




# Reconstruction



## A Current Issue



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## The author

Hervé Dupont was born in 1948 in Evreux (Normandy), a town severely affected by the destruction of the war. His father Pierre Dupont, an architect (1911-1983), played a significant role in the reconstruction of the town. An engineer, architect and town planner, Hervé was notably involved in the construction of the new town of Cergy-Pontoise as the director of urban development, before becoming deputy director general of the public development authority for the La Défense business district. In 1995, he became the land development division manager for Solidere, the company in charge of development and reconstruction for the Beirut Central District. After his return to France in 2000, he spent six years managing the State's major urban planning operations before focusing on the development of the northern suburbs of Paris.

In 2016, he published a book on his father's work in Evreux. Intrigued by the mechanisms of reconstruction operations, and by the part played by the memory of places and people, he presents us with this booklet offering important insights based on his experience.

## Disclaimer

This document is a re-edition of the article published under the same name in October 2018 by Les Ateliers Internationaux de Maitrise d'Oeuvre Urbaine de Cergy-Pontoise. Since then, new conflicts have arisen, notably the war in Ukraine, a major event of our times. Despite this, the analysis conducted in this article remains relevant. The author has simply corrected a few errors in the original document and removed references to destruction due to natural or industrial disasters, which are not the same as those resulting from armed conflicts.

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In 2018, the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency entrusted Les Ateliers to lead an urban development workshop in Bangui in the Central African Republic. The objective was to address the conditions required for a successful reconstruction – one adapted and meaningful to the city and its inhabitants, as well as conceived through a renewed dialogue. The challenge was great, as it was Les Ateliers' first experience in a post-conflict environment, in a city still torn apart by the clashes of the past. It was on this occasion that Hervé Dupont, a member of the Board of Directors of Les Ateliers, offered to share his experiences and his vision of reconstruction. A testimony by a meticulous urban planner, documented by photographic research and carefully detailed, his delicate undertaking has given rise to this impressive document, which we are now proud to publish. It is a reminder that reconstruction is not just a question of major public works. Rather, it is a process that calls for an immense capacity to rediscover the history and daily lives of a city's inhabitants, while also proposing a future environment able to take on meaning and relevance as the new face of the city takes shape. A city bears the soul of its inhabitants, it is a reflection of them. We become all the more aware of this when a city is battered, amputated by conflict and destruction. Hervé, through the magic of his words and images, explains to us how these cities – after the Second World War in France and Beirut after the war in Lebanon – have gone through the delicate stages of rebirth in their streets, their neighbourhoods, their centres...

Today, this testimonial work is particularly meaningful in the tragic context of the conflict in Ukraine. The destruction caused will forever change the shape of its cities. "Reconstruction" serves as a reference, a recounting of a moment of history but also the sharing of experiences which will be invaluable in the rebuilding of Ukrainian cities so that they may preserve their souls as they also look to the future.

Pierre André Périssol,  
President of Les Ateliers

## Reconstruction: A Current Issue

The sheer hope for an end to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq gives rise to the question of the reconstruction of towns and villages heavily affected by destructive conflict. In Africa, the reconstruction of Bangui and other cities is on the agenda.

In the past – France 1944, Beirut 1995, as well as Berlin, Warsaw, Hiroshima – many cities have been rebuilt.

Their situations vary in all aspects, and yet there is one constant: reconstruction is an urban planning and development operation unlike any other. It involves not only emergency and trauma, but also the reorganization of a country and its laws, memory, the capacity to invest in a new project, the dream of a better life and the confrontation with reality, population movements, etc.

This article is an attempt to look at past experiences to shed light on the challenges of today's reconstructions. It does not pretend to be exhaustive, nor does it offer ready-made solutions. It draws on the experience of reconstruction in France, in which I took a personal interest; on the reconstruction of downtown Beirut, in which I participated as the Land Development Division Manager for Solidere, the company in charge of development and reconstruction for the Beirut Central District (BCD); and on other examples that have been of interest to me.

# Preface: After the disaster

## Emergencies and instability

The destroyed city is an enigma. Its inhabitants have often fled, left to search in the ruins for traces and memories of the dead and the living. Its sites are ravaged (mines, shells, bombs...).

In Berlin, children who had lost their parents wandered through the ruins in search of shelter and food. Looters came through; and armed hostile forces were sometimes present (in Lorient, the German army stayed until 8 May 1945). The mayors who received instructions from the French state for the reconstruction had to negotiate with the Germans.

In Aleppo, the situation remains unstable; like all of Syria and part of Iraq, refugees are pouring in.

Massive movements of population add to the complexity of these situations. In Germany, following the Soviets push across the border, the German populations driven out of the East dispersed in complete disorder. For some, it would take years to find their children, parents, brothers and sisters. The same happened in Poland.

Civil wars set the stage for the reconfiguration of former balances amongst communities, which then sometimes turns into ethnic cleansing, as in the last Balkan War, or in today's Near East. For Eastern Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, this reconfiguration is ongoing; and it is one of the great challenges of war.

In Beirut, in the 90s, after the civil war, many Lebanese who had fled the war returned to the country, yet in varying numbers depending on their different communities. This affected traditional balances, which had

previously served as the institutional basis of Lebanese politics. Moreover, some of the Lebanese from Southern Lebanon, driven out by the bombings by the Israeli army who also occupied Southern Lebanon, were forced to become refugees in their own country. Many flocked to Beirut where they settled in its ruins, often in extremely precarious conditions.

## The need for a governing authority

A political authority is necessary; it is the prerequisite for reconstruction.

Depending on the case, it might be the same authority that restores public order and leads reconstruction efforts.

In other situations, a military authority, often external, restores order and a local political authority carries out the reconstruction.

The first responsibility of any political authority is to establish stable law and order, and to organize relief efforts; then to prepare for the actual reconstruction. There is no single formula, with local situations serving as determining factors and political ulterior motives ultimately influencing any future reconstruction.

In Europe after 1945, the countries occupied by the Americans and their allies quickly regained their independence and the control of their urban planning policies and territory. This occurred even despite the friction caused by the mechanism devised by the American army to temporarily manage the territories before the restoration of a civilian authority.

In some countries, such as Japan, tensions have mainly been due to the establishment of American bases, which are extra-territorial and completely outside the control of local authorities. Whereas, in countries under Soviet occupation, once opponents had been eliminated, a system of highly centralized planning and the nationalization of land and enterprises were imposed everywhere.



1. Beirut. Historic centre at the end of the war.

In Poland and other countries, the “resistance” to this occupation consisted above all in preserving and magnifying the national culture in opposition to the occupier. This is illustrated by the “identical” reconstruction of the centre of Warsaw, which was destroyed during the insurrection by Polish resistance forces by the Germans as Soviet troops amassed along the banks of the Vistula watched on without intervening.

In Beirut, the Syrian army reigned and drove Lebanese politics. However, it did not intervene in the decisions concerning reconstruction projects. The territories which evaded the rule of Lebanese authorities were those in Israeli-occupied Southern Lebanon, which have now been returned to Lebanon, and the Palestinian camps, areas of great poverty which are managed by Palestinian groups and over which the state has no control.

In addition to this are now the numerous camps for Syrian refugees fleeing the war in their own country. They are estimated at 1.5 to 2 million people compared to the 7 million Lebanese. These camps are administered by self-proclaimed groups who make their own laws. They are likely to persist for lack of a lasting solution.

Across the world, these types of camps are multiplying, as refugees are driven out of their homes by war, climatic disasters and poverty. Some are more than 15 years old. And often, they are transformed into more permanent situations. In Beirut, the canvas-tent camps which were hastily built for Armenian refugees fleeing the genocide perpetrated by the Turks in 1915 have maintained their original boundaries, but now the tents have been replaced by buildings of 5 floors or more. The establishment of emergency camps contributes to shaping the city which is to be reconstructed.

## The challenges of reconstruction The road to physical, moral and civic reconstruction

Reconstruction is a medium- and long-term undertaking, oscillating between the desire to bring back a past that has been destroyed and the desire for a new life, for what is imagined to be a radiant new future. This can be found in other development efforts, but the violence of destruction is such that these attitudes are exacerbated. Physical reconstruction is essential as it often symbolizes the possibility of a moral and civic reconstruction, which often takes longer.

This was seen in Europe after 1945, and in Beirut after the return of civil peace. At the time of the Liberation, the ringing of the church bells and the impromptu dances held in the public squares testified to this enthusiasm and faith in the future. In Beirut, parties and soirées were organized in the middle of the ruins, an act of defiance to the disaster that the city had just suffered. Despite the hardships and difficulties, it is striking to see the energy of entire populations towards reconstruction.

It is also an opportunity to lay the foundations for a new society, for a country to transform the ordeal and launch itself into modernity.

In Western Europe, the complete catastrophe produced by the war was the impetus for the construction of a new Europe, where peace and cooperation between nations, who had long been at war, became the basis for a new political construction in the history of humanity.

In Lebanon, institutions were redesigned to take into account the new balances of power, yet without significantly changing their spirit. Moreover, many actions were taken to facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation between populations that had fought an atrocious and fratricidal war. The same was true in Rwanda and elsewhere.

For all these reasons, reconstruction can

only occur under the leadership of a local political authority. This is because only the country alone, however poor it may be, can rebuild itself; no one else can do it in its place.

External aid, whether charitable, institutional or technical, must be provided within this framework, regardless of the opinion of the government put into place after the destruction.

Reconstruction also concerns local trade, crafts, industry and agriculture, which must be given a chance to develop without having to compete with free donations from third countries.

Some organizations provide support and advice in all areas, taking care to work through local organizations and relying on local professionals; others do not share this same ethic, and cause more harm than good in terms of a true reconstruction. The free donation of food, manufactured goods, books, etc. must be handled with care so as not to compete with local businesses, shopkeepers and craftsmen.

This debate is not new. In Europe, the Marshall Plan proposed by the Americans to help with reconstruction was refused by the Soviet bloc for obvious political reasons. In France, the Communist Party, at the time totally subservient to the USSR, opposed it for the same reasons. However, the latter also underlined the risk posed by the free supply of tractors and consumer goods, especially how it would make it impossible to revive French industry in these fields, which made sense. The Marshall Plan was channelled exclusively through the French authorities. It was of great help at a time when France was in dire straits; and without its financial support, reconstruction could not have been carried out in such a short time. But the government also worked to ensure that it would end as soon as possible.

In Germany, the aid provided by the American and Allied forces resulted in a total waiver of the German debt, which allowed

2. Evreux (27).  
The reconstruction  
(1945-1958).



German industry to grow dramatically and to quickly compete with the industrial markets of the United States and European countries. The Allies were obsessed with the idea that Germany should not collapse as it had after the Great War. A strong West Germany was needed to counter the Soviet threat.

# The fundamental choices of a reconstruction

## Preparing for reconstruction

Can reconstruction be prepared during armed conflicts?

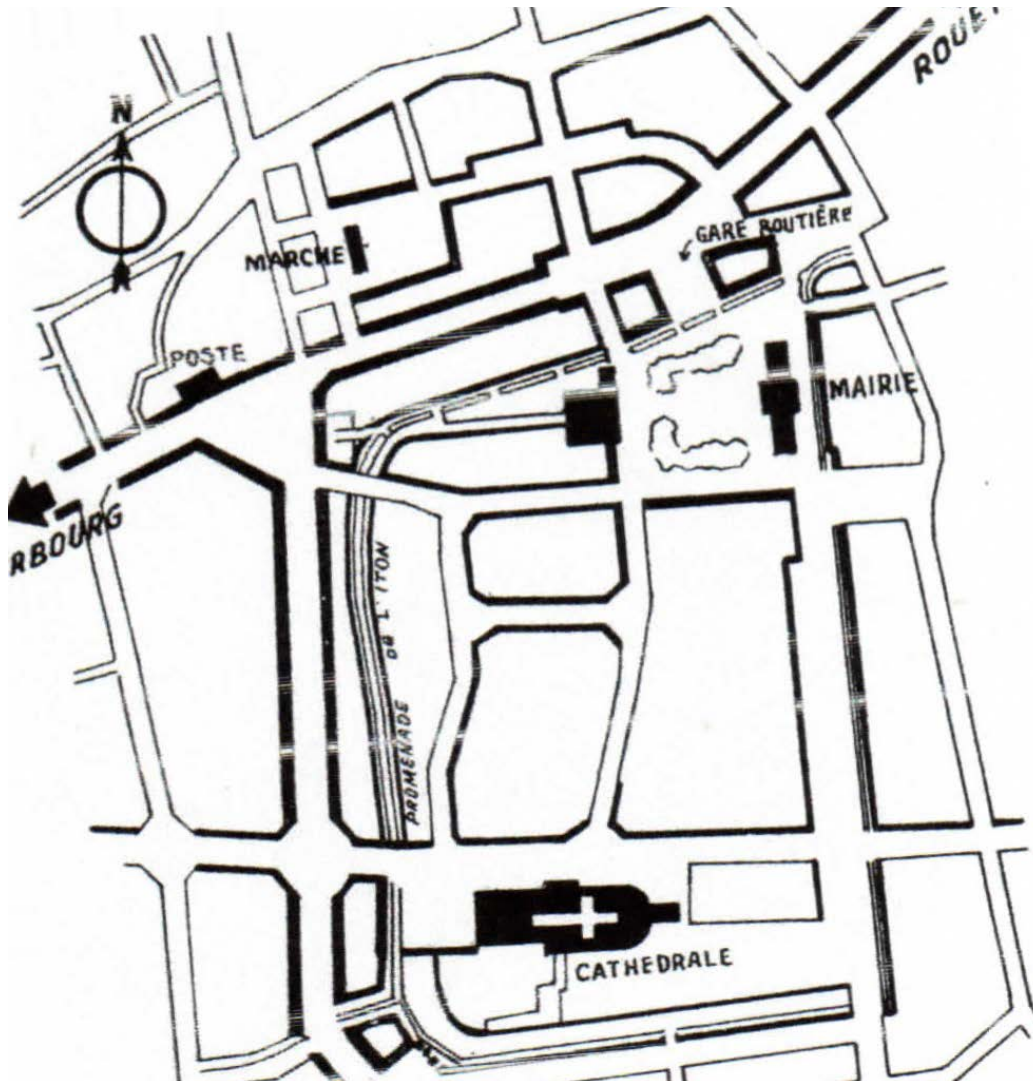
In France, after the disaster of May-June 1940, which caught authorities completely off guard, the Vichy government, once it had been formed, began preparing for reconstruction. It assembled architects, town planners, engineers and economists to assess the damage and establish a policy. In 1940, 126 municipalities were declared disaster zones (there would be 1,851 in total after the war). Reconstruction and development plans (PRA) were entrusted to urban planners and designers. Bound by the armistice treaty, which gave priority for the allocation of materials such as cement, steel, brick and wood to the German military authorities, the new government was powerless to carry out these projects. Only national infrastructures – roads, bridges and railways – were rebuilt because they served the German military strategy. However, once the PRA was updated during the Liberation, it made it possible to implement the reconstruction of towns more quickly. Moreover, the technical sections of the original PRA, which were better adapted than the former legislation for urban planning and design, were adopted for the post-war PRA. Meanwhile, the political and institutional sections were completely reworked to reflect the spirit of the new institutions.

For its part, during the war, the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) made plans for the reconstruction of the country and its institutions. In addition to the political aspects, its programme included health and social action, in particular through the creation of the social welfare system and the creation of the Commissariat général du Plan (CGP, or General Planning Commission), which produced the Modernization and Re-equipment Plan. The Plan was to play a decisive role in the reconstruction effort itself. The destruction caused by the war had ruined French industry. The management of resources became centralized, and the ministries in charge of Public Works, Industry, Reconstruction and Urban Planning were allocated materials based on priorities. Long-term planning was carried out according to a global vision of France's economic recovery. Initially, priority was given to infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, ports, etc. as well as to industry, the basis for a sustainable recovery for the country. The reconstruction of the cities was viewed as a second phase.

During the war, the Vichy regime had companies study models of prefabricated "barracks" to temporarily rehouse disaster victims, with allocation criteria excluding Jews and other citizens who might be hostile to the "national revolution". Few of these barracks were built during the war. But with plans ready, they would allow for the rapid construction of numerous barracks for disaster victims, public facilities, shops, offices, etc. once the Liberation happened.

In the United States, England and Germany, industrialized models of rapidly buildable houses were also studied during the war. These prefabricated houses and others developed at the time of the Liberation were used extensively in France's stricken cities, either as temporary or permanent housing.





3. Evreux (27).  
 Presentation diagram of the reconstruction plan (PRA) designed by Paul Danger and approved in 1943. Widening of the roads, road bypass, upholding of a principle of blocks.

Some of the “provisional” projects were consolidated, improved and are still in use.

In Beirut, the 15-year conflict had periods of relative calm during which it was hoped that the hostilities would end quickly. Several plans for the reconstruction of the city centre were drawn up, calling on the aid of foreign experts, notably from France. During the same period, the Lebanese developed the legal, economic and financial model that was to be put into place following the Taif Agreement which brought an end to the conflict.

## Where to rebuild?

Where to rebuild in towns ravaged by war?

The answer seems obvious: it is necessary to rebuild the destroyed parts of the city in order to link it to the past and prepare it for the future, to reshape the city which has fallen victim to cataclysm and catastrophe in a new way.

In the event of a civil war, this need is all the greater since rebuilding a city disputed by different factions is a way of announcing that people will live together again. This does not replace the work done by the many associations leading and facilitating reconciliation, but the physical reconstruction of the city has an invaluable symbolic force.

This was notably the case in Beirut, where the city centre – a space in which all the religions and communities of Lebanon coexisted, and thus the most disputed and destroyed site during the fratricidal war – had to be reborn to mark a new beginning.

However, there are cases where the temptation to accept the void, i.e. leaving such and such district undeveloped since the trauma is so extensive that it is difficult to imagine it ever being rebuilt, prevails over this logic of reconstructing on the ruins. This was indeed the question asked in New York City after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Should a new tower be rebuilt on the site or should Ground Zero serve as a place of remembrance for this catastrophic tragedy that struck America?

The most symbolic example is the site of Hiroshima, more precisely, the residential area that was largely destroyed by the bomb, whose power the Japanese were unaware of, as well as its terrible long-term effects on the affected populations. The site is therefore void of construction, except for a half-destroyed but still standing tower, the “Genbaku Dome”. It is located in a vast park designed by the architect Kenzo Tange, which also includes the memorial to the first

atomic attack in history. This peaceful park calls for meditation and peace among men.

The decision not to rebuild the area as residential was not due to concerns about the radioactivity of the site, as the public is admitted. The memorial is much visited, and there are highly populated and bustling districts nearby.

It is more a question of signifying that the place where this catastrophe for modern Japan occurred, simply cannot be built on, since it has such a symbolic dimension for the whole of humanity. This is strongly expressed in the memorial, which calls for an end to atomic weapons, while hiding nothing of the origins of the conflict – Japanese militarism – and the rather ambiguous motivations of the American administration that led to the dropping of the bomb on Japan on 6 August 1945.

## Reconstruction, construction, what to build, for whom to build?

Repairing the damage and preparing for the future

In France, after the war, reconstruction, as defined by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urban Planning, consisted of replacing buildings and infrastructure destroyed during the war with new constructions of the same use, without necessarily being identical or on the same plots. This definition reserved reconstruction funds, and in particular war damages, for towns, companies and individuals considered to have been affected. The allocated budgets were based on the size and purpose of the destroyed building and took into account the new sanitation standards. Any improvement beyond that was at the owner’s expense. This restrictive definition had to however be adapted to reality. The births of so many children (aka the Baby Boom) led to the construction of lower and upper schools much larger than those that had been destroyed. The same

was true for public administration buildings, prefectures, administrative centres, town halls, not to mention the new administrative units resulting from the programme of the National Council of the Resistance (CNR), such as the department for Social Security.

As far as housing was concerned, many of the dwellings not affected by the disaster were inadequate, unhealthy and over-occupied, as shown by the MRU surveys and especially in the work of urban planner Robert Auzelle. The high number of births aggravated the situation, which became dramatic. It was therefore necessary to establish building credits. By 1954, these credits exceeded those for reconstruction, the latter of which was well underway. This was the prelude to the policy of large housing estates, which soon became the priority of housing policies. In 1958, reconstruction was declared complete, and the MRU became the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning.

It should be noted, however, that the Reconstruction and Development Plans (PRA) included urban extensions from the outset, which were implemented as part of the construction policy, and sometimes even as part of the reconstruction policy, as the reconstructed plots were not sufficient enough to replace all the destroyed housing.

Furthermore, the reconstruction in France did not always allow for the rehousing of all the war's victims. War damages were mainly paid to property owners, who were supposed to rehouse their tenants. But the rent freeze established in 1919 after the Great War became largely responsible for a substandard housing stock. The Law of 1948 limited this to dwellings built before 1948, which meant that new homes were no longer subject to the rent freeze. At the same time, a vigorous policy of building social housing (HLMs) was implemented and divided into different categories based on rent levels and the income of the inhabitants. They were built in the large housing estates mainly located on the outskirts of the city,

but also as part of the vast urban renewal operations which destroyed more housing than had been destroyed during the war. In the mid-1970s, the policy of large housing estates and urban renewal was stopped, and priority was given to the rehabilitation of old, substandard housing.

In Lebanon, the concessionary company in charge of the development of the destroyed city centre acted within the framework of a contract signed with a state body in charge of steering and coordinating reconstruction operations throughout the country. This body was called the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), while the concessionary company was called Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction (Solidere). The objective was clearly the development of the city centre in an ambitious and large-scale project, to enable it to regain its position from 15 years earlier as the intellectual and economic capital of the Middle East.

The programme included an extension to the sea and the construction of 4.6 million square metres, a marked increase compared to the prior situation. In addition, no public funds were allocated to the land developer Solidere. It financed the works for infrastructure, decontamination, public spaces and other expenses through its development. It was therefore not only a reconstruction project per se but also a construction project. The reconstruction aspect mainly concerned the special status of the former owners and tenants of the city centre and the refurbishing of the partially or totally destroyed old buildings.

This approach was based on the assumption that Lebanon's economic development was largely dependent on the regional situation. In fact, the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was followed by strong tensions in Lebanese society, which resulted in a blockade of the city centre by Hezbollah for more than a year. This brought to a halt the gradual resumption of economic activity in

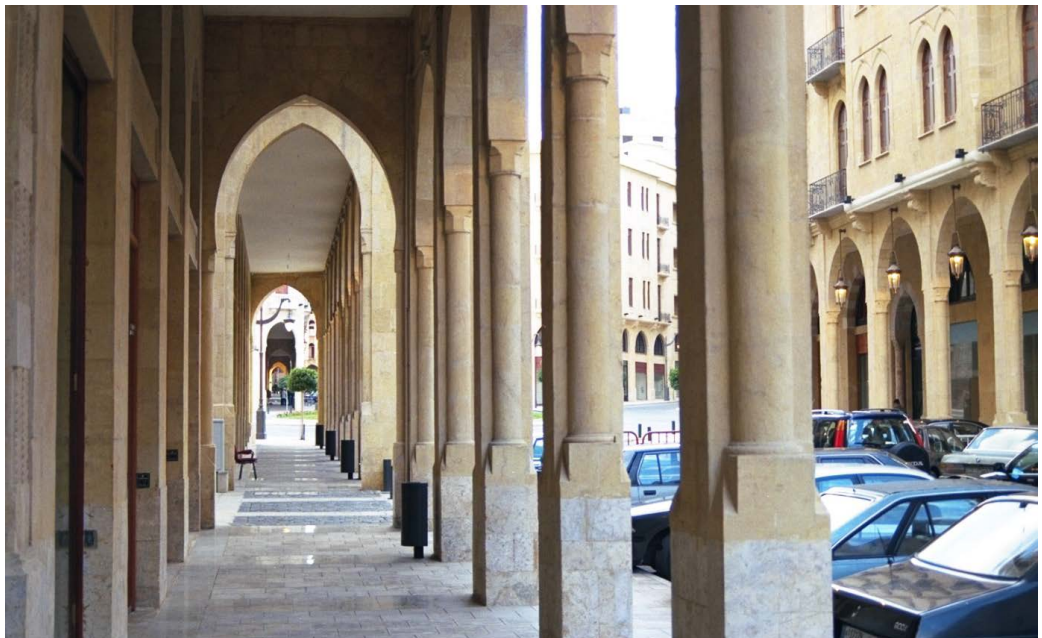
the city centre and its frequentation by inhabitants. Moreover, the hardening of Israeli policies, which culminated in the massive bombing of Lebanon in 2006, dissuaded foreign investors, particularly those from Arab countries, who until then had largely contributed to the country's development. However, despite the economic crisis, many housing projects were built in Beirut. Many remain unoccupied. In the neighbourhoods adjacent to the city centre, speculative deals have led to the destruction of buildings typical of 19th- and 20th-century Beirut in favour of high-rise buildings that are barely occupied. In this way, owners gain a significant boost in their property value, but at the expense of the destruction of older buildings which were not protected by law. This offer competes with the older housing and offices in the city centre that have been restored and rehabilitated as part of the Solidere programme at higher costs, as is usually the

case in this type of project. It is only recently that, under pressure from a segment of the public, the government and the municipality have become concerned with the protection of these historic districts on the outskirts of the reconstructed centre.

Finally, it should be added that, contrary to the situation in France and most European countries, Lebanon does not have a social housing policy for low- and middle-income populations.

Any reconstruction efforts necessarily include a construction component that must be provided for not only in planning policies but also in the financing and implementation modalities, whose rules may differ depending on whether it is to repair the damage suffered by victims or to look to the future. The urgency of reconstruction cannot replace a longer-term vision of a construction policy concerning all the populations and districts of the city.

4. Beirut. Rehabilitation of pre-war buildings



## How to rebuild? The actors and the urban project

### The actors in the reconstruction

In France, reconstruction was led by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urban Planning, which centralized all the expertise specific to this type of operation: de-mining, drafting of reconstruction and development plans, re-parcelling, allocation of credits and materials. The shortage in materials and the state of the industry effectively led the CGP to impose quotas on building materials.

This did not go smoothly. The theory of the economists at the time was that national planning should give priority to the revival of industry and the reconstruction of the national infrastructure; the fulfilment of the population's needs would come later. It was better to use the scarce resources available to produce steel, cement and energy than to build housing. It partly relied on family or neighbourhood solidarity, which was real. In June 1940, refugees fleeing by road were often welcomed in the countrysides and towns they crossed. The municipalities of the South, spared by the German attack, sponsored the stricken towns. This sponsorship consisted in providing assistance to the victims (which is how Grenoble became the sponsor of Evreux in the Eure). Throughout the war, there were many such signs of solidarity and recourse to the possibilities of the countryside for children and families. But the destruction was so great that the number of victims who were left homeless became significant. In the first few years, the MRU devoted itself to clearing mines as well as to the establishment of urban planning policies and re-parcelling, all tasks requiring limited financial resources. Nevertheless, the question of the construction of public and private housing and buildings soon arose. The state tried to use provisional means: preliminary studies for housing projects (e.g. rehousing in barracks and the requisitioning of private buildings) were launched before the

beneficiaries had even been designated and war damages assessed. Minimum occupancy standards were even issued, with the aim of replacing the occupants of "under-occupied" housing with families whose sizes were more in line with that required for the respective units. This measure, as one can imagine, had little success, and the representatives of the prefecture who announced the news to the inhabitants were not warmly welcomed. It was time to face the facts. In 1950, the MRU's investment and war damages budget was multiplied by 119 (+11900%) compared to that of 1949, allowing for rapid and efficient reconstruction.

The MRU acted in a highly centralized manner, with most decisions being made in Paris. It had appointed a reconstruction delegate in each département or county, who was the local contact for the mayors and the county's assembly members. This delegate acted in close liaison with the prefect, the county's national government representative. It is important to remember that the county assemblies were chaired by the prefect, and that their administrative and technical services were provided for by the State, including those of the MRU.

The latter carried out work on infrastructure and public facilities, while private buildings benefiting from war damages were managed by property owners grouped together in councils of property owners for reconstruction (known as ASRs in France), which were formed from the previous councils of property owners for re-parcelling, under the close supervision of MRU agents.

This highly centralized model corresponded to a necessary management of the recognized shortage, but also to a centralized vision of the planning of the country's reconstruction and development. This vision must be carefully interpreted. The representatives of the disaster victims and local authorities knew how to make themselves heard in Paris, and the reconstruction delegates had to deal with these local political forces.

In Lebanon, the reconstruction of the whole country was led by the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). Concerning the city centre of Beirut, the State, heavily indebted, decided not to participate financially in its reconstruction, considering that the context allowed it to be financed entirely by private capital. A special law created the Solidere company, in charge of this reconstruction, whose shareholders were the former owners and tenants of the city centre. The latter received shares in Solidere in exchange for the transfer of their properties to the company.

The CDR signed two contracts with Solidere: one concerned the decontamination and infrastructure works, and included the detailed projects and specifications to be respected by the concessionaire. These works were entirely at the expense of the concessionaire. The other one concerned the urban development project, in particular the urban planning regulations and the construction programme, covering 4.6 million m<sup>2</sup> and including housing, shops, offices, services, private and public facilities as well as buildings to be demolished and those to be restored. The public facilities were the responsibility of the administrative authorities. The religious buildings, property of the waqfs, were the responsibility of the latter. None of this was accomplished without difficulty.

In France, re-parcelling had to be approved by the property owners. However, re-parcelling did not allow the affected property owners to recover the same plot sizes as before. A proportion of these private properties was allocated to public spaces: roads, parks, etc. (typically, an old town designates 30% of its surface area to public space, a modern town about 50%).

In addition, to allow for the construction of proper housing with adequate sanitary conditions, larger plots than traditional ones were preferred. This often led to the replacement of a destroyed single-family house plot with a condominium unit in a multi-family building. Some owners were attached to the ownership of the land, and were apprehensive to move to a flat, especially in medium-sized cities. It is worth remembering that most of France's medium-sized towns, even large ones, are made up of individual townhouses. However, the State and the owners were in a hurry to rebuild, a condition for the latter to benefit from the credits for war damages. The State, on the other hand, was concerned with its credibility. All this made negotiations much easier, especially as war damages were calculated in such a way as

5. Evreux (27) after the German bombardments of 9-10 June 1940. One can distinguish the plots of land previously divided into individual housing units lining the River Iton.



6. Evreux (27). Aerial view of the reconstruction in the 1950s. Urban planning comprised of townhouses aligned with the street, including widened streets and plots. Return to the old block-style plan.



to allow for the restitution of housing with an equivalent surface area. As for the town planning regulations, they were not to the liking of the owners who were used to more freedom in the construction of their homes before the war.

In the case of Beirut, the lack of public funding meant that the land developer had to finance the infrastructure works and other expenses (mine clearance, decontamination, eviction costs, archaeology, study expenses, maintenance, etc.), which amounted to approximately one billion dollars, through the sale of building rights. As a result, the former landowners had no hope of recovering, through the shares received from Solidere, amounts equivalent to the values of their pre-war property. The difference went, as we have seen, into the development work, but also into the construction of new buildings. The densification provided for in the urban plan was not sufficient, especially since the surface area available for private property was significantly reduced due to the public spaces created by the reconstruction. In theory, this arrangement was fair, with

the beneficiaries benefiting from Solidere's profits as the project progressed. The Solidere share price, after an initial drop in the always critical period of any development operation where expenses are considerable and revenues still pending, multiplied by two or three times with respect to the initial value thereafter, before dropping again during the economic crisis of the 2000s. In practice, the distribution of undivided interests and certain properties, or the desire by some to get their money back as soon as possible, meant that only those who were able truly benefited. Moreover, the strong personality of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the traditional mistrust between the different clans and communities in Lebanon, meant that criticism was widespread. These criticisms were based on the feeling of having been wronged. However, the initial skepticism about the future project was rapidly forgotten as the project was completed, given its quality. Solidere fulfilled its contractual obligations with quality standards far above those required by the State, especially for public spaces, particularly those in the historic districts.



7. Beirut. Garden as a part of the reconstructed city centre

## The urban project, between radical modernity and respect for the old city

In Europe, between the two wars, there were lively debates among those in favour of a radical break with the old practices of architecture and urban planning in order to adopt methods adapted to the world of industry and the automobile; and those in favour of an evolution that respected a degree of tradition enshrined in our cities. The vocabulary was deliberately warlike: "We must kill the corridor street", declared Le Corbusier. The destructions of 1940 to 1945 provided the opportunity for the realization of the theories of both sides.

The MRU refused to adopt any particular theory. It defended the need to facilitate automobile traffic by widening existing streets or creating new ones, to open up the old city by creating green spaces as well as larger plots of land suitable for the construction of well-lit and functional buildings, to introduce new sanitary standards for sewage disposal and water supply in new housing, and finally to encourage the use of

reinforced concrete, a material considered more economical and quicker to use than traditional ones. It also promoted experiments in the industrialization of construction in the form of medium-sized prefabricated reinforced concrete panels and reinforced or prestressed concrete slabs. There was little debate in the profession about this direction.

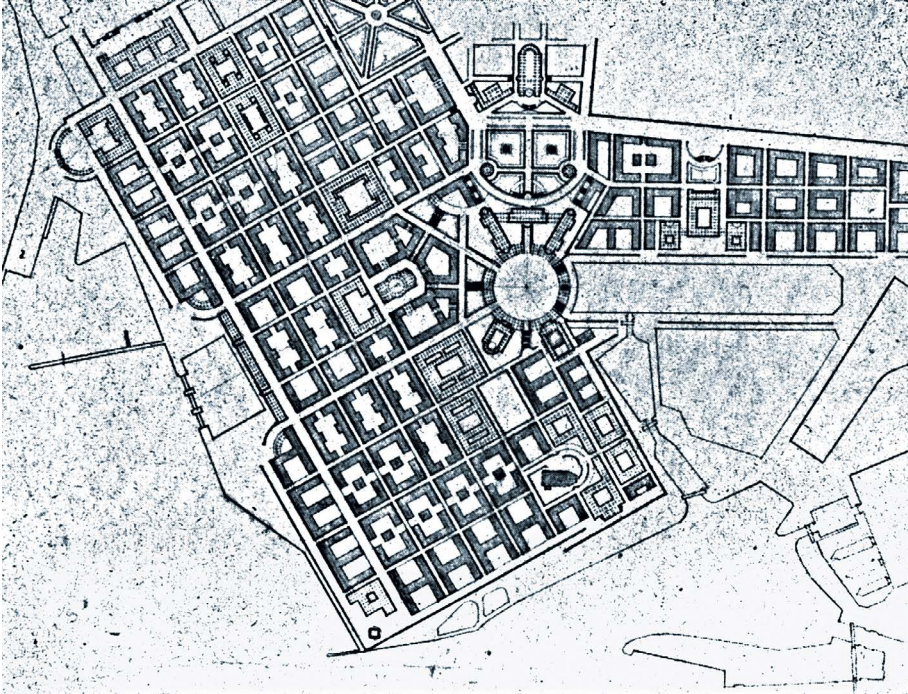
For each city, it appointed an architect in charge of the reconstruction project. In each county, it named a chief architect for the reconstruction. These architects reported directly to the ministry. They belonged to different schools of urban design. For the implementation of the urban plan, the local MRU representatives appointed architects for the city blocks. These architects applied the rules of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (PRA), each in their own way. The idea was to encourage diversity within a very strict regulatory framework concerning the floor plan and the location of the building in relation to the street. This explains the various types of reconstruction in France, from medium-sized towns where the reconstruction followed former patterns, as in Evreux or Mantes-La-Jolie, to more radical

### 8. Evreux (27).

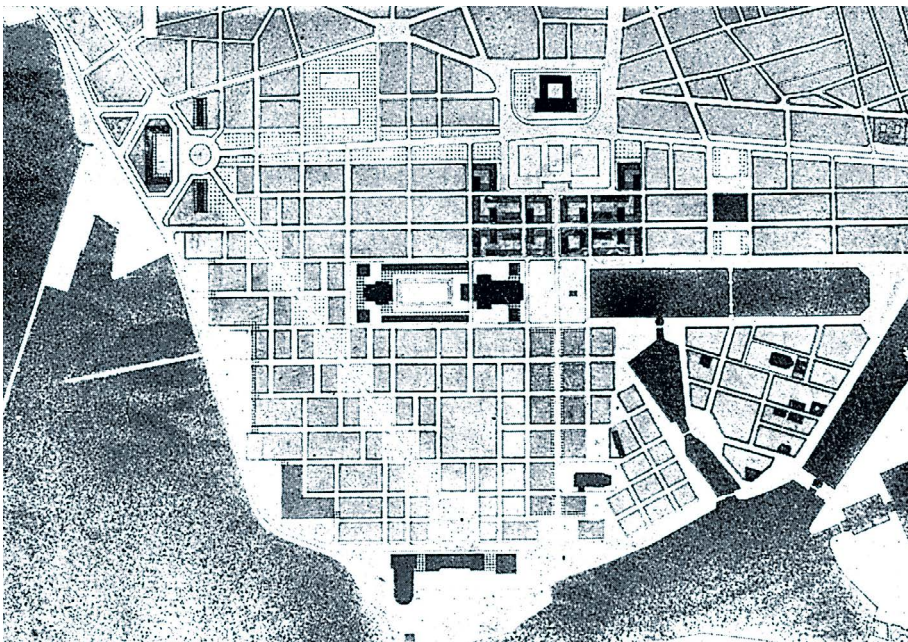
Reconstruction. The "water mirror and the Iton promenade open to the public as part of the reconstruction", architect A de Brettes. The Grand Cerf hotel rebuilt by architect P Dupont. In the background, blocks of flats rebuilt in line with the curved layout of the widened rue de La Harpe.







**9.** Le Havre. The reconstruction plan resulting from an internal competition at L'Atelier Perret during the summer of 1945. This plan proposed the most radical orthogonal layout, guided solely by the waterfronts to the west and south, and following the orientation of the former Boulevard François Premier. Only the alignment along the Bassin du Commerce (to the right on the plan) preserves one of the original orthogonal patterns that previously characterized the north of the city centre before the war.



**10.** Le Havre. The so-called definitive plan. This plan, adopted in January 1946, was a compromise that limited the disappearance of the city's former layout. It also proposed a regular grid, while respecting the orthogonal orientation of the northern section of the city centre along the Bassin du Commerce, which made it possible to preserve the route of the Boulevard de Strasbourg, while also integrating it into an esplanade opening out to the sea through an "ocean gate".

reconstructions, as in Le Havre, where the old layouts were practically all erased. None of these projects were without controversy, whether between local elected officials and inhabitants or amongst architects who advocated one doctrine or another. The State had set up a largely centralized management system, but without imposing a single doctrine, as it did later on with its large housing estates and urban renewal policies.

In Beirut, the initial urban project included expressways and avenues with a very large right-of-way, as well as highly specific building regulations. The project was modified to

take into account the criticisms of the overly large roadway. Nevertheless, the detailed urban planning regulations, although they did not impose any particular architectural style, were a new development for investors and private individuals who were used to very minimal regulations. Compliance was obligatory, with the idea that the required urban design standards were also imposed on the neighbouring plots, which contributed to the value of the building. This was in contrast to neighbouring districts where a high-quality building could be found next to a neglected construction.

**11.** Beirut (Lebanon). The reconstruction plan for the city centre (1993). Preservation and rehabilitation of the historic districts, extension to the sea, high-rise buildings on the periphery.



These two examples are not the only ones, but they contain all the conditions for successful reconstruction: rapid action thanks to special laws, controlled land reorganization, operational financing and the management of multiple public or private interventions by a developer-operator, backed by a strict urban plan, and a special place for disaster victims or beneficiaries.

In these examples, considerable funding was provided in one case by the State, in the other by private funds. It was applied to both land development infrastructures and the construction and restoration of buildings. These examples are not necessarily replicable. The French state was heavily indebted at the time and benefited from the Marshall Plan credits put in place by the Americans.

In Beirut, the exceptional situation of the city centre and the unique position of the Lebanese diaspora in the Middle East allowed for efficient private financing, which is a very specific case.

In other cases, it is necessary to find funding, either for the affected private individuals to be able to finance the reconstruction of their buildings themselves, even if this means in some cases resorting to supervised self-construction, or to find funding from international organizations or donor countries. In the latter case, it is important to ensure that these contributions are coordinated and in line with local government policy.

In the southern districts of Beirut, Hezbollah's stronghold, destroyed by Israeli bombings in 2006, the reconstruction was led by Hezbollah teams and financed in part by the Lebanese state but also by Iran. The objective was clearly political: to quickly rehouse the inhabitants of the district by showing the efficiency of Hezbollah, and to demonstrate that the group was not afraid of the Israeli bombings. In doing so, Hezbollah played its political card independently from official Lebanese policy.

## Memory, heritage, symbols and commemorations: Rebuilding a city with consideration for its own history

Beyond the humanitarian, economic and operational aspects, the great singularity of reconstruction concerns the question of memory and heritage. It would be better to say memories, as the opinions of experts, historians and architects are not always in agreement with those of populations, who also cultivate differing memories based on their own histories, cultures and convictions.

### Archaeology

The destruction of a city provides archaeologists with a great opportunity to uncover the remains buried under the foundations of the old destroyed buildings, and thus to excavate the city's history.

This discipline calls on multiple sciences, techniques and knowledge to decipher the information from the excavations, which is sometimes confusing. From this point of view, it is very similar to the work of a detective, who must not overlook any detail and, above all, must avoid any preconceived notions about what he is going to discover or wants to discover. This is not so simple, especially when the subject is sensitive or even explosive, as in the Near East.

The excavations in Beirut were highly instructive in this sense. Lebanon, and

especially downtown Beirut, has seen numerous civilizations over the past 4,000 years. Canaanites, Phoenicians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans, French and other Europeans, all have left their traces, often reclaiming the stones of previous civilizations. Moreover, the city is populated by numerous populations belonging to minority groups that have taken refuge there, each bringing its own history, laws, traditions and religion. From this point of view, Lebanon is a true reflection of the entire Near East.

The excavations of the city centre took place over several years from 1993 (as part of the CDR pending the intervention of Solidere in 1995) to about 1998. They mobilized numerous teams of Lebanese and foreign archaeologists, workers and assistants. The number of people working on the excavation site rose to 400, twice as many as the companies responsible for the reconstruction. Lebanon has good archaeologists, but not enough to meet the demand. It was therefore necessary to call on foreign universities, most of them in Europe, trained in excavations in the Near East. This was what was known as rescue archaeology at the time. The excavations tied to infrastructure construction were entirely financed by the developer Solidere, up to the moment the archaeologist submitted his report. The schedule was set according to the progress of the work. For the private land plots, the excavations were paid for by the property owner. The State, via the Antiquities Directorate, approved the teams of archaeologists who applied. The duration of each excavation, its budget and the resources allocated were negotiated between Solidere and each archaeologist. If necessary, depending on the results of the excavations, the duration and budget were extended. At the end of the excavation, it was up to the Directorate of Antiquities to decide whether the vestiges could be destroyed to make way for construction sites. All this is the

standard procedure, but it requires financial resources and an administrative, technical and institutional organization that is not easy to bring together in countries that are currently in a state of disorganization.

The inhabitants were extremely attentive to these excavations, curious and interested, even enthusiastic. However, depending on the discoveries, Solidere was accused by some or others of having found too few remains of this or that civilization, or of not having preserved them sufficiently. The discoveries were explained and the objects found (pottery, coins, etc.) were presented in an exhibition that was well attended. They quite simply testified to the diversity of cultures and origins of Beirut.

After the decision by the Directorate of Antiquities, the urban plan was modified in some places, especially for the extension of the Martyrs' Square, where the discovery of the Canaanite tell, the city wall and the harbour gate proved to be a momentous event. The originally planned routes were therefore eliminated or diverted. A project for an excavation museum in the city centre was conceived by Solidere on the site, with a signposted pathway for visitors through the entire city centre. It is currently being launched under the leadership of the Lebanese government and the municipality.

It should be noted that archaeologists usually excavate down to the city's bedrock, removing successive layers after surveying and removing the contents. As each archaeologist is the proprietor of his excavation report and of the numerous surveys he has carried out, it is up to him to analyse them for scientific publication. This can be time-consuming, as one month of excavations requires an average of one year's work, not counting regular duties as university professors. The need to rebuild quickly does not allow for the wait. There is no doubt that the archaeologists would have preferred, as in Palmyra, to excavate little by little while reserving time for their research work.

In terms of the public works, there were a few slip-ups, even if it went well overall. The company in charge of infrastructure construction became impatient and tried to do the work without waiting for the excavations to be finished. They had to be reined in.

Among the objects saved were some magnificent Byzantine mosaics that attest to the fact that the souks of Beirut already served as a commercial street at the time. After their removal, Solidere offered to pay for their restoration according to the terms defined by the Directorate of Antiquities, with the mosaics remaining the property of the State. The latter refused. These mosaics are

now lost. Trust is not always forthcoming.

There is no doubt that reconstruction in Syria and Iraq will face the same difficulties. Everything will depend on the will of the local authorities in charge of reconstruction. The cost is high and runs into millions of dollars to be disbursed over a short period of time. It is not clear if the developer will want to pay. Private foundations may offer to help fund it. Whatever their origins, be they Western or from other countries in the region, they will sometimes, not always wrongly, be suspected of orienting the excavation work towards their own policies of support for a particular community or ethnic group.



12. Beirut. Archaeological excavations in the city centre

The length of the excavations delays work and prevents the rapid reconstruction desired by authorities, whose interests might also be in not uncovering any remains that contradict the national narrative. In some countries, excavations have revealed ancient pre-Islamic civilizations that were highly advanced for their time. Unlike in Beirut, some of these were immediately halted at the request of fundamentalists who believe that history begins with the Prophet. The destruction of archaeological sites by radical Islamists follows this same logic.

The discovery of problematic vestiges can lead to their destruction. It is better to bury them while waiting for a more appropriate moment.

Trafficking in antiquities is an old practice, which has largely contributed to the financing of terrorists and other groups.

Finally, it should be recalled that in Jerusalem even the smallest stone is likely to provoke tensions depending on the civilization to which it is attributed. This does not necessarily mean that archaeologists are to blame, as they are often very well trained, but rather that their work is exploited for political purposes.

This issue is not limited to this region alone, although tensions are particularly high and there is a great deal of disorganization. I don't know what it is like in Iraq today in the secured areas. Iraq, like Syria, is a country with an old civilization and a high level of education. There is no shortage of well-trained archaeologists, architects, engineers, lawyers and administrators. These human resources exist as long as they can be mobilized and their return to the country facilitated. Preventive archaeology is therefore possible and necessary, because all types of construction work destroy vestiges. Urgency is no excuse for ignoring this problem.

During the war in Syria and Iraq, to mitigate these risks, community leaders, scientists and historians saved – often putting their lives in peril – precious items, objects

and books from destruction. The reconstruction of a country also requires this type of intervention.

### Which buildings should be preserved, rehabilitated or destroyed?

The destruction caused by war or disasters can be partial or total depending on the city and the building. In France, the German army's dive-bombing in 1940 nearly destroyed all the buildings that were hit, even though it did not affect the whole city. Some old buildings survived among the ruins. The American bombing raids using "carpet bombs" dropped from an altitude of 4,000 to 6,000 metres covered a large area. The buildings directly hit were destroyed, but the vibrations in the ground caused by these very powerful bombs also weakened the buildings which were still standing.

In Beirut, the Israeli army's aerial bombardments reduced the buildings to rubble. The same was true of buildings hit by Syrian artillery shells, although to a lesser extent. The buildings used by the militia for street fighting bore the traces of bazooka and bullet holes of all kinds, and were therefore partially damaged.

How to choose and according to what criteria?

In France, precise inventories were drawn up by experts from the MRU or mandated by the ministry. They were used to create lists of damaged buildings and damaged towns, based on the degree of destruction. This classification made it possible to allocate or not allocate credits for war damages. As a result, it was better to be a disaster victim, and many local elected representatives campaigned in Paris to obtain this allowance.

In Lebanon, the same inventory was made. But war damages did not exist, as the Lebanese government, faced with a country in ruins and a bankrupt state, had decided



**13.** Evreux (27) after the German bombardments of 9–10 June 1940. The 15th-century belfry was not hit.



**14.** Beirut. Building in the city centre hit by a shell.

not to allocate any public expenditure for the reconstruction of the city centre. The company Solidere, the concessionaire for the development, recovered private land and buildings in exchange for shares from the former property owners and tenants. The preserved buildings could be reclaimed by their rightful owners, provided that the latter restored them according to precise quality standards, returned the corresponding shares, and paid a balance for part of the infrastructure work. As a result, the property owners did not necessarily want their buildings to be included in the Solidere perimeter, especially since outside of it they were free to destroy the building for a more profitable speculative construction.

In addition to the purely technical criteria of the buildings' condition, other criteria were added. In France, the notion of a historic monument was well established, and was used to protect buildings on the basis of their heritage value. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is certain that some buildings not placed in this category would be so today.

In Lebanon, the subject was more controversial, as the opinions of the architects and different segments of the population varied widely and could not be based on the concept of historical monuments, which were traditionally reserved for ancient ruins.

In addition to this criterion, there was also that of the urban plan. In France, the emphasis was on the passage of air and light, and the creation of wider roads to facilitate traffic. In medium-sized cities, the widened roads remained limited in size and followed the lines of the old road layout, familiar to inhabitants. However, there were protests, especially from shopkeepers, who found them too wide. In more radical reconstructions, such as in Le Havre, the new grid system established by the architect Auguste Perret erased the old routes and disrupted the whole atmosphere of the old town, and therefore was not easily accepted.

In Lebanon, Solidere's initial plan provided for a large-scale urban expressway, similar to that of France in the 1960s, when urban renewal was rife in many city centres and which led to the destruction of twice as many homes as during the war.

In Lebanon, the Solidere project was vigorously contested by Lebanese, French and other architects, who were backed by a large portion of the population. The plan was revised with the help of a French urban planning firm (Cabinet Sato), commissioned by Solidere. The new plan included far fewer major roads and therefore less destruction of buildings. It was nevertheless contested by some. Of the 900 pre-war buildings, many of which had been ruined by the bombings, 275 were preserved and rehabilitated, 175 of them by their former owners.

The notion of heritage has continued to evolve since interest in built heritage began in the early 19th century (in France, with the creation of the Commission des Monuments Historiques). For many in France, heritage is a notion that refers to testimonies of the past bequeathed to us by previous generations and which bear a positive value.

Yet, in Poland, UNESCO decided to classify the Auschwitz concentration camp as a World Heritage Site. The idea of showing future generations Nazism and its horrors makes sense. But this camp, designed by an architect trained at the Bauhaus who had forgotten all the richness of the inspiration of this movement at its beginnings – having retained only its basic framework and reducing it to the notion of efficiency served by a powerful industrial apparatus – testifies above all to a mystique of hatred and death. The barracks, built with little expense thanks to a total and repetitive industrialization, are dominated by the chimney of the crematorium and the watchtowers of the sentries, a sort of macabre figure inverted from the traditional village with its houses grouped around the bell tower and the public square,





15. Beirut. Rehabilitation of pre-war buildings



16. Beirut. New building as part of the reconstruction of the historic centre

its market and its town hall. Despite the negativity associated with it, this serves as an example of how heritage has evolved to shine not only a light on the positive attributes of the past, but also that which we wish to forget and which nevertheless remain an important part of our legacy.

### Reconstitution The impossible quest for a return to the past

Sometimes the trauma of conflict and the desire to revive the past leads to the reconstitution of a monument or even a destroyed district.

According to the first edition of Françoise Choay and Pierre Merlin's Dictionary of Urban Planning and Development, reconstitution is "[a] reconstruction on the basis of written and/or iconographic documents of a building or a group of buildings that has disappeared or been badly damaged."

In Seoul, after American bombings destroyed the entire city, the monuments of the former kings of Korea, traditionally made

of wood, were accurately reconstituted and bear witness to this past in the midst of a city rebuilt in the 1950s and 1960s. It is an old tradition in Korea as in Japan to regularly rebuild royal monuments and temples in their entirety or to replace some of their old elements according to traditional techniques.

In France, there were reconstitutions of parts of cities. The most significant of these is the facade of the town of Gien on the Loire. Due to Gien's location on both sides of a bridge crossing over the Loire, it was destroyed in 1940 by German-Italian bombing and then in 1944 by the Americans.

In Poland, in Warsaw, with the revival of a Poland "liberated from its Russian invaders", the city centre was reconstituted based on archives and testimonials carefully collected by the city's historians and architects. As much as it is possible to reconstitute a building, the reconstitution of an entire district is a delicate undertaking. Remnants from the Middle Ages, in particular the fortifications buried under the pre-war city, were revealed by the destruction of the district. It was therefore decided to highlight them rather than to protect the buildings which were

constructed afterwards on the same site. Buildings from the 20th century and even those from the 19th century were not reconstituted because they were considered to be of little interest. On the other hand, beautiful 18th-century houses were reconstituted, as they were more representative of Polish culture. This reconstituted town is therefore a town that never existed in this form at any given time. It would probably be better to speak of it as a beautiful recomposition of the past, which was precisely the aim of this exercise.

### Monuments and commemoration of the past The remembrance value of ruins

There are countless plaques and monuments which pay homage to the victims and combatants of the conflicts and disasters that have destroyed cities and which denounce the barbarity that takes place during conflicts.

Far rarer are ruins that have been preserved and redeveloped to testify to the violence of the destruction. In Hiroshima, on the site of the district destroyed by the bomb, there remains, alone in the middle of a vast meadow, a partially destroyed tower, the last standing testament to not be completely reduced to ruins by the blast of the bomb. It was built of reinforced concrete, unlike the traditional buildings in the city centre.

In Berlin, the Gedächtniskirche, or Church of Remembrance, is a largely destroyed Wilhelminian church, to which a modern church is attached. It is a place of calm and meditation, whose wall of glass slabs diffuses a blue light mixed with reds and whites that is extremely peaceful and conducive to contemplation. [Architect Egon Eiermann and stained glass designer Gabriel Loire]

In the same spirit in Beirut, Alexandra Asseily, a Lebanese woman of English origin, imagined creating a "Garden of Forgiveness" between the churches and mosques of all

denominations, to testify to the diversity of the Lebanese population by making careful use of the ancient remains overlooking the present-day city. This beautiful idea, inviting contemplation on Lebanon's destiny and the forces that led to its fratricidal war, was finally completed in the early 2000s despite numerous controversies. First, it was necessary to translate the word forgiveness into Arabic, which is said in two ways. One meaning, as I understand it, is a total and unconditional forgiveness, as only God (regardless of his name) can give. The other, a more human forgiveness, implies apology and reparation and therefore negotiation. This took two years. It was the latter that was adopted. Then Solidere organized an international competition of landscape designers to select the project currently in place.

More recently, it was decided to preserve a building typical of the 1920s and 30s, located on the demarcation line. Because of its location, it was used as a sniper's den during the war. Its façade continues to bear all the scars of the fighting; and the building, called "the yellow house", is now used as a place for exhibitions and conferences dedicated to the memory of the conflict which lasted 15 years.

## Conclusion: Reconstruction as an exceptional moment in a country's history

This document does not claim to cover everything, but rather aims to point out several topics that are not always familiar to urban planning and development professionals, as the question of reconstruction is rather specific compared to other modes of urban intervention. It is worth bringing to the debate other examples from recent wars as well as those from cities destroyed by natural or industrial disasters.

In France, many monographs on reconstructed cities have been published, and there are extensive archives. Nevertheless, works on reconstruction as a whole are rare. The main work of reference is that of the historian Danièle Voldman, whose *La reconstruction des villes françaises de 1940 à 1954. Histoire d'une politique*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997. deals with administrative, political, social, architectural and urban planning aspects.

The usual actors in urban planning are less interested in this period. Often, they are more attracted to debates concerning the large housing estates and urban renewal policies that followed reconstruction and ended in the second half of the 1970s.

### Reconstructing the country and its institutions, re-establishing the rules of construction

Reconstruction provides the basis for a new beginning for the country, and is a unique opportunity to review its organization and legislation, in preparation for a new future after the trauma of destruction.

In France, at the time of the Liberation, the provisional government of General de Gaulle decided to create a dedicated ministry for reconstruction and development. Some thought it necessary to create an administration attached to the General Planning Commission. However, the concern for efficiency led to the creation of the MRU with all the means necessary for this action, which was not only legislative and regulatory, but also operational. It was necessary to be quick and efficient, as the credibility of the new institutions was at stake. This was a novelty, as urban planning had previously been the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, whereas construction was the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry. It was therefore the second technical ministry created in France,



17. Beirut. Aftermath of the civil war. The illegal rubbish dump along the sea, known as the "Normandy embankment".

## 18. Beirut.

Decontamination and composting of the “Normandy embankment”, the site where 6 million m<sup>3</sup> of waste were dumped into the sea during the war. These works, carried out by Solidere, also included a coastal protection dam.



after the Ministry of Public Works, heir to the Ponts et Chaussées services created before the French Revolution. This last ministry had played an essential role in the development of the national territory during the first industrial revolution by creating the roads, railways, canals and ports necessary for the country's development.

In 1958, the MRU became the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning, and then merged with the Ministry of Public Works to become the Ministry of Equipment. Urban planning legislation gradually evolved but maintained the same basic principles as in 1945, at least until the passing of the SRU law in 2000. Reconstruction initiated the management of large-scale development and urban planning operations, under State control, such as large housing estates, La Défense business district, the new towns, major urban planning operations and, more recently, the work carried out by the Agence Nationale de Rénovation Urbaine (ANRU).

In Lebanon, the Solidere project inspired others with similar models for the development of Beirut, notably by backfilling the sea to reclaim land for further real estate projects. In terms of legislation and regulations, it is especially important to note the introduction of seismic regulations (Beirut is located on a still active fault line) and fire

protection regulations, both of which did not exist before. Solidere's very precise urban planning regulations were also a novelty in a country which tends to favour a laissez-faire attitude in this field. Similarly, the clean-up of the 6 million m<sup>3</sup> of waste on the “Normandy embankment” in the city centre helped to change people's attitudes towards the crucial issue of waste disposal.

### The tremendous drive of disaster-stricken populations

Regardless of the reconstructions I have seen, the most striking point is the tremendous energy that drives inhabitants in their desire to rebuild, their way of looking to the future, despite often very difficult living conditions. This is undoubtedly the most precious asset for a successful reconstruction, provided that it can be mobilized and channelled into a shared project.

Hervé Dupont,  
engineer, architect and urban planner  
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