

EP16_BetweenAcrossThrough_NadaBeirut

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0:00:02.6 Iana Romero: This is Between, Across, and Through.

[music]

0:00:21.2 IR: War is devastating, it ravages people and places. It consumes land and demolishes cities, leaving them abandoned, shattered and ruined. Instead of grand avenues and architectural wonders, we see crumbling craters and bodegas butchered by bullets. We see an emptiness, as communities are left dead, dispersed or disrupted. But war is not forever and people are resilient. And after a war is over, what is left behind is a place full of promise, valuable real estate up for grabs to those with the best claim. Today, Professor Kevin Lewis O'Neill, Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies has a conversation with Professor Nada Moumtaz from the University of Toronto. We will discuss the reconstruction project in Beirut's city center, how the civil war in Lebanon affected the makeup of the city. How politics, corruption and the interest of the powerful determined how the land was reclaimed and how the city was rebuilt. Please join us as we travel between, across and through.

[music]

0:01:47.9 Kevin Lewis O'Neill: Hello, I'm Professor Kevin Lewis O'Neill and I'm joined by Professor Nada Moumtaz. Thank you for joining us.

0:01:53.3 Nada Moumtaz: Thank you for having me.

0:01:54.3 KO: Nada, your paper focuses on the reconstruction of Beirut city center. But before we get into that, can you give us just a brief background on the Lebanese conflict and the impact it's had on Beirut city center?

0:02:06.5 NM: Yeah. The Lebanese conflict is often referred to as the Lebanese civil war, but it is a conflict that had much more regional as well as global dimensions including the Cold War. And in terms of the regional dimensions, it was very much about the Palestinian cause and the war with Israel. And in terms of Lebanon, there was a lot of class issues that were happening, it started in 1975, but it was a conflict as... Old conflicts that last for so long. It also degenerated into fights between Christians and Christians, Christians and Muslims, so it was not necessarily along just conventional minds, even though Beirut itself become split along a green line between Christian east, predominantly, and a predominantly Christian west. And it was the scene of battles that were very famous, like the hotels battle as well as very horrendous massacres, particularly of Palestinians in Palestinian refugee camps.

0:03:12.1 NM: And the city center itself was the kind of end of the green line that separated the city, and the war itself affected, as you can imagine, the city center, and there's a kind of lore [chuckle] of how... Whether certain parts were preserved, like the banks because all of the bankers were paying the militiamen not to target the banks. And then other parts of the city center were much more hardly hit. And some people say that there were money that poured into the warring factions to cause as much destruction in what we would call a process of creative destruction which gives the promise of big reconstruction projects for developers, etcetera, etcetera.

0:04:00.8 KO: And so what happened to the people that lived or worked in the city center? Where did they go?

0:04:06.4 NM: Yeah, there's a huge Lebanese diaspora, so some people left completely Lebanon. Other people moved within the city itself. But it's also important to note that the city center was also very much a commercial hub. It had, of course, residential neighborhoods. So people who were there moved to... If they're Christian they went to Christian areas and Muslim to Muslim areas. And so people kind of scattered throughout the city, outside the city center basically.

0:04:34.9 KO: Okay. And so after the conflict was done, who had claim over what was left to the city center?

0:04:41.5 NM: The city center had a lot of property owners. It had souks, the way you imagine "Islamic cities" have these souks. So there's some of these souks that existed, which have very, very tiny shops. [chuckle] It's not like that shops that we have today. And so there was a plethora of property rights owners in the city center as well as tenants. And because the Lebanese tenancy law at the time preserved the rights of tenants and their descendants, so there were also people who had claim on the city center.

0:05:18.4 KO: Was it possible to reclaim their property after people had left?

0:05:20.8 NM: Yeah. It was... Yeah, people could just go back. Of course it was very much in shambles, it was like there was trees in the middle of streets, it's not that... It wasn't something that you could really... You could drive and just work on renovating because the infrastructure itself was in really bad shape. So that was really the main issue. There was need for infrastructural work. And then there was also the issue of these very fragmented property rights, with also some property right holders who were difficult to reach and heirs who were just so many. People say there was like 250,000 property rights holders in the city.

0:06:01.7 KO: Just for the city center of Beirut.

0:06:04.0 NM: For the city center, yeah.

0:06:05.8 KO: And at this moment, the city center needs to be rebuilt. Needs to...

0:06:11.8 NM: Yeah. That's also a big question because people again, say that after the war, say 37% of the buildings couldn't be repaired basically, and then after the company in charge of reconstruction took over and there was a phase when there was destruction happening under the cover of preparing for reconstruction, and 80% of the buildings came to be irreparable, so there was more destruction after than during the war, basically.

0:06:45.4 KO: So there was a company who was spearheading the reconstruction?

0:06:49.3 NM: Well, the company itself is called Solidere, and of course, it's owned networks, so

these are people who are close to the main architect of the reconstruction, which is the late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, so it's kind of all of it is engineered by him.

0:07:04.4 KO: Why was the appointment of Solidere so controversial for the appropriation of land and property?

0:07:09.0 NM: Okay, so regarding the property holders, because they were so many... There's this argument that was put forward that it's gonna be very hard to get everybody to agree on reconstruction, there are people who are not here, etcetera, etcetera, so they're like, "Okay, the best thing perhaps to do is to have one company that expropriates everybody and buys their land," so that's enormous as you can imagine.

0:07:34.4 KO: So of the 250,000 people with land claims in the city center, this one company Solidere is supposed to evaluate and compensate each of these claims.

0:07:48.4 NM: Right. In fact, all of these expropriations happened before the company called Solidere came to existence in 1994, so this all happened through parliamentary decisions, and before the company was incorporated, so there was a law in 1991 that was passed to allow for the creation of such a real estate holding company. And so, of course, the biggest problem was not only that they expropriated people and assessed them at the prices that were [chuckle] right after the war, which were very low, real estate property values were much lower than what the promise of the future reconstruction would bring. So if you held on to your property, you would imagine that you would be able to kind of sell it at much higher price eventually.

0:08:33.0 KO: The company appraised the value of the property following the war, but not possibly before war as you're saying, it's a sort of future appraisal.

0:08:44.6 NM: Yeah. Because they're expropriating them at the current prices of course, and then the even more controversial aspect of it was that they didn't expropriate them against cash, they expropriated them against company shares, so you became part of the shareholders of the company as somebody who was a property owner.

0:09:02.6 KO: Wow, so I don't even receive, if I'm a shareholder or... No, I'm not. No, hold on. [chuckle] So if I'm a property... If I have a claim to property, then I become a shareholder... And in theory, I could sell my share for money...

0:09:16.9 NM: You could, yes. And...

0:09:17.0 KO: But I'm not given cash.

0:09:19.6 NM: You're not. And so that means that your fate depends on how this company in... Whose decisions you basically have no input, [chuckle] and the plan had already been decided and the plan had been approved, and the expropriation process, all of this happened before the incorporation of the company itself. Solidere likes to place itself as, "We didn't do the expropriations." But of course it's the same actors that were doing all of that work before the

company itself became incorporated.

0:09:47.9 KO: And just to follow up, if I then become a shareholder, which I could sell for money, what is the likelihood that I could find someone willing to buy my share?

0:09:58.6 NM: I would say that at first people also held hope that the company would do well and they would get some dividends from that, so I'd imagine at first people held on to that and then it was also... Became publicly trading on the market, and it didn't do particularly well, so you're not gonna make so much money, and because especially if you felt like you were assessed at a lower price than what you're owed, you would hope that the shares would increase in value and you could actually make a bit more money.

0:10:30.8 KO: Nada, what's the dynamic between those who have a large amount of claim of property and those with smaller claims to property in the city center?

0:10:39.3 NM: Yeah, the process of assessment was really very controversial, and we know that there was corruption, and people say that the assessment committees were made out of judges and so and experts in real estate, so they were supposed to go around and look at the state of each property and assess it. And people say that that's not really what happened everywhere, basically, some people were doing the assessments from their homes, [chuckle] or that they were not really doing their jobs properly. And that people who had connections with this upper crust of judges, etcetera, these could get their properties valued at a higher rate versus those who might not have these connections might get their properties valued at a lower rate, so you had a lot of claims that went into courts and they were challenged, but they dragged on and on and on, as you know what the legal process is everywhere. It takes quite a bit of time. And then they also had done something within the legislation that made the assessments not appealable through the regular judicial process. It's important to know that the main character behind the whole reconstruction project was the person who became Prime Minister in 1992, whose name is Rafic Hariri, who was a multi-billionaire who made money in Saudi Arabia working as a developer, and who supposedly kept kind of distant from the warring factions, etcetera.

0:12:10.2 NM: And he came back to Lebanon as the person who is gonna come and save Lebanon to a certain degree, and this is all his brainchild. And after the Israeli invasion of Beirut, it was his company in Beirut that kind of did a certain plan for the city center. So he has been very much involved. And then one of his, the director of that company was appointed at the Council for Development and Reconstruction, which is a state entity. Now you had these private developers who are now running the main state institution that's gonna be doing the reconstruction plan, and so basically you had this kind of coming together of private interests into the state bureaucracy and helping the vision of Hariri come true without actually... He was not yet, basically, prime minister, and he had people in different places. And then when there was the vote for the law that created the company and allowed this expropriation process, etcetera, people say, there were suitcases full of cash that were given to members of Parliament to kind of vote in favor. There was a lot of co-optation through bribing to kind of pass that law.

0:13:39.6 KO: Nada, what is the relationship between this future prime minister and the company Solidere.

0:13:44.4 NM: He is one of the biggest shareholders, there's a 10% maximum any one single person can actually own, and that is usually evaded [chuckle] through having your cousins and your family... [chuckle]

0:14:01.8 KO: I see.

0:14:02.8 NM: And people who are close to you by. Even though he officially on paper he couldn't be having the biggest chunks of the company, but he is in reality, the biggest shareholder. [chuckle] What?

0:14:18.7 KO: Well, it's an extraordinary story, thanks to our new story, God, this should be like a movie. That's an incredible story. Okay, Nada, so this particular person who may not have technically the largest percentage share of Solidere, but though through kin and affiliation clearly is the dominant voice around the table, I presume this person is benefiting tremendously and financially from this situation.

0:14:48.3 NM: Yeah, I mean, he became prime minister before all of this happened, 1992, the company was incorporated in 1994.

0:14:55.0 KO: But it seemed to have happened at the same...

0:14:56.5 NM: Yeah. It's all happening at the same time, and that's how he politically became so successful, people loved him, and now, only now they're realizing after the financial meltdown that his architectures were one of the reasons behind the financial and economic meltdown that is happening now. People call this harirism, that is kind of... It has a name, all of these neoliberal policies.

0:15:20.2 KO: Right like factionism or...

0:15:20.4 NM: Exactly, exactly.

0:15:22.5 KO: Interesting.

0:15:23.5 NM: And an important aspect of the company is that it's not itself doing the reconstruction, it is in charge of basically supervising reconstruction, and their infrastructure is paid by the state. And the way the company makes money as a private company is by basically selling the properties that it bought at very cheap prices after finishing and making the state pay for the infrastructure, then it sells these same properties at crazy prices. That's really how that company operates, it's not that they are rebuilding themselves. No, they did a few prototypes to kinda show, and they renovated a few things, but really it was mostly through selling them back to developers, particularly from Arabian Gulf money. So yeah, there was a huge amount of dispossession that then they made a lot of money of, in addition to the fact that it created this model for the economy, that it's all based on real estate development, that became a huge motor for the economy. And it was all speculation. And as you can imagine, it created a huge real estate bubble in Beirut that had a few

crashes during the '90s and 2000s, the prices in Beirut are now as ridiculous as in Toronto, [chuckle] for example, even perhaps worse.

0:16:52.8 KO: I'm trying to think of a way to describe Solidere as something other than a real estate agent or agency. Is there anything... Did it award contracts for the construction, did it do anything other than mediate the sale of these properties?

0:17:09.6 NM: Of course, no, of course, it was doing contracts as well for the infrastructural work, etcetera, so it's partly a contractor, so that's kind of how Solidere made its money at the back of Beirutis. [chuckle] And eventually the kind of real estate bubble that it created ended up actually affecting Beirutis who don't live in the city center, but also live around it that now cannot afford to live in the city. Not only were they dispossessed of their shops, because a lot of people owned shops in the city center, and their livelihood because that's how they made their monies. Then eventually they also had to move out of the city because it became unaffordable.

0:17:51.0 KO: As you say, on the back of Beirutis, but then also in the spirit of the speculative future that traffics in such aspiration of hope and peace.

0:18:05.6 NM: Absolutely. Yeah, and Solidere is very much in the back of everybody's head, like today on Twitter, I was reading one member of Parliament was saying, why shouldn't we do Solidere again, and you should see the storm... [chuckle]

0:18:21.9 KO: Wow.

0:18:23.6 NM: It's like, what? So some people who made money from this think about it as a great solution, and then again, the other part of the project that was really sad was that, as I said, it was like 250,000 people. And that means that it was very diverse, so it's not like a high-end city center, it was kind of very much popular and it had different areas for different budgets, if you will.

0:18:48.6 KO: Sure.

0:18:49.3 NM: And we are as nowadays, the city center was very much rebuilt for clientele that doesn't really reflect the population of Beirut and Lebanon, it was very much built for the ultra rich. It is not a place where people will just go and have a coffee because a coffee costs three times more than another place, there's no street vendors or the kind of cheap everyday bodegas are not really there. It's really super high-end and became a very exclusive city center.

0:19:22.0 KO: Sure, and your research really focuses on how the appropriation affected awqaf. What are they?

0:19:29.9 NM: Awqaf are forms of charitable endowments, which means that they are lands whose property their founders gave to God, and they dedicate their revenues to particular charitable purposes.

0:19:44.0 KO: Who would typically set up this type of property?

0:19:48.2 NM: It was men and women who were sometimes of modest means and sometimes who were not. In the Islamic tradition, waqfs are considered an act of charity, they are a way for people to get close to God, but of course, there are also many other things. They are a way for people to decide what will happen to their property after they die. It can also be used for prestige, you can just create a mosque, you can create a school, you can create so many of these institutions that are today usually provided by the state, a lot of the times, it used to be provided by these charitable foundations. It's a way, in a way that you can do good even after you die. These rewards will continue to accrue to you up until the day of judgement.

0:20:36.3 KO: And so then how are they administered today?

0:20:39.4 NM: Yeah, so originally they were individually administered, so I would make one and I'd create an administrator who would just rent it and then use the money to either do some repairs on that... Or necessary or pay somebody. And so that was kind of the gist of it until I would say the mid-19th century, when the Ottoman State, because Lebanon was under the Ottoman Empire at the time, it didn't exist as an entity called Lebanon, and so the state started to centralize and to take over some of these waqfs, under the pretext that they are not well administered. And so they start to take over, and so they became administered by a state ministry and the air of that entity today in Beirut, in Lebanon is called the Directorate General of Islamic Waqfs.

0:21:26.0 KO: And what does it mean to say that they are inalienable?

0:21:30.5 NM: Usually when they do a waqf, they give the ownership to God and they dedicate revenues to particular beneficiaries, and when you give property to God, who becomes then its owner, they are the only one who can sell it and rent and do all of these rights of alienation with it, so sell it, mortgage it, pass it on to heirs, etcetera. And so basically, these rights extinguish, they cannot be held by anybody anymore because they go to God, and so it means that the property itself cannot be sold officially.

0:22:07.5 KO: Because the property belongs to God?

0:22:10.5 NM: Right.

0:22:12.7 KO: Wow, and so then the person or the institution administering is simply that, just an administrator?

0:22:20.2 NM: A trustee.

0:22:22.3 KO: A trustee for God's property?

0:22:24.5 NM: Yeah. And of course, with... The French real estate code did not have God as a possible kinda owner, as you can imagine, so what became the owner was the waqf itself. Now people think about the properties as owned by the director general, not as held in trusteeship by the Directorate General. And even though technically it is held in trusteeship by them, but with the

French mandate, there was more possibility to do what is known as exchanges, which means it's like a sale, but it's not a sale. Even in the 19th century or before you make a waqf that's supposed to last forever, but we know that earthquakes happen, cities become deserted, and so of course, that property can stop being revenue-generating, and so jurists created the possibility for these waqfs to be moved from one place to another. So the same stipulations of the founders and the same beneficiaries remain, but the asset itself can be substituted with another one, so you can move that waqf from one place to another with the same conditions.

0:23:37.3 KO: Tell me how this then intersects with reconstruction of the city centre?

0:23:44.6 NM: Yes. Since these waqfs can be exchanged, the Directorate General could have exchanged them for shares and said, "Okay, we can be doing this exchange and we'll use the revenues from these with shares." Now, of course, this would have required a bit of processing because there's some procedural issues with the way, whether the Directorate General is supposed to buy back something with that money or if it can keep that money when they're doing substitutions. The question of what happens is a bit more wishy-washy these days. What happens at the time is that the Directorate General of Islamic Waqfs agrees to this expropriation and that is done under the guidance of the person who is the highest religious authority, who is in charge of the waqfs, who is the Grand Mufti of the Lebanese Republic, so he's the official representative of the Muslim Sunni community. So he has some political alliance, etcetera, with Hariri, who basically brokers his election as the Grand Mufti, not just as the acting Grand Mufti in exchange of him agreeing to that Solidere. And there's also talk about awqaf being assessed higher values, like what I told you about.

0:25:08.5 KO: When an awqaf is expropriated for shares, how does that impact the inalienable nature of these properties?

0:25:18.5 NM: Yeah, inalienability is kind of wishy-washy because it's very much present in jurist discourse, but also in practice, they are not as inalienable as they appear in text, because as I said, there was all of these substitutions that were happening even in the 19th century. Waqfs were never really inalienable in the sense like you would say like crown jewels. In fact, that these are much more like properties that can actually be moved to keep them in shape in the adverse conditions of life, so inalienability remains attached to them and that's what you see in the public discourse. Even though legally what the Directorate General did was not wrong...

0:26:05.0 NM: But the idea that waqfs are inalienable holds a lot of ground in public discourse as well as among religious scholars who are trained in the tradition and who in their world, whatever state says, waqfs should not be sold. And they should be kept. And so there was a huge mobilization, you had religious scholars writing against the exchange and the expropriation of these awqafs' siting inalienability. And there was also opponents of the Mufti politically who also were kind of using that argument to say, "You're not supposed to sell awqaf," for their political purposes. But there was also some genuine kind of appalled Beirutis, who are like, "They sold the Muslims' waqfs," like, "They are not supposed to do that. They're supposed to hold on to them." And this big mobilization actually forced the Directorate General of Islamic Waqfs to issue a statement saying, "We are not giving up the waqfs, we are recuperating all the waqfs of the Directorate General of Islamic Waqfs." So the mobilization around inalienability was performative in the sense that it

created inalienability, even though inalienability now is not really there so much. It allowed for the reproduction of inalienability and the kind of the promise to return the awqaf to their inalienable status.

0:27:30.9 KO: And what happened when these administrators demanded their properties back from Solidere?

0:27:37.5 NM: What happened was actually much more complicated because they didn't really come and say, "These are awqaf, they are inalienable." No, they went back to Solidere using Solidere's own by-laws because Solidere had these by-laws that allowed for people who had buildings that were in good shape to recuperate them. They negotiated with Solidere and they bought back their properties by giving back the stock. But of course, things were a bit more complicated because sometimes there were tenants in these buildings, and so Solidere had expropriated these tenants too, so they're like, "Okay, but now you also need to pay for the share of these tenants because we paid them to get them out also. Now, if you want back this building without the tenants, you have to pay the tenants' share."

0:28:26.2 NM: That is what then makes the Directorate General, which doesn't have cash at hand, to say, "Well, we can't pay back, so what are we gonna do, we have these waqfs that are much smaller," as I said, some of them are shop here, especially in the souks, so instead of recuperating all of their waqfs, they recuperate the biggest properties that are mostly things that can be developed, so they can build a new building that they can rent, etcetera. These are the buildings that they decide to keep, and then there's a much more, like three times more, smaller waqfs that they give up to Solidere in exchange of what the Directorate General owes for the tenants' shares.

0:29:13.5 KO: Solidere took away these smaller properties and gave them shares, though the administrators selected the largest and most substantial properties to take back?

0:29:25.2 NM: Yes, they had given them share for everything, and then they decided to only recuperate those that are very valuable, and then to use the rest of the things they don't recuperate to pay back Jews that they owe on the big lots for the shares of tenants.

0:29:42.5 KO: And the administrator gets into debt through this because the administrator has to pay, for example, possible tenants in these larger properties to remove them?

0:29:52.7 NM: Yes, they didn't go into debt, they did a debt swap basically. Solidere owes them all of these shares for the small waqfs and they owe Solidere shares for the tenants, and so they kind of did a debt swap and eventually were clear with Solidere. They gave up some of their properties in exchange of having the tenants removed. Basically they participated, at the end, they were fighting for them to stay, but they were doing it also at the back of tenants.

0:30:28.5 KO: On the back of tenants, but it seemed like the awqaf also loses out tremendously because they are spending their smaller properties to recuperate the more substantial properties, and both of them, they own.

0:30:42.9 NM: Yes, but I mean, to them, what they have now are these like three lots that they developed into this... Enormous buildings that will provide them much better rents. So they...

0:30:55.7 KO: You're not too concerned.

0:30:58.3 NM: I'm not concerned...

0:31:00.6 KO: I got it.

0:31:00.7 NM: About... No, no, no, not at all. I think they joke about it and they say, Solidere is the best thing that happened to the awqaf.

0:31:06.2 KO: Okay.

0:31:06.8 NM: Because, yeah, so they actually kind of partake in this like this dispossession, they kind of escape from it, but they also... So it's one of these interesting...

0:31:17.2 KO: And they clearly profited?

0:31:19.0 NM: They profited. Exactly, and you can say they are different from other people who profited, like Hariri. Because at the end, this money is supposedly going to the Muslim community, it is not that they're buying more property to kind of develop, what they're doing mostly with this money is paying the staff of mosques, they are paying for religious schooling, so they are really using it to perpetuate the Muslim community's way of life. So even though they partook in this process, they were not really... They're not really capitalists.

0:31:53.7 KO: Well, you've written very provocatively to say that values such as getting close to God are able to persist, not against, but through neoliberal capitalism, what do you mean by that?

0:32:07.4 NM: That's exactly what I'm talking about. The fact that they were actually partaking in that process of dispossession of some tenants, they were actually playing along with Solidere in some ways, but at the end of the day, in order to allow for the perpetuation of mosques being staffed, etcetera, etcetera, so these Muslim subjects that are being trained through these programs that they have... Part of the money that's sustaining them comes from these capitalist kind of enterprises and projects. And of course, anthropologists have done a lot of work about how the Islamic tradition can sometimes be very much in line with even neoliberal subjectivities, kind of productivity, entrepreneurship, all of these can be framed as Islamic virtues. But what we see here, I think that is different, is that there are excesses, you can't say that Islam has become neoliberalized, there's these values that can't square. Especially if you think about God, for example, you do things for God, and that is something that is important for religiously committed Muslims. I think that is something that exceeds just to say capitalist logics.

0:33:28.8 KO: This dynamic with the administrator of awqaf, the idea of trading or selling property for shares, especially property that is owned by God. I can't help but thinking that it changes understandings of housing and rights to housing. What has been the impact?

0:33:55.3 NM: I think relation to land perhaps, or relation... Or the social value of property is what I would say... I think that's really what matters is the fact that property has value other than just profit. The thing I usually say is cities for people not for profit. They are basically doing both here, they are profiting, but then using it for... And that's kind of philanthropy and all of that that you talk about as well, so all of these philanthropists who make a lot of money, then they are trying to be doing good. They are part of the problem as well. But partly what I don't want to end up saying is because I feel like it's too easy to kind of pinpoint and say the Directorate General of awqaf is evil and they are just part of the capitalists. It's actually a bit more complicated, and there's ways that we can actually push them on these Islamic values, whatever they are, getting close to God or doing good for the Muslim community, they are supposed to do that. I think there's ways that we can push them to more radical ways that they can do with their property in the city. I think instead of just saying they are just part of this political, religious capitalist class and they are evil, I think that the waqfs are in an in-between position that can be... That can have more radical potential, is what I think.

0:35:22.7 KO: Now that you mentioned in your writing that the reconstruction project in Beirut is a cautionary tale for war-ravaged cities in the Middle East. Can you say a little more about that?

0:35:32.7 NM: Yeah, it's a cautionary tale in so many different ways. I would say it is a cautionary tale because it ended with the dispossession of so many people and putting profit before people, I would say, that that kind of is really the main problem with the way the reconstruction went. You can also think about participatory planning, the fact that that was not present at all, so there was no integration of the community at all. The community was completely absent. You can see how... It was one that put the interests of a few who were interested in making money basically off of this reconstruction project rather than about the life of the city itself and its inhabitants. Beirut is such a diversity. I refer usually to Beirutis to talk to be able to say that we should plan for all the residents of Beirut, whether they are Lebanese or Syrian or Palestinian or Ethiopian or Sri Lankan or all of these other nationalities of people who live in Beirut and call it home.

0:36:39.7 KO: Well, and that's why your research has always struck me as not just speaking about Beirut, but about cities themselves and how they should be populated, which is... We just made this conversation so... So fantastic. Thank you for joining us, Nada.

0:36:53.5 NM: Thank You.

0:36:56.2 IR: Now, is Professor Kevin Lewis O'Neill in conversation with Professor Nada Moutaz from the University of Toronto. If you enjoyed this episode, please subscribe on your favorite app and give us a five-star rating. This monthly podcast was brought to you by the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto. Between, Across, and Through is produced by me, Iana Romero, thank you for listening and joining the conversation.

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