



**POLITECNICO
DI TORINO**

Honors thesis

Architecture for Sustainable Design

This Thesis is willing to show you the devolution of a city that survived fifteen years of civil war and society damage; the unsustainability of destruction and the deep lost of collective memory; to remember the city that we had and to forget how we lost it.

To Project in a Border Environment Beirut - Lebanon

Tutor

Riccardo Pollo

Co- tutor

Per-Johan Dahl

by

Sara Darwich Abboud

September 2018

After the independence of Beirut from the French mandate the city had reached a successful urban design model who was ready to be improved with the new politics; In the early 60s Beirut was on top in terms of tourism, economics, and political liberalism, it was the golden age of architecture and urbanism of the city; the city center was full of souks of all types, fabrics, carpets, manufacturing, apparel, food, shoes, jewelry and more from the local industry; it was also growing with the construction of banks, clinics, hotels, cinemas and nightclubs.



Between 1975 and 1991 civil war happened, and all social, economic, administrative and political structure were destroyed; in the precedent years the city had reached a huge development and between these years it stopped completely. the armed conflict was a massive human rights violation and people had to migrate from one side to another; the periphery of the city started growing by displaced populations without any plan, violation of building codes, construction codes and property rights regulation; it was a need.

10% of the constructions of Beirut and its suburbs were destroyed, taking with them the physical infrastructure of the country (water, electricity, roads) and the city center heritage; the city infrastructure still a problem after war, and the city heritage was something that can't be brought back, it was gone.



After war in 1991 the reconstruction of the city was the plan, but what was supposed to be rebuild and planned by the public sector was taken by the private, who took advantage of the bankrupt government making the city center project a business for sell to foreigners; Solidere was the company on charge of the Beirut Central District project managed by

Rafik Hariri; in the hurry of building their business they deleted most of the heritage that had survived war and what was left was renovated using them as shops for big international brands, forgetting that the city center was before a complex of souks of local merchants.

Not only the functionality of the city center had changed, but also its scale; the memory of the city was deleted as a tabula rasa, and what came later wasn't even made by Lebanese hands, the company contracted big international offices as Herzog & de Meuron, Daniel Libeskind, Jean Nouvel and other prestigious architects that without doubt made beautiful and interesting projects, but they don't belong to the city, they could be placed anywhere else because they don't respond to the context, to the history or even to the citizens needs, they are just big empty boxed owned by some Saudi or emirate that doesn't even care of the piece of city that they have; for them is just an investment.

The big city center was a project made by the Lebanese architect Joseph Philip Karam and is part of the Beirut central district area, the construction started in 1965 as a multi-user complex that was claimed to be the largest shopping mall in the middle east at the time; but the project didn't even had the opportunity to see the light, it was partially destroyed before being finished; the complex consisted in two big towers where only one of them was constructed and destroyed during war, and a cinema with a form of an egg shell that still decaying nowadays.

The leftovers of the city center have become an icon to the city; ruins in between all the luxurious building that surround it; some claim that it should be destroyed, some others claim that is an important picture of the city, a place that remember how was Beirut before war and saw it suffer during it.



For further information please contact:
Sara Darwich Abboud, saradarwicha@gmail.com