

Regressive Utopia in Progress: The Reconstruction of Beirut

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The process of reconstructing Beirut started a decade ago. This process is still nowhere near completion, and seems to be stalled at the moment: another casualty of the change of political power that took place two years ago, and as some would argue, of the deadlocked peace process. The reasons for this state of affairs is not hard to comprehend when one realizes that the major key player of this reconstruction was no one other than the former prime minister of government who invested personally in this campaign. This aspect alone renders the reconstruction of Beirut a curious affair for urbanists worldwide, added to the fact that what we are witnessing perhaps is a first application in the urban realm of the contemporary mania for capital concentration and corporate takeovers.

In this paper, I would like to draw a general assessment of the urban reconstruction of Beirut, taking into considerations some of the social and political criticism that has been already leveled, but also projecting this critique against the *imagery* of the actual style adopted for this politic of reconstruction and which would form an integral part of this *regressive utopia*. It is in a sense a utopia no longer based on any social concerns as was the case of the social utopias of Fourier or Saint Simon, but more concerned with projecting an appealing model to capital investors. Formally, the redesign of this capital city presents a reverse analogy to the emergence of the *Grossstadt*, hailed at the beginning of the century as a model of progress by the emerging avant-garde, a city that would incorporate technical progress along with cultural and artistic renewal. Here, in contrast, the image is largely tailored to appeal to a select group of financial decision makers, of a safe place for investment and work.

What is then utopic about this specific operation? It is utopic in that it also promises a recovery of an "original" condition, one that preceded the catastrophe or "fall", and further aims at idealizing this pre-fall condition by substantive urban manipulations. In this sense, the mythological aspect of this reconstruction should not be overlooked and could be uncovered in the various associations with a specific notion of rebirth, a myth which subtly underlies the publicity behind the reconstruction project, and which acts

as an effective deterrent against any critiques of the legitimacy of this operation.

A HISTORICAL APERCU

Beirut dates back to pre-historic settlements which took root in a fertile valley framed by two hills, and in proximity to a natural harbor. Recent excavations confirmed that initial Phoenician settlement occurred in certain zones along this northern edge of the city, yet it was not until Roman times that this entity emerged as a city, specifically during the reign of Augustus. Augustus endowed the city with all the regalia of an imperial city: an urban plan complete with its basilicas, temples and its famed law-school. (1)

The city slowly recovered from the natural disaster of the sixth century AD, to witness again a succession of different interventions. From Byzantine to Arab conquerors, from Crusaders to Ottomans, successive settlers and occupiers brought their alterations to the urban fabric, ripping old monuments to create new ones, overlaying new cities on the ruins of the old, as is the case of all historical cities. For the better part of the middle ages, Beirut lost its previous glory to other competitors along the Mediterranean coast, and would only partially recover this role in the twentieth century.

The process of urban modernization started in the nineteenth century under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans enacted a policy of urbanization throughout the empire, emulating the ongoing process in other European cities: a modernization that was based on the *tabula rasa* of old and unsightly quarters. The prelude was the demolition of the city wall, the last vestige of the medieval city, which heralded the expansion of the city into its neighboring countryside. Vast areas in the center of the city were cleared, while some areas did not see the end of this process due to the outbreak of the First World War. After the war, and upon these already initiated urban clearings, the French impressed their own designs which would later characterize the image of the city in the twentieth century, putting their finishing touches to the broad avenues that replaced the labyrinthine alleys; and completing the renovations at the heart of the city around the newly shaped *Place de L'Etoile*.

THE CURRENT PROJECT

The current operation started towards the end of the civil war (1975-1991). Beirut Central District or *BCD*, the acronym given to the area that is now the main focus of the reconstruction project, lies at the core of the city and incorporates all of the ancient city of Beirut as it existed until the beginning of the twentieth century, in addition to its immediate perimeter areas.



Fig. 1. Beirut Central District circa 1991. The black line delimits the boundary of area under reconstruction, the central star is the Place de l'Étoile; above it lies the Souks area delimited by a gray outline, and immediately above the Souks lies to the left the outgrowth of dumping into the sea, to the right the Port area]

The war of 1975 left some drastic scars in the city. Yet the city center itself, paradoxically, witnessed much less devastation than the other fault lines. Under the cover of expediency and the urgency of reconstruction, a private company was founded in order to manage the reconstruction of the urban core, after a governmental decree allowed the expropriation of all land in the old city, with a large part of the profit in real estate going to the company itself, in return for developing roads, infrastructures and other amenities. These amenities, largely non-profitable and requiring maintenance, would be returned to the state after the completion of the project. The excuse for expropriation was the exaggerated extent of destruction due to war and the incapacity of both small-owners and the state to handle this large task, compounded by the legal problems of multiple ownership and rental rights that could well delay the reconstruction process. In a sense, an ex-cathedra judgment on the incapacity of the bourgeoisie, now out of line with late-capitalist realities, to manage its own rehabilitation. The authorities in charge, which would eventually coalesce into a select consortium of political and economic powers, thus ruled to substitute with one swift decision a whole political-economic structure for another. The company in charge, named *Solidere*, would effectively replace the municipal council in this territory, financing and planning the reconstruction and taking charge of its management after reconstruction. The expropriated

landowners, on the other hand, would become mere shareholders in this new arrangement, along with new investors. (2)

A number of controversial political decisions had long preceded and paved the way for the establishment of this corporation, namely the abrupt demolitions of the market district near *Martyrs Square* in 1982; twelve years before the formal incorporation of this company and nine years before the final end of the war. This action, like others which followed it, occurred in the darkness of the night and was attributed to an accident. Ten years later, in 1992, the second market district including the most historic *Souk Ayyas* were raised, beginning another cycle of wholesale demolitions that cleared up the old city and opened up its space, as if in a rewinding mode to a pre-historic condition, soon to be reconstituted according to a new image that projected a "new" city, cleansed of all its previous impurities.

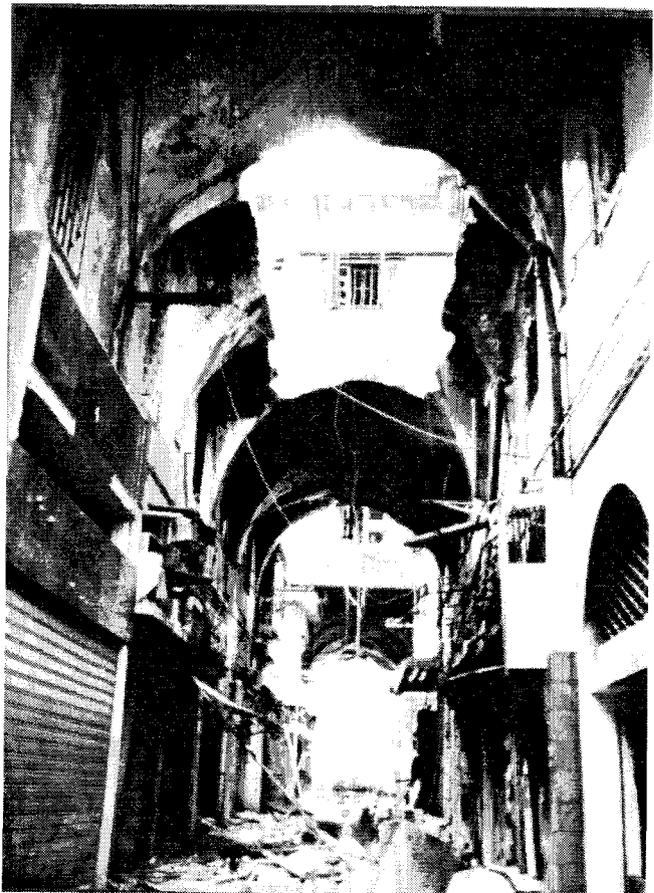


Fig 2. Souk Ayyas

The critic Elias Khoury summed up at the time the general popular reaction to these visions: "It is the Lebanese memory itself and the soul of this city that is being assassinated..." (3). In fact, the execution of the *Souks* was a conscious act intended to do once and for all with a place-specific economic mode, replacing it with another that could lend itself more easily to the game of international speculation. It was a conscious action destined to reshape once and for all the new city according to the new economic parameters.



Fig. 3. Martyrs Square, 2000

Martyrs Square, the other major urban space in the city became a desolate tract of land, awaiting an unknown fate. The history of this square, once an open field outside the city, excluded, and later becoming the center itself; was a consequence of the expansion of the port itself, which gradually shifted its center of gravity eastward in its process of enlargement; given the additional factor that the major road to Damascus, starting at the eastern corner of *Martyrs Square*, became a major avenue at the turn of the century. These factors affected the constitution of all the districts surrounding this specific square which became dotted with coffee shops, cinemas, small hostels, traveling agencies, and, of course, bordellos. The popular character of this square is clearly captured in the iconic postcard pictures of the period, which have become in fact nostalgic symbols of that *belle-époque*.



Fig. 4. Martyrs Square, c. 1974

The radical reshaping of *Martyrs Square* is the most telling evidence of this attempt to assassinate public life by eliminating its central space. The projected changes indicate without doubt an attempt to cancel its function as a central political space. (4) A large billboard was installed in the summer of 1995, offering a prospectus of the rehabilitation

envisioned. Not only is this manner of publicity quite exceptional in the whole history of urbanism, at least in this part of the world, it is also indicative of the ideals of its promoters: it favors a simulacrum of a public space rather than the real one, purified of its irregularities, and increasingly managed like the controlled space of a commercial mall.

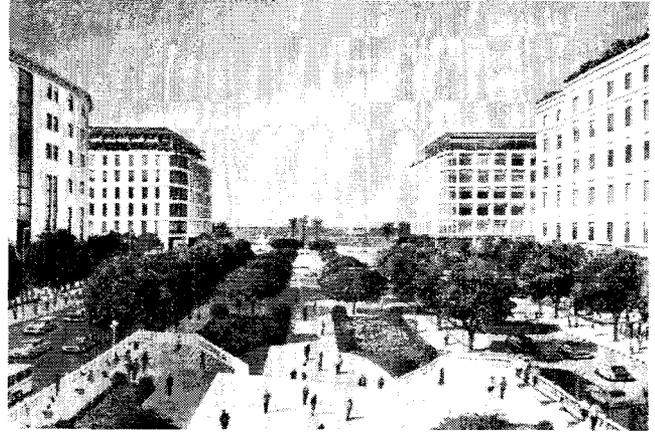


Fig. 5. Martyrs Square, proposed scheme, c. 1997

In fact, the few public events that took place in this space since the end of the war were all staged events, a testimony to the potential power of this corporation to determine contemporary culture. The theater of life that once was *Martyrs Square* has been sterilized for pathetic performances: stripped of all its connections to the urban fabric around it, it is transformed into a peaceful park where the new citizen would be allowed to stroll and spend some good time as suggested perhaps in Seurat's *La grande jatte*.

This process of sanitization extended to the well knit neighborhoods that once constituted thriving residential areas around the core, public outcry and media campaigns against these actions notwithstanding. The implementation of broad avenues would create further separations and dissect the city into an unrecognizable landscape of emptiness. One of the most telling examples of this phenomenon is the district of *Wadi-abu-Jmil* and the neighboring *Bab-Idriss* sector, both of which have been simply erased to make room for a network of new avenues, radically changing the character of that whole area.

Archaeology was one of the short-time benefactors from this radical cleansing, yet this fundamental issue was again subject to intractable and controversial manipulations by the company in charge, with the overriding concern being the expedition of the construction process. Under public protest and the intervention of international organizations, few archaeological parcels of land were set aside as mementos to the history of the city. (5)



Fig. 6. The former neighborhood of Wadi-bou-Jmil, with the remaining Synagogue and few other houses in the background.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF A REGRESSIVE UTOPIA

The first master plan expressed in vivid terms this paranoia of a regressive utopia. A pseudo Beaux Arts approach based on grand axes that lead to the sea, ripping through urban space, framed by an architecture of a hybrid regionalism, organized in a continuous folkloric parade around the blocks of the city. (6) The images marketed in this first proposal suggested this possibility of reclaiming history through a pastiche or a masquerade of forms, without negating its potential of adapting to new market forces.

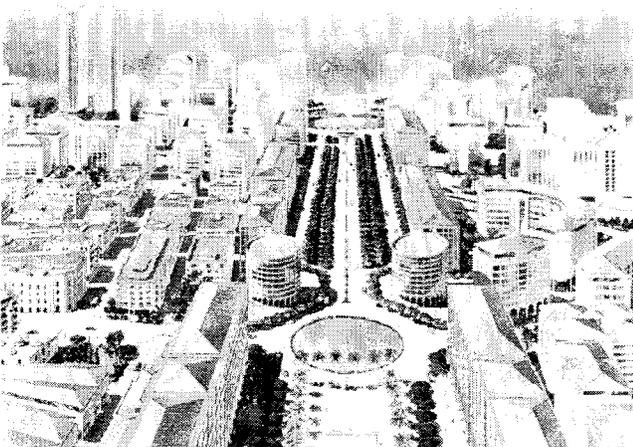


Fig. 7. First proposal. View through reconfigured Martyrs Square and all other districts adjoining it.

The second proposal apparently replaced this pastiche vision of the city with a more sensible contextual approach. Angus Gavin, a member of the Solidere team, explained the new design as a synthesis between the "grand planning" tradition and the Anglo-Saxon contextual tradition of urban design.(7) Gavin carefully avoided in his apologetic to address the controversial demolitions of whole neighbor-

hoods, as well as the more serious controversies surrounding this project which effectively maintained the same area of clearings as the earlier proposal, with few exceptions applying to particular landmarks.

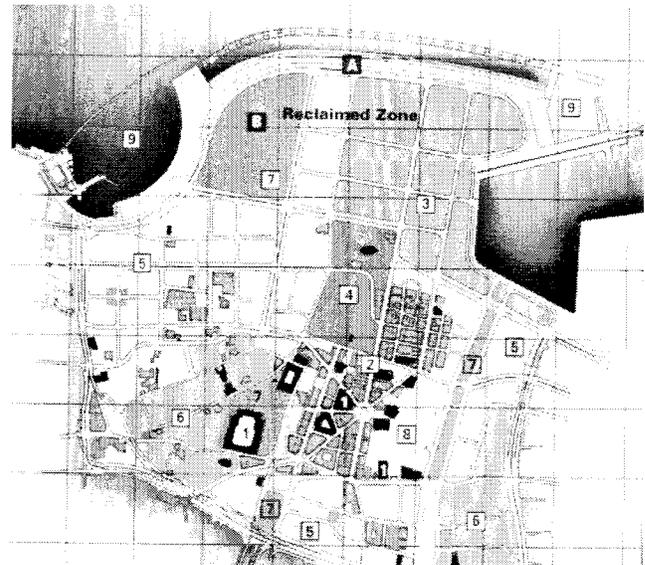


Fig. 8. Second proposal showing areas to be cleared and rebuilt, remaining buildings in dark gray and black; and a new configuration for the "reclaimed zone".

Fundamentally, the second master plan could do little in questioning the legal basis of this operation, again attesting to the fact that architects and planners eventually yield to the overwhelming superstructure on which they are dependent. In fact, the second master plan aggressively continued the process of transforming the image of Beirut from that of a medieval or petit Bourgeois city into an international corporate metropolis, without any attending public debate. The "business-gentrification" of the core and its dedication to highlevel businesses would all in fact serve to reshape the image of the city. On a social ground, Beirut would in a sense be the first among all cities to make the transition from collective ownership to some sort of corporate ownership. The architecture would be carefully tailored to this lethargic taste of apparent harmony, in an attempt to recreate the lost heritage. It is interesting to note in this respect how most architects, some of them pioneer modernists in the country, were so pliant in answering to this new false-consciousness.(8)

This version of "postmodernism" answers well to Cornelius Castoriades's critique of late capitalism, where aesthetics retreat into a conformism that represents political atrophy and the disappearance of critical thought. This is nowhere more true than in Beirut today, where the selective restitution of certain landmarks and styles is accepted as a legitimate compromise between real estate and social values. Castoriades states:

If the "modern" period [...] can be characterized, in the field of art, as the self-conscious pursuit of new forms, this pursuit has now explicitly and emphatically been abandoned. Eclecticism and the recombining and re-processing of the achievements of the past have now gained pride of program. [...] The value of postmodernism as "theory" is that it mirrors the prevailing trends. Its misery is that it simply rationalizes them through a highbrow apologetics of conformity and banality. Complacently mixed up with loose but fashionable talk about "pluralism" and "respect for the difference of the other", it ends up glorifying eclecticism, covering up sterility, and providing a generalized version of the "anything goes" principle [...](9)

This critique applies to this situation at hand where capital interests found in certain stylistic forms an appropriate medium for the taming of the various aesthetic interests, in the name of historic preservation and the faithful yet selective restoration of the past, and the summary disposal of other less redeemable forms such as the more popular *Souks*.(10) Yet, as any sociologist would have reminded us, the formal parameters alone would never suffice to re-politicize the spaces of the city: it is doubtful whether the *Souks* would ever recover any of their previous life under a new and more anonymous economic regime. Henri Lefevre's comments are also appropriate here:

Neither the architect nor the sociologist creates social relations. Under certain favorable conditions, they help these tendencies to materialize. Only social life has the power to create social relations. (11)

The only positive aspect of this whole operation could have been its capacity of enforcing new urban design guidelines that replace the archaic guidelines established in the 1950's and which are primarily responsible for the disfiguration of other districts in Beirut due to rampant speculation. Yet in this case and without any public debate, authority to define these architectural guidelines was left to the personal will of the corporate managers, and the taste that reigns is the one deemed appropriate by its team of developers and urbanists, who opted for a hybrid post-modernism as the defining style of Beirut.

On a social level, certain critics outlined the different problems of this reconstruction project, primary among them the fact that the new city core would become an enclave where only the select few could have right of entry. The new "citizens" of this city were now foreign capital managers for whom the city is one of many other investment potentials; they are not rooted in the political life of the city. The socio-political discontinuity is evident in the concern for a certain image of the city created for the upper classes and the international investors. (12) The exclusion from the new center of small manufactures and middle-class residences would inevitably create a "business center" where, as Michael Davie asserts:



Fig. 9. The southern edge of the BCD, with the new United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) headquarters in the background, and *Johnny Rockets* in the foreground.

[...] the contrast between the center and the rest of the city will be flagrant... The Middle classes which converged on the center previously ...would be naturally excluded now from this center of affairs. At any rate there will be nothing left there for them to appropriate nor claim: neither work, nor property, nor history, nor the soul of the city ... This city center will be the spatial expression of the political class now in power... It would be the symbolic space of the post-war powers: a privatized space, managed by the interests of a very small group of entrepreneurs strategically placed at the heart of the state apparatus, which is now under its control. [...] The new city center will impose itself like an island, a ghetto... it is a space of exclusion which will not contribute to the nurturing of a sense of citizenship... a space that will be the focus of envies of those excluded. (13)

This has been a point of agreement among many critics of this urban utopia. If this condition brings to mind the utopias of the avant garde, namely the *Ville Radieuse* of Le Corbusier, we must again draw a distinction in this case where this utopia does not extend its sphere of concern to address the other social and housing problems in the city, but satisfies itself with the *Cite d'affaires*, providing an agreeable environment for investors, at the expense of the rest of the city and its population. Thus while the center takes central role; the real challenge to the question of mending two separate parts of the city was left unaddressed, and remains critically open, a socio-economic open wound. It is as if the reconstruction politics rejected the natural extension of the city into its more populous suburbs, preferring to cordon off one section deemed of historic value, paradoxically only to negate this history by substituting for it a false history. This paradox may be better understood against the backdrop of Tafuri's analysis of the dialectical intertwining of design and capitalism,(14) but in this case the operation is led by a rear-guard, so to speak,

intent on recovering a sense of its own history while committing it simultaneously to the rubble. Mementos are thus preserved as inseminating ingredients in this new concoction, without any sense of social or political role to play.

DAMASCUS ROAD

The line that spreads from the city center, the old city, all the way down to the densely populated southern suburbs, for fifteen years the line of demarcation where battles were fought, has therefore received little attention and its role as a major political space has been ignored, leaving it to the wild urges of a rampant speculation. It is important here to draw a portrait of this other space of the city and its historical development as a dividing line. To understand this, we must once again go back to the nineteenth century, when the city witnessed its major transformations, namely the demolition of the city walls, the shifting of the main port activity area, and the definition of Martyrs Square as a major node. The importance of this avenue was further reinforced by the founding along its path of major institutions that benefited from its access as well as the cheaper available lands outside the city core. Institutions such as the Jesuit University, the French School of Medicine, and the French Lycee gradually established their presence along this crucial axis. The process of polarization which later turned this avenue into a separating line resulted from the growth of the city and the influx of the two main religious groups originating from two opposite sources: the eastern side of the city was populated by the largely Christian Maronite rural migrants from Mount-Lebanon as well as other Christian migrants from the Chouf Mountains, while the influx of Shiite Muslim migrants from the South settled in the adjacent areas, slightly to the West of the Damascus road divide.(15) The settlements created there were further expounded by the arrival of Palestinian refugees after 1948 who settled in the camp areas at the Southwestern periphery. This zone constituted effectively the explosive poverty belt of Beirut, to which neither the authority of the state nor its services extended.(16) It butted against the other poverty belt to the east, the Christian one, both of which became the major recruitment grounds of the opposing militias. It was at the interface between these two zones of the periphery, these two poverty belts, and outside Beirut proper, that the spark of the civil war erupted. The war transformed *Damascus Road* from a space of cultural interaction and interstitial parks to a line of separation and a symbol of the city's division. On both sides of this virtual wall, a generation of people grew up for whom the city ended at this vague but dangerous frontier, perceptible only through certain "gates" such as the Museum crossing.

An urban study of this section of the city revealed the large number of under-exploited parcels along this axis, which would, in the absence of sound urban regulations, lead to the destruction of the homogeneous scale of specific stretches in this sector. Already, and at the site of the old Lycee, a new development rose with a mix of retail and office space.

Without focusing on the pathetic architecture of this indiscriminate construction which promises to become a model for future ones, it is the interior space which heralds the Mall type made popular by the *American way of life*: inside the artificial space of this complex, cinemas and retail shops parade along a glossy street, a sad transformation of the oriental *souks*. It is another case of this fast adoption or assimilation of western models with the underlying yet naive hope of generating an instant culture in tune with the new world order. In some sense, the general prevailing taste has been uncritically conditioned by a global culture which seeks to market certain architectural types with proven economic results. Another close model being in this case the reigning paradigms in the prosperous Arab Gulf countries, which have appropriated this new architecture.(17)

The fate of some historic areas and landmarks of Beirut that escaped destruction hinges precariously at the moment on a confluence of arbitrary factors which leaves them momentarily outside the game of speculation. Others have not been so fortunate, and saw a third pattern to their possible replacement or destruction, that of "restoration", a restoration which either defaces the original, or an idealization which seeks to refurbish the building while corrupting its social function. In certain cases, both calamities occur, as in the case of the *Artisans House* where an aesthetic corruption was compounded by the corruption of the original building purpose. Some critics already pointed to the ideological background of such restorations: an underlying rejection of modernism in itself, a regional modernism at its best in this case, where the concrete structure attempted to draw lessons from the traditional vernacular without falling into the trap of pastiche and mimicry.(18) The restored pavilion instead camouflaged all structure under a scaffolding of fake vaults, hidden behind a façade that pretends to a more genuine relation with the place, further compromising its function by turning this public crafts outlet into a private and elite concern. Another ominous danger lies in the continuing abuse of already lax regulations which leads to the gradual deterioration in scale and form of once coherent neighborhoods. One striking example of this is the emergence in the last few years of high-rise towers alongside the last remaining public space in the city, the *Corniche* promenade, disfiguring the scale of this stretch as well as blocking eventually the sun from the sidewalk promenade, and the view to the sea to all its backyard neighbors.

CONCLUSION

In his latest work, Jean-Pierre Vernant talked about the "weaving of friendship" in Greek culture, the metaphor of the weaving machine representing the elements of a necessary dialectic in the constitution of the very fabric of a society on the image of the Greek *philia*, or friendship.(19) Yet in all these new projects that are unveiled for the city, one thing is quite clear: the opposition and balance between public interest and private profit is eliminated in favor of the latter.

At its apogee, the Greek city provided a model for a democratic system of government, which required from all its citizens dedication and time for its maintenance. Yet, as in our own times, that ideal city dissolved into tyranny or oligarchy the moment that private material interests prevailed over the common public interest. The city, as an entity, was a bounded realm with its particular set of rituals, laws and customs.⁽²⁰⁾ It represented a union of two realms: the realm of ideas, and the realm of physical facts. The "right to the city", as Henri Lefevre reminded us, remains a fundamental right of the citizens to partake in these two realms, in the making and renewal of urban life and urban forms.⁽²¹⁾ Should this right and this form of existence be now abolished in favor of an economic reality which is dissolving all boundaries, replacing them by a homogeneous global culture? Can public spaces in the city still play a role as the shuttle in a weaving machine, patching up the various city fragments, or is this idea a meaningless metaphor in a world where economic operations and not architectural space can act as a guarantor of an economic and civic peace? Are there still any possibilities left for a contemporary revival of the ideals of the *polis* in this time of celebrated globalization? And does the model of corporate planning, best exemplified by what has happened in Central Beirut, present a better alternative to that of speculative development by individual developers, or are these simply two sides of the same coin, which in both cases negates the fundamental right of citizens in a democracy to debate and decide the form of their city, turning it instead into an exercise of financial speculation?

NOTES

1. Nina Jidejian's *Beirut through the Ages*. Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq, 1973; as well as the more recent accounts of the excavations of the city (1992-97).
2. The company in charge of reconstruction was defined as a Real Estate operation, founded by governmental decree # 91-117 on December 7, 1991. It was formally baptized *Solidere* in May 1994, and stands for The Lebanese Company for the Redevelopment and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District. The state's complete delegation of its role in reconstruction to this company appeared clearly as a political-financial coup to most observers. The excuses for this delegation were the ones outlined above, namely the incapacity of the state to handle the cost of reconstruction as well as the legal and complex problems in the specific laws that regulate ownership and rents in Lebanon. For a critique of this, see in arabic [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity] edited by N. Beyhum et al., Beirut: 1992.
3. Quoted in "La Dernière Bataille de Beyrouth" in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, # 289, (52-8), October 1993.
4. A specific study on Martyrs Square commissioned by Solidere clearly demonstrates the awareness of the historic importance of this public place, while concluding its assessment with an evaluation of a "decline" of the square in the forties and fifties. See Isabelle Guerin's *La Place des Martyrs a Beyrouth, Recherche Historique Préliminaire a l'Amenagement de la Place dans le Cadre de la Reconstruction du Centre-Ville de Beyrouth*. Beirut: Solidere, c.1995
5. Extensive protests since the onset of this process have been recorded or expressed by some of the vigilant citizens or news reporters. For examples of this see the archives of the two major dailies, An-Nahar [in arabic] or L'Orient-Le-Jour [in french] during the whole period of 1992 to 1997. The scandals around the handling of archaeology have been also well recorded in the press. Specifically, during the summer period of 1995, almost daily attempts to shortcircuit the archaeological process, sabotage and vandalism were recorded in An Nahar and other daily newspapers.
6. Architect Henri Edde, of Dar-Al-Handassah (a large regional firm with branches in Lebanon and the Middle East) prepared this first proposal in 1991 which was later revoked.
7. Angus Gavin, "Heart of Beirut: Making the Master Plan for the Renewal of the Central District" in *Projecting Beirut, Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Prestel: 1998.
8. The process of commissioning works in the BCD is another of those well-kept affairs, where secrecy and a certain familiarity with the old rules of the game still reigns. Virtually no open competitions have decided the fate of any singular project. Projects are normally commissioned by the clients who purchase or rent a lot, but have to prescribe to the regulations of Solidere, and are also therefore subject to the company's approval. Few projects were commissioned through closed competitions, where the invited firms have mostly been the few large firms in the country.
9. Cornelius Castoriades, "The Retreat from Autonomy :Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism" in *World in Fragments*. California : Stanford Univ. Press, 1997
10. After an ill-fated competition, the Souks have now been partially commissioned to Rafael Moneo. For more on this see Moneo's essay in *Projecting Beirut, Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Prestel: 1998.
11. Henri Lefevre, *Le Droit a la Ville*. Paris : Anthropos, 1968. (120) [my translation]
12. Michael F. Davie, "Discontinuités Imposées Au Coeur De La Ville: Le Projet De Reconstruction De Beyrouth" in *Colloque International*, Université Michel de Montaigne, Talence: Mars 1995.
13. Ibidem. (6-7) [my translation]
14. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. MIT Press, 1976.
15. Michael F. Davie "Demarcation Lines in Contemporary Beirut" presented at University of Durham Conference, Durham: July 1995, also May Davie's *Beyrouth et ses Faubourgs*. Beyrouth: CERMOC, 1996.
16. An excellent study of the Shiite sector of the southern suburbs has been done by Mona Harb-El Kak, *Politiques Urbaines dans la Banlieue Sud de Beyrouth*. Beyrouth: CERMOC, 1996. On the project to reconfigure some areas into a new residential suburbs complex, see also the same author's essay in *Projecting Beirut, Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Prestel: 1998.
17. See in this regard the critique by Jad Tabet of a typical project of this nature, the projected Convention Center [The Convention Center and the National Style of Architecture: Monumentality and Traditional Symbolism] in arabic in *An Nahar* cultural supplement, February 3, 1996.
18. See Mona Al-Hallak's article [The Execution of the Artisans House] in arabic in *An Nahar* cultural supplement, November 14, 1998.
19. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Entre mythe et politique*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.
20. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*. Paris : Flammarion, 1984. See particularly Book IV.
21. Henri Lefevre, *Le Droit a la Ville*. Paris : Anthropos, 1968