Urban Thinkers Campus

BEIRUT POST-BLAST RECONSTRUCTION

Climate-Heritage Planning to Build back better

17th March, 2:00-5:00 pm, Beirut local time (CET +1)

Please register on: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEkdOuvqzwth9APcmXNWP3O4CFNwbFJQiek

Marwan Abboud, Mohafez of Beirut
Elias Tawil, Director of Urban planning / Lebanon
Sarkis Khoury, Director of Antiquities / Lebanon
Jad Tabet, President Order of Engineers & Architects
Vahakn Kabakian, UNDP
Karim Hendili, UNESCO / Beirut Task force
Georges Abi Sleiman, UN-Habitat
Karima Ben Bih, World Bank
Christianna Johnnides Brotsis, World Bank
Fouad Awada, General Director, Institut Paris Region

Yasmine Makaron, ICOMOS-Lebanon, UL
Eric Huybrechts, ICOMOS (CIVIUH), IPR, FNAU-MTPA
Andrew Potts, Climate Heritage Network
Kamel Dorai, Institut Français du Proche-Orient
Mona Fawaz, Beirut Urban Lab / AUB
Howayda Al-Harithy, Beirut Urban Lab / AUB
Serge Yazigi, Beirut Urban Lab / AUB
Habib Debs, architect and urban planner, URBI
Edgard Mourad, Khatib & Alami
George Zouein, Gaia Heritage
BEIRUT POST BLAST RECONSTRUCTION: CLIMATE HERITAGE PLANNING TO BUILD BACK BETTER

The Beirut blast on 4th August 2020 killed more than 200 people, and affects more than 8,000 buildings, mainly the historical part of the City. The political, economic, financial and sanitary situation before the blast was critical. The reconstruction is particularly difficult to implement without national government (dismissed after the blast), weak institutions, social contest and slow process to deliver funds.

More than 500 NGOs support the reconstruction with the help of the population and subsidies from donors, under the coordination of the Army and the Governor of Beirut. But the reconstruction cannot be implemented only with NGOs. Among the main challenges for reconstruction is to strengthen the institutions, and build back better.

The Order of Engineers and Architects adopt a Declaration to fix the principles for the reconstruction of Beirut. The Beirut Urban Lab at the American university of Beirut with the support of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient and the Columbia World Projects, and the Post Conflict Cities Lab at Columbia University, organized several debates on heritage preservation, model of development and engine of growth, housing and land policy, environment and quality of life, connectivity and urban synergies, port and large infrastructure recovery, governance and funding modalities to define a strategy to mobilize actors for the implementation of the reconstruction. These debates aim at identifying an Integrated Vision for Beirut’s reconstruction.

The European Union, World Bank and UNDP have presented a Framework for Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction to define the condition for international loans and grants for 2.5 billion USD. The Integrated Vision for Beirut reconstruction is premised on the assumption that it is desirable to create an inclusive urban context in which the development model is redistributive and socially just, protective of heritage, and ecologically sound. As such, we begin by questioning the rentier development model that has guided the growth of the city over the past three decades. The historic neighborhoods that were damaged by the blast used to precisely challenge this rentier model, making an adaptive economic re-use of its cultural heritage, attracting successfully creative industries, cultural and tourism activities and relatively keeping the variety of its population. In addition, given that the post-blast recovery is occurring in the shadow of the breakdown of public institutions and a major financial meltdown, it is unlikely that any large-scale traditional master-planning will be possible or useful. Instead, we seek to articulate a vision that can guide and integrate the piecemeal interventions that are likely to produce the reconstruction projects. This vision should also act as a platform that can assemble actors engaged in the current recovery process around shared ideas, aspirations, and principles.

In its aims, the vision adopts the following priorities:

1. People-centered
2. Interconnected: reconnect the port to the city, reconnect the city to the sea, and ensure connectivity between neighborhoods and districts spatially, socially and economically.
3. Respectful of the past, open to the future
4. Decentralized
5. Environmentally sound
6. Rethinking the institutional mechanisms and adequate planning tools that can:
   - Adapt to a decentralized project financing structure that will be carried out on an ad hoc basis by multiple independent actors
   - Coordinate sustainable reconstruction of the stricken neighborhoods and the port that aims to return the population, economic fabric, and urban identity
- Strengthen, as much as possible, the role local and central public agencies and institutions

More dialogue is necessary between institutions, funders, professionals and academicians to coordinate actions, following the principles adopted by the professionals to build back better. The key objectives of the urban Thinkers campus are the following:
- To stress the reconstruction of Beirut on Climate Heritage Planning
- To offer an opportunity to dialogue between institutions, funders, professionals and academicians
- To give perspective for implementation the Declaration of Beirut provided by the Order of Engineers and Architects of Beirut
- To summarize the initiatives done during last months for Building back better after the blast
- To share best practices for innovation in climate resilient urban planning
- To give hope for the reconstruction of Beirut

The Urban Thinkers Campus is hosted by the Institut Français du Proche-Orient and the graduate programs in Urban Planning, Policy and Design (MUPP/MUD) in the Department of Architecture and Design, Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA) at the American University of Beirut.

SPEAKERS
Eric Huybrechts, ICOMOS-CIVVIH, Institut Paris Region, FNAU-MTPA: Presentation of the UTC
Marwan Abboud, Mohafez (Governor) of Beirut: Introduction

Panel A - Climate resilient planning
Kamel Dorai, IFPO: Introduction
Fouad Awada, Directorate general of The Institut Paris Region: Keynote speaker
Speakers: Elias Tawil, Director of Urban planning of Lebanon
Jad Tabet, President of the Order of Engineers and Architects of Beirut
Georges Abi Sleiman, UN-Habitat
Karima Ben Bih, World Bank
Mona Fawaz, MUPP-MUD and Beirut Urban Lab /AUB
Habib Debs, architect and urban planner, URBI
Edgard Mourad, Khatib et Alami

Questions/answers

Panel B - Culture and Heritage
Serge Yazigi, AUB: Introduction
Yasmine Makaron, ICOMOS-Lebanon: Keynote speaker
Speakers: Sarkis Khoury, Director of Antiquities of Lebanon
Vahakn Kabakian, UNDP
Karim Hendili, UNESCO Task force for the Reconstruction of Beirut
Christianna Johnnides Brotsis, World Bank
Andrew Potts, Climate Heritage Network
Howayda Al-Harithy, MUPP-MUD and Beirut Urban Lab / AUB
George Zouein, Gaia Heritage

Questions/answers

Conclusion