From Beirut to Mostar, from London to the centre of Berlin, from Warsaw to Jerusalem, from the cities in Europe to the cities of Africa, from Vietnam to Cambodia, everywhere, after the ravages of war comes the necessity for reconstruction. As one of the organisers said at the beginning of this conference: ‘half a century after World War II, it seems relevant to evaluate the on-going reconstruction efforts with regard to past experiments, where architects’ contributions have brought forth a diverse scope of answers. Such an assessment may allow us to uncover a number of parameters and guiding principles behind successful achievements that will help us to avoid major errors in the future’.

This Conference included a three day seminar, an open debate forum, and guided study tours to downtown Beirut, Tripoli and the ancient city of Byblos. The seminar was opened by the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in the presence of Assem Salam, President of the Order of Engineers and Architects, and Vassilis Sgoutas, Secretary-General of UIA. Twenty five of the more than 200 participants gave presentations of their professional experience in various aspects of reconstruction, urban transformation and cultural heritage of cities after war, and the immediate as well as future impact on their inhabitants.

The seminar comprised six sessions:

Session One was devoted to the question of Modernity and Heritage. Among the main issues was the case of Warsaw, presented by Bogdan Wyporek – former President of the Polish Town Planners Society – who was involved in the reconstruction of the city after World War II. Christa Aue – member of the Stadt Forum Berlin from 1991-96 – reviewed the relationship between modernity and heritage in the various plans for the city, from the first reconstruction plans of the late 1940s to current projects. The Italian architect Francesco Venezia argued that tragic events, such as destruction provoked by war, determine a number of parameters and guiding principles behind successful achievements that will help us to avoid major errors in the future.

The PRDU forms part of The University of York’s city centre campus based at The King’s Manor, a medieval building of great historical and architectural importance, and is administered by the Department of Archaeology.
transformation in the urban and architectural realm that could create new aesthetic values. The Lebanese architect and planner Jad Tabet discussed the recurrent theme of heritage preservation in all reconstruction experiences.

**Session Two** focused on the problem of Continuity and Mutations. Among the main speakers, Ibrahim al Dakkak reviewed the impact of spatial transformations on the city of Jerusalem. Barnabas Nawangwe discussed the spatial mutations provoked by wars in Africa, and the Lebanese sociologist Nabil Beyhum explored the concept of social fabric as related to urban fabric.

**Session Three** dealt with the problem of Infrastructure and Urban Environment. Nicholas Bullock presented the case of London, stressing the conflictual relationship between private and public interests. Vladimir Belousov gave an overview of the various experiences of reconstruction in former Soviet Union after World War II, while the Lebanese architect and planner, Oussama Kabbani, emphasised the role of public space in shaping the urban environment, taking the reconstruction of Beirut Central District as a case study.

**Session Four** was devoted to the question of General Planning and Specific Urban Projects. Spanish architect Manuel de Solà-Morales argued that although general ideas are a prerequisite for any project, these ideas do not necessarily appear in large scale planning. Sometimes it is in specific limited projects that complex problems find their solution. The issue of cities divided along ethnic lines, and the associated challenges that impose onto reconstruction, was explored by Tajma Kurt from Mostar, while Mireta Ioannidou laid stress on the integration of war refugees in Cyprus. Lebanese economist Kamal Hamdan explained the economic policy of reconstruction in Lebanon and the priority given to the sole reconstruction of infrastructures.

**Session Five** tackled the issue of Imported Technologies versus Local Know-how. Sultan Barakat highlighted the opportunities and limitations related to foreign aid, and the need to balance donor priorities with on-site priorities for post-disaster assistance. Rifat Chadirji discussed the matter of Technology and Society, whilst the Lebanese architect Rahif Fayad addressed the problem of globalisation versus identity.

**Session Six** centred on the problems of the Mechanisms and Modalities related to the implementation of reconstruction projects. Daniele Voldman reviewed the various mechanisms devised in the reconstruction of French cities after WWII. Joe Nasr focused on transformations and continuity in the lot patterns of France and Germany after WWII. Sami Nahas and Georges Corn both discussed the case of the reconstruction of Beirut Central District and the problems pertaining to issues of real estate and means of financing reconstruction projects.

Several keynote speakers also participated in the seminar: Pierre Vago, Henri Edde and Bahaeddine Bsat.

It emerged that a number of similar issues ran through each situation. Reconstruction, inevitably, puts into question economically a process of financing, socially the rehabilitation of a population affected by war and culturally the attempt at reconciling opposing demands between preserving cultural heritage and implementing urban transformations.

The participants used the plenary sessions to discuss the specific role of architects in the context of global market strategies, where decisions are often taken regardless of local and regional consideration, focusing in particular on the economy and reconstruction in Lebanon. Reconstruction and traditional construction methods, globalisation and their identity were the subjects of the greatest concerns for the Lebanese participants at the conference, especially now that reconstruction of their capital is in full flow.

**CONCLUSIONS**

At the end of the discussions in the open debate forum, the participants came up with the following conclusions:

- A plea for the consideration of physical reconstruction to be carried out in the context of a national plan which would determine the distribution of resources and growth between regions, and between urban and rural areas.

- A plea to consider reconstruction not as a ‘one-off’ project, but as the start of a process of institutionalising the regulation of the city for sustainable development and of representing the interests of the community as a whole.

- A concern to preserve, as much as possible, the coherence of the social fabric as a basis for any reconstruction project.

- A concern to control the density and form of development and to restrain the rights of the individual to develop their own land in defiance of the interests of the community; the role of public authorities being to initiate, follow up and control the implementation of reconstruction plans entrusted to various actors.

- A call to launch public participation as an absolute necessity in any planning process. Information, consultation and partnerships are major elements of public participation, which should precede and accompany each step of the reconstruction process so as to prevent any demagogic distortion.

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