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WAR AGAINST ARCHITECTURE, IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the phenomenon of violence towards architecture, mainly, the collective memory associated therewith. It addresses the relationship between architecture and identity, and its role in the formation of social, cultural, and political context in the memory of people or community. It also identifies the buildings and areas mostly targeted in the wars of memory and identity, such as heritage buildings which store large collective memory, and places and scenes that have high symbolic value. In order to verify and validate these concepts, a special case study was conducted on the town of Bint Jbeil in southern Lebanon, since it embodies the target of military violence during the recent war between Israel and Lebanon (July 2006). It has been selected as having a large collective memory that stretches deep into history as a result of the important role the city played - throughout ages - in various political, economic and cultural fields. The destruction that ruined the ancient town and the market (Souk) has badly damaged the large city's memory. Besides, the reconstruction that was completed recently faced physical and legal constraints which reflected negatively on the image of the city and its architecture. The research discusses the reconstruction process and how it harmonized between the preservation of memory and future requirements.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically and over time, buildings have been military objectives for destruction and devastation in wars. After gaining sovereignty, influence and power over a certain area, armies used to destroy and demolish the most important buildings, architectural traditions, and landmarks of that area; regardless of whether they were labeled a security threat or not. As if, in this process they are confirming the termination of a certain regime or culture. The whole victory was marked by the complete demolition of both human and construction. The goals of such violence toward architecture, however, is symbolic rather than physical, since the value it represents for man and community is linked to their collective memory, contributes to the formation of their identity, and promotes their patriotism. This research, therefore, will shed the light on the phenomenon of violence toward architecture, mainly, the collective memory associated therewith. It addresses the relationship between architecture and identity, and its role in the formation of social, cultural, and political context in the

memory of people or community. Then it'll shed light on the town of Bint Jbeil in southern Lebanon as a special case, since it embodies the target of military violence during the recent war between Israel and Lebanon (July 2006).

METHODS

This study is based on the descriptive analytical approach which relies on gathering facts and information about the phenomenon or problem in hand. This approach was done by collating, analyzing and interpreting data to reach acceptable generalizations. The research was based on two types of data sources: library research and on-field research. Library research was conducted by analyzing historical records and documents, reviewing of primary sources (main sources of data, like: data archives, government documents, census materials, and voter registration lists) and secondary sources (supportive data such as books and studies, periodicals and newspapers) to make a critical evaluation of the materials in hand. On-field research, on the other hand, was based on a case study, direct observations and conducting interviews with experts and locals.

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DISCUSSION

A Brief History of this Phenomenon

Throughout most wars that targeted memory and identity, systemic demolition of some buildings, architectural heritage, and landmarks occurred and sometimes urban areas were removed completely. This happened in cases of obliterating a certain civilization and replacing it with another. "The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history" (Kundera, 1999). In history we have a lot of examples such as: the destruction of the Library of Alexandria by the Romans in 48 B.C, the demolition of lots of cities and countries during World War I and II, conflicts between Muslims and Hindus in India over 1947-1991, and the destruction of the Tibet heritage by China during 1949-1950. In addition to lots of violent acts against symbolic buildings such as libraries, mosques and bridges in Yugoslavia over 1991-1999, the destruction of Buddha statues in Bamiyan (in Afghanistan) by Taliban in 2001, the attack on World Trade Center on the ninth of September 2001, and finally the demolition of the Shrines in Mali in July 2012. Those buildings are targeted and destroyed due to their moral value and what they represent of cultural memory at the community or people's level. According to Bevan Robert, the author of "The Destruction of Memory": "This is the active and often systemic destruction of particular building types or architectural traditions that happens in conflicts where the erasure of the memories, history, and identity attached to architecture and place-enforced forgetting-is the goal itself. These buildings are attacked not because they are in the path of a military objective: to their destroyers that are the objective" (Bevan, 2004).

The Collective Memory

Relatively, collective memory is a new concept. It has been recently addressed by sociology, philosophy, history, and anthropology. Maurice Halbwachs (1976) is one of the most important sociologists who focused on this concept; especially that he linked the collective memory to two main dimensions which are time and place (Halbwachs, 1976). Halbwachs indicated in his book "On Collective Memory", that the society has a memory, which can't be formed but through a social frame. "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs, 1992). The collective memory differs from the individual one. The individual memory is a mental skill that allows the person to remember and keep past experiences, yet the collective memory points out to memories that are shared with individuals who belong to a certain culture, doctrine or community (Zerubavel, 1999). According to Zerubavel (1999), these collective memories are not necessarily a representation of one's own personal experience, but they can be memories for the experiences of the group throughout history. Thus, the members of a group might not live the same experience in order for it to be part of their collective memory; these memories could be transmitted from one individual to another and subsequently passed from one generation to another. It is worth mentioning that the collective memory is not like history because it does not deal with all the important events and significant turning points of a

certain group, yet collective memory is selective by keeping some memories while excluding others. The community establishes and develops its memory according to its needs, ideas, and tendencies (Halbwachs, 1976), and excludes everything that might separate among its members and scatter them. Hence, in other words, the memory is not objective and abstract but selective, and it adapts itself for the sake of the formation of the identity and community solidarity (Eyerman, 2004). Here we can notice the essential role that collective memory plays in community life; when members of a certain community share experiences, memories, values, and history, they become more united and close, and as a result, cohesion and solidarity occur and contributes over time in the formation of what we call the "National Identity" which emphasizes and strengthens the concept of national belonging and patriotism.

Architecture and Memory

According to Halbwachs (1976), memory is "a reconstruction of the past using data from the present." The said data is the social frames that allow fixing memory in its spatial and temporal frame. In other words, it consists of important dates, times, and places in the community history, contributing in determining when and where the act we want to recall has taken place. Here it is noticeable the significance of place as a major factor and condition to recall the act. Forasmuch, a "place" is the result of interaction between its physical components and the human or social events that occur in it; where, the built environment, with its various features, forms one of the most important social frames of the groups' memory (Hoteit, 2015). There, man practices different activities (residence, work, entertainment ...etc) and experiences emotional and social engagements (joy, anger, rebellion...etc).

Any event, attitude, or experience –whether it is joyful or sorrowful, at an individual or collective level–occurs in a private or public place. Hence, this place will become a vital part of the memory, and accordingly whenever seen by the individual or the group will stimulate the recalling of the memory or the event that occurred therein. Moreover, as long as this place survives (that might be a building, edifice, or landmark), the relative memory will be strongly and effectively preserved and the person or the group will feel safe and comfortable. Yet, when it disappears, the memory will wither gradually (Halbwachs, 1976), until it perishes with the passage of time. Hence, we can say that, the built environment, with its various features, form an essential and major condition in keeping the individual and the collective memory. Consequently, any major modifications that occur to these places might lead to serious changes to our memories and most often to its total effacement.

Architecture and Identity

Monuments, streets, neighborhoods, buildings, churches, and parks are all material things, but they also evoke specific kinds of meanings and serve as spatial coordinates of identity (Lynch, 1972). The function of architecture goes beyond designing spaces to help the person afford his daily needs. An emotional and sentimental relation rises from the very first moment of interaction between the human and the place. As the period of interaction extends, contentment and security

towards the place grows. Subsequently, the symbolic value of the place -the belonging - is established, which contributes to rendering this place part of one's identity. "One way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by feeling that you belong to that place. It's a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (Rose, 1995). Over time, a place memory is formed; which is a record of accumulated activities and interactive events that took place within it. Noting that, this memory is cumulative since it is inherited by the sons from their fathers and ancestors, apart from the personal experience. Places, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used, and transformed in relation to practice (Tilley, 1994).

Violence and Architecture

The building is similar to a container that stores memories (Zannad, 1994), so, violence against architecture is violence targeted against peoples' memory and identity (Bevan, 2004). Whenever a people's architecture is targeted, their national identity is also targeted. Whenever this identity is stabbed, the national belonging and the collective memory disappears. Subsequently, defeating such people becomes easier and uprooting them from their homeland becomes a promenade. In other words, the homeland is the place that preserves the identity, (Mubarak, 2007) i.e. it is impossible to abolish a community's identity unless total displacement has occurred. The systemic destruction that takes place in certain types of wars does not target all constructions and buildings. Yet, it selects certain buildings that reflect true symbolic meanings and trigger feelings of the communities, so that the buildings' destruction will affect the people's withstanding and combating morals. Subsequently, the destruction of the cultural heritage of these communities will strike their values, traditions, and finally, their identity.

The places that are mostly targeted in the wars of memory and identity are: 1) traditional buildings that store and preserve a huge collective memory transmitted from one generation to another, 2) places and landscapes that reflect a symbolic value which is rooted in the peoples' conscience (special building, memorial, ancient fortress, natural landscape, perennial trees...), and 3) buildings that embody a certain function that makes people interact more with these buildings (such as religious, cultural buildings...), or 4) the ones that become familiar to individuals over a long period of time (such as schools, universities, institutes...). The non-targeted areas are the ones that do not have a specific identity since it does not enjoy a moral value by the community. Hence, its destruction is not considered a big shock or an irreplaceable loss. Newly and modern built regions are excluded as well for they do not embody significant collective memories. Exceptionally, those areas might be bombarded if they become strategic and cause a military threat to the enemy.

Case Study: Bint Jbeil

Location

Bint Jbeil is located in farther south Lebanon. It is 120 km away from Beirut and 800 m above sea level. It has an area of

9 hectares and a population of 52000 people; emigrants of Bint Jbeil are 30000 (Panorama for general services, 2008). It is bounded from the south by Maroun Al Ras and Yaroun, from the west by Ain Ebel, from the east by Aytaroun, and from the north by Aynata and Kounin.

The importance of the location

Bint Jbeil is the District City of Bint Jbeil Province where its jurisdiction includes 35 towns and villages. Many factors have contributed to the development and the prosperity of Bint Jbeil over history. Its unique geographical location as a crossing point between different regions has linked it, since ages, with the north of Palestine, south of Syria, and north of Jordan. It was a passageway and a station for commercial convoys. This fact led to the foundation of the ancient "commercial souk" of the city as one of the most significant town features, called Thursday Market Souk, where traders gather on Thursday coming from the near districts inside the Lebanese territories or from outside the borders to sell their products (Al Suleiman, 1995).

History of foundation

Bint Jbeil was founded hundreds of years ago. Its name stemmed from a historical basis; it was named after a Phoenician king's daughter who was married to a man from the city (Bazzi, 2007). Lots of Phoenician, Roman, and Byzantine ruins are found in the city, such as: "The big mosque, Albarrak arches, and ancient earthen homes in Shalaabun region"; bear in mind that the town is suffering from the negligence of the government with respect to the act of uncovering more archaeological remains in Bint Jbeil.

The Memory of the City

Agriculture

Bint Jbeil was the center for tobacco, vegetables, wheat, and fruit trees cultivation. Yet, as a result of the civil war and the Israeli occupation, inhabitants displaced to Beirut and immigrated (mostly to the USA) and some 3000 people were left. Therefore, agriculture was brought to an end.

Trade

Since long ago, the commercial market, "Thursday Souk", has distinguished Bint Jbeil. The geographical location of the city as a passageway of the commercial convoys gave prominence to the commercial market. The city is 5 km away from Palestine and 20 km away from Horan, south of Syria. There were no tariffs at the borders; the borders were open and convoys that used animals to move, used to pass easily (Bazzi, 2007). The booming period of the souk lasted until 1948. After the closure of the southern borders, the role of the souk started to shrink. Thus, the commercial activity became restricted to neighboring towns and villages. Later, security incidents aggravated causing recession and subsequently affecting various economic activities.

Industry

Lots of agricultural industries were found in Bint Jbeil, such as "food industries". Besides, there were small and medium

industrial facilities. Yet, Bint Jbeil was mostly famous for "shoemaking". For a long time, "shoemaking" was an essential economic resource for the residents (20% of the townsfolk have economically benefited from this craft). Before the Israeli occupation, about hundred "shoes factories" were operating in Bint Jbeil. As a result of emigration, recession, and the absence of the state's liability towards the national industry, only four or five factories have survived up until now (Bazzi, 2007; Fares et al., 2013; Hoteit and Fares, 2014).

Services

Since long time ago, Bint Jbeil has been a center of science and literature in "Jabal Amel" (Al Sulieman, 1995). It includes religious schools, a branch of a private university, five public schools and four private ones, and a public library. It also includes lots of cultural, social and sports clubs and associations, many dispensaries, a traders union, and two hospitals (one is private and the other is public).

Public institutions

Bint Jbeil, as stated before, is the district city and hence it includes most official administrative institutions, social institutions (such as the center of social affairs and of civil defense), and several places for worship (ten mosques and four hussienies).

The political role

The unique location of Bint Jbeil as a point of contact between various regions led to its prosperity and development at all levels on one hand, and to making it a target of the regional conflict on the other. Lots of leaders, ministers, and political figures were from Bint Jbeil. The history of the city witnessed the resistance to the occupation since the Turkish and the French mandate. It resisted as well the Israeli occupation until the liberation in 2000. War of July 2006 came next where the fiercest battles took place and many martyrs sacrificed themselves defending their city and homeland (Fares and Fares, 2013; Fares et al., 2014). The city was named "The Capital of Resistance", and in its honor, Victory and Liberation Festival took place there in 2000 where the leader of "Almoqawama (Resistance)" delivered an important speech. After the speech, most of the southerners regarded Bint Jbeil as a great symbolic value for resistance and patriotism.

Morphology of the City

Bint Jbeil is formed from the Old Town (which includes twenty two old neighborhoods), the souk, and the new neighborhoods. Lanes, alleys, and places, used to resemble family gatherings. Until 2006, Bint Jbeil had included two kinds of buildings: "the traditional building" which was located in the old town and in the souk, and "the modern building" which appeared in the extension areas of the city.

The traditional building

Most of those buildings were built pre-1920. It was built of polished and carved stones using clay and lime. Yet the ceiling

was made up of wood that was covered completely with clay and white soil mixed with coarse hay. The mixture used to be rolled later by the ceiling roller. Most of the houses were of only one floor and they were very close to each other. Close houses used to have common walls in between, with windows (sometimes small ones) or even doors that were known by: "the secret doors"; they were used in exceptional cases (Bazzi, 2007). The traditional Lebanese style of construction is shown in the traditional buildings, such as "the arch, vault, hall, corridor, and courtyard," in addition to other traditional building styles, such as "the rectangular house, the house with a courtyard, and the house with a corridor." Besides, facades were either simple ones formed from stones, or decorated by inscriptions to match the owners' economic and social level.

The modern building

It includes buildings that were built after 1920. In that period, cement and steel started to be used in building. Thus buildings style started to change to suit the lifestyle. Houses began to spread outside the old town.

Memory and war

According to the above mentioned, it is quite clear that Bint Jbeil has a major collective memory, which is deeply rooted in history, since it played over time a major role in politics, economics, and culture. This memory is not owned by its inhabitants, but it is shared among a large group of people who can be either home or abroad. Hence, targeting this city's memory causes greater damage than that of any other city.

During the war of July 2006 between Hezbollah and Israel, Bint Jbeil was fiercely bombarded and many parts of the city were destructed. Subsequently, we have found out that the most targeted and destructed regions were:

The souk

The souk is the place that preserves a genuine collective memory. The souk, where people meet and contact, is a major element in the memory of Bint Jbeil for it is the reason of the establishment of Bint Jbeil the center of the city, and the stimulus of development and prosperity there; it holds a true symbolic meaning. Thus, destroying the souk and paralyzing its economic activity, means destroying economy and traditional culture. The souk is pretty popular to the extent that the residents of Bint Jbeil and of the neighboring cities don't say "It's Thursday", yet they say "It's the souk day".

The old town

The old city, the traditional buildings, the narrow streets, the lanes, and the squares that were filled with memories and past events, were all destroyed. The Majority of the houses in the remaining neighborhoods and lots of the service institutions were damaged (Figure 1). Most of the elements that motivate the memory like worship places, schools, and clubs were destroyed. The urban landscape was fully changed. The place was emptied; no more residents and no more crowd in the souk. A new era started in Bint Jbeil; the era of reconstruction. Throughout four years, the role of Bint Jbeil vanished at the expense of the big neighboring towns such as "Aytaroun" and "Mays Al Jabal".



Figure 1. Old Town of Bint Jbeil after war (Commission of Inquiry in Lebanon, 2006)

Memory and Reconstruction

If war erases the collective memory of the city by destroying its buildings and spaces, reconstruction often is more dangerous than the war itself. Reconstruction completes the mission of the war and sometimes it goes further. Reconstruction faced many impediments. The main one was that the real estates in Bint Jbeil weren't surveyed, and were overlapping. In addition, the amounts that were specified for compensating the housing units weren't enough for repairing or rebuilding all the traditional stone buildings. Hence, only the houses that reveal a symbolic meaning were repaired. The other remaining buildings were rebuilt with cement and concrete. Moreover, the municipality expropriated the properties of 130 residents who decided to leave the old town, for the sake of public interest (Al Amin, 2007), which caused a change in the image of the city and its architecture.

Traditional stone houses that were embraced by a unique urban fabric reflecting kinship, disappeared. Modern construction overran. New houses are here now with no identity, no history, and no memory. Houses became of two floors instead of one, and the sunlight could barely break-through in some streets (Yaghi, 2010). Stone houses were replaced by buildings of cement and concrete, whose colors differ to meet the residents' desires. Other buildings became covered with stones; many colors and materials were used, causing the disappearance of harmony and beauty. Balconies appeared; they were small and did not accommodate the dwellers who used to sit in the courtyards in front of their houses. There are no more lanes, alleys, and small courtyards because streets widen for cars. The scene has changed and the memory of the city was harmed (Figure 2). There are different points of view regarding the new style of building. On one hand, the owners and the dwellers of the houses in the old town greeted the new style for many reasons: 1) it was more robust; especially that some traditional buildings, built a hundred years ago, urgently needed restoration to meet modern requirements, and this wasn't affordable. 2) Legal issues; because the properties were overlapped and there were multiple owners. 3) Financial issues; since the economic level of the dwellers of the old town wasn't suitable.



Figure 2. Old Town of Bint Jbeil after reconstruction

Aids for reconstruction offered a chance for the residents to build new houses with improved conditions and equipments. On the other hand, a group of educators, intellectuals, and pioneers of art, heritage, and literature from the people of the city who do not reside permanently in the city, were shocked and frustrated by the new scene. They felt they lost the identity and the memory that were weaved by their ancestors over time (Sharara, 2007). For them, war and then reconstruction demolished the history and glory of the city.

Conclusion

Violence that took place in Bint Jbeil affected the city and its architecture deeply. Besides, the destruction of the old town and the souk damaged the memory of the city by harming two of its most irreplaceable elements. Consequently, the following questions pop up. What should have happened if the impediments didn't exist? Would the city be reconstructed as it was before the war even though the previous construction didn't match the modern lifestyle? Is reconstructing the city as it was, considered an act of forging the memory of the city? For whom is the priority in reconstruction, for the traditional urban fabric or for the social fabric?

The importance of the place results from the relation between the person and the place. Hence, the place can survive and withstand, though hardly, as long as the interaction between it and its inhabitant lasts (Lefebvre, 1991), even if some of the physical elements of the place vanished. Reconstructing the place should give priority to the social fabric that constitutes a major condition of its existence. Dealing with the collective memory must be characterized by flexibility and rationality to correspond with the emotional, financial, physical and spiritual needs of the people. Some places and landmarks should be preserved as far as possible; those places form important spatial reference points of memory, for they have a big symbolic and moral value. Furthermore, we should preserve some natural and constructional elements (such as the alley, pond, memorial, perennial tree...) or even keep the old names of the courtyards, streets, and places, despite their renovations or changes. This doesn't mean to construct randomly far from regulatory controls and disciplines but reconstruction shall follow organized planning studies. In addition, we have to engage those who were shocked by the recent constructional changes in panel discussions and workshops and allow them to

participate in the decision making process. Finally, we state that the survival of the place and the continued interaction with it are the most important elements, and the essential conditions for the identity's existence. Herein appears the role of the collective memory as a flexible and dynamic process that develops and adapts itself serving its main role in preserving cohesion and promoting national affiliation.

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