented, helping build the urban resilience of communities and governance structures. This is especially the case if the NUP process is still at its initial phases, as in Lebanon. So, on the one hand, formulating policy in such periods characterized by instability or turmoil may prove to be difficult. On the other hand, the situation may help identify areas where

policy is lacking or is weak and hence needed or requiring redirection or enhanced clarity more urgently – something NUP can help rectify.

Lebanon has faced multiple – often simultaneous – crises in the past several decades, many of which have had dramatic consequences on urban (and rural) areas. They have included the influx of Armenian and Palestinian refugees, the Lebanese Civil War, the July 2006 War, the Syrian refugee crisis, the recent political instability and economic crisis, the 4 August 2020 Beirut Port explosion, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter has of course been an unprecedented global crisis; the dire consequences of the virus spread have impacted the world so severely that we see policy and infrastructure struggling to adapt and catch up in many countries. The below subsections present in brief challenges and considerations for policy formulation in the housing and transport sectors in Lebanon during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a review of some approaches that have been proposed and implemented by different actors.

### 4.1 Housing

Mass urbanization has become a prevalent phenomenon across the world, and the population trends in Lebanon



prove the local situation to be no different. There are three facts about urbanization in Lebanon that are quite relevant to take into account within the pandemic context:

- Firstly, Lebanon has an average population density of 669 people/km<sup>2</sup> (World Bank, 2018)<sup>16</sup> and 88.887 per cent of the Lebanese population is urban (World Bank, 2019), with two thirds of those residing in the main urban agglomerations of Beirut, Tripoli, Zahle, Tyre and Saida (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018).
- Secondly, the water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) sector in Lebanon is one that faces large deficiencies, including water collection issues (up to 50 per cent is lost to leakages in infrastructure) (Farajalla et al., 2015), inconsistent supply and access to hygiene facilities (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2021), and improper wastewater treatment (Walnycki and Husseiki, 2017). For example, 12 per cent of Syrian refugees reported having no access to showering or washing facilities (UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, 2021).
- Thirdly, absent or largely deficient planning systems, coupled with waves of population influxes, have led to large areas of informal urbanization – and informal living arrangements – in Lebanon. Though reliable and comprehensive data on informal areas is lacking in the country, it is estimated that 61 per cent of the urban population live in slums (World Bank, 2018).

These contextual parameters mean that not only is the majority of the population living together in a handful of areas (often in dense and overcrowded neighbourhoods), but also they are often residing in unsuitable and badly managed living situations, presenting a particular challenge to monitoring and managing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, their dire economic situation leaves most low-income residents with no choice but to commute to work to make a living. For a

majority of residents, teleworking and staying at home during lockdown periods are not viable options.

The housing conditions of Syrian refugees is another source of particular concern. Although the majority of these refugees live in urban settings often side by side with poor Lebanese and other vulnerable non-Lebanese, the management of health conditions in the various informal tented settlements (ITSs) housing Syrian and Palestinian refugees across the country presents challenges. It is estimated that 67 per cent of Syrian refugee households live in residential structures, 21 per cent live in non-permanent shelters (including ITSs), and 12 per cent live in non-residential structures. Of all surveyed refugee households, 58 per cent live in settings that are either overcrowded or substandard (UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, 2021).

Case-specific protocols have been created to deal with such overcrowded areas. For example, if an informal settlement had little to no COVID-19 cases, it would be required that proper WaSH measures be provided to the inhabitants so as to limit contamination. If there were merely a few cases that tested positive for COVID-19, they would be isolated to appropriately prepared quarters around the informal settlement, and make sure to accommodate for any individuals that had to be moved in order to accommodate for those infected. If the cases testing positive in an informal settlement reached a majority, measures could become more drastic, leading to a community quarantine (Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2020). Going a step further, studying similar cases in Argentina, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has suggested that cash interventions be made in order to make sure that lower-income households receive primary care. This not only helps make sure that cases of those infected do not become severe, but also helps mitigate further

<sup>16</sup> Lebanon ranks 15th globally (World Bank, 2018).



contamination, by encouraging those sick to get help faster (UNDP, 2020).

More broadly, due to the particular dynamics faced in cities, WHO provided local authorities in urban areas<sup>17</sup> with the necessary guidance for the preparedness for COVID-19, including coordination of local plans, community engagement in risk management, physical measures for public health and access to health-care services (WHO, 2020). Additionally, as part of the response and recovery measures of the COVID-19

pandemic, and due to the high percentage of COVID-19 cases in urban areas, the United Nations Secretary General determined the priority actions for policymakers in order to reduce urban inequalities, strengthen human rights, and enhance the resilience of vulnerable groups in urban contexts (United Nations, 2020). The priority actions were determined along three key areas: tackling inequalities and development deficits; strengthening the capacities of local actors; and pursuing a resilient, inclusive, gender-equal and green economic recovery (United Nations, 2020).

## 4.2 Transport

With isolation measures becoming imperative under the pandemic, the transport sector across the world has taken a serious hit. Lebanon's transport sector is loosely organized (as mentioned earlier in the report) and has a strong dependence on independently employed taxi-vans, which, since the isolation and lockdown measures, have seen a severe reduction in users. There have been reports of drivers choosing to no longer drive their vans because it is not profitable for them anymore, despite being permitted by the government to operate following specific distancing guidelines. The reason is that these guidelines require them to operate at 50 per cent of their capacity, a requirement that has reportedly made it difficult for their work to be profitable (Sewell, 2020). This situation is not only worrisome for those who work in the transport sector with no other source of income, but also for those who are most reliant on it (the primary users of public transport with no alternative transport means available to them), mainly lower-income individuals. Particularly over the past year, affordable transport has become more crucial as Lebanon faces a severe economic crisis, leaving many with little income to spare.

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<sup>17</sup> Detailed programmatic guidance on the COVID-19 response in urban areas is included in the UN-Habitat COVID-19 Policy and Programme Framework (UN-Habitat, 2020b).

This has been a problem in other countries as well, where lower-income individuals also typically hold essential jobs that require them to work on location and not to stay or work from home. Essentially, if transport systems fail, these workers become vulnerable to unemployment, and if transport systems are badly managed, they become prone to illness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, encouraged alternative forms of transport (especially for short distances), such as walking or biking, that are considered as safe modes for preserving physical distancing. Several cities (like Seattle, Paris, Milan, Lima, Bogota and Kisumu) are trying to open up more pathways for such activities (Tan et al., 2020). The pandemic has also catalysed the introduction of alternative work modalities, including remote work, shifting the usual way of operation of many businesses to less dependency on physical presence in the office space. Subsequently, the need for a daily commute to work is becoming less relevant for some, with longer-term persistency to be determined in the post-pandemic period (Madgavkar and Lund, 2020). Nonetheless, these alternative modalities are more relevant to office job holders, and do not apply extensively to service job holders, infrastructure workers and those working in the informal economy – all of which constitute a considerable part of Lebanon's economy – which still rely heavily on commuting and performing their jobs in person.

Some protocols for public transit, such as operating at partial capacity, have been complicated due to the potential economic losses they pose for the sector and the individuals working in it, as well as the challenges of enforcing such restrictions. However, other protocols, including distancing and cleaning methods, might prove more feasible. In Egypt, a country where public transport is highly relied upon, in addition to encouraging alternative transport modes, UN-Habitat has suggested a variety of protocols that could help ensure safer conditions within public transport services during the COVID-19 pandemic (UN-Habitat, 2020a). Most notably, they include making

sure that all transport vehicles are cleaned regularly, that all the involved staff are informed and given proper amenities to maintain their own hygiene, that contact is limited through various methods (such as implementing Plexiglas barriers between drivers/fee handlers and customers, encouraging cashless interactions, etc.), that awareness campaigns are organized for users, that users are monitored via temperature-testing centres at boarding stations, that distancing markers are applied on vehicles, and that time schedules are properly managed (the more vehicles available, the less crowded they are and the less people wait in large crowds) (UN-Habitat, 2020a). Of course, all of this requires strong planning capabilities and a lot of funding, which could mean that the transport sector in Lebanon needs to be seen as a priority area from a policy and investment standpoint to receive the support that it needs. On a larger scale, the concept of "15-minute neighbourhoods" where services can be accessed within short walking distances from homes, has become even more important during COVID-19 movement restrictions and lockdowns. This concept can be reintroduced at the local level as part of a densification strategy, as discussed above.

### 4.3 Community-oriented approaches

As mentioned before, pre-existing infrastructure and systems in the housing and transport sectors have been challenged (even more) by the unprecedented pandemic, and some ways to address these challenges have been briefly described above. The Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center at the American University of Beirut (AUB) takes an interesting community-oriented approach to this situation by proposing that the pandemic presents an opportunity for governing institutions to diversify their channels of action. Exploring the health-care sector, the K2P Center notes that care efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic have been highly "hospital-centered" – a large focus of support going towards hospitals, and the majority of treatment being taken care of in hospitals (Fadlallah, Daher and El-Jardali, 2020). The K2P Center

proposes that communities could become the first line of defence to help relieve some of the strain off health-care systems, as well as to better deal with the pandemic overall. Encouraging communities to get involved could mean the proliferation of more monitoring and treatment centres across the country (El-Jardali et al., 2020). While the K2P Center's efforts have been largely health-focused, this process of empowering local actors – including community actors, local government, and non-governmental organizations – and strengthening the

channels of collaboration between them and the national government could inform efforts in other sectors as well. The concept presents an opportunity in Lebanon, where planning in sectors, such as housing and transport, faces drawbacks due to its highly centralized nature. The project could be a step in the right direction, and empowering, replicating and expanding on newly established channels of collaboration could be a valuable option for the NUP programme in Lebanon, as well as for policymakers focusing on different sectors in the country.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The making of inclusive and sustainable communities is deeply rooted in the interconnectedness of the housing and transport sectors, along with other sectors. Reversing the human development challenges that Lebanon faces necessitates a joint or integrated planning of the housing and transport sectors, which are realms of critical importance in this highly urbanized country, to set the path for sustainable urbanization. Integrating both sectors in the country's NUP, as a guiding framework for urban development and sustainable planning, presents several challenges. Urban policy is not recognized as a stand-alone category in the making of public policy in Lebanon (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018). In addition, there is a lack of housing and transport policies. The development of cross-sectoral strategies and integrated policies necessitates regulatory and institutional reforms that move away from the traditionally limited tools (such as land-use planning) and the institutional fragmentation among the different stakeholders responsible for urban planning in Lebanon. It also requires capacitating governance actors with the tools and means for multisectoral, integrated policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, as well as institutionalizing the suitable platforms for exchange, coordination and collaboration.

Such integrated strategies also require the establishment of national and subnational urban data observatories that can best inform the NUP process and regularly monitor changes in urban indicators over time, including those linked to SDGs. Local authorities play a significant role in urban development through their mandate to set up strategic plans for their territories (UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2018). As such, they bear a key role in data collection, analysis and monitoring at subnational levels and in driving the shift in policy discourse towards integrated multisectoral strategies that look at the city as a functioning whole. Lebanese state authorities

play a central role in setting up the groundwork for the housing–transport nexus through strategy preparation, institutional reform and capacity-building. Civil society and grass-roots organizations involved in advocacy, research, planning and service provision are also urged to join the multisectoral discourse of the housing–transport nexus as to advance this shift to a forward-looking holistic vision of urban development. This approach is also crucial for building resilience in cases of emergencies or crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adopting this integrated policy approach is an opportunity to expand the housing–transport nexus to align with Lebanon's environmental policies, social and economic policies, migration policies and other sectoral policies that constitute the key drivers of the economy and social prosperity. As such, the NUP framework constitutes the overarching structure to achieve effective policy integration, allowing the government to efficiently respond to the most pressing needs that are emerging with the fast urban growth and to plan for longer-term sustainable development.



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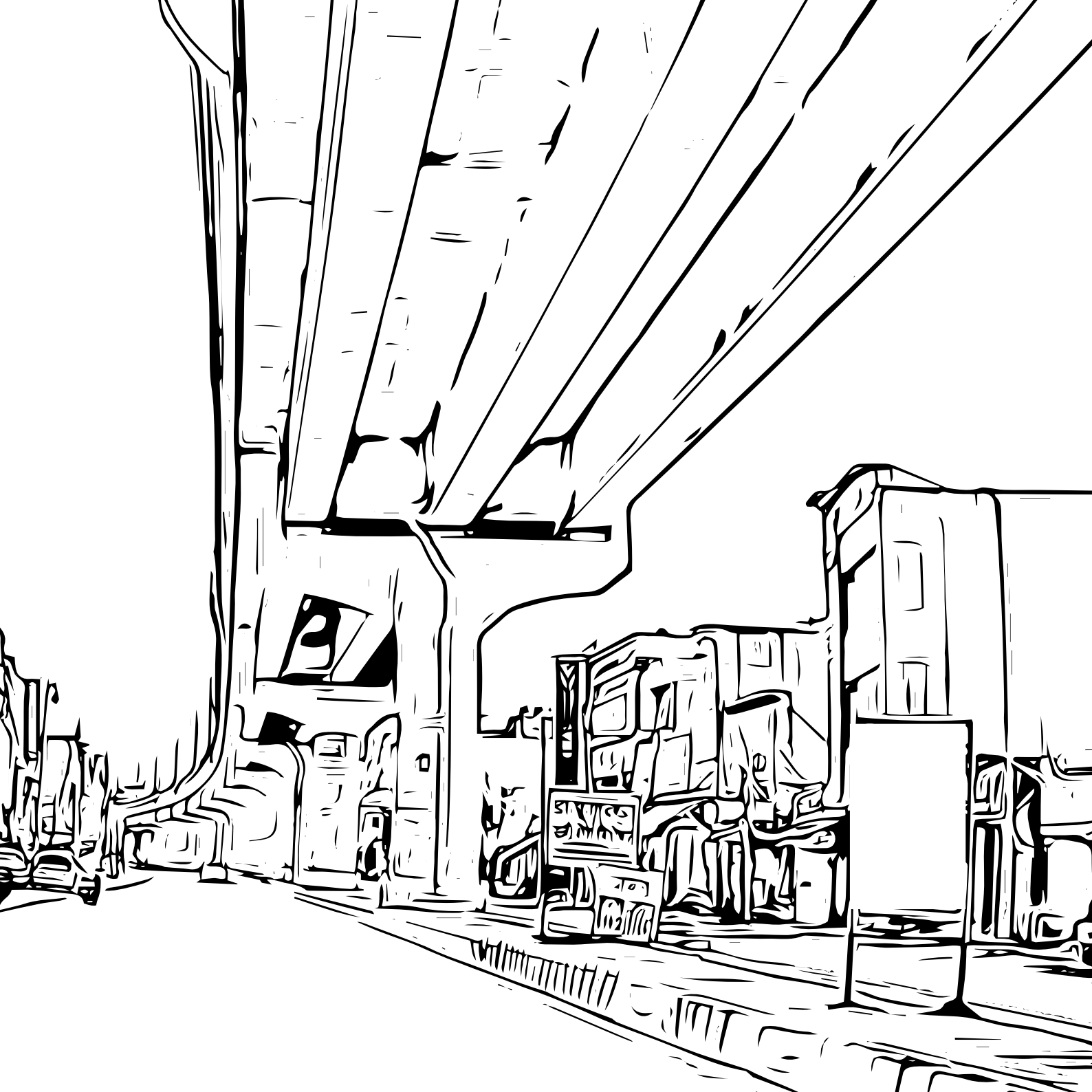
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