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Integrating culture, recovery and reconstruction for sustainable urban development: Beirut case study

by Howayda al-Harithy and Dina Mneimneh*

Abstract:

The exceptional cultural vitality of Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s was heavily ruptured by the Lebanese civil war that ravaged the country from 1975 to 1990. Beirut's society was dismantled and divided on confessional grounds, along with its institutions. In their paper, Howayda al-Harithy and Dina Mneimneh examine how, after the end of the civil war, reconstruction efforts failed to address social and cultural dimensions of recovery. Government initiatives, crippled by institutional fragmentation and financial challenges, reduced the reconstruction of the whole country to that of central Beirut, and subsequently entrusted it to the private development company, Solidere. The city is painted in a post-war context of recovery where remembrance and erasure continue to be juxtaposed and negotiated.

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Howayda al-Harithy
Dina Mneimneh

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Introduction

Lebanon's unique cultural diversity has multiple manifestations across the country: archaeological sites, historical monuments of different periods, museums, and arts and music venues. This diversity further encompasses intangible cultural practices and contemporary art forms¹. However, Lebanon has lacked the necessary mechanisms to identify, define, conserve and manage these assets through a comprehensive approach that contributes to building true cultural continuity and a collective sense of place.

The exceptional cultural vitality of the 1950s and 1960s was heavily ruptured by the civil war that ravaged the country from 1975 to 1990. Furthermore, the post-war period exacerbated the country's cultural disruption. Government initiatives for recovery, crippled by the heavy burdens of institutional fragmentation and financial challenges, failed to identify the role of culture - through its multiple expressions – and integrate it into strategies for transforming the war-torn society, restoring a true sense of belonging and communal reconciliation. This is best expressed in the post-war reconstruction of Beirut's city centre.

Pre-war Lebanon (1950s and 1960s)

Unprecedented economic and touristic vitality characterized Lebanon in the 1950s and 1960s. Against a backdrop of regional events and movements, such as the Palestine War (al-Nakba) in 1947-1948, flows of entrepreneurial elites and affluent oil economies of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as restructured monetary and economic relations with Syria, the 1950s-1960s largely consolidated the establishment of Lebanon as an independent state in 1943 and the end of the French Mandate in 1946, which manifested at multiple political, economic and administrative levels².

Lebanon's growing economic position, both regionally and internationally, was generated by several key factors: (a) infrastructural developments, such as the increased role of Beirut's port (due to the decline of Haifa's port and the closing of the Suez Canal in 1967) and the construction of Beirut's international airport in 1951; (b) an economic laissez-faire approach (banking secrecy and free trade); and (c) a significant influx of Arab investments. Between 1950 and 1974 national economic growth increased annually by 7%³. Lebanon's service

1 UNESCO. 2016. *Culture: Urban Future*. Paris, UNESCO.

2 Kassir, S. 2003. *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Paris, Fayard, pp. 416-456.

3 Idb.



Figure 1. Aerial view of Beirut.
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sector, including banking, finance, hospitality and entertainment, thus became a major asset to attracting tourism activity.

Moreover, critical institutional reforms during Fouad Chehab's presidency (1958-1964) introduced developmental projects that contributed to nationwide prosperity, although at different scales. These included large-scale infrastructural and social development projects and, most importantly, decentralization aimed at balancing regional growth⁴. The creation of a Ministry of Planning in 1963 enabled the adoption of planning legislation applicable to all of Lebanon. Major cities of Lebanon were subject to urban planning proposals to limit their uncontrolled growth and further empower their regional position⁵.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive national discourse on culture, the revitalization of some cultural assets featured in specific government projects of the 1960s. Both the master plans prepared for Ba'alback (by the architect Henri Edde in 1963) and Tyre (by the architect Pierre el-Khoury in 1964) recognized the value of preserving the major archaeological sites around which the two cities were organized⁶. Other sporadic government initiatives for promoting culture were pursued through the arts and

architecture. The government joined with private funders to back the Ba'alback International Festival, an annual summer event created in the mid-1950s, which gained unprecedented regional and international recognition in the 1960s and early 1970s⁷. It also commissioned a Permanent Tripoli Fair to the architect Oscar Niemeyer in 1963, which took place in Lebanon's second largest city, Tripoli⁸.

Reticent government efforts with regards to culture were, however, counterbalanced by the private sector's more instrumental involvement, which powered the thriving cultural scene, and was best expressed in Beirut. In addition to the growth of private academic and educational institutions in Beirut, increased information flow characterized the prosperous pre-war era, notably: (a) producing and distributing local and international press media (newspapers and magazines); (b) publishing significant literary works through publishing houses across the city; and (c) the creation of two private TV channels Compagnie Libanaise de Télévision (CLT) and Télé-Orient⁹. Art production and exhibitions also experienced increased growth, which was further boosted through the movement of regional and international performing artists. Similarly, the rise of cinema theatres in Hamra Street in the 1960s contributed to this newly-established business and cultural hub. Beirut's cultural vitality was coupled by a growing tourism sector, which developed through the emergence of the hotel district in Ein el-Mreysse, numerous hotels in Hamra, and a large variety of hospitality services across the city (restaurants, beach resorts, nightlife, etc.¹⁰).

The civil war in Lebanon

When the civil war broke out in 1975, the economic, tourism and cultural prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s was severely disrupted. Internal struggles inherent to the Lebanese socio-political and confessional system resulted in violent strikes across the country. The 15-year-long war was

4 Salam, A. 1998. The Role of the Government in Shaping the Built Environment. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp. 126-132.

5 Tabet, J. 1998. From Colonial Style to Regional Revivalism: Modern Architecture in Lebanon and the Problem of Cultural Identity. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp 29-95.

6 Ibid.

7 Kassir, S. 2003. *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Paris, Fayard, pp. 416-456.

8 Tabet, J. 1998. From Colonial Style to Regional Revivalism: Modern Architecture in Lebanon and the Problem of Cultural Identity. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp 29-95.

9 Kassir, S. 2003. *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Paris, Fayard, pp. 416-456.

10 Ibid.

punctuated by intermittent periods of devastating clashes generated by complex, multifaceted factors. The spatiality and temporality of the conflicts, the nature of the destructions, and the identities and nationalities of the protagonists involved contributed to the intricate specificity of this ravaging war, which devastated the country's institutions and built environment.¹¹

While sectarian and communal clashes were at the core of the fighting, regional and international forces fueled the conflict, such as the Palestinian and Syrian interventions and, most notably, the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. In 1982, Israeli troops besieged Beirut in retaliation to Palestinian attacks, resulting in heavy air and shell bombings. While a partial withdrawal took place in 1985, other regions in southern Lebanon and West Bekaa remained under Israeli occupation until 2000.¹² The Ta'if Agreement (National Reconciliation Accord) was ratified by the Lebanese Parliament in November 1989, calling for an end to hostilities, Lebanese sovereignty, the adoption of a 'mutual coexistence' principle, as well as political, judiciary and educational reforms.¹³

Disruptions at the national scale

Leaving approximately 150,000 dead and 300,000 injured,¹⁴ the social and sectarian clashes of the civil war altered the population's geographical distribution into confession-based areas. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that by the end of the war, 500,000 people were displaced and 900,000 had fled the country 'many of whom well to do and/or highly qualified'.¹⁵ Moreover, permanent internal displacement was a major consequence of the war. After the Israeli occupation, approximately 62% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled to the Aley, el-Shouf and Baabda mountain areas, while another 24% were displaced to

southern Lebanon.¹⁶ Material losses impacting all sectors were estimated at a cost of between US\$ 25 billion and US\$ 30 billion, some 10 to 12 times the gross national income of the country.¹⁷ The economic decline weighed heavily on the surviving Lebanese population: Lebanon's per capita income slipped from US\$ 1,800 in 1974 to below US\$ 250 in 1989.¹⁸ Cultural disruptions were felt nationwide with the interruption of artistic productions and cultural events, such as the Ba'alback International Festival (halted in 1975 for 24 years). Archaeological sites and heritage cities across the country also suffered irremediable damages.

Damage in Beirut

In Beirut, the war's sectarian clashes divided the city into two enclaves of East and West Beirut, which were separated by the Green Line, a north-south axis running along Damascus Road from the National Museum of Lebanon to the city centre. The resulting rapid development of suburbs and new peripheral urban centres further reduced the central role of the devastated capital. In fact, 'the ratio of Greater Beirut's population in Lebanon fell from about 54% in 1970 to 42% in 1996'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the city and its suburbs housed most IDPs 'living in poor conditions, often in crowded areas, lacking essential health and social services'.²⁰ The urban nature of the militia warfare coupled with heavy military bombings (especially during the Israeli siege of 1982) placed heavy human and material tolls on the capital. While a systematic assessment of damages was not undertaken, it was estimated that 10% of the buildings in Greater Beirut were heavily damaged, yet unevenly localized.²¹

11 Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.

12 O'Ballance, E. 1998. *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*. London, Macmillan Press.

13 Presidency of the Lebanese Republic. 1989. *Ta'if Agreement*. Available at: <http://www.presidency.gov.lb> (Accessed 22 January 2018.)

14 Makdissi, S. 1997a. Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Front Lines/Border Posts. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 660-705.

15 UNDP. 1998. *The National Human Development Report Lebanon - 1998*. Beirut, UNDP/CDR.

16 Norwegian Refugee Council. 2004. *Profile of Internal Displacement: Lebanon*. Geneva, Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, pp. 4-6.

17 UNDP. 1998. *The National Human Development Report Lebanon - 1998*. Beirut, UNDP/CDR.

18 Kubursi, A. 1993. Reconstructing and/or reconstituting the post-war Lebanese economy: the role of infrastructural development. S. Khalaf and P.S. Khoury (eds.) *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*. Leiden, E.J. Brill.

19 Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.

20 Norwegian Refugee Council. 2004. *Profile of Internal Displacement: Lebanon*. Geneva, Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, pp. 4-6.

21 Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.



Figure 2. Green Line, 1982.
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In addition to infrastructural damages, social, economic and cultural disruptions were endemic in the war-torn city. The once-thriving hospitality and tourism businesses were devastated, such as the Holiday Inn, St. George and Phoenicia hotels in the Ein el-Mreysse district. Formerly a hub for cultural production, the city experienced significant decline and damages to national cultural landmarks were incurred. The National Museum was heavily bombarded, its equipment was stolen or destroyed by fire, and artefacts were damaged due to a basement flood. At the personal initiative of the National Museum's curator, Emir Maurice Shehab, an extensive collection of artefacts were saved by moving them to secure areas or protecting them *in situ* through reinforced concrete boxes.²² Other assets such as the Lebanese National Library and the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music suffered significant material damage to their buildings and equipment.²³ The UNESCO Palace, a national space for cultural events, was hit by an Israeli bomb raid in 1982, causing substantial damage to its theatre and facilities.²⁴

Post-war government initiatives for recovery

Due to the cyclic nature of the war, demolition and rebuilding were often intertwined. The government proposed early reconstruction efforts

22 Phares, J. 2003. The National Museum of Lebanon in Beirut. *Museum International*, Vol. 55, Iss. 3-4. Blackwell Publishing.

23 Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. 2018. History. Lebanese Higher Conservatory of Music. Available at: <http://www.conservatory.gov.lb/history> (Accessed 2 March 2018.)

24 Ministry of Culture of Lebanon. 2018a. UNESCO Palace. Ministry of Culture. Available at: <http://culture.gov.lb/ar/Ministry-Services/94-UNESCO-Palace> (Accessed 10 March 2018.)

in 1975, two years after the rise of hostilities and when a brief interlude of peace fuelled a national push to recover and re-establish prosperous pre-war conditions. Fervent reconstruction efforts conveyed the Lebanese authorities' need for a 'strong image to be used as a symbol for national unity'.²⁵

The creation of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) in January 1977 was among these early reconstruction efforts. It was conceived as an autonomous public institution, free from the bureaucratic constraints of governmental bodies, and accountable to the Council of Ministers.²⁶ The CDR aimed to devise plans and timetables for reconstruction projects, coordinate their implementation with the different government agencies, and manage local and international funds (as potential donors needed a reliable body through which to channel their funds). While it was conceived to assist public authorities in reconstruction tasks, it was, like other government agencies, deeply affected by political fragmentation, which rendered it ineffective.²⁷

Other reconstruction plans were also set forth. They were, nevertheless, limited to physical reconstructions in Beirut, such as the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanism (APUR) plan of 1977 that targeted central Beirut, and the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région Ile-de-France (IAURIF) plan of the early 1980s that proposed the creation of a 'radiocentric' model with four hierarchical regional centres.²⁸ Severe institutional fragmentation and recurring episodes of violence also hindered their implementation.

25 Tabet, J. 1993. Towards a Master Plan for Post-War Lebanon. S. Khalaf and P.S. Khoury (eds.) *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, pp. 91-93.

26 Council for Development and Reconstruction. 2018. The Creation of the CDR and the Reasons for its Establishment. CDR. Available at: <http://www.cdr.gov.lb/eng/profile.asp> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

27 Salam, A. 1998. The Role of the Government in Shaping the Built Environment. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp. 126-132.

28 For further information, see: Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141; Tabet, J. 1998. From Colonial Style to Regional Revivalism: Modern Architecture in Lebanon and the Problem of Cultural Identity. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp. 29-95.; and Salam, A. 1998. The Role of the Government in Shaping the Built Environment. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp. 126-132.

Following the end of the war in 1990, there was a pressing need for reconstruction at multiple urban, infrastructural, economic and administrative levels. In a state of crippling institutional fragmentation, underfunded and understaffed, public agencies were faced with a myriad of challenges in planning, financing and implementing national recovery. Economic stability became the prime objective of post-war government initiatives. This was largely achieved through the Central Bank's initiatives to reduce inflation rates; a process aimed at building domestic and international confidence in the Lebanese financial market to pave the way for further investments and foreign aid.²⁹

In 1991, the CDR was restructured and established as a major stakeholder in the implementation and supervision of reconstruction projects, acting on behalf of the government. Drawing on an extensive study carried out by the National Emergency Recovery Programme (NERP), the CDR worked in conjunction with local and international consultants, Dar al-Hadassah and Bechtel Corporation, to prepare the Horizon 2000 plan. The Horizon 2000 plan (1993-2002) focused exclusively on the physical rehabilitation of public service infrastructure, yet claimed to address social cohesion and maximize the equal distribution of income growth.³⁰ The sectors included in the project's scope were electricity, health, waste management, communications, transport, water, education, social welfare, agriculture, industry, fuel, services, public buildings, management and housing. It 'centred again on physical reconstruction, but [took] into account the regional distribution of public investment'.³¹

In order to fund the estimated US\$ 11 million Horizon 2000 plan, different financial frameworks were proposed: borrowing from domestic and international sources, foreign financing and utilizing national budget surplus. As the significant lack of foreign funding had placed a heavy financial burden on national resources, the

private sector seemed an appropriate vehicle to finance selected projects. Some public projects were privatized under a Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) arrangement.³² Moreover, the development of tourism, agriculture, industry, services, higher education and, most notably, Lebanon's role as a regional and international cultural bridge, were entrusted to the private sector. However, the plan was not wholly approved by the Council of Ministers due to its broad scope, and the parliament opted to execute it on a sector-by-sector basis.³³

In a quest to re-establish viable political and administrative structures, successive post-war governments undertook several administrative and institutional reforms, including creating new ministries, organizing municipal elections, empowering military bodies, and achieving a balance of power and cooperation in the government, as stipulated in the Ta'if Agreement. Long-term development initiatives, such as dealing with IDPs, creating a basic national database, rehabilitating the health sector and protecting children, were initiated as well. The projects remained, nevertheless, selective and sporadic in the absence of a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to post-war reconstruction.

*Comprehensive programmes aimed at improving levels of living differentials between regions and population groups fell short of requirement. The reconstruction projects that were implemented often lacked a clear and explicit view of their social impact.*³⁴

Public participation - that creates a climate for capacity-building and constructive interactions with governmental authorities, and is essential to achieving long-term development and transparent governance - was non-existent in the post-war reconstruction process. In addition, major Israeli attacks on the Lebanese territories and infrastructure after 1990 further challenged government efforts for rebuilding.³⁵ Consumed by the heavy weight of the institutional reforms and financial burdens of infrastructural reconstruction,

29 UNDP. 1998. *The National Human Development Report Lebanon - 1998*. Beirut, UNDP/CDR.

30 Kisirwani, M. 1997. *The Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Lebanon*. P.J. White and W. Logan (eds.), *Remaking the Middle East*. Oxford/New York, Berg.

31 The World Bank. 1993. *Memorandum and Recommendation of the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan to the Lebanese Republic for an Emergency Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

32 UNDP. 1998. *The National Human Development Report Lebanon - 1998*. Beirut, UNDP/CDR.

33 Kisirwani, M. 1997. *The Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Lebanon*. P.J. White and W. Logan (eds.), *Remaking the Middle East*. Oxford/New York, Berg.

34 UNDP. 1998. *The National Human Development Report Lebanon - 1998*. Beirut, UNDP/CDR.

35 Ibid.

the Lebanese Government failed to produce a shared vision that conceptualized post-war reconstruction as 'a set of interconnecting social, political, and economic components within a multidimensional process, which is located at the local, provincial, national and international levels'.³⁶

National-scale cultural recovery was not integrated into post-war reconstruction. The long-term process of cultural revitalization weighed against the urgency of responding to post-war basic needs, such as economic recovery, housing and basic services, and failed to be brought forward as a post-war recovery priority within the government's scheme.³⁷ However, as part of the post-war institutional reforms, in 1993 the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education (restructured as the Ministry of Culture in 2008) was created to oversee archaeology, heritage, historical property, art, literature, intellectual property, cultural production and cultural property management across the Lebanese territory.³⁸

The earliest government initiatives in the cultural domain took place in the mid-1990s. They remained, however, limited to the physical rehabilitation of cultural institutions under the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education's jurisdiction, and were concentrated in the capital Beirut. The initiatives included the rehabilitation of the National Museum and the restitution of its collections in 1995, the rehabilitation of the UNESCO Palace in 1998, and the proposal for the rehabilitation of the National Library in 1999. Clear identification, assessment and management mechanisms within a broader strategic vision for the revitalization of national cultural heritage were non-existent.

In Beirut, archaeological remains, traditional neighbourhoods, historical monuments and modern landmarks of the 1950s and 1960s, embodying the city's economic and cultural diversity, stood as mere relics of a past period.

36 Barakat, S. 2007. Post-war reconstruction and the recovery of cultural heritage: critical lessons from the last fifteen years. N. Stanley-Price (ed.), *Postwar reconstruction and the recovery of heritage. Papers from the ICCROM Forum held on October 4-6 2005*. ICCROM Conservation Studies, No. 6. Rome, ICCROM.

37 Stanley-Price, N. 2007. The Thread of Continuity: Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery. N. Stanley-Price (ed.), *Postwar reconstruction and the recovery of heritage. Papers from the ICCROM Forum held on October 4-6 2005*. ICCROM Conservation Studies, No. 6. Rome, ICCROM.

38 Ministry of Culture of Lebanon. 2018b. Historical Background. Available at: <http://culture.gov.lb/ar/The-Ministry/History> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

With no envisioned plan of urban revitalization, these assets were highly subject to increasing pressures from real-estate speculation and conflicting infrastructural development.

Private initiatives played a considerable role in Beirut's cultural post-war revitalization. Cultural production slowly began to be revived, giving way to a 'renaissance in various cultural and artistic fields'.³⁹ Moreover, the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became key actors in issues related to the city's cultural heritage. One of the main initiatives in Beirut to raise awareness and protect historic neighbourhoods was a survey of traditional houses and neighbourhoods carried out by the Association pour la Protection des Sites et des Anciennes Demeures (APSAD), the results of which were presented to the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in 1996. The initiative failed to materialize into policy, and subsequent surveys of the peri-centre districts of Beirut, such as those carried out by the Directorate General of Urban Planning in 1997 and Khatib & Alami in 1998, drastically reduced the number of classified houses due to political interventions and real estate pressures.⁴⁰ Private efforts focused on physical restoration and/or reconstruction, such as the Artisan's House in Ein el-Mreysseh, urban rehabilitation projects in the Gemmayzeh and Ashrafieh areas, and initiatives of private educational institutions, such as the reconstruction of the historic College Hall of the American University of Beirut. Other neighbourhoods in Beirut sustained massive destruction of their traditional fabric, notably Zoqaq el-Blatt and Ein el-Mreysseh, in addition to the demolition of modern landmarks such as the Carlton Hotel in Rawcheh to make way for high-rise residential towers. A *laissez-faire* approach generally prevailed in Beirut regarding the definition and management of cultural heritage.

Beirut city centre

The multiple social, economic, cultural and physical aspects of post-war recovery came into focus in the reconstruction of Beirut's city centre. The process symbolically converged the whole

39 Agenda Culturel. 2016. *Culture in Lebanon by 2020: State of Play*. Beirut, Agenda Culturel.

40 University of Balamand, Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA). 2012. *Urban Observation Zokak el-Blat*. Sin el Fil, Academic Urban Observatory Institute of Urban Planning (MAJAL).

country's post-war revival into the city centre's reconstruction and rebirth as a financial hub. Strongly conceptualized as a symbol of collective recovery and the start of a new modernized era, it brought to the forefront issues of social and economic reconstruction, urban conservation, regeneration of the tangible and intangible heritage of its historic core, as well as governance and public participation (or lack thereof).

Beirut's centre before the war: a thriving hub

Beirut's urban nucleus is testament to one of the earliest human settlements through its archaeological layers and unique urban fabric. With its traditional souks, public spaces and religious landmarks, the city centre had developed through history as a dynamic hub of social, economic and political exchange. The particular economic and cultural vitality that characterized Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s manifested in the business areas of the city centre, such as Foch-Allenby with its financial and insurance businesses related to Beirut's port activities, and the Riad al-Solh area as a prime location for financial institutions. Moreover, the waterfront area experienced commercial growth due to the increased significance of the port.⁴¹ Economic prosperity was reiterated by growing tourism and cultural spaces in the city centre. The 1950s witnessed the emergence of new theatres, such as the Rivoli, Métropole, Capitole and Radio City,⁴² thereby consolidating the centre as a hub for arts and cultural exchange.

As soon as the war started, intense hostilities disrupted the administrative, religious, economic and cultural activities of the city's heart. The city centre was transformed into a battlefield where only militia were able to circulate freely.⁴³ As people abandoned their businesses and residences, the centre became a deserted 'no man's land', severed by the clashing eastern and western sides of Beirut. The war's disruption of religious and social mixity, together with economic exchange, was physically expressed in the forsaken city centre.

41 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

42 Kassir, S. 2003. *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Paris, Fayard, pp. 416-456.

43 Fawaz, M. and Ghandour, M. 2010. *Spatial Erasure: Reconstruction Projects in Beirut*. Iowa State University Digital Repository. Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1047&context=arch_pubs (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

War damage in the city centre

Beirut's centre was heavily damaged during the war: 'a destruction beyond salvage of almost two-thirds of the urban fabric and the city's public spaces'.⁴⁴ By the end of the war, the city centre counted around 800 surviving traditional buildings in varying states of devastation, as per the technical assessment undertaken by the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District - a private real estate company known as Solidere. Moreover, around 30,000 families of squatters occupied dilapidated structures.⁴⁵ Uncontrolled landfill heavily polluted and altered the city's interface with the sea. The Normandy Landfill was the product of the war's dumping of waste and rubble, covering an area of 250,000 m² and 20m above sea level.⁴⁶ Images of the war-torn city centre needed to be quickly erased from the Lebanese collective memory. The start of the rebuilding process was essential, firmly coupled with projecting national reconciliation and reclaiming a common public space where the whole nation converged.

An early reconstruction plan for Beirut's centre

Early governmental initiatives for rebuilding the city centre were undertaken during peaceful intervals of the war, yet abandoned when strife broke out again. The earliest recorded reconstruction plan was the Master Plan for the Reconstruction of Beirut Centre, proposed by APUR with the assistance of local experts, and approved by the Council of Ministers in June 1977. Covering 130 ha of the most devastated areas of central Beirut, the plan conceived the city centre as a symbolic space for national unity and recovery, embodying the city's historical layers, social coexistence and bustling economic activities. It adopted an approach that valued cultural and urban heritage and its reintegration in the city, and prioritized the rehabilitation of the

44 Gavin, A. 1998. Heart of Beirut: Making the Masterplan for the renewal of the Central District. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

45 Ibid.

46 Bădescu, G. 2011. Beyond the Green Line: Sustainability and Beirut's post-war reconstruction. *Development*, Vol. 54, No. 3. London, Palgrave Macmillan/Society for International Development.

souks as an economic engine.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the Plan put forward a new vision for the city's modernization through the extension of its financial district, and the provision of upgraded public transportation infrastructure.⁴⁸

The APUR Master Plan introduced a studied balance between the roles of the state and the private sector, and allowed for active public participation in the reconstruction process. The estimated US\$ 5.2 billion plan envisioned developing some of the zones through the creation of private real estate companies that would expropriate property in the city centre and reimburse property owners via regular payments and/or shares. State intervention featured more prominently concerning heavily damaged areas and infrastructural projects through the expropriation of specific lots and/or the creation of commercial public enterprises. The Municipality of Beirut was the main public actor in the project, operating under the direct supervision of the city's Governor, Mitri Nammar, and assisted by the Office of Urbanism of the City Centre, local experts and private consultants.⁴⁹

Demolitions of built heritage

Given the absence of a national policy for the preservation of built heritage and the chaotic situation that crippled the authorities' control, between 1983 and 1986 planned demolitions were carried out in Beirut under the pretext of 'cleaning war relics'.⁵⁰ The demolitions of the traditional Nourieh, Surssock and Jewelers' souks, the Saifi

neighbourhood and the area between Nejme and Martyrs Square were recorded during that period. Despite critics and activists stressing the importance of an integrated balance between the city's urban heritage and a post-war vision of modernity, their efforts failed to counteract the *tabula rasa* decisions.⁵¹ The elimination of all war relics is attributed to OGER Liban, a contracting firm belonging to the businessman Rafiq Hariri, with close ties to the CDR. These actions would later prove to lay the groundwork for Beirut's post-war reconstruction scheme.⁵²

Post-war reconstruction in Beirut Central District (BCD)

The rise of privatization

At the end of the war, national institutional reforms and post-war reconstruction efforts began to take shape. Concurrently, limited governmental resources and the heavy financial burden of infrastructural reconstruction across the country gave way to the private sector's active involvement in reconstruction. Multiple factors influenced privatization in Beirut's city centre: a fragmented administration unable to formulate, implement or control development frameworks, limited or non-existent financial capacities to undertake projects of such scale and, most importantly, the complex entanglement of property rights.⁵³

Against this backdrop, the newly-appointed CDR commissioned Dar al-Handasah (Shair and Partners), a Beirut-based design consultancy corporation, to propose a Master Plan for the reconstruction of the city centre to be financed by the private sector. The Master Plan was presented to the public in 1991 along with a draft law that outlined the different mechanisms of its implementation. It proposed amending the CDR's regulatory framework to allow for the creation of a real estate company to undertake the reconstruction process. The

47 For more information, see: Tabet, J. 1993. Towards a Master Plan for Post-War Lebanon. S. Khalaf and P.S. Khoury (eds.) *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, pp. 91-93; and Howe, M. 1977. Beirut Plans to Rebuild its Devastated City Center. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/19/archives/beirut-plans-to-rebuild-its-devastated-city-center.html> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

48 Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.

49 For more information, see: Howe, M. 1977. Beirut Plans to Rebuild its Devastated City Center. *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/19/archives/beirut-plans-to-rebuild-its-devastated-city-center.html> (Accessed 10 January 2018.); El-Khoury, P., Khoury, K. and Raad, A.A. 1978. *Plan Directeur d'Aménagement du Centre de Beyrouth 1977*. Beirut, République Libanaise/Municipalité de Beyrouth/Bureau d'Urbanisme du Centre-Ville; and Kassab, S. 1997. On Two Conceptions of Globalization: the Debate around the Reconstruction of Beirut. A. Öncü and P. Weyland (eds.), *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*. London, Zed Books.

50 Beyhum, N., Hamdan, K., Shanbour, T., Corm, G., Choueiri, T., al-Basat, B., el-Khoury, P., Salam, A., Tabet, J. and Akl, Z. 1992. *l'amar Beirut wa'l fursa al-da'i'a* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity]. Beirut, Dar Rami al-Khal. (In Arabic.)

51 Ibid.

52 Tabet, J. 1993. Towards a Master Plan for Post-War Lebanon. S. Khalaf and P.S. Khoury (eds.) *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-War Reconstruction*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, pp. 91-93.

53 Beyhum, N., Hamdan, K., Shanbour, T., Corm, G., Choueiri, T., al-Basat, B., el-Khoury, P., Salam, A., Tabet, J. and Akl, Z. 1992. *l'amar Beirut wa'l fursa al-da'i'a* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity]. Beirut, Dar Rami al-Khal. (In Arabic.)

proposal stirred heated political debates that denounced the flawed legal, constitutional and technical approaches of the project. The Order of Engineers and Architects of Beirut took an active role in reviewing the proposal in detail, reporting to the CDR, and pushing for the participation of experts and different stakeholders involved in the project. It, however, failed to make any tangible impact.

While the privatization of reconstruction projects was not new in the context of the city centre, as it had been introduced in the 1977 APUR Master Plan, the magnitude of the private sector's contribution to the proposed scheme was alarming. The private sector was presented as the main driver of post-war reconstructions, including the planning, financing and implementation of the post-war reconstruction plan. The government's role was effectively reduced to creating the necessary regulatory frameworks, with minimal to non-existent intervention. In December 1991, Law 117 was passed that gave municipalities:

[...] the authority to create real estate companies in war-damaged areas, and to entrust them with the implementation of the urban plan and promotion, and the marketing and sale of properties to individuals or corporate developers.⁵⁴



Figure 3. Beirut Central District.
© Radi83/ Wikimedia Commons

54 Salam, A. 1998. The Role of the Government in Shaping the Built Environment. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel, pp. 126-132.

Solidere: a key stakeholder in post-war reconstruction

Beirut's post-war reconstruction efforts were largely entrusted to Solidere, a Real Estate Holding Company (REHCO). Solidere was formed in 1992 after the late Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri took office, and adopted the 1991 Master Plan for post-war reconstruction. A series of regulatory and institutional actions established the geographical boundaries and planning frameworks under which the company operated. Decree 2236 delineated the boundaries of Solidere's intervention, the Council of Ministers approved the institutional framework allowing Solidere to function as a real estate company, and investors were then invited to take part in the company's foundation.⁵⁵

In December 1992, the founding committee of Solidere was established, consisting of 12 members: one representative of the CDR, five representatives of property holders in the city centre, and six major investors.⁵⁶ The dissolution of hierarchical authority thus consolidated the overarching neoliberal paradigm brought forward through the creation of Solidere as the sole actor (planner, developer and manager) of Beirut city centre's post-war reconstruction.

Financial framework

The financial framework of BCD's post-war reconstruction is a product of several factors: (a) Solidere's corporate model as a real estate joint-stock company; (b) weakened government authority; and (c) the Master Plan's regulatory framework, which turned the city centre into an enclave of development by allowing private investments through a broader community of local and regional stakeholders.⁵⁷ The financial framework operated amidst a complex entanglement of property rights in BCD, as Lebanese law recognizes the property rights of owners and their descendants, as well as tenants/leaseholders and their descendants.

55 For further detail, see: Beyhum, N., Hamdan, K., Shanbour, T., Corm, G., Choueiri, T., al-Basat, B., el-Khoury, P., Salam, A., Tabet, J. and Akl, Z. 1992. *l'amar Beirut wa'l fursa al-da'i'a* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity]. Beirut, Dar Rami al-Khal. (In Arabic.)

56 el-Achkar, E. 1998. *Réglementation et Formes Urbaines: Le cas de Beyrouth*. Beirut, Presses de l'Ifpo (Online edition, 2013), pp. 101-134.

57 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

This specific urban morphology that has shaped social, generational and functional diversity in Beirut could have, ideally, offered lessons for a sustainable vision if it was considered in conjunction with the prevailing socio-economic conditions and urban form⁵⁸.



Figure 4. Beirut Central District.

© Public Domain - Source: Brian Bell/ Wikimedia Commons.

Instead, in line with the financial framework put forward by Law 117, Solidere addressed this challenge through the expropriation of most property in BCD. The compulsory conversions of most tenants and landowners' property into shares of Solidere allowed the company to solve both inheritance issues and land claiming disputes. This process deprived an estimated 250,000 property claimants from occupying - or later returning to - their premises⁵⁹. Moreover, it facilitated Solidere's actions in dissolving property boundaries and altering the city's original morphology. Property was re-divided and sold to developers according to the 1991 Master Plan's guidelines and real estate market stipulations.

58 UNESCO. 2016. *Culture: Urban Future*. Paris, UNESCO

59 Makdissi, S. 1997a. Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Front Lines/Border Posts. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 660-705.

Solidere, however, provided the original property owners with 'the choice' to recuperate their buildings and restore them in accordance with the company's strict design briefs, rigid timetables and heavy financial guarantees. Aside from the 26 public and religious buildings exempt from the Master Plan's guidelines that remained under the ownership of the government and/or religious waqfs, the BCD area became the property of Solidere⁶⁰.

SOLIDERE's capital was valued at US\$ 1.82 billion consisting of two types of shares: (a) SOLIDERE A - issued to property claimants in exchange for their property, proportionally valued by the company; and (b) SOLIDERE B - issued to investors in the project, thus providing the necessary capital to undertake development projects⁶¹. This financial framework eliminated the participatory role of original property owners in the reconstruction process and transferred ownership to private regional investors, resulting in the drastic disruption of the unique social fabric rooted in history.

Moreover, as there were no economic incentives for local investments, it further marginalized local stakeholders and rendered the return of small businesses, typical of the traditional city centre's economic fabric, challenging⁶². The tabula rasa approach was echoed at social and economic levels. Transformed into an elitist and exclusive enclave within Beirut, the once vibrant city centre became a space of exclusion.

Implementation framework

Driven by economic gain, the BCD's post-war reconstruction lacked an integrated balance between public good and private profit. An adequate governmental role in decision-making and active public participation were non-existent throughout the implementation, financing and supervision of the project phases.

60 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

61 Makdissi, S. 1997a. Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Front Lines/Border Posts. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 660-705.

62 Beyhum, N., Hamdan, K., Shanbour, T., Corm, G., Choueiri, T., al-Basat, B., el-Khoury, P., Salam, A., Tabet, J. and Akl, Z. 1992. *l'amar Beirut wa'l fursa al-da'i'a* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity]. Beirut, Dar Rami al-Khal. (in Arabic).

*The reconstruction of downtown Beirut is an exceptional example of a radical reorganization that was achieved by means of an entrepreneurial urban policy and market orientation. Inflexible organizational as well as urban structures were broken down in favour of a swift implementation and privatization of the reconstruction.*⁶³

At the start of the reconstruction phase, the government's role was limited to the preparation of institutional frameworks for the creation of Solidere, the delineation of its geographic jurisdiction and the preparation of works in the city centre. Furthermore, financial abatement was offered by the state: Solidere was exempt from taxation for the first 10 years of its operation.⁶⁴ In accordance with Decree 2237, the government was also engaged in the process of property expropriation: it provided legal and institutional assistance throughout this phase, and devised a two-year judicial valuation process whereby existing property owners relinquished their property rights against shares in Solidere.⁶⁵ This process was the object of heavy criticism, as the valuation criteria were not transparent nor fair, and mainly responded to the project's lucrative goals. Moreover, by means of the Central Fund for the Displaced created in 1993, the government undertook the evacuation of squatters from the city centre's properties,⁶⁶ thus facilitating the start of the works.

Further weakening the government's position as a vital actor in post-war recovery, Solidere undertook financing and executing BCD's infrastructure on behalf of the government. While both Law 117 and Decree 5665 of 1994 stipulated the handover of infrastructure and reconstituted public domain to the state, represented by CDR, the operation and maintenance of completed infrastructure were entrusted to Solidere.⁶⁷ The company was reimbursed through granting

development rights for reclaimed lands by the sea and 25% of governmental property rights of BCD's public spaces.⁶⁸

In the absence of instrumental governmental participation, the key actors involved in BCD's post-war reconstruction were limited to Solidere (planning, developing and managing), investors, local and international developers, as well as design consultants. The role of public agencies was marginalized and diminished to supporting a review-for-approval step to monitor the legal aspects of construction processes. These agencies included: (a) the Higher Council of Urban Planning that contributed to settling technical, architectural and legal conflicts related to the Master Plan's guidelines; (b) the Directorate General of Urbanism that exed large-scale developments or restorations within the historic area for compliance with Lebanese building codes, and issued building and/or restoration permits; (c) the Municipality of Beirut that issued building and occupancy permits; and (d) the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) that managed archaeological findings.⁶⁹

Binding contracts between owners and developers allowed Solidere to control the construction and/or restoration processes, thereby ensuring the implementation of its Master Plan's guidelines. In fact, in addition to the set of planning regulations applicable to each district, specific design briefs and procedures were developed. Included in Solidere's 'Developer's Kit' were design guidelines for construction site regulations, fire safety, seismic code, disabled access, signage, energy efficiency and environmental impact, which were strictly controlled by Solidere across all projects.⁷⁰ Restricted timetables and financial guarantees only gave way to a specific calibre of real estate developers to operate in the Beirut Central District.⁷¹

63 Schmid, H. 2006. Privatized Urbanity or a Politicized Society? Reconstruction in Beirut after the Civil War. *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 14, Iss. 3. London, Routledge, pp. 365-381.

64 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

65 For more information, see: Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

66 Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.

67 Solidere. 2002. *Solidere Annual Report 2002*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/ar2002.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

68 Beyhum, N., Hamdan, K., Shanbour, T., Corm, G., Choueiri, T., al-Basat, B., el-Khoury, P., Salam, A., Tabet, J. and Akl, Z. 1992. *l'amar Beirut wa' l fursa al-da'i'a* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity]. Beirut, Dar Rami al-Khal. (In Arabic.)

69 For more information, see: Solidere. 2002. *Solidere Annual Report 2002*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/ar2002.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.); Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.; and Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

70 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

71 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

To render its project more inclusive, Solidere launched design competitions for designated lots to encourage the broader participation of local and international architects. Examples included the International Ideas Competition for the design of the souks in 1994, and an open international urban design competition for the grand axis of Martyrs Square in 2003. Nevertheless, the contribution of local architects and designers in BCD projects remained quite limited. Most projects were entrusted to international architects, such as Rafael Moneo, Jean Nouvel, Arata Isozaki and Norman Foster, among others. The reconstructed architectural narrative in BCD thus failed to establish continuity in the identity of place through a genuine contextual approach to design and an affinity to local architectural forms.

The financial and implementation frameworks within which Solidere operated had disruptive repercussions at multiple governmental, social and economic levels. The government's marginalization further exacerbated its 'bloated, corrupt and inefficient' bureaucracies.⁷² Moreover, while the neo-liberal reconstruction model deprived the government of substantial financial returns through taxation, it became especially lucrative for individual members in the government.

Appointing Solidere as the main vehicle for the post-war reconstruction of Beirut's centre and the subsequent creation of its regulatory frameworks and planning vision embodied a top-down approach and put forward a corporate model. The neoliberal approach to reconstruction not only minimized the government's role but actively reduced the participation of directly affected stakeholders, such as property owners in the city centre and local experts in planning and/or sustainable development with an alternative vision. Consequently, the process was dissociated from its underlying social, economic and cultural dimensions in favour of exclusively responding to the market-led vision of Solidere. BCD was transformed into a densified, touristic, financial business centre governed by real estate speculation.

72 Barakat, S. 2007. Post-war reconstruction and the recovery of cultural heritage: critical lessons from the last fifteen years. N. Stanley-Price (ed.), *Postwar reconstruction and the recovery of heritage. Papers from the ICCROM Forum held on October 4-6 2005*. ICCROM Conservation Studies, No. 6. Rome, ICCROM.

Approach to culture

The 1991 Master Plan comprised a vast area of intervention: 1,200 km² in the city centre, a seafill area of around 200 km² and enlarging Beirut Port's first basin by 250 km². Highly insensitive to the surroundings, the Plan was predicated on erasing the surviving traditional fabric, with the exception of a small area dating back to the French Mandate and a few selected cultural and religious monuments.⁷³ The representation of a modernized city with high-rise towers was heavily dissociated from the city's collective memory, rendering it unfamiliar and unrecognizable. Moreover, the Plan failed to address genuine dialogue, restore social and economic diversity and, most importantly, preserve or restore the continuity of cultural threads.

The Master Plan stirred waves of criticism and public controversy that called for urgent planning reconsiderations. It was criticized as 'a false start [...] with a grandiose scheme that combined beaux-arts "grand planning" and a 1960s infatuation with the car and heavy road infrastructure'.⁷⁴ According to Salam (1994), the Plan was a 'devastation' from which Beirut needed to be saved.

*If we respect the memory of the city we should also recall its unconscious memory: the great archaeological heritage that lies beneath the ground. The plan ignores this, taking no account of a possible need to record, let alone preserve, the relics of the ancient city which will be revealed in the creation of a new one, for such recording could only diminish or delay the investor's profits.*⁷⁵

In April 1992, a group of consultants and experts⁷⁶ put forward an alternative plan for the post-war reconstruction of the city centre, stressing the necessity to empower state intervention, minimize the role of the real estate company, and establish genuine public-private partnerships.

73 Salam, A. 1994. The Reconstruction of Beirut: A Lost Opportunity. *AA Files*, No. 27. London, Architectural Association School of Architecture.

74 Gavin, A. 1998. Heart of Beirut: Making the Masterplan for the renewal of the Central District. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

75 Salam, A. 1994. The Reconstruction of Beirut: A Lost Opportunity. *AA Files*, No. 27. London, Architectural Association School of Architecture.

76 Bahaa al-Din Bsat, Ziad Akl, Jad Tabet, Pierre Khoury, Assem Salam and Khalil Khoury.

The alternative plan strongly valued preserving the built heritage and traditional social and economic fabric. This was followed in May 1992 by the conference 'Beirut - the Memory, Beirut - the Participation, Beirut - the Future: Post-war Reconstruction Policies and the Public Good', held at the Carlton Hotel in Rawsheh. The conference included the participation of experts in architecture, planning, economics and law, and concluded with a detailed set of recommendations for a multi-disciplinary, sustainable post-war development process. Public protests took place around the same time involving property rights holders, tenants and leaseholders in the city centre, as well as heritage preservation activists.

Against this backdrop of public outcry, the authorities launched the Master Plan's execution. Demolitions executed in April 1992 in preparation for the reconstruction works erased important sections of the surviving traditional fabric in the city centre: an estimated 300 buildings were flattened.⁷⁷ In addition, the traditional souks of Beirut and buildings bordering Martyrs Square were bulldozed to make way for the new axis proposed by the Master Plan.⁷⁸

These demolitions uncovered archaeological layers of great significance, especially around the demolished traditional souks. In response to public pressure for enhanced heritage conservation and management of the emerging archaeological findings, as well as internal economic considerations of the project's scope, in 1993 Solidere halted the original Master Plan for revision.⁷⁹ The company entrusted the French planning consultants Sato et Associés with the Master Plan's re-evaluation, to be later developed by Dar al-Handasah.⁸⁰

Solidere's revised Master Plan of 1994

Presented with the challenging conditions of an 80% flattened historic site and, simultaneously, an emerging archaeological city, the revised Master Plan of 1994 reconsidered the issue of heritage preservation in conjunction with the vision of a modernized city, hence introducing a major shift in planning and design approaches.⁸¹ The Master Plan's revision 'reduced the amount of infrastructure conflicting with the historic urban fabric; maintained the original width of Martyrs Square; [and] enhanced some historic features like the remains of the Ottoman seashore line and jetty'.⁸² Other planning concepts were also adopted, such as enhancing visual permeability with the sea, limiting high-rise developments at the edge of the city centre, and emphasizing mixed-use.⁸³ Upon the official approval of Solidere's revised Plan in 1994,⁸⁴ further field surveys were conducted to assess and salvage surviving traditional buildings, which increased the number of buildings included in the Plan's conservation strategy from 110 to 300.⁸⁵ The retained buildings fell into three categories identified by Solidere: (a) buildings of historical or architectural value; (b) relatively large modern buildings in sufficiently good condition; and (c) buildings of 'social value' housing legal tenants.⁸⁶ However, despite its claims towards a more contextual approach that valued Beirut's heritage, Solidere undertook further demolitions of historic buildings and neighbourhoods in 1994, at the start of the revised Master Plan's execution.⁸⁷

Solidere's 1994 Master Plan covered a total land area of 191 ha, comprising 118 ha of the original traditional city centre and a 73 ha extension

77 Salam, A. 1994. The Reconstruction of Beirut: A Lost Opportunity. *AA Files*, No. 27. London, Architectural Association School of Architecture.

78 For further information and detailed mapping, see: Schmid, H. 2006. Privatized Urbanity or a Politicized Society? Reconstruction in Beirut after the Civil War. *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 14, Iss. 3. London, Routledge, pp. 365-381; and Verdeil, E., Faour, G. and Velut, S. 2007. *Atlas du Liban: Territoires et Société*. Beirut, IFPO-CNRS.

79 Samara, R. 1996. Urban Reconstruction in the Twentieth Century: the Post-War Deconstruction of Beirut, Lebanon. Master of Architecture thesis, McGill University, Montreal.

80 el-Achkar, E. 1998. *Réglementation et Formes Urbaines: Le cas de Beyrouth*. Beirut, Presses de l'Ifpo (Online edition, 2013), pp. 101-134.

81 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.; Nasr, J. and Verdeil, E. 2008. The Reconstruction of Beirut. S. Khadra Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 1116-1141.

82 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

83 Ibid.

84 el-Achkar, E. 1998. *Réglementation et Formes Urbaines: Le cas de Beyrouth*. Beirut, Presses de l'Ifpo (Online edition, 2013), pp. 101-134.

85 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

86 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

87 For further information and detailed mapping, see: Schmid, H. 2006. Privatized Urbanity or a Politicized Society? Reconstruction in Beirut after the Civil War. *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 14, Iss. 3. London, Routledge, pp. 365-381; and Verdeil, E., Faour, G. and Velut, S. 2007. *Atlas du Liban: Territoires et Société*. Beirut, IFPO-CNRS..

reclaimed from the sea. It specified: (a) 98 ha of public space; (b) roads and landscaped open spaces; and (c) 93 ha allocated for development sold to developers and/or owned by Solidere. Around 22 ha were retained as public or religious property.⁸⁸ BCD's area was sub-divided into seven districts: the Conservation Area, Saifi, Wadi Abou Jmil, New Waterfront District, Marinas, Hotel District and Martyr's Square. In the general overview of the Master Plan, Solidere stated the following goals:⁸⁹

1. Involve the recovery of the public domain, with the installation of a complete modern infrastructure.
2. Provide an urban design framework for new constructions and the restoration of preserved and historic buildings, incorporating old and new, tradition and innovation, and regulation and creativity in architectural expression.
3. Create public spaces, including gardens, squares, belvederes, promenades and pathways.
4. Unearth layers of the city centre's history.
5. Re-establish the urban fabric and neighbourhood structures, accommodating a broad mix of land uses ranging from business and institutional to residential, cultural and recreational.
6. Offer a flexible, market-oriented development framework, encouraging the emergence of a sustainable environment.
7. Create poles of attraction for city centre renewal.
8. Create a vibrant, 24-hour active downtown.

Two main implementation phases characterized the amended Master Plan:⁹⁰

Phase One (1994-2004) prioritized the completion of infrastructural works, the restoration of the historic core and renovation of the banking district, works on the reclaimed lands, housing developments (especially in Saifi, Beirut Marina and Wadi Abu Jamil) and a 'substantial consolidation of the critical mass of BCD development through the implementation of the Souks of Beirut magnet.'

88 Solidere. 2018a. Beirut and its City Center. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/beirut-and-its-city-center> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

89 Solidere. 2018b. Master Plan. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/urban-overview/master-plan> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

90 Solidere. 2002. *Solidere Annual Report 2002*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/ar2002.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

Phase Two (2005-2020) focused on the new Waterfront District by 'launching high-rise developments with a distinct architectural style that will bring a new identity to the city.'

Heritage and culture

Tangible heritage is manifold in Beirut's centre. While archaeological sites date as far back as the Iron and Bronze Ages, the built heritage incorporates the urban fabric of the modern period, thus unfolding a rich and complex notion of heritage in Beirut, forming 'a thread for the Beirutis of a living, pulsating history of their city and its tribulations and glories'.⁹¹

*Fragments of each influential era and successive patterns survive to the present day. We need to respect and preserve the continuum and allow such a pattern of layering to survive and evolve into the future.*⁹²

As Beirut's built heritage and archaeology were brought forward in the Master Plan's conceptual planning, 'memory' and 'layers' emerged as dominant design concepts, embodying the motto 'Beirut: Ancient City of the Future' coined by Solidere.⁹³ Through a more contextual approach, the revised Master Plan claimed to shift towards a 'bottom-up' approach with a 'message of cultural continuity and pluralism, and not the imposition of foreign order'.⁹⁴ With no real government or civic participation, this approach exclusively responded to Solidere's definition of history and heritage, as conveyed in the developers' design proposals.⁹⁵

A national framework regulating the identification, assessment and management of cultural heritage in its broader sense; one that aimed at 'safeguarding the cultural heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions to produce

91 Rabbat, N. 1998. The Interplay of History and Archaeology in Beirut. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

92 Gavin, A. 1998. Heart of Beirut: Making the Masterplan for the renewal of the Central District. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

93 al-Harithy, H. 2008. Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut's Last Mamluk Monument. *Muqarnas*, Vol. 25. Leiden, Brill.

94 Gavin, A. 1998. Heart of Beirut: Making the Masterplan for the renewal of the Central District. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

95 Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.



Figure 5. Franch Mandate-era housing, Gouraud street.
© Public Domain - Source: Slugh Mcgee/ Wikimedia Commons.

a sense of place, the integrity of the urban fabric and the identities of communities⁹⁶ remained unattainable in Lebanon. Moreover, the international cultural heritage instruments ratified by the Lebanese Government were not legally binding nor materialized into national regulation⁹⁷. When the 1991 Master Plan for post-war reconstruction was conceived, the only existing national regulation, the outdated Law No.166 of 1933⁹⁸, provided ambiguous and/or limited definitions and management procedures related to antiquities and historic monuments.

The lack of a comprehensive definition and an integrated approach to cultural heritage in Solidere's 1994 Master Plan gave rise to multiple mechanisms involving different stakeholders for the assessment and management of BCD's cultural assets. On the one hand, the study and integration of archaeological findings fell within a complex framework, which primarily involved the official intervention of the DGA to undertake excavations of significant archaeological sites as national property. On the other hand, the identification, assessment and restoration/conservation works of built heritage, although selective, followed Solidere's construct of Beirut's

96 UNESCO. 2016. Culture: Urban Future. Paris, UNESCO.

97 Lebanon signed the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage in 1990 and the Malta Convention in 1992. See : Directorate General of Antiquities and UNESCO, 1997.

98 High Commissioner of the French Republic in Syria and Lebanon. 1933. *Arrêté No. 166 portant règlement sur les antiquités*. Available at : <https://fr.unesco.org/cultnatlaws/list> (Accessed 22 December 2018).

history, which were subsequently translated into district planning guidelines and technical briefs.

Beirut's historic core, as re-identified by Solidere, consisted of the Conservation Area and the Beirut Souks' site. It quickly became the main focus of the Master Plan's first phase, closely linked to reviving the city centre through the provision of poles of attraction.

The main objective for the master plan's first phase is to provide critical mass in and around the historic core in both restoration and new development, thereby reactivating a city centre that has been abandoned for a generation⁹⁹.

Solidere's conceptualization of Beirut's heritage aligned with its profit-driven approach: presented as a marketing tool and an asset to attract future economic investments and tourism in the area, all the while addressing the population's 'strong longing for the lost and damaged fabric of the immediate pre-war past'¹⁰⁰. The process of identifying heritage buildings, archaeological findings and historic periods to be revived and integrated into the reconstruction of the 'city memory' narrative was selective, and mainly served a memory construct that was 'a product of the present rather than the past'¹⁰¹.

Generally, Solidere's 1994 Master Plan failed to propose a comprehensive approach that strategically combined the manifold components of heritage, actively reintegrated them in their urban surroundings, and limited the evergrowing clashes with the profit-driven agenda and development interests in the area¹⁰². Instead, multiple development approaches were brought forward in the revitalization of urban heritage, generally falling into three categories: conservation, preservation and reconstruction.

99 Gavin, A. 1998. Heart of Beirut: Making the Masterplan for the renewal of the Central District. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

100 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

101 al-Harithy, H. 2008. Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut's Last Mamluk Monument. *Muqarnas*, Vol. 25. Leiden, Brill.

102 Sader, H. 1998. Ancient Beirut: Urban Growth in the Light of Recent Excavations. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

In some districts, such as Wadi Abou Jamil and Saifi, a hybrid combination of reconstruction and restoration characterized the 'clustered developments involving infill construction together with restoration', and 'conceived along Lebanese vernacular tradition, four new clusters blend in style and colour with a number of existing buildings restored to their original glory'.¹⁰³

Bringing the public back to the heart of the city was of utmost importance as soon as the post-war reconstruction project was launched. Encouraging cross-cultural exposure that fed into the BCD's conceptualized vision as a space of reconciliation was part of Solidere's commitment to leveraging culture as a tool for promoting greater accessibility in the war-torn city centre.

Solidere's cultural initiatives, although sporadic, were largely organized around two main approaches: (a) the creation of new magnets to host art and music events and; (b) the activation of open spaces around the BCD through various cultural events: music concerts, art exhibitions, etc., organized in collaboration with local and international partners. In this regard, one of the earliest projects was the creation of Planet Discovery - the children's science museum and exhibition centre - in 1999 on Omar al-Daouk Street (later relocated to Beirut Souks). The Waterfront District was also home to two important cultural magnets planned by Solidere: (a) a multi-use 82,000 m² venue leased to the Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure Centre (BIEL) for diverse cultural events in 2001, and; (b) the Beirut Exhibition Centre, a 1,200m² space designed by L.E.FT Architects, for contemporary art exhibitions in 2010.¹⁰⁴

Open spaces around BCD have regularly been home to cultural events, notably the annual Fête de la Musique, which takes place around the Roman Bath's public staircase and in Saifi Village during Beirut Design Week. In the open spaces in Beirut Souks, several events take place such as the Beirut Music and Art Festival and the Beirut Jazz Festival, an initiative launched by Solidere. The Souks' Ajami Square, Trablous Street and Souk al-Tawileh are regularly animated by concerts and/or exhibitions, nurturing social and cultural exchanges.

103 Solidere. 2018c. Districts and Main Axes. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/urban-overview/districts-main-axes/wadi-abou-jamil-zokak-el-blatt> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

104 Solidere. 2011. *Solidere Annual Report 2011*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/city-in-scenes.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

Rather than establishing BCD as a space for cultural production and exchange, however, cultural events taking place around BCD have primarily served recreation purposes and to promote local and international tourism in the heart of the city. Moreover, the experiences of establishing cultural hubs have stressed the importance of ensuring the continuity of cultural threads in reconstruction projects. For example, new cultural attractions, such as Planet Discovery and the exhibition centres located in the Waterfront District, lack cultural memory and do not appeal to the collective memory of people. Conversely, the Grand Theatre in Riad al-Solh, a cultural magnet in the minds of people, remains closed with plans to be demolished.

Archaeology

The war's heavy damage and early post-war reconstruction steps unveiled significant archaeological layers in various areas of Beirut's city centre.

However, this was not the first occasion that archaeological findings had been uncovered in Beirut: the centre's earliest excavations dated back to the French Mandate (mainly between 1916 and 1928) when fortuitous archaeological findings interrupted building and construction processes. More significant research and excavation works were undertaken by French archaeologist Jean Lauffray in 1941 and 1947 in the Nejme Square area, which unveiled the plan of Roman Beirut and provided a reference for subsequent findings. The 1950s and 1960s were also notable periods for archaeology missions in the centre of Beirut, which revealed the Roman Baths site, remains of a Roman road in the Nejme Square, and Bronze Age tombs in the vicinity of Martyrs Square.

Two additional excavation projects, a joint Lebanese-French mission in 1977 and a Japanese mission in the 1980s, resulted in further evidence of Beirut's Byzantine and Prehistoric settlements. Despite these sporadic projects, archaeological findings were undervalued as national cultural assets due to the lack of government frameworks regulating their assessment and management. The Roman Baths and Nejme Square were the only uncovered archaeological sites in Beirut pre-1993.¹⁰⁵

105 Sader, H. 1998. Ancient Beirut: Urban Growth in the Light of Recent Excavations. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

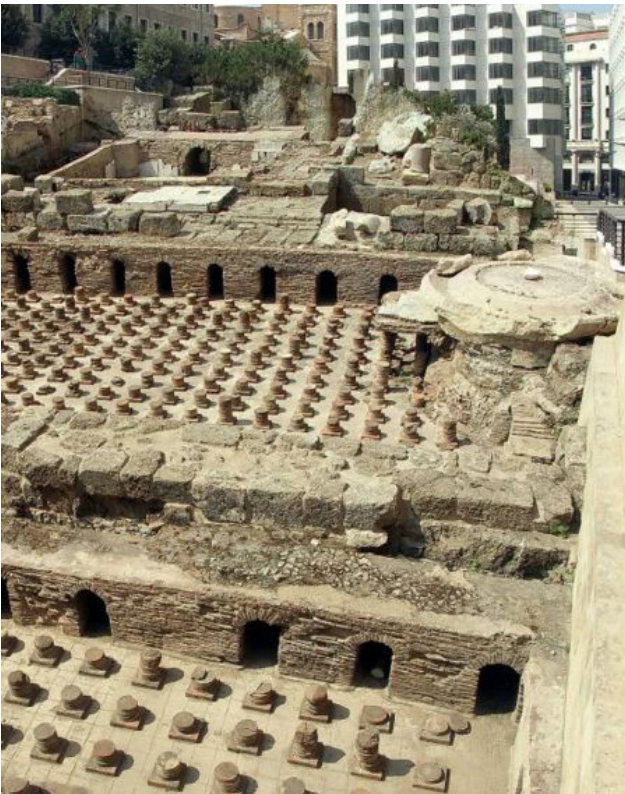


Figure 6. Roman Baths.
© Aboluay/ Wikimedia Commons

The discovery of archaeological findings at the onset of the reconstruction phase fuelled public resolve to revisit the Master Plan in view of integrating heritage and archaeology.¹⁰⁶ As BCD's sole developer, Solidere acknowledged the importance of integrating heritage, and considered the preservation of archaeological findings as tangible evidence of its vision of Beirut as an 'ancient city for the future'.¹⁰⁷ However, the real estate company did not adopt any comprehensive strategy for the assessment and management of archaeological assets. Its revised plan of 1994 promoted the inclusion of the major archaeological excavation site 'Zone des Eglises', subsequently named the 'Garden of Forgiveness', as an urban park integrating the archaeological remains.¹⁰⁸ Planners also called for the incorporation of archaeological findings in

the new design for the Souks area.¹⁰⁹

*These plans were not drawn up around actual discoveries, or with any reference to heritage management needs and considerations. [...]. Instead a priori assumptions about the role of the historic past in framing the modern urban landscape were incorporated into the master plan.*¹¹⁰

The Lebanese Government was a central partner in archaeological projects in BCD, as the Law No.166 on Antiquities (1933) allowed the DGA control over all archaeological works in the country. While it was an important public actor, the DGA was under-resourced, lacking adequate funds, human resources and technical expertise. Moreover, the entangled relations between the DGA, which managed archaeological findings, and the Ministry of Culture, owning the country's cultural property, presented an additional challenge. International aid was thus sought by the Lebanese Government, mainly through UNESCO's technical assistance.

At the request of the Lebanese Government, the project UNESCO-LIBAN/92/008: *Réhabilitation de la Direction Générale des Antiquités et Soutien à la Reconstruction du Centre-Ville de Beyrouth* was launched. It stipulated cooperation between local governmental agencies (the CDR, responsible for the coordination of construction and archaeological operations through a special committee, and the DGA, which supervised and controlled all archaeological operations), UNDP and UNESCO. This partnership resulted in excavations that brought together local and international expertise to Beirut's centre, rendering it one of 'the largest urban sites being excavated in the world'.¹¹¹ The private sector was included as a financial partner. The project's first phase was partly financed by the Hariri Foundation, while the later phases were financed by Solidere.

106 Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

107 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

108 Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

109 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: the Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

110 Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

111 Sader, H. 1998. Ancient Beirut: Urban Growth in the Light of Recent Excavations. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

UNESCO-LIBAN/92/008 aimed to rehabilitate the DGA, and support the reconstruction of central Beirut and the management of archaeological assets through establishing a regulatory framework of defined objectives, budgets, resources and expected results for projects (Directorate General of Antiquities and UNESCO, 1995). A three-phased programme established by the DGA and UNESCO began in 1993: (a) *Phase 1* was dedicated to the exploration of accessible open areas; (b) *Phase 2* extended the initial excavations; and (c) *Phase 3* salvaged archaeological findings ahead of construction works.¹¹²

The archaeological projects in post-war Beirut presented, in its essence, a tangible opportunity for public participation and capacity-building. Local archaeologists and students shared the different excavation sites with other local and international missions, making the space more accessible and inviting.

*In this way cultural heritage has a very real contribution to make “towards peace-building with its threefold goal of offering hope, healing and reconciliation.”*¹¹³

Similarly, it offered the occasion to officially engage the state, represented by the DGA, in creating a genuine partnership between local and international actors for financing, planning, implementing and managing projects.

Beginning in September 1993, the systematic excavations involved different archaeological teams designated the following sites:¹¹⁴

- Site 001 (south of Martyrs Square): studied by an archaeological team from the Lebanese University. The site uncovered findings ranging from Roman and Hellenistic periods to the Ottoman rule.
- Site 002 (north of Martyrs Square): studied by the Institut Francais d'archéologie de Proche-Orient (Ifpo). It uncovered architectural remains of the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Byzantine mosaics) and a workshop of an Abbasid glassmaker.
- Site 003 (north of the Rivoli Cinema): studied

by a team from the American University of Beirut. Architectural remains of the Bronze Age were uncovered.

- Site 004 (the vicinity of the St. George Maronite Cathedral and the St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral): studied by an archaeological team from the Lebanese University. It uncovered a wide range of archaeological materials.
- Site 005 (near the Evangelical Church). It uncovered Roman remains.

The archaeology programme of the city centre, however, did not reach its ambitious potential. Rather, it gave rise to acute conflicts of interest since it failed to establish long-term partnerships among the several stakeholders involved.

*The relentless timetable of engineering works, the absence of any proper assessment and evaluation of the location and potential of the archaeological finds, and local resource limitations made conflict not only inevitable but routine.*¹¹⁵

Several factors contributed to its failure, notably: (a) the outdated Law No.166 on Antiquities of 1933, which did not stipulate a binding regulatory framework for the DGA in the management of the archaeological findings; (b) a poor coordination between 'managers of heritage' and developers seeking lucrative benefits of the site; and (c) the limited role of UNESCO as technical consultant.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, critics found that archaeology lacked proper assessment,¹¹⁷ and highlighted the necessity to establish clear criteria for the coherent integration of archaeological research and the comprehensive integration of heritage into the urban development scheme.¹¹⁸

Between 1993 and 2000, 138 archaeological sites were excavated, unveiling the different archaeological layers of Beirut since the Iron and

¹¹⁵ Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

¹¹⁶ Sader, H. 1998. Ancient Beirut: Urban Growth in the Light of Recent Excavations. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

¹¹⁷ Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

¹¹⁸ An International Scientific Committee, consisting of regional and international archaeology experts for the UNESCO project, visited Beirut in 1995 and 1996. For further information, see: Directorate General of Antiquities and UNESCO. 1997. Rapport du Comité Scientifique International. *Archéologie et Patrimoine*, No. 7. Beirut, DGA/UNESCO.

¹¹² Perring, D. 2009. Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3-4, pp. 296-314.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Jidejian, N. 1997. *Beirut Through the Ages*. Beirut, Librairie Orientale.

Bronze Ages.¹¹⁹ In light of these findings, multiple approaches were set forth in the management of archaeology: documentation, *in-situ* preservation as public spaces or as integrated design features, and transportation to the National Museum in Beirut. The inventory of archaeological sites listed on Solidere's website, although limited, outlines the different projects executed and/or planned around the city centre.¹²⁰

1. Beirut Tell Area: the area's findings are integrated in the urban design of Castel Square and Belvedere Park landscape, accompanied by the creation of a City History Museum;
2. Roman Baths: the site remains a thriving public space of the city centre, around which cultural events are organized;
3. Roman Hippodrome: the site of an international landscape competition to design a hippodrome park on Wadi Abou Jamil;
4. Between Martyrs Square and Maarad Street: the urban landscape project 'Garden of Forgiveness' is envisioned following an international competition. The project remains on hold;
5. Other excavations: have no specified management approach, have varied levels of documentation, and/or have been left *in-situ* or transported to the National Museum. Sites include the burials at the Riad al-Solh Square, the crypt beneath the St. Georges Orthodox Church, and findings of the Saifi and Beirut Harbour areas.

Uncertainty continues to plague the archaeological framework in the city centre, as the issue of plots sold to developers with potential archaeological findings remains unresolved. The resource-limited DGA is still unable to fund archaeological work or provide a regulatory framework for the compensation of developers.¹²¹ Conflicts of interest among the different actors in archaeological projects have delayed and/or ceased many development projects in BCD, resulting in costly disputes between developers

and the state.¹²² In 2002, Solidere claimed US\$ 17 million in compensation for increased infrastructure costs due to delays of the DGA on sites with archaeological findings, and estimated that 'the costs are bound to increase as long as issues remain unresolved'.¹²³



Figure 7. Garden of Forgiveness.
© Howayda al-Harithy

However, cultural initiatives have been undertaken by Solidere to underline its commitment to cultural revival in BCD through leveraging archaeological sites of Beirut. One of the earliest initiatives was the Initiation to Archaeology Programme in 1995, organized in partnership with the DGA and UNESCO. It involved an exhibition for school students to discover models and tools of archaeology, guided by archaeological experts working in the city centre. Another exhibition held in Martyrs Square from May to June 1995 presented the chronology of Beirut's archaeological findings.¹²⁴

Today, Solidere is a partner in two projects related to the archaeological findings of Beirut: the Heritage Trail and the City History Museum. In

119 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

120 Solidere. 2018d. Archaeology. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/history-and-culture/archeology> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

121 Sader, H. 1998. Ancient Beirut: Urban Growth in the Light of Recent Excavations. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

122 For example, the Landmark Beirut project, a \$US 150 million development by Jean Nouvel, was stopped in 2013 after photos of archaeological findings dating back to the Byzantine period were leaked by activists to the media. Source: The Daily Star Lebanon. 2013. Archaeological ruins halt \$149M landmark project. *The Daily Star Lebanon*. Available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/May-21/217804-archaeological-ruins-halt-149m-landmark-project.ashx#axzz2TG9673Dn> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

123 Solidere. 2002. *Solidere Annual Report 2002*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/ar2002.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

124 Rousseau, A. 1995. Archéologie et Histoire, vers un apprentissage pédagogique. *Archéologie et Patrimoine*, No. 1. Beirut, DGA/UNESCO.

an effort to better integrate BCD's archaeological layers and built heritage into their surrounding contexts, Solidere collaborated with the DGA and the Municipality of Beirut to create the Heritage Trail, a walking circuit featuring different sites around the BCD. The initiative claims to link the different archaeological sites preserved *in situ*, historic public spaces and heritage buildings, in a celebration of Beirut's multi-layered heritage (e). The City History Museum, located in the Beirut Tell Area, is planned to be the central anchoring point of the Heritage Trail.¹²⁵

The Conservation Area

The Conservation Area's boundaries delineated in Solidere's 1994 Master Plan comprise four zones of intervention: (a) Serail Hill; (b) Riad al-Solh Street; (c) Nejme (Etoile) Square and Maarad Street; and (d) Foch-Allenby. The area stands at the locus of the old medieval city, testifying to the various historical layers that shaped it.¹²⁶ Studded with historic buildings and religious landmarks, the area is bordered by two of the largest preserved *in-situ* archaeological sites in Beirut: the Roman Baths and the Garden of Forgiveness (Figures 6 and 7).

The periods to which the historic stock belongs offer insight into Beirut's urban development. The Serail Hill sub-district contains two late Ottoman landmarks: the Grand Serail and the CDR building. Nejme Square, and Maarad and Foch-Allenby streets feature cohesive historic stock dating back to the French Mandate (1920-1930) with religious landmarks (St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, al-Omari Mosque, etc.), whereas Riad al-Solh Street encompasses Beirut's modern heritage through its buildings that used to house the city's financial district.¹²⁷ By restoring this area, Solidere claimed that 'heritage buildings can survive and create value provided that they are adapted to the needs of contemporary life and business. [...] It is a real showcase of the city centre reconstruction'.¹²⁸

125 Solidere. 2018d. Archaeology. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/history-and-culture/archeology> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

126 Solidere. 2018f. Conservation Area. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/urban-overview/districts-main-axes/conservation-area> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

127 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

128 Solidere. 2018f. Conservation Area. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/city-center/urban-overview/districts-main-axes/conservation-area> (Accessed 10 January 2018.)

Examples of conservation and rehabilitation within the Master Plan

Nejme Square and Foch-Allenby streets

The revitalization of Nejme Square and the Foch-Allenby streets (Figures 8 and 9) was given high priority in Phase I of Solidere's Master Plan, and sought to conserve it as an urban ensemble and preserve the traditional fabric. Although it was among the least damaged areas of post-war Beirut, technical surveys were undertaken from 1993 to 1994 to assess damage to the remaining buildings, and locate alterations and additions to original structures.¹²⁹

Historically, the area formed a vital interface between the land and the sea, but land reclamation compliant to the Master Plan altered its strategic position. Distanced from the sea and its port-related activities, the area's connection with its direct surroundings was altered and it was assigned new urban functions to complement the Master Plan's surrounding districts. A 'free-market approach driven by business concerns' was at the heart of the urban renewal strategy for Nejme Square and Foch-Allenby streets, creating an 'environment conducive to cultural, tourist, recreational and shopping activities targeting the metropolitan elite and middle class'.¹³⁰

Technically, five approaches characterized the rehabilitation works of Nejme Square and Foch-Allenby streets: restoration, refurbishment, renovation, rebuilding and remodelling. Restoration, refurbishment, renovation and rebuilding mainly focused on reverting to pre-war structural conditions, which left little margin for creativity or architectural reinterpretation, whereas remodelling allowed for new enclosures to existing structures. These strategies were both contextual and building-specific responses, which were also in line with the vision proposed for street elevations and the surrounding urban space as a whole.¹³¹

The example of Nejme Square and the Foch-Allenby streets stands as a literal response to the developmental/preservationist dichotomy: the rehabilitation process brought forward a new building typology that, responding to

129 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

contemporaneous needs, incorporated both modern interiors and historical facades. The adoption of international standards coupled with local skills emphasized issues of scale and stone craftsmanship, and contributed to delivering an architectural facade as true to its traditional character as possible.

Drawing on the urban and architectural assets of the area, including its numerous civic, financial and religious landmarks, Solidere's Master Plan redefined the area as the 'new' historic core of Beirut, and nurtured a strong sense of 'communal and national identity'.¹³² The pedestrian-friendly area quickly became a pole of attraction at the end of the conservation works.



Figure 8. Nejmeh Square.
© Getty Images / Getty Images Plus



Figure 9. Maarad Street.
© Howayda al-Harithy

Yet, at urban level, the renovated historic core failed to reconnect to the city's traditional fabric in a multidisciplinary manner, which sparked heavy gentrification and diluted the original vibrant economic and social exchanges integral to Beirut's city centre.

*Unwilling to address the present with its most recent social memory, that of the war, nor able to start anew, Solidere gives us 'the city of collective memory, with its quasi-archaeological presentations and staging, as well as restored buildings.'*¹³³

Public and religious landmarks

In accordance with the Master Plan, 27 public and religious landmarks were retained for preservation. In the heart of the Conservation Area, two major civic monuments still fulfil their role as spaces of national and local power: the Parliament House and the clock tower in Nejmeh Square, both built in 1934 by the local architect Mardiros H. Altounian, and the Municipality of Beirut building on Weygand Street, built in 1925 by the local architect Youssef Effendi Aftimos.¹³⁴ Conceived in line with the French Mandate's planning strategy for Beirut's city centre, both buildings symbolize the quest for national identity, as argued by Saliba (2013):

*During this time, the two symbols of local power, the Parliament and the Municipality buildings, also expressed the dual nature of an ambiguous search for national identity. The former adopted an Orient-revivalist style that articulated historical regional references with Neo-Mamluk overtones. The latter provided a clear expression of the Neo-Islamic style developed in Cairo by turn-of-the-century Western and western-educated architects.*¹³⁵

This identity was consolidated by Solidere as both these monuments were restored to operate as per their original functions. Another nucleus of political power was the adaptive reuse of the Ottoman Serail and Ottoman military hospital,

133 al-Harithy, H. 2008. Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut's Last Mamluk Monument. *Muqarnas*, Vol. 25. Leiden, Brill.

134 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

135 Saliba, R. 2013. Historicizing Early Modernity — Decolonizing Heritage: Conservation Design Strategies in Postwar Beirut. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1. Berkeley CA, International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE), pp. 7-24.

132 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.



Figure 10. CDR building on the Serail Hill.
© Howayda al-Harithy

which were turned into the headquarters of the Lebanese Government and the office building of the CDR (Figure 10), respectively.

Numerous religious buildings of different historical periods were well preserved within the Conservation Area, and constituted 'great heritage value and reinforce[d] the city centre's historic identity'.¹³⁶ These buildings include the al-Omari, Assaf and Amir Munzer mosques, the St. Elie Greek-Catholic Cathedral, the St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral (built over a Byzantine church), the St. George Maronite Cathedral and the St. Louis Capuchin Church. Urban design and landscape features were introduced around these buildings to provide public spaces, such as the Municipality Garden, which articulates the relation between the Municipality building and the adjoining mosques on Weygand Street. The demolition of many damaged buildings within this locus enabled the creation of this 'new square and formal setting'.¹³⁷

Despite the high technical standards of the restoration works, the main criticism of the preservation of BCD's religious buildings centred on its lack of genuine integration with the urban surroundings. Historical religious monuments existed within a set of spatial and urban conditions that the Master Plan failed to consider.

Solidere's efforts have left religious buildings magnificently restored but isolated among a wasteland of car parks

136 Gavin, A. and Maluf, R. 1996. *Beirut Reborn: The Restoration and Development of the Central District*. London, Academy Editions.

137 Ibid.

*and empty lots, lonely monuments to a lost society. Removed from their urban context, these buildings have become historical sites, not places of living remembrance.*¹³⁸

Solidere's identification and conceptualization of the Conservation Area as the city's historic core presented it as a cohesive urban context. Nevertheless, alterations introduced by the Master Plan in terms of new infrastructure, shifts in land uses and socio-economic aspects have drastically transformed the original fabric within which its major historical landmarks once existed.

Built heritage in other BCD areas

While the Conservation Area counted the largest number of preserved historical buildings and religious structures, other districts were studded with intact monuments of great social and religious significance. Nevertheless, these preserved religious buildings further testify to the disintegration of the monuments within their urban surroundings. Examples include the al-Majidiya, Zawayat Ibn Arraq and Abou Bakr (al-Dabbagha) mosques and the Maghen Abraham Synagogue in Wadi Abou Jamil.

Moreover, other heritage buildings still stand today as left by the war with no clear plan of intervention, such as the Grand Theatre on Riad el-Solh Square (Figure 11), 'The Egg', a product of the modern era located alongside Martyrs Square (Figure 12), and the L'Orient Le Jour (Figure 13) on the northern edge of the souks.

In support of reconciliation and institutional revival in post-war Beirut, collective memory and religious co-existence were indeed emphasized in the preservation projects of Solidere's Master Plan. However, the approach remained sporadic and failed to integrally anchor the preserved monuments within a comprehensive urban vision. Furthermore, it neglected to revive the cultural and socio-economic exchanges that once characterized the original fabric within which these landmarks existed and functioned.

138 Fricke, A. 2005. Forever Nearing the Finish Line: Heritage Policy and the Problem of Memory in Postwar Beirut. *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Vol. 12, Iss. 2. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.163-181.



Figure 11. Beirut's Grand Theatre.
© Howayda al-Harithy



Figure 12. City Centre Dome 'the Egg', a modern landmark.
© Howayda al-Harithy



Figure 13. L'Orient Le Jour.
© Howayda al-Harithy

The Beirut Souks

The Beirut Souks site was the object of three waves of demolition, dating back to as early as 1983 by OGER Liban Company, and later in 1992 by Solidere at the start of the Master Plan's implementation.¹³⁹ However, the demolition of

this historic site uncovered archaeological layers that attested to the ancient role of this part of the city, linking its functional and spatial patterns to the early Phoenician period.¹⁴⁰

The souks, an emblematic feature of the Old City of Beirut, stood at a strategic location, negotiating the relationship between the active commercial exchanges of the port on the one hand, and the economic and social exchanges of the inner city on the other. Solidere's Master Plan envisioned the souks' revival through a complete reconstruction project of 'new' souks. The project, prioritized in Phase I of Solidere's development scheme, aimed at re-establishing the ancient souks' layout and their vibrant commercial exchanges within a contemporary context through '[f]inding an architectural solution that revitalizes the familiar character of a souk while accommodating contemporary needs of shopping and retail'.¹⁴¹

The plan for Beirut's new souks was commissioned to the local architect Jad Tabet and approved in 1999. Drawing on the old souks' grid, the reconstruction scheme respected the preservation of street patterns and proposed open spaces, while applying Solidere's Master Plan's guidelines in terms of connectivity with the surroundings and ensuring a pedestrian-friendly experience. 'Replacing the traditional markets',¹⁴² as indicated in Solidere's brief, was designed by the international architect Rafael Moneo. This 100,000m² urban reconstruction project addressed the issue of heritage in multiple ways. Formally, it referenced history through reconstructing the traditional souks typology and reinterpreting their architectural style. It remained, however, devoid of consideration for the inherent social and economic exchanges of the souks, as well as their active integration within the urban context.

*[R]etaining the old street patterns does not ensure maintaining the spatial social practices that animate the souks, especially if elements on the site and beyond are not interdependent in their programmatic distribution, access, and circulation.*¹⁴³

139 Makdisi, S. 1997b. Reconstructing History in Central Beirut. *Middle East Report*, No. 203. Tacoma, Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP).

140 Moneo, R. 1998. The Souks of Beirut. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

141 Ibid.

142 Solidere. 2002. *Solidere Annual Report 2002*. Solidere. Available at: <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/ar2002.pdf> (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

143 al-Harithy, H. 2008. Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut's Last Mamluk Monument. *Muqarnas*, Vol. 25. Leiden, Brill.

At the urban scale, the project was marked by the incorporation of the following archaeological and historic monuments within the whole project design:¹⁴⁴

1. Zawiya Ibn Arraq, a Mamluk *zawiya* (prayer corner) at the southern end of the souks (Figures 9 and 10);
2. Majidiyya Mosque and Khan Antoun Bey of the Ottoman Period in the northern part of the souks;
3. Archaeological findings preserved *in-situ*: Phoenico-Persian Quarter, the City Wall and Moat, and elements of the ancient harbour walls in Khan Antoun Bey Square.



Figure 14. The Souks southern entrance.
© Howayda al-Harithy



Figure 15. Zawiya Ibn Arraq.
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Interestingly, these heritage components animated the main pedestrian access points and formed an interface with the surrounding urban context, thereby creating ‘corporeal anchors for the contemporary, ultra-modern city that tie it to its rich and varied history and articulate the specificities of its character formed and reformed over time’.¹⁴⁵

Conclusions and recommendations

Today, 27 years after the end of the civil war, we witness the outcome of the reconstruction project’s failure to address social and cultural dimensions. Firstly, it is a result of a primarily economic government strategy that reduced the reconstruction of the whole country to that of central Beirut, and entrusted the urban project to a private development company, Solidere. This strategy was not accompanied by plans for social and cultural recovery nor its extended scope beyond the BCD, thus failing to facilitate genuine post-war reconciliation. At present, the BCD is marked by exclusive spaces that are inaccessible to all socio-economic groups, and restricted security zones suffocating development, which have left behind empty apartments and aching businesses.

Key outcomes of the BCD reconstruction

1. A neo-liberal project

To transform the BCD into a regional business and finance hub, Solidere adopted a neo-liberal model that favoured private investment over the public good. Solidere attracted foreign investors through tax incentives and iconic architecture. Owing to its Master Plan, the built up area of pre-war BCD doubled,¹⁴⁶ luxury offices and apartments were built, and the old souks were turned into a shopping mall. Profit was prioritized over social inclusion and diversity. Critics have viewed this ‘as the embodiment of a new political and economic era associated with the neo-

¹⁴⁵ Rabbat, N. 1998. The Interplay of History and Archaeology in Beirut. P. Rowe and H. Sarkis (eds.), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich, Prestel.

¹⁴⁶ Verdeil, E., Faour, G. and Velut, S. 2007. *Atlas du Liban: Territoires et Société*. Beirut, IFPO-CNRS.

liberal project of the Hariri Mandate in Lebanon (1995-2005), which states as its main aim the establishment of Beirut as a global destination for international capital and investors'.¹⁴⁷

2. A city of exclusion

Solidere's planning was an 'insular urban development',¹⁴⁸ transforming the city centre while turning its back on the marginalized, peri-central districts and suburbs. Beirut's historic core and civic centre became an exclusive, high-end and elitist space. This was compounded by neglecting the city centre's crucial role as a key transportation and exchange node that brought people together from different socio-economic backgrounds and destinations and connected them to wider networks.

3. An urban rupture

The project re-invented the BCD as an island or enclave severed from its surroundings via a network of major roads acting as physical barriers. This rupture manifested in several ways. With regards to the current urban fabric, the typology of large blocks of high-rises stands in stark contrast to the low-rise density of the surrounding neighbourhoods that resemble the pre-war fabric of the city centre.

There was also a social rupture. The social network of owners and dwellers with historic roots to the city, which was still vivid in the memory of people after the war, was fractured and neglected. It was replaced by property shares controlled by the real estate company. For many, this reinforced the image of the city centre as an isolated 'no-man's land' during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), hence 'permanently inscribing the spatial impacts of the civil war on Beirut'.¹⁴⁹

147 Fawaz, M. and Ghandour, M. 2010. *Spatial Erasure: Reconstruction Projects in Beirut*. Iowa State University Digital Repository. Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1047&context=arch_pubs (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

148 Saliba, R. 2004. *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area*. London, Steidl.

149 Fawaz, M. and Ghandour, M. 2010. *Spatial Erasure: Reconstruction Projects in Beirut*. Iowa State University Digital Repository. Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1047&context=arch_pubs (Accessed 22 December 2018.)

4. Absence of public participation

Solidere's reconstruction project exemplified market-led urbanism with an imbalance between public interest and private profit. Reconstruction was profit-driven and especially lucrative for members of government and foreign investors.

Since the reconstruction was limited to the economic recovery of Lebanon, the Solidere project, which covered 191 ha and included Beirut's historic core, lacked a participatory process and an adequate governmental role in decision-making with the private sector. Even property owners weren't given flexible options for development based on comprehensive guidelines.

5. A city without memory

An important part of reconstruction was taking into account the pre-war social and spatial networks that linked people to the BCD through practice and memory. Their erasure during the war, and even more so during the post-war reconstruction process, was significantly damaging. The social and urban fabrics - embodied with memory, identities, practices and historic significance - disappeared. The erasure of historic neighbourhoods, such as Zeitouni, Wadi Abou Jamil, Saifi, as well as the old souks and the main public space of Martyrs Square, similarly obliterated the social memory of dwellers, businesses and civic activities.

Recommendations

Planning and public participation

1. All reconstruction processes should be comprehensive and participatory;
2. Post-war reconstruction processes should be guided by a shared vision, reflecting government efforts and people's aspirations, and reinforced by people-centred policy-making;
3. Post-war reconstruction should be an opportunity for training and capacity-building in different disciplines and trades;
4. Facilitating genuine social reconciliation, especially in the case of civil wars, should be underpinned by inclusive public participation across all sectors, genders, ages and socio-economic groups;

5. Reconstruction projects should prioritize the public good and social inclusion. They should opt for social mixity rather than exclusivity;
 6. People should have ownership in the reconstruction process through actively participating in different phases: planning, implementation, financing and execution;
 7. In urban reconstruction and renewal projects, it is important to enforce mixed-use to allow the area to function by day and night, including commercial, cultural and public buildings, as well as residential neighbourhoods;
 8. Physical restoration should be part of a multi-disciplinary approach to economic, social, educational and cultural rehabilitation, in order to allow for an integrated recovery. Social and cultural recovery should be prioritized as much as economic recovery;
 9. Urban conservation projects should not purely be about restoring facades and formal features, but also the functions linked to the memory of the people, the identity of the place and the social practices that unfold there. This is necessary for creating continuity not only in the historical narrative, but in the social memory of the city dwellers.
2. Cultural heritage - both its tangible and intangible components - should be properly assessed in a multi-disciplinary manner, and linked to the community as part of a sustainable approach;
 3. Heritage management policies should value genuine economic stimulation, not only for tourism but for the continuity of traditional trades and industries;
 4. Social practices that were disrupted during conflict should be re-integrated into a comprehensive vision of cultural heritage management;
 5. The 'cultural recovery' process should be stressed as a means of creating public amenity and an 'inclusive space of reconciliation' within a scarred cityscape of spatial and physical expressions of conflict.

Governance

1. Public-private partnerships should support government decision-making and monitoring. The government should play the critical role in protecting the public good;
2. Government agencies involved in the reconstruction process should be empowered to play a more instrumental role in project planning and implementation;
3. Local governments, such as municipalities, should work in close coordination with other stakeholders to ensure adequate implementation and genuine public participation;
4. Technical assistance by international agencies should be sought under the plan's official comprehensive framework, and for strengthening local capacity-building.

A sustainable approach to cultural heritage

1. Recognize cultural heritage as an adequate entry point for the post-war recovery of community identity and reconciliation, as it restores a sense of belonging through shared

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