

ICOA1947: RECONSTRUCTION OF BEIRUT LEBANON: CHALLENGES IDENTITIES RECONCILIATION AND MODELS

Subtheme 02: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation

Session 1: Heritage as Peace Builder, Tying and Benefitting Community

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Abstract: The city of Beirut LEBANON was the scene of a civil war for 30 years. Armed conflicts have affected the center of the historic city with its components of modern city, built on strata of known or unknown cities, but which shaped the city then without a town plan and without awareness of its treasures.

The face of the city appears during the reconstruction, the old cities with their historical markings and traces were unveiled. State bodies have taken charge of the reconstruction and enhancement of archaeological sites as well as the recent heritage, memory of a recent past, social and collective. A virtual city appears; it outlines peace and tries to keep watch over its identity.

After 4 years of studies and 10 years of work, the project can be qualified as a technical success but beyond this success, underlying social and socio-cultural aspects could be erased. Today the city lives with its new components, its strategies and offers a vision far from authentic but with an approach that can be considered eclectic.

The presentation tends to show the process of reconstruction from the draft to date by trying to explore its limits based on rights for citizens, and for the renewal of the city.

What is the effect of this reconstruction and how peace was built in this historic centre, how did cultural heritage participate in reconciliation, what about identity and authenticity, how do we envision the reconstruction of historic post-war cities with this model, which guarantees of peace after conflict which probably give rise to other conflicts. Can this rediscovered city model be replicated, what approach to rights? What participatory democracy must be put in place?

Key words: *Peace, Reconciliation, Approach to rights, Identity.*

Introduction Perception of the city of Beirut

Beirut is one of the oldest cities in the world. Its position as a crossroads between East and West has earned it a great reputation among traders of antiquity. Several civilizations have succeeded each other and left many archaeological remains.

Beirut opens widely on a blue and serene Mediterranean sea. Partially destroyed by the 1975 civil war, Beirut is now still under reconstruction and the city center, closely linked to its port, impresses with the architecture of its recently renovated buildings.

<<The city is famous for its nightclubs, restaurants, shops and especially for its city center >>¹.

Overview: Conflict

The reconstruction of downtown Beirut was one of the most significant projects in the world, representing a post-war urban regeneration challenge.

Before 1975, the city of Beirut was able to build an identity of an open city composed with the authentic (souk), with the modern and the inheritance of urban policies since the Ottomans in 1890 and the recommendations of urbanism services of the French mandate, which structured the city of 1975. Beirut played a crucial economic role in the regional area at the time when the petrodollars were manufacturing the city. Several other aspects have contributed to economic dynamism and unequalled growth in the region. This period still remains, and from the point of view of a non-negligible number of Lebanese a period of prosperity, but which only benefited the centre and the capital, a wide gap emerged between the five mohafazats (administrative regions) of Lebanon.

In 1975, a war broke out in the historic heart of Beirut; the city became the scene of destructive events for 15 years. The heart stopped beating and the population of Beirut and the inhabitants were deprived of their capital, the dynamism that it brought and the impetus it created for a better future.

The Lebanese population of no less than 15 religious communities, whose past and cultural heritage have no less than 15 historical period, is destabilized by these events and must subconsciously prepare for reconciliation in a future that has often been declared as near. The war has brought people face to face, often by compulsory adherence to this war, and for which an end is expected. Beirut, capital of Lebanon, and the main city that was ravaged during the "events" in Lebanon (1975 to 1990), came out of the war period in 1990 naked; a total disaster; total desolation.

¹ Site Internet : Le Guide Méditerranée



Fig.1– Aerial photo (SOLIDERE).

Reconstruction - The Lebanese model

In the aftermath of the war, with an accumulation of crises and social conflicts and cultural community positions, it was necessary to rebuild. << Lebanon was forced to begin a reconstruction that materialized around the character of Rafic Hariri, a controversial figure, but whose reconstruction strategy began well before the war>>².

The city is famous for its nightclubs, restaurants, shops and especially for its city center

"Reconstruction affects an area of about 1.8 million square meters." 4.69 million square meters will accrue. In the BCD, 265 ancient structures are maintained. These structures will be divided into three categories: those "in a sufficiently healthy condition to give them future economic value, the other category includes housing (legal tenants), then the 26 buildings that are governmental, public or religious." Townscape structures resume pre-war themes, most of them emblematic fountains, souks, religious monuments, city gate stairs. Most of the 265 buildings are concentrated in the historic centre, "the square area of Nijmeh of a relatively large and intact area ".

To succeed, the Beirut project has pioneered the strategic business project model with objectives borrowing from the European urban language in an oriental city with exceptional geographical assets but devoid of urban planning instruments and local authority actions (pouvoir public). The project is inscribed in a project approach: processes and objectives to be achieved, global strategic project thought through the interaction between the various actors of the complex process of the city: political actors, social actors, economic actors, technical actors , environmental, cultural and tourist, urbanistic and architectural actors, the real absence is the social aspect.

Beirut's "Urban Project" has tried to position itself in the saga of urban projects, the reconstruction of Beirut can be considered as a phenomenon triggering dynamism, an introduction to heritage values and, above all, a way of rethinking how to rebuild, but unfortunately totally devoid of social tools which provide a concrete way out of crisis.

² Chaker, Gonçalves. (2013).

A law gave the municipal administration the authority for the creation of a special type of company SOLIDERE whose mission is the execution of the designated urban plan "Master Plan", promotion, marketing and marketing properties. The powers of this society seem to be a little extended given the Lebanese context, especially since it is the first time in the urban history of Lebanon that we are witnessing this mode of operation which has been set up in a very private way (This type of arrangement, although innovative, is still intriguing in the unique choice for the city of Beirut) . This necessitated the privatization of reconstruction and conservation operations and property actions, through local legal procedures and conventions.

The data corresponding to the participation of the users is not very well explained in the official documents of the city. The axes of the urban project are fixed, a political axis: to design a future for the city following the various destructions, a social axis of reconciliation and renewal with the glorious past and identities, an economic axis, the city designed to provide economic solutions.

Reconstruction Process, a Path to Sustainable Peace: History and Memory, Communication Opportunities

The main objective of the project is to restore the regional role of Beirut as the financial, commercial, educational, cultural and tourist centre of the Middle East. But the city of Beirut as before had the look of a virtual city, oscillating between authenticity and modernity. The face of the intangible ancient historical city so narrated has emerged with the disasters of war. Actions on Heritage and their preservation as a pledge of reconciliation and lasting peace are conducted.

The treasures of the city from studies and excavations must be enhanced with a new symbolism. However communication around these actions cannot be considered participatory. The municipality, place of exchange and potentially the place of social innovation, failed to put in place the necessary levers to encourage the contribution of citizens. Decisions were made within the company in charge, with a very high technical nature.

The memory of the past, the cultural heritage, the archaeological heritage, the history of Beirut and Lebanon become the strategic axes of the emergence of notions of identity and must form the keys to the success and attractiveness of the city. The levers for Hariri are centered around archaeological remains, a way to reconnect with a glorious past and a recent past, a way to a Peace at Hariri time.

To Reconcile the Lebanese, the Social objectives 1 - Rebuild the capital, define intervention programs, 2 - Find landmarks through memory, 3 - Find the landmark, through history 4 - Reposition Beirut in its lost place, cultural attractiveness, tourism, educational offer for the Middle East, other economic objectives (5) Requalification of major economic structures: Port, Airport, irrigation of zones to the south and north, (6), Rebuild the banking centre, rue des banques, (7), Ensure a quality residential offer for investors, Create a qualitative offer of offices, (8) Provide an attractive setting.

Among the orientations, the development of the sites after excavation.

Each site tells a story and traces a new historical path. The studies are multiplying to meet the objective of "past future, to find the MARK

a)The site of the TELL, brought to light following the demolition of the buildings that occupied this place, Phoenician ruins, but also witness to 15 civilizations, will be the principal site to present to the Lebanese. The site of the tell is currently located in the extension of the place of the martyrs and baptized by the media as Freedom Square or Crazy Place. It was the land of separation of Beirut (East West) . The

site covers an area of about 2 hectares; it includes remnants of several historical periods or civilizations that have played a role in the construction of the city.

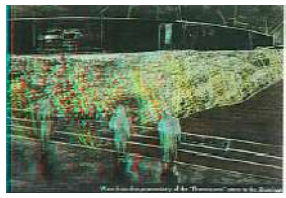


Fig.2 – Tell interactive muséology (After)



Fig.3 – Tell phoenician wall (Before)



Fig.4– Tell Site Museum Project (After)

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Fig.5– Martyrs square (Before)

b) The churches site: The Garden of Forgiveness. This project speaks of an intention about the future, union to build better. In the perimeter of the Roman city, the site of the CARDO, will lead to the project of the Garden of Forgiveness, a theme which emerged during studies and whose site is majestically surrounded by religious monuments of the main religious communities.

c) Heritage trail d) The gates of the city: Memory of Beirut, this typology is present in many ancient and eastern cities. These gates tell the history of the city, for the generations who knew the pre-war Beirut, they evoke the economic and technological development, that the city has lived through, they are representative of landmarks, connecting with the city outside the historical Center. The gates of the city embrace the perimeter of the Roman city, coincidentally; they constitute a skeleton of city reading, absent even before the war.

e) The souks: Collective memory “par excellence”, the site is currently occupied by a modern souk with a beautiful architecture erasing the authenticity of the place to represent economic globalization. Only the names of streets indicate a link with the real Beirut.



Fig.6– Souk (Before) Fig.7 – Souk (Now)

To date, reconstruction provides a unique environment of quality, tourism, and consumerism. However, it does not provide sites dedicated to the transmission of knowledge, cultural places or authentic areas with real functions in the image of Beirut as before and an absence of place recalling the history of the city or its pre-war elements. This raises the following question, should this request be taken into account by the project or by the city? The business surveys proved to be very difficult and did not allow establishing and recording an order of the frequentations of the place. However, the feedback collected in the questionnaires and the observation carried out visually via the media as well as the indications on the site of SOLIDERE tend to confirm the success of the place. The SOLIDERE project is an active, autonomous cell in the city, but does not interact with its immediate environment. The projects of the city of Beirut outside the perimeter of BCD do not project a satisfactory image of the city and do not illustrate its potential

Survey results (Private)

An online survey with a category of Lebanese people living in the Lebanon or abroad was led to evaluate the feedback. The subjects of the questionnaire concern the degree of attractiveness of the city, the Memory, the history, the participatve way of inhabitants, the direct or indirect economic aspect on the activity of each and on the communication. The survey reflects the lack of information on the city real-life experience by inhabitants and visitors, a negative image of the places of consumption in connection with their functions (offices) of origin, a real sensibility in public places and pedestrian spaces in the city. This comes to confirm the role of a strategic project in the construction of the city. In an approach of evolution capacities of the global project and the flexibility of the "Master's degree Plan ", certain gaps can be remedied, the deficiencies regarding cultural offers are left with the good care of the Municipality which has to work to rethink its offer. (<https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/X5K4N9E9A0B2R9V5D>)

Among the gaps identified, and essentially on the Peace and contribution of inhabitants, history and the memory, we note a recurring observation on the soul of the city which disappeared because of the activity (occupation) of places by spaces of consumption of restaurants and businesses of tourism, and especially a lack of relation with the immediate environment, the notion of Identity, authenticity and reconciliation. The Garden of Forgiveness, representative of religious identities could be the powerful lever.

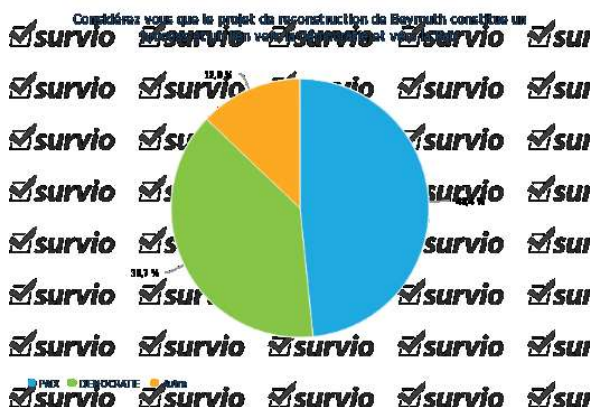


Fig.8– Survey result Q17

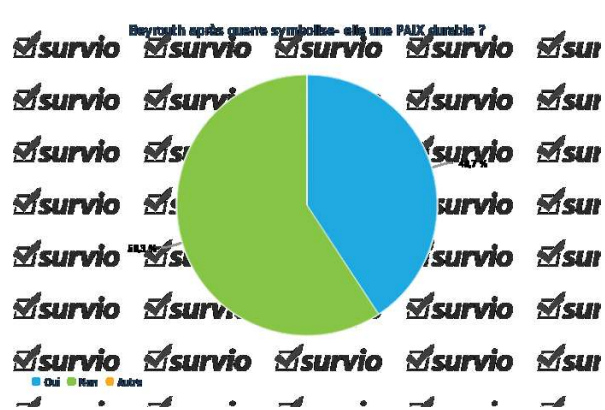


Fig.9 – survey result Q4

Lessons for the next phase

The objectives of the post war economic project cannot be in line with the objectives of civil society, thus far not expressed. 'Solidere' who were responsible for reconstruction, in all its composite parts, did not know how to build participative tools to be used by civil society, instead, social inequality that threatened cohesion and sustainable peace.

The political leaders prioritized the economic aspect and renewal of Beirut via new components, landmark structures, and the memory of the city was erased and replaced by new entities, notably the SOUKS, a bet on a continuity of values that unfortunately has not been achieved.

Based on the survey results, recommendations to support a better response to the expectations of the Lebanese public.

Firstly, the collective memory; how is it perceived by the Lebanese, inhabitants? Identities, memory and history: many memories, many histories, how to narrate them. This term was invented by Maurice Halbwachs to differentiate from the notion of individual memory. Collective memory is shared, transmitted and constructed by the group or modern society. In the local Lebanese society, many memories can co-exist. It is important to quote 'religious memory' which is very present in the site of the 'Garden of Forgiveness', where the theme of forgiveness is a common civil denominator. It is the PLACE of Dialogue (Roman Forum).

Secondly, establish the principle of participative democracy, or the role of society in the formulation of the expression of the expectations of the inhabitants and uses (usages). Representative participation is sworn to fail in the case of reconstruction after deadly wars. The Garden of Forgiveness could be the answer, but the possibility for alternatives to save these memories is open.

Thirdly, identical reconstruction and its harmony with authenticity must obligatorily be inscribed in a register of real participative democracy.

Forthly, strong articulation to be found between projects of type PPP (Private) and the city projects (Public) .The city center of Beirut created opportunities in the city, consumerism, public spaces and a new image of the city at the heart of the city. The articulation of these places not being part of the project is brutal; a border is emerging on a technical and social level.

Fifthly, the tools to be created for territorial balance., heritageisation as a process of social and spatial recomposition of cities. Although Beirut is living a renaissance, the emerging cities are experiencing their disappearance. Especially that the projects is driven and organized by a private company. Beirut is reborn, the renaissance and success are composed of several aspects : 1) the success of the creation of places and qualitative public spaces that are conducive to the making of identity, the creation of spaces of consumption in the absence of places of culture, which can induce a certain type of territorial hegemony,

Conclusion

The cultural heritage of historic cities is a fundamental tool for reconstruction and especially a powerful lever of reconciliation.

The reconstruction project is often based on technical tools: historical , financial, economical, marketing, urban zoning , but the social aspects and the sociological studies and visions must be taken into account during the programming phase .

By implementing management policies and participative democracy, municipalities and state authorities encourage dialogue with the population and by permitting "small interventions" in the project (Master plan), to finding solutions or developing a strategic Project. The involvement of the population to build project axes that meet their aspirations and expectations is a condition for success and for the link with lasting peace, especially for countries emerging from crisis or war.

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