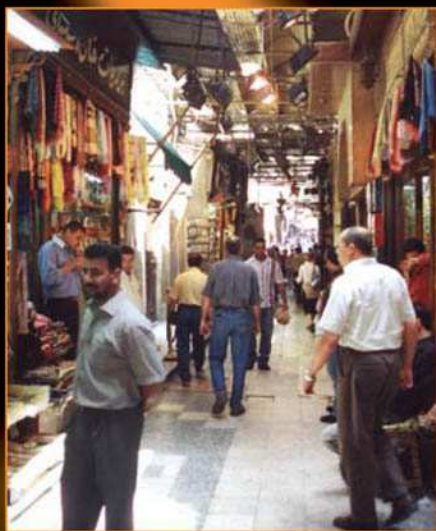


Tourism and Cultural Change



Tourism in the Middle East

Continuity, Change and Transformation



Edited by
Rami Farouk Daher

Tourism in the Middle East

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Preface

For the ancient Greeks, the world was essentially divided into an East and a West. This notion of a world of two halves was largely continued by the Romans, despite their forays into the North of Europe, and remains embedded in 'Western' public consciousness to this moment. The area we commonly refer to as the Middle East (and formerly, within a less expansive world, as the Near East) is thus at the very point of cross-over between these two 'halves' of the world; a wonderfully permeable, fluid, real and imagined expanse of lands, landscapes and peoples. In the European tradition, the Middle East marks the point where Europe stops being Europe and gradually, untidily, and somewhat uneasily, morphs into another place and culture. Here, globalization is not a new phenomenon.

Over the years a great imagining of difference relating to the Middle East has constantly veered from romanticized fascination and engagement, to that of suspicion and fear on both sides of this perceptual divide. Travelers, traders, and pilgrims to, and through, the region have long been an outcome and an expression of the region's strategic position, religious significance, and imagined mystique. Thus, the region is well-versed in providing the essential structures and cultures of hospitality, fed as they are through the religious and cultural values that intrinsically pervade all aspects of everyday life.

But within the modern world it would be wrong to portray the Middle East solely as a focus for the Orientalist explorer or spiritual traveler. Through Thomas Cook's Tours, the region was one of the first in the world to experience organized tourism and over the past 50 years or so substantive parts of the region have been engaged with the essentially modernist project of leisure tourism. A drive along the coastal highway of Lebanon, for instance, reveals a plethora of sites and facilities dedicated to domestic tourism and to an international tourism that flourished during the 1950s and 1960s.

It would be true to say, certainly from a European perspective, that when we think of tourism in the Middle East, we generally conceptualize it as a number of destinations: places where international/Western visitors go. In this process, we have been all too happy to reduce the complexity and richness of histories and cultures to a relatively small number of images and signs. Thus Jordan *is* Petra and the Dead Sea, Syria *is* Palmyra, and Egypt *is* Luxor and the Pyramids at Giza. Of course these are the very centres where international visitors do congregate; such is international tourism. But this view neglects three important dimensions. The first is the diversity of landscapes, sites, and locations, which also attract international tourists and have done for many years, such as the Syrian coastline for instance, and particularly the sea-port of Latakia, which is still a call for Mediterranean cruise ships, stopping for excursions to nearby Qalaat Saladin. The second is the incidence of regionalized or domestic tourism in the Middle East, which remains largely poorly understood. Over recent years, the internal patterns and flows of tourists within the region have increased due to significant levels of Arabs preferring not to venture out to European and American destinations. The third dimension relates to the tremendous changes that are taking place regarding the provision for tourism driven by high levels of external investment, particularly from, and in, the Gulf States. The levels of investment and development in tourism are, of course, tremendously uneven across the Middle East, ranging from the hyper-modern, capital intensive, high-rise hotels of Dubai to the development of small eco-tourism projects in Mount Lebanon.

It is these processes and dynamics of change that have long marked out the Middle East region as one of the most significant and indeed, sensitive regions of the world. But change is always set within the contexts of continuity and tradition to produce dialectics of complex engagement and encounter at a variety of levels. Tourism and travel are acts of transformation at the individual and institutional level. Throughout the Middle East region landscapes and lives are being transformed through the provision of infrastructure to support tourism and leisure, and in the process identities and local/global relations are being challenged and re-defined.

Sadly, in common discourse, discussion of tourism in the Middle East continues to fall between a number of extremes: persistent and pervasive Orientalist conceptions or peoples and places, somewhat disjunctive notions of massive post-modernist spatial transformations, and configurations of the region as a series of 'no-go' areas due to military and political instability. All such narratives are accurate to a degree, but between

these all too familiar focal points there is a much more complex, deeper and richer set of understandings about tourism and tourists. While aware of the meta-narratives relating to tourism, this volume is a fine attempt to get between the extremes and into the intricacies of tourism in the region. Through its insightful and varied chapters the book sets out to uncover and unravel the multifaceted nature of tourism in the Middle East from a variety of perspectives. Understanding tourism in the Middle East, as a form of social encounter and exchange, as well as in a context of spatial and historical transformation, is critical in helping to understand the region not as a boundary between two notional world halves, but as the very place that as binds them together.

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Abbreviations

AIC	Abdali Investment Company
APSAD	Association for the Protection of Sites and Ancient Dwellings
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
ATLAS	Association of Tourism and Leisure Studies
AUB	American University of Beirut
BCD	Beirut Central District
CDR	(Lebanese) Council for Development and Reconstruction
CENTOPS	Centre for Tourism Policy Studies
CHTUD	Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development (Project)
CPH	Cham Palaces and Hotels
DGA	Directorate General of Antiquities
EFF	Extended Fund Facility
GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
GDP	gross domestic product
GSM	Greater Salt Municipality
HTML	hypertext markup language
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOM	The International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICUN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IFPO	French Institute of the Near East
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JUST	Jordan University of Science and Technology
JVA	Jordan Valley Authority
KDC	Kerak Development Cooperation

KM	Kerak Municipality
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MOTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MPWH	Ministry of Public Works and Housing
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
PMU	Project Management Unit
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zone
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SAL	Structural Adjustment Lending
SCA	Supreme Council of Antiquities
SCT	Supreme Commission for Tourism
SDC	Salt Development Cooperation
SWR	Südwestrundfunk
TDA	Tourism Development Authority
TDD	Technical Development Department
TOR	Terms of References
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDP	urban development project
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	US Aid and International Development
WDI	World Development Indicator
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWW	World Wide Web
ZIH	Zara Investment (Holding) Co. Ltd

Chapter 10

Tourism, Heritage, and Urban Transformations in Jordan and Lebanon: Emerging Actors and Global-Local Juxtapositions

RAMI FAROUK DAHER

Introduction

The development of tourism in the Levant or Bilad al Sham in the second half of the 19th century is partially attributed to the business of Thomas Cook and Son who popularized mass tourism to the region (Hunter, 2003: 157). A typical journey from Europe covered Egypt's ancient monuments, the Nile, the holy sites in Palestine and prime locations in major cities such as Beirut, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Sites such as the Temple of Jupiter in Ba'albeck, Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the ruins of Palmyra, and the rose-cut city of Petra were popular sites among tourists.

The definition of heritage of the region was confined to its classical, religious, and ancient monuments during mandate and early statehood periods in the first half of the 20th century. Meanwhile, and according to Maffi (2002: 210–11) Daher (2002), and Schriwer (2002: 197), the heritage of the recent past was marginalized by official state discourses that attempted to disassociate from the recent Ottoman past and local realities and instead to construct legitimacy for the different new emerging state systems (Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon) by creating constructing links with distant origins (e.g. Nabatean in Jordan, Phoenician in Lebanon). It is only recently and through changing state interests and semiotic shifts, but also through new emerging actors and agents, that new sites are being incorporated into the realms of heritage and the tourist. Such sites include most recently the urban heritage of secondary

cities such as for example Tripoli (Trablus) and Sidon (Saida) in Lebanon, but also Salt and Kerak in Jordan. Furthermore the 'city' is being rediscovered as a site of tourism attraction, the urban scene in the region is re-emerging as a place of consumption, play, and entertainment.

This chapter ventures into the epistemology of urban conservation/regeneration of historic cores in different cities of Jordan and Lebanon within the cultural region of Bilad al Sham. Through its various discourse analysis, the research will investigate the nature, scope, and effect of diverse groups of publics, actors, networks, and agencies (international and local) engaged in the definition, production, consumption, and regeneration of 'urban heritage' and its links to place politics, identity construction, and tourism development. The chapter will attempt to reveal the various connections, networks, and discourses operating between those publics, actors, and agencies.

Hall (1996: 155) examines how cities are being packaged and introduced as products for marketing in an age of 'New Urban Tourism,' he investigates how 'although urban centers have long served to attract tourists, it is only in recent years that cities have consciously sought to develop, image and promote themselves in order to increase the influx of tourists.' Within the larger context of the Middle East, which includes the Arabian Gulf states and parts of North Africa, one observes how, whether it was Beirut or Amman, Dubai or Manama, Cairo or Tunis, it is very obvious that cities all over the region are competing for inward business and tourism investments with considerable consequences not only for how these cities are being transformed, or how heritage and urban regeneration is being conceived, but also for how tourism, tourist products, and experiences are taking a central role in this overall transformation.

It is very obvious that tourism and its related development had played a significant role in the transformation and reshaping of cities recently. This chapter sheds light on current socio-economic and cultural/spatial transformations affecting urban centers and historic city cores within the region and identifies several significant emerging phenomena:

- (1) The emergence of several urban regeneration/tourism projects within the region that stems from neo-liberal urban restructuring and circulation of surplus global capital as in the case prime cities of Beirut's Solidere Project in the downtown area and Amman's Abdali Mega Urban Project, which is represented as the 'new downtown for the City'.
- (2) The emerging role of aid agencies and international donors in the regeneration/tourism projects targeting historic urban centers of

secondary cities within the region and circulating a standardized form of heritage and of place in places like Salt, Kerak, Jerash, and Madaba in Jordan, and Tripoli, Byblos (Jbeil), and Tyre (Sour) in Lebanon.

- (3) The emergence of new /old actors and agents in the form of 'notable families' who reintroduce themselves in the region as patrons of culture, heritage, and history. They work to fund and patronize urban regeneration projects, adaptations into cultural tourism facilities and into heritage museums and interpretation centers. Though the impact might be minimal at the moment, in comparison to other agents of change, such families and philanthropists are reintroducing another alternative to the state's formal vision of history and of the past, furthermore, they facilitate different itineraries for tourists and visitors that rest on an informal narration of the past and an emphasis on the 'ordinary,' on the social history and matters of everyday life.

While the first phenomenon centers on the circulation of global capital and networks and city development approaches within prime cities such as Beirut and Amman, the second phenomenon centers on the involvement of donor agencies (mainly the World Bank) and the state in urban regeneration and tourism endeavors in secondary cities in Jordan and Lebanon. In the midst of global flows and circulating donor agencies' interventions emerges local actors and agents in the form of families and philanthropists from the region who attempt to reintroduce and grant voice to an ordinary local heritage and narration of history, thus contributing to a more contextual and involved cultural tourism experience.

The significance of the chapter rests on the fact that it ventures into very contemporary and recent transformations and changes within the region of the Middle East that had stayed predominantly outside the interest of researchers and scholars such as the inseparable relation between tourism and urban change. Observers of the current transformations of the urban scene in the region are likely to conclude that cities are gradually becoming business and tourism spectacles. For example, Reiker (2005) elaborates how there has been over the last decade considerable research and literature that examined neo-liberal urban projects and tourism ventures in metropolitan context in the west, but that 'much less attention has been given to these developments in the region.' Tyler (2000: 287–8) elaborated that urban tourism is about the political management of change and how tourism 'had adopted a central role in the late 20th century' in terms of the choices made concerning the nature of the changes in city form and functions. The following quotation assists in explaining such

urban transformations and change and their links to tourism at a global level:

These changes can be seen in relation to four main concepts which form two axes. First, city administration has had to market their cities in order to seek new inward investment, creating new attractive spaces within the city as part of the process. Taken together with the thesis of the Fantasy City this provides one axis for analyzing these changes in form and function. The second axis relates the contestation of space between stakeholders which leads to capacity issues and debates over the nature of tourism development. (Tyler, 2000: 287–8)

New Urban Restructuring and Emerging Actors and Agents in the Age of Tourism

In order to commence to understand current urban transformations in the region and their links to tourism, one has to reflect on the current urban restructuring, and the role of different actors and agents vis-à-vis such transformations within the region. Actors and agents range from global networks of multi-national cooperation to international donor agencies together with central governmental agencies (such as ministries of tourism) with certain *development* agendas, to philanthropists and local notable families who are also playing a significant role in such urban transformations.

It is fascinating to understand the effect of the circulation of global capital, excessive privatization, rise of new Arab elite, and circulating urban/tourism flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, and through out the Arab region. New emerging urban islands of excessive consumption for the chosen elite where the city is becoming a place to play signifies this neoliberal urban restructuring in places such as downtown Beirut, Abdali in Amman, and in many other places as well.

Furthermore, it is also interesting to analyze and understand the rationales behind the sudden shift to tourism as a main initiator of urban regeneration in the development plans presented by international donor agencies to secondary cities in Jordan and Lebanon such as current projects in Kerak, Salt, Madaba, and Jerash in Jordan and Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre, Ba'albeck, and Byblos in Lebanon. Finally, contrasting the global circulation of capital, of images and of heritage, it is worthy of note to also understand the role played by certain families in the region as patrons of art, culture, and heritage providing a different tourism experience as well.

Prior to embarking on understanding such transformations, it is crucial to put things in perspective and to contextualize such transformations by first understanding the interest of developing governments to invest in tourism, and second understanding the shift in global economic restructuring from modernity to neoliberalism.

Urban De-industrialization Process in the West and the Interest of Developing Governments to Invest in Tourism

More recently, and within the past 20 years or so, it was interesting to note the emergence of several global trends within the different countries of the world. One very important trend is the appeal of heritage tourism to many governments in developing countries in attempts to achieve successful economic restructuring signaling a shift to the service sector in a late capitalist era with consequences on heritage / tourism relationships and privatization dynamics (Chang *et al.*, 1996: 286–99). Robinson (2001: 40) elaborates how

for developing economies whose natural resource base is depleted, tourism would appear to provide a rather rapid way of generating hard currency and creating employment. Indeed, utilizing the cultural and ethnic resources of a nation or region for tourism may be the only way out.

This is not a new phenomenon, it had occurred in developed countries as well. Tourism developments continue to play a major role for developed countries in their attempts to restructure and readjust from a manufacturing to a service-sector base (Robinson, 2001: 40). This is an evident in many ex-industrial and manufacturing small- and medium-size cities shifting their economy to tourism industry and the service sector.

Tiesdell *et al.* (1996: 68) elaborate how many cities in their attempts to revitalize historic urban quarters are 'attempting to attract new activities; a key new activity has been tourism and associated cultural activities.' They added that strategies for tourism or culture-led revitalization 'have encouraged the exploitation of the area's historic legacy for tourist development. Such development has usually meant a partial or extensive diversification or restructuring of the area's economic base.' The literature is full of many examples of cities in the industrial world that had witnessed deindustrialization and a shift to a service-sector economic base.

Robinson (1999: 133–4) elaborates about de-industrialization in UK smaller cities and the shift to a service-sector base saying that 'at its heart, de-industrialization is normally taken to mean the dismantling of

manufacturing industry, particularly, the productive primary and secondary industrial sectors.' This dismantling process was particularly rapid in the 1970s and 1980s and included coal mining, steel production, shipbuilding, engineering, automotive and textile production. Robinson continues to explain that the outcome from the de-industrializing process is a

political, economic and moral agenda to 'regenerate' the de-industrialized urban centers. Paradoxically, this has required a level of intervention which was at odds with the Thatcherite ideologies which contributed to decline. However, it has been an intervention of private capital; private ownership and a planning process which side-stepped traditional democratic politics. (Robinson, 1999: 136–7)

Hall (1996: 155–9) emphasizes the universality of this phenomena and its spread to different cities and water fronts all over the Western World and beyond:

Following the deindustrialization of many industrial and waterfront areas in the 1970s and 1980s, tourism has been perceived as a mechanism to regenerate urban areas through the creation of urban leisure and tourism space. This process appears almost universal in North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. (Hall, 1996: 155–9)

Examples for such a shift are evident in many cities such as Lowell, Massachusetts (Tiesdell *et al.*, 1996: 73) and Manchester, UK (Tiesdell *et al.*, 1996: 80). In some larger cities' historic cores that were associated with steel or milling industries; there is also a major shift to a broader service-sector base centering on entertainment, tourism, and the heritage industries. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, for example, the whole milling district on both sides of the Mississippi in historic downtown Minneapolis (known as the Mills District) is shifting into very creative adaptations of industrial museums, housing in the form of lofts and apartments, and mixed use tourism-oriented and commercial activities (City of Minneapolis Planning Department, 2000). Based on research conducted by the author about urban regeneration in the city,¹ several projects and skillful adaptations emerged in the form of 'festive markets' that contributed to urban regeneration in such previously deteriorated spaces like the 'Mills' and the 'Warehouse' Districts. Fainstein and Judd (1999b: 2) sum up this process of urban transformation by adding that

once cities prospered as places of industrial production, and then in the industrial era they were engines of growth and prosperity. On the

eve of the twenty first century, they are becoming spaces for consumption in a global economy where services provide the impetus for expansion.

Swarbooke (2000: 271) elaborates how in many communities, 'tourism has been adopted as an urban regeneration tool, almost as a last resort' as part of a strategy of desperation when there seems to be little chance of other alternatives to help regenerate the local economy. In the developing world, and with increasing economic problems and mass unemployment, tourism is gradually becoming an attractive sector to invest in because it does not demand huge investments nor does it demands high technology that is not available for most such countries.

In cities of the Middle East, there might have not been a period of de-industrialization like in the West, but it is obvious that governments of these countries are choosing tourism as a main generator of economic growth and prosperity; and in Jordan and Lebanon, the urban heritage of cities is being chosen as the new tourism product. This is manifested not only in donor agencies and governmental ministries' several projects in secondary cities but also in neoliberal restructuring in prime cities as well. As will be explained in the remainder of the chapter, these urban transformations in Jordanian and Lebanese cities are changing the nature of urban experience in a sense where cities are being incorporated into the tourism market, and are becoming a commodity and a place to play, to see and to be seen.

Tourism plays a significant role in the budgets of Jordan and Lebanon. In 1996, the tourism sector provided more than 770 million Jordanian Dinars in revenues amounting to more than 12% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country to the extent that it had been defined as Jordan's number one foreign exchange earner (Daher, 2000: 22). In Jordan, for example, Gray (2002: 325) believes that the main link between economic liberalization programme and tourism in Jordan is that tourism has been used to cushion some of the financial hardships caused by liberalization. It is significant to notice how certain governments in the region such as Syria, Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon are attracted to the 'labor-intensive nature of tourism, and the hard currency that foreign tourists provide for the economy. Further, tourism is not a complex sector to develop and does not usually rely on large injections of capital or expertise' (Gray, 2002: 325).

Lebanon's whole economy was always dependent on tourism, especially inward Arab tourism from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Before the civil war and in the early 1960s and 1970s tourism accounted for over

20% of Lebanon's GDP, making it one of the countries most important economic sectors. Most of the visitors came from the Arab Gulf region but also from the rest of the Arab world enjoying the cool climate in the mountains above Beirut in the summer months.

After the end of the civil war in the late 1980s, the government of Lebanon attempted to regain its position again as the region's most popular tourism destination. Lebanon's success in achieving such a goal is occasionally hampered by political unrest such as the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al Harriri in 2004, which had an adverse impact on the tourism market, and a flourishing market after the war, which the government together with private businesses are becoming gradually very dependent on. In fact, after September 11, the circulation of Saudi and Gulf capital investment, after it was no longer welcomed in the US and Europe, found its way to the Lebanese tourism market in the form of several international chain hotels such as the Movenpick of Beirut, but also the Rotana group of hotels, which is funded by United Arab Emirates (UAE) Emirs and Sheikhs.

Global economic restructuring: From modernity to neoliberalism

Change and transformation is in evidence, over the past century the First and Third World countries alike had witnessed major discursive and structural shifts from modernity to postmodernity to globalization. More recently, we are witnessing further changes and transformations affecting First and Third Worlds alike. Under the rationales of economic liberalization and privatization of the state's enterprises and investments, the world is now part of a neoliberal moment anchored by more conservative politics and excessive economic liberalization and restructuring. Such a moment was manifested in excessive privatization, the withdrawal of the state from welfare programs, the dominance of multi-national corporation politics, and as far as the Third World is concerned, the restructuring of international aid to the Third World in the form of structural adjustments and policy instead of project-oriented aid. This was coupled with the surfacing of several discursive tactics for such a neoliberal transformation such as dominance of the World Trade Organization (WTO), international gatherings such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and several similar other instances of economic restructuring at the global level.

It is evident that such major transformations of course have substantial effects not only on cities and the nature of urban and heritage tourism

emerging, but also further complications on how tourism benefits and revenues are distributed and shared between the different segments of society and across national borders where the First World–Third World divide had been even made more intertwined, complicated, and blurred. Furthermore, such neoliberal economic restructuring will also affect how and for whom such urban tourism spaces emerge and constitute, in many cases, secluded ‘gated communities’ intensifying issues of social equity, inclusion-exclusion, and accountability. Furthermore, and with an increasing competition between cities, they are gradually becoming places of play and commodities themselves. The following quotation from Fainstein and Judd (1999a: 261) illustrates how urban culture is gradually becoming a commodity within such cultural changes from modernity to postmodernity, and from internationalism to globalism with considerable effects on urban tourism:

Tourism has been a central component of the economic, social, and cultural shift that has left its imprint on the world system of cities in the past two decades. Theorists have variously termed it formational mode of development, from modernism to radical modernism, from modernity to postmodernity, and from internationalism to globalism. In spite of considerable debate over the newness of the tendencies revealed and the extensiveness of the changes, there does seem to be a degree of consensus that the present epoch involves a different, more flexible organization of production, higher mobility of both capital and people, heightened competition among places, and greater social and cultural fragmentation. Within the city the unity previously imposed by a manufacturing-driven economy has disappeared, and urban culture itself has become a commodity.

Prime Capitals and Neoliberal Urban Restructuring

The chapter aims to understand the effect of the circulation of global capital, privatization, the rise of new Arab elite, and circulating urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, all over the Arab Gulf states, and throughout the Arab region. New emerging urban islands of consumption for the elite signifies this neoliberal urban restructuring in places such as downtown Beirut and Abdali in Amman, Dreamland in Cairo (Adham, 2005), the Financial District in Manama and even in the heart of the Holy City of Mecca through the Jabal Omar Project.²

Middle Eastern cities compete for international business and tourism

Cities across the Middle East are currently competing with one another in order to attract international investments, businesses, and tourism developments. Cities are 'obliged' to create the right milieu, competitive business climate, and first-class tourism facilities in order to attract people to come live, invest, and be entertained. Developments in Dubai and the current urban reconstruction for the Beirut downtown area (the Solidere Project) are becoming the models to follow in such developments. Dubai had about 4.8 million visitors in 2003 in tourism through its entertainment, business, and sport tourism, and is planning to add another 100 hotels within the next five to seven years (Sadiq, 2005).

It has been estimated that the Gulf Cooperation Council has around US\$80 billion in liquidity expected to be spent in real-estate, international business, and tourism investments within the next five years and especially in countries such as the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. This vast amount of money, which before September 11 used to be invested primarily in the US and Europe, will attempt to find new markets in the region, and of course part of it had already found way into Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian³ markets through multi-national hotel and real-estate investments (Sadiq, 2005).

Hall (1996: 155–7) has commented how city centers are shifting to leisure and tourism in many parts of the world. He has noted that the 'primary justification for the redevelopment of inner city areas for tourism is the perceived economic benefits of tourism.' The urban core is increasingly looked upon as a recreational environment and as a tourism resource, with one of the purposes to 'attract and retain the interest of professionals and white-collar workers, particularly in "clean" service industries such as tourism and communications' (Hall, 1996: 155–6). According to Harvey (cited in Hall, 1996: 158), imaging a city through the organization of spectacular urban space is a mechanism attracting capital and people (of the right sort), in a period of intense inter-urban competition and urban entrepreneurialism.

Competition between cities in the region of the Middle East is likely to have an effect not only on the nature of urban tourism developments, but also the type of clientele such tourism developments attract, and complexity of the investment, especially in an age where neoliberal urban restructuring and excessive capital accumulation by multi-national cooperation are the norm.

Neoliberal urban restructuring and first-class tourism development: Beirut's Solidere and Amman's Abdali projects

This section of the chapter focuses on formal discursive shifts in the creation of 'public' urban space/tourism investments orchestrated by partnerships between multi-national corporations and the state through the establishment of newly regulating bodies (such as Solidere⁴ in Beirut and Mawared⁵ in Amman) within the last 10 years. Several of these *neoliberal* corporate visions, blessed by the state's public discursive shift concentrating on economic prosperity and encouraging international investment in the country, are leading to urban geographies of inequality and exclusion, and spatial and social displacement of *second-class* citizens, functions, histories, and itineraries in favor of *first-class* tourism developments and real-estate ventures. In this section of the chapter, the author will attempt to compare and contrast each of these two cases in an attempt to understand the nature of such urban transformations in the different contexts of the region (Beirut and Amman). Therefore, the author will be oscillating between the two cases, rather than presenting each separately, in order to reflect on such similarities and differences between the two contexts.

The Solidere Beirut downtown reconstruction project was presented to the public as the main post-war reconstruction effort, and has been critiqued as simply being a real-estate development project where the history and heritage are simply themes incorporated through *Disneyfied* pastiche representations (Figure 10.1). The project also includes the *preservation* of older buildings and urban spaces from the traditional Lebanese and French mandate periods (Khalaf, 1998; Summer, 2005). This reconstruction is creating a collaged urban morphology that is designed for consumption by tourists and the Lebanese people alike.

The Solidere Model for neoliberal urban restructuring became the adopted approach within the region. Not only was copied in Amman through the Abdali Project, but also there are plans to transform it to other places within the region as well. This neoliberalization in the creation of public urban space circulates urban images, spectacles, and models and is gradually creating *generic* realities out of cities and is leading into the dilution of local differences and the circulation of 'corporate' urban realities and images.

In Jordan, formal state discursive shifts are gradually moving away from regional politics (e.g. emphasis on Arab nationalism and unity) and elaborate social agendas (e.g. agriculture, health care, education) into



Figure 10.1 The Saifi village is part of the reconstruction efforts in downtown Beirut after the civil war, known as the Solidere Project. The Saifi Village is an up-scale adaptation of existing historic fabric into chic and expensive apartments that are becoming very popular amongst tourists from Saudi Arabia and from rich Arab Gulf states. The police in the picture are not city police, but rather security guards to provide a certain feeling of exclusiveness for this 'gated community' in the center of the city.

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (2005).

adopting neoliberal agendas of privatization and a rentier state where most vital assets and sectors had been rented or sold to the outside (e.g. water, telecommunication, power). Such formal semiotic shifts are also manifested in the creation of new 'public' urban space/investments orchestrated by partnerships between multi-national corporations and the state through the establishment of newly regulating bodies in Amman within the last 10 years. The Abdali Project represents a clear realization of such neoliberal urban restructuring efforts and is facilitated by the state's Socio-Economic Transformation Program. Blessed by the 'state's' public discursive shift concentrating on economic prosperity and encouraging international investment in the country, and by turning its back on Amman's original downtown, which is only about 1.5 kilometers away from the Abdali site, the Abdali Project is anticipated to lead to urban geographies of inequality and exclusion and spatial and social displacement of *second-class* citizens, functions, histories, and itineraries in favor of *first-class* tourism developments and real-estate ventures.

This neoliberal urban restructuring phenomenon is not new to the world. Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002: 542–3) elaborated how, and based on a study that incorporated 13 large-scale recent urban development projects in Europe, most of these projects

accentuate socioeconomic polarization through the working of real-estate markets (price rates and displacement of social or low-income housing), changes in the priorities of the public budget that are increasingly redirected from social objectives to investments in the built environment and the restructuring of the labor market.

In Amman and Beirut, the effect of such socio-economic transformation on the creation of new public urban space produces 'a privatized public space' based on a highly selective definition of the public, thus triggering a new critical investigation of the meaning of public/private and inclusion/exclusion. Furthermore, and in Beirut, the Urban Development Corporation System (Solidere) worked to annex different parts of the downtown area to the Beirut Central District (BCD) and demarcated the BCD from its periphery (Saliba, 1997b).

Amman's *Abdali*, modeled after Solidere, in fact enjoys some of the same investors, and is promoted by Mawared's brochures, website, short video, and other promotional materials as the 'New Downtown for Amman' (Figure 10.2). New introduced functions include the American University of Amman, an IT Park, medical tourism, and different high-end commercial activities, in addition to a newly created civic 'secular' plaza bounded by the State Mosque, the parliament, and the law courts.



Figure 10.2 Billboard at Abdali, Amman's major neoliberal urban restructuring site. These images represent an *Oriental vision of the Occident* and are the only interface and source of information about the project between the multi-national real-estate companies financing such urban restructuring endeavors and the public at large.

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (2004).

This represents a symbolic replacement of the existing historic downtown and the current civic/urban symbols (e.g. the Historic Husseini Mosque and specialty Ammani markets). This will intensify the socio-economic and spatial polarization not only between East and West Amman, but also between this new 'elitist urban island' and the rest of the city.

In Beirut, the Solidere Project eradicated the whole concept of property rights, divorcing the city from its social memory where it no longer became a 'downtown' where business takes place and people of different social backgrounds go shopping. The compensation and consolation for ex-owners of land and property take the form of 'shares' in this newly erected multi-national cooperation 'Solidere.' In the case of Amman, the

Abdali Project will also culminate in the displacement of the nearby existing Abdali transportation terminal, together with its drivers, informal vendors, and occupants, to the outskirts of Amman away from the center of the city. The project will also definitely present fierce competition to the existing downtown that is gradually disintegrating and is already suffering from a lack of economic vitality. This is reinforced through a combination of physical, social, and cultural boundary formation processes. Furthermore, Hall (1996: 159) elaborates how the 'creation of a "bourgeois playground" in the name of economic progress may create considerable tension in the urban policy-making environment.'

After a clear observation and critical analysis of the details of the investments in Beirut and Amman, one easily realizes that the bottom line is that the state is subsidizing large-scale investment for the business elite of the region to create such flagship or mega projects of urban restructuring. Contrary to formal state discourse, which advocates an absent state in such neoliberal privatization efforts, it is very clear that in urban restructuring projects, the 'state' is not absent, but is 'there' heavily involved and there to stay. Yet, regardless of the similarities in these two mega urban projects in Amman and Beirut, forms of such subsidies differ based on each context.

In Beirut for example, the financial contribution of the state is considerable. On the one hand, it cannot cash any possible tax revenues from the development for the first 10 years. On the other hand, and most importantly, it has to compensate the private developer for the infrastructure works by allocating it 600,000 sq. m of land reclaimed from the sea, which are allowed to be developed at very high densities (Summer, 2005). In Amman, prime urban land made available for investment forms a greater part of the subsidy, but other forms of the subsidy also include taxes exemption, infrastructure provision, and elimination of all barriers and red tape in addition to special building regulations made possible for this particular development.

It is also important to compare the two cases in terms of the nature and details of the shareholding setup. In Beirut, for example, Solidere's capital initially valued at US\$1.82 billion when first issued consisted of two different types of shares:

- type A shares issued to holders of expropriated property in the downtown area relative to the value of the expropriated property; and
- type B shares (with an initial stock offer of US\$100 per share) issued to external investors.

Solidere's own rhetoric sugar-coats the type A shares and rationalizes their facilitation by stating that 'most lots in the Beirut Central District are owned by tens, hundreds and in some instances (the *Sūq* areas) thousands of people.' Therefore, the type A shares are being presented as the only 'just' solution for such a dilemma. Furthermore, it has been stated that 'through this approach, the property right holders would *relinquish* their rights in exchange for shares in the company while investors would provide the required capital in exchange for shares in order to finance the project' (Kabbani, 1997). Maha Yahya (2005) on the other hand elaborated on the process of 'emptying of the Center' in Beirut and how the 4000 previous residents never came back. The emptying of the center is already exerting negative consequences not only on the ownership patterns, the city's social memory, but also the overall urban experience for users and tourists alike.

In Amman's Abdali, the Abdali Investment Company (AIC) has been created and is composed of the main investors: Mawared and Saudi Oger⁶ only. As a private real-estate developer, it is responsible for implementing the project, and is in charge of the management and the master planning of the project (similar to Solidere in Beirut). But the shareholder set-up in Abdali is very different. The two main stakeholders in the company are Mawared and Saudi Oger, no other company or individual is allowed to buy shares (Summer, 2005).

Regardless of the similarities between the two projects, they are different in terms of details of the investment as mentioned earlier and also in terms of the levels of public contestations. In Beirut, for example, the nature of critical debates engages a wider sector of non governmental organizations (NGOs) and critical actors, debates center on anti-globalization and commodification of the historic and built environment (an active civil society rooted in not only in technical matters but also in business and financial administration). There have been critical debates on the many places constructed during the post-war boom, which have become simply places of consumption, thus leveling the local differences and positive distinctions that might have otherwise emerged during the reconstruction process. Many actors and critical thinkers are attempting to counteract bland consumerism and commercialization in Beirut's post-war construction.

But again, this is limited to only isolated critical voices more recently. In fact, there have been several revisions for the Solidere plan for downtown Beirut reconstruction until the final version was approved. For example, one can witness the merger between old mentors such as senior

architects and urbanists who had taken part in pre-war construction on one hand and a young generation of critical thinkers on the other. Such critical public groups together with different NGOs (e.g. Association for the Protection of Sites and Ancient Dwellings (APSAD) and the revived Order of Engineers and Architects) have been very active in launching campaigns to disclose the shortcomings of the different post-war reconstruction projects and schemes (Rowe, 1998: 135–9; Khalaf, 1998: 140–5). Also, in Beirut, the level, intensity, and sophistication of the ‘publication’ efforts on the Solidere Project and even other neoliberal urban restructuring endeavors is to be noted.

In Amman, critical debates are more sporadic, concentrating on ‘technical’ matters of investment and heritage developments. In addition, and in many contexts, there is a huge overlap between the state and the public sphere represented by its various civil institutions and NGOs (which might form communication structures facilitating critical public debate). In Jordan, the border-lines between the state and civil society are very blurred. In Jordan, for example, many NGOs receive state funding or engage in state-run projects, others are very much linked to the Royal Family who patronize such civic institutions that are seen as extensions of the state where the concept of resistance becomes impossible or very difficult. The border-lines between the state and civil society are very blurred where the concept of critical resistance becomes very difficult to emerge. Publications remain very scarce, if any.

It is interesting to notice, that regardless of the similarities between the Beirut and Amman projects, how each of the projects takes shape within a completely different local context and is consequently reshaped by it. El-Sheshtawy (2004: 18–19) confirms that while certain processes in globalization may seem to come from outside (e.g. multi-national corporations and the setting up of regional headquarters), yet, these are processes that are activated from the inside by local actors. Furthermore, Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002: 545) elaborate how such neoliberal urban restructuring projects are incorporated in localized settings, hence the term ‘glocalization.’

Swarbrooke (2000: 275) elaborates how in certain developed countries such as the UK, for example, one can find public contestation against the use of public resources (funds, subsidies) to support such flagship projects and tourism developments. The reasons for contestation are because it is thought that it would be ‘wrong for poor communities to, in effect, offer subsidies, to wealthy private companies’ and that ‘the money invested in tourism could be devoted to more valuable causes. It is often suggested

that in depressed urban areas it is the social infrastructure – health, education, and housing – that should be the priority for the allocation of public funds’ (Swarbrooke, 2000: 275).⁷

It is very important to understand local/global relationships vis-à-vis latent processes of urban inclusion/exclusion and power mechanisms embedded in such ‘urban restructuring’ projects and corporate visions in Middle Eastern cities and locales such as Beirut and Amman. Therefore, it is also important to understand the effects of such socio-economic transformation on the creation of new public urban tourist space in such cities producing ‘a privatized public space’ based on a highly selective definition of the public (Crawford, 1995), thus triggering a new critical investigation of the meaning of public/private and inclusion/exclusion (Anderson, 1995). The Solidere Project is producing ‘gated communities’ that are isolated from the rest of the city’s participants and that are facilitated by this privatization of planning.

This notion of ‘Island Planning,’ where certain urban development projects (UDP) turn their back on adjoining districts and areas, becomes a contested reality that deserves further attention and contemplation. For example, the issue of reconnecting BCD to its periphery is a pre-occupation of planners and urban designers (Saliba, 1997a). Referred to by Sassen (cited in El-Sheshtawy, 2004: 18) as the ‘Quartering of Urban Space,’ the same problem is expected to appear in Abdali, the result will be a ‘fragmented City,’ a ‘patchwork of discrete spaces with increasingly sharp boundaries (gated business centers, leisure, tourism, or community spaces).’ Fainstein and Judd (1999b: 9) have added that

carefully bounded districts have been set aside as tourist bubbles’ isolated from surrounding areas of decay. Within these districts, historic and architecturally significant structures are integrated with new generation of tourist facilities that, instead of evoking images of an urban golden age, are quite contemporary.

Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002: 542) elaborate how

large-scale urban development projects have increasingly been used as a vehicle to establish exceptionality measures in planning and policy procedures. This is part of a neo-liberal ‘New Urban Policy’ approach and its selective ‘middle and upper-middle class’ democracy. It is associated with new forms of ‘governing’ urban interventions, characterized by less democratic and more elite-driven priorities.

AlSayyad (2001: 14) refers to the 'transfer of design and political control from local governments and citizens to large corporations and the design professionals they hire.' In Amman, and based on interviews conducted at the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), many felt that Mawared has been created to take on the role of GAM in such sensitive projects. While previously, GAM responsibilities covered what Mawared is doing now. In both cases in Beirut and in Amman, it is interesting to notice the transfer of power to and the emergence of new regulating bodies replacing state institutions such as Mawared and Solidere.

In the cases of Beirut and Amman, underneath the rhetoric of Mawared or Solidere lies a public (state) subsidy for private real-estate development for very selective urban business regional elites from Lebanon, Jordan, and the Gulf. This conservative liberalism, according to Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002: 547):

seeks to reorient state interventions away from monopoly market regulation and towards marshaling state resources into the social, physical, and geographical infra-and superstructures that support, finance, subsidize, or otherwise promote new forms of capital accumulation by providing the relatively fixed territorial structures that permit the accelerated circulation of capital and the relatively unhindered operation of market forces. At the same time, the state withdraws to a greater or lesser extent from socially inclusive blanket distribution-based policies and from Keynesian demand-led interventions and replaces them with spatially targeted social policies and indirect promotion of entrepreneurship, particularly via selective deregulation, stripping away red tape, and investment 'partnership'. (Swyngedouw *et al.*, 2002: 547)

Solidere's Project in Beirut is booming with tourists, especially at night, eating and drinking in its different diverse restaurants and coffee shops, tourists and local residents come to the downtown to see and to be seen, but one has to ask the question if this is the place for businesses and where the regular Beirutis go shopping or rent offices as the whole place is geared and targeting the very rich or the affluent tourist (e.g. Arab tourists from the Gulf or Saudi Arabia). One taxi driver once commented that the new downtown after the Solidere intervention is longer for the Beirutis, he longed for a time when one could really go shopping downtown or have a decent meal or even drink a cup of coffee. As a tourism space, yes, it is packed with people, but social interaction is limited confined and iconographic. The urban sense at Beirut is turning into a commodity, the

downtown is transforming from a real downtown to a, and borrowing from Tyler (2000: 292–3), ‘playful spectacle.’ Fainstein and Gladstone (1999: 27) elaborate how ‘since the tourist experience is contrived, staged authenticity replaces the genuine. At their most extreme, tourist destinations become wholly de-attached from their social context.’

In Amman’s Abdali, while it is too early to judge the project as it is still under construction, similar tourists experiences are anticipated where the urban experience will be commodified and packaged in front of a passing audience. The Abdali Project has been promoted as a site for not only civic activities, educational, and medical tourism, but also as a high-end tourist destination in the form of boutique shopping and residential activities with ‘a prestigious address living “above” the city’ as indicated by one of the promoters of the project. One feature of the project would be the ‘Ammani Street,’ which is a modern shopping street modeled on Ammani urban heritage architecture in the downtown area. This pastiche replica would reduce the complexity of the real downtown experience with its details, years of evolution, and special dynamic into one *Disneyfied* moment with its kitsch postmodern fake building façades, yet chic, well-proportioned, and pretentious corporate architecture.

It is very obvious that tourism plays a major role in both case studies presented before where a staged rather than a lived city is continuously situating itself as a spectacle for tourism investments and entertainment. Cities in the region are competing for inward business and tourism investments. Mawared and Solidere are producing millions of dollars worth of billboards, short videos, websites, TV and newspaper ads with high-quality graphics and design to market and sell the cities and their new projects. Tyler (2000: 292–3) talks about the creation of the ‘Fantasy City,’ where the city turns into a ‘playful spectacle’ and elaborates on city marketing where he sees it as a reaction to economic change – a method of promoting inward investment by marketing, undertaking physical change, and image recreation:

A major element of this process was to demonstrate to potential investors that your city was a good place to locate because of both business and lifestyle advantages. In creating the image to attract investors often city centers and waterfronts were changed out of all recognition and in some cases local communities were socially and economically excluded from the newly created tourist bubbles. City marketing, however, was essentially a boosterist approach to redevelopment believing that all investment was good investment as it created jobs

and, therefore wealth. However, as city marketing became an ever-more competitive process it evolved into a more complex movement incorporating public-private partnerships, embracing the consumer driven middle classes and youth markets of city regions and creating not just tourist bubbles but entertainment and cultural quarters in existing city spaces that appealed to those willing or able to spend money on leisure activities, but excluded those who could not. (Tyler, 2000: 292–3)

Secondary Cities and Donor Agencies' Urban Regeneration/Tourism Recipes

Jordan and Lebanon, and other countries in the region have received international funding from the World Bank and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to boost their national tourism strategies and development in the form of tourism and urban regeneration in secondary cities and smaller towns. Such international aid was in support of several tourism/urban regeneration projects in different cities such as Tripoli, Tyre, Ba'albeck, Sidon, and Byblos in Lebanon, and Kerak, Salt, Jerash, Amman, and Madaba in Jordan. Several of these donor agencies' projects centered on improving the tourism sector in each country.

Furthermore, the cultural urban heritage of smaller towns is starting to be the focus of such projects shifting the usual stereotypical, 'orientalist,' and later on nationalist approaches, from tourism that concentrated previously on classical and ancient ruins, biblical sites, and high-class architecture in prime 'traditional' cities such as Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem to tourism where the heritage of smaller towns and the local history and culture have become incorporated into the tourism industry. It is interesting to notice how smaller towns in the *region* are attempting to diversify their economic base by locating their cultural and localized distinctive heritage as part of the objects of the tourist gaze. This is somehow gradually changing the nature of the tourism product and experience in the region.

International aid in the neoliberal age

It is important to link such socio-economic agendas and transformations and this notion of privatized planning within the city (such as the Abdali or Solidere Projects) with other neoliberal urban restructuring in the region (e.g. provision of Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs), privatization

of vital sectors such as water, telecommunications, and privatization of even tourism/heritage sector orchestrated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the blessing of the state in Jordan and Lebanon and to a certain extent within the region of the Middle East. Brenner and Theodore (2002) elaborate how in many countries of the world, the World Bank and the IMF were subsequently 'transformed into the agents of a transnational neo-liberalism and were mobilized to institutionalize this extension of market forces and commodification in the Third World through various structural adjustment and fiscal austerity programs.'

Mosley and Toye (1988) presented a critical and interesting critique of World Bank and IMF lending policies to Third World governments in general and conditional program lending in particular. They pointed to the lending trends enforced and adopted, since the beginnings of the 1980s, by the World Bank and other international development agencies. Such agencies had invested a large proportion of its resources in 'conditional program lending,' that is, in finance designed to underpin not a project but a cluster of policy changes.

In the Bank's case such finance is known as Structural Adjustment Lending (SALs) if it applies to the entire economy, and by a variety of labels (e.g. 'sectoral adjustment lending,' 'economic recovery program,' 'expert rehabilitation loan') if it applies only to a part of it. (Mosley & Toye, 1988: 395–6)

Sharpley (2000: 5) stated that within a global economy the lending policies of the World Bank and the IMF after the 1980s (during the Reagan–Thatcher era) followed neo-classical economic paradigms that adhered to the fact that

liberalized international trade can be a positive force in 'export-led economic development.' Reliance on the free market economy was promoted and lending conditions, through *Structural Adjustments Programs*, included mechanisms to facilitate this reliance such as the privatization of state enterprises and overall reduction of state intervention. . . . In particular, it has guided the policy of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and their Structural Adjustment Lending (SAL) programs, which render loan facilities conditional on specific policy and economic structure changes in loan-receiving countries. However, such policies have attracted widespread criticism both in a general development context and in specific context of tourism. (Sharpley, 2000: 5)

The international response to the debt crises was structural adjustments that were imposed from First World countries. Structural Adjustments Programs singled a shift from project-based aid to policy-based aid. This 'liberal' rhetoric in foreign aid policies promoted liberalization policies within the governments of the Third World that took the form of liberalization and privatization of governmental agencies to facilitate control and exploitation. The responsibility of the state was to find a buyer (mostly foreign) of its enterprises and various operations including investment rights in tourism and other sectors of development. Gradually, a new form of government is emerging, one that is unaccountable, uninvolved, and faceless.

The loss of national economic control has been accompanied by a growing concentration of power without accountability in international institutions like the IMF and the WB [World Bank], and GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. For poor countries, foreign control has been formalized in structural adjustments programs, but IMF decisions and GATT rules affect all countries. (Brecher & Costello, 1998: 31)

As we will see in the next section, international aid to countries such as Jordan and Lebanon concentrated on restructuring of national policies to encourage a shift to excessive and uncontrolled privatization. Tourism development, and drafting of national tourism policies received a considerable chunk of international aid, donor agencies that were involved in such projects included the World Bank, JICA, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and US Aid and International Development (USAID).

In the case of Jordan, for example, in 1999, the IMF has approved credits totaling US\$220 million for Jordan in support of the nation's 'economic adjustment' and 'structural reform program' for the period 1991–2001. Of the total US\$220 million, about US\$174 million is available under a three-year Extended Fund Facility⁸ (IMF External Relations Department, 2001). A major portion of that fund is allocated to tourism through several World Bank-funded projects. The amount allocated to tourism is in the range of US\$40 million, but this total is continuously increasing. The scope started with the First and Second Tourism Priority Projects, which addressed urban development and tourism in cities such as Kerak, Jerash, and Salt, but now the Third Tourism Priority Project is underway targeting the same cities but also Ajloun and Madaba as well. A recent (October 2005) meeting with members of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

(Technical Development Department (TDD) personnel) provided information about a new World Bank project where urban tourism is the focus: the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Urban Development Project (CHTUD) funded by a Japanese grant through the World Bank. The CHTUD Project addresses urban architecture and tourism in selected areas within the historic cores of Kerak, Salt, and Madaba.⁹

In the case of Lebanon, the government received in October 2003 an amount of US\$31.5 million from the World Bank and French and Italian governments to be spent on the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Project (CHTD). The project was later on renamed Cultural Heritage and Urban Development (CHUD) as will be explained later on in this chapter. The project was defined as having a major urban tourism component and its objectives were to preserve the urban cultural heritage of the selected historic city centers, encourage private sector-driven development, archaeological sites conservation and management, and support tourism facilities in the historic cores of Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre, Byblos, and Ba'albeck. The project is administered by the World Bank and a host country implementing agency, which is the Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) and the different municipalities of each town.¹⁰

Tourism as a preoccupation of donor agencies: Tourism/urban regeneration juxtapositions in the 1990s

The 1990s in Jordan were typified by several significant global, national, and regional events characterizing the transition from the 20th to the 21st centuries. One major event was the peace process with Israel, which affected the nature and types of developments proposed by international donor agencies and adopted by national policy makers. In addition, during the 1990s, conditional aid to Jordan concentrated on neoliberalization of different sectors of development that took the form of privatization and the opening up of Jordanian markets to global businesses. One of the main tracks for development that was emphasized by the World Bank was for Jordan to invest in, develop, and promote its tourism sector, and cultural heritage in general, and the urban heritage of Jordanian cities in particular, and for the first time in Jordan, was identified as one of the main assets for the generation of such development. Joffe (2002: xvi) stated that:

In the context of 1994 peace treaty, tourism was seen as key to the promotion of open borders and economic cooperation that would

both strengthen peace and produce prosperity. There was, indeed, a short-term boom that, in turn, led the Jordanian state to encourage major investment in the sector. However, the necessary management skills were lacking and the centralized direction of the expansion of tourist facilities undermined initiatives towards integration with regional and global tourism strategies.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan (MOTA)¹¹ elaborated that this interest in the urban cultural heritage really started after the peace process in 1994, and is supported by international donor agencies taking into consideration that the topic of 'cultural heritage' is a preoccupation of the international community (e.g. World Bank, JICA). In addition, several other donor agencies, and in cooperation with the World Bank and the IMF saw in tourism and in the promotion of tourism development a venue and an opportunity not only to promote regional collaboration and stability but also liberalization of development and investments.¹²

In Lebanon, and after the end of the civil war at the beginning of the 1990s, Lebanon witnessed a remarkable post-war reconstruction boom, and the reconstruction of the severely war-damaged historic city center (the Solidere Project) became the symbol for Lebanon's new age after the war (Rowe, 1998: 135–9). In Lebanon, and in addition to this neoliberal urban restructuring in prime cities such as Beirut, the World Bank had started in 2003 to initiate, as mentioned earlier, a series of several heritage management plans and urban tourism development schemes for secondary cities and smaller towns such as Tripoli, Ba'albeck, Sidon, Tyre, and Byblos.

The International Tourism Development Institute of Japan, and through international funding from JICA, had been involved in tourism development plans and implementation strategies in different places from Jordan (e.g. the Tourism Development Plan for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of 1996) and Lebanon (e.g. Tourism Sector Review by International Tourism Development Institute of Japan).¹³ The production of such knowledge in the form of national tourism strategies, tourism development plans, or site management plans for certain areas or zones, had certainly put tourism as a priority on national agendas. The preoccupation of such international donor agencies' research facilitated the surfacing of different 'urban regeneration/heritage tourism' developments in places such as Amman, Salt, and Kerak in Jordan, or Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre, Byblos, and Ba'albeck in Lebanon orchestrated and funded by international donor agencies, primarily the World Bank and JICA.

In Jordan, these various projects were seen by Maffi (2002) in the frame of a 'wider plan aimed at developing international tourism in Jordan' and not so much leading to a local sustainable effort of urban regeneration and conservation of the urban heritage of the country (Maffi, 2002: 208). Tourism and tourism development had been presented to the Jordanian public by the state as one of the main 'peace rewards' anticipated to left up and nourish the Jordanian economy. Michael Lynch (1999) argues that economic rewards caused by tourism developments and waiting to be reaped by investors were more of a public sphere justification strategy or an official justification tactic than a major cause of the peace process. In reality, while it is true that tourism development in the wake of peace 'offered opportunities for some entrepreneurs in Jordan; tourism development has been difficult to sustain in the context of an increasingly complex global tourism economy without adequate public and private institutions for its promotion' (Hazbun, 2002: 331).

Driven by unwarranted optimism and the political imperative of over-promoting tourism development as a means to capture the economic rewards of peace, state agencies and state plans lacked an accurate vision of what the tourism economy would look like from the vantage point of the individual private firms in the tourism sector. (Hazbun, 2002: 340)

Swift urban heritage donor recipes: Cosmetics urban regeneration

It is interesting to compare the scope, objectives, and details of donor agencies' projects of urban regeneration and tourism development between 1999 and 2005. Based on the analysis of the Terms of References (TOR) given for these projects, analysis reveal how similar these projects are in terms of their scope, component, rhetoric, tendering procedures, and even place details. In almost all of the projects, the TOR covers issues of physical and functional accessibility to the site (e.g. tourist trails, public spaces), improvement of infrastructure and quality of services, rehabilitation of the urban environment, community participation, and institutional capacity building at the level of municipalities. Many of these components have not been implemented, particularly the ones related to the rehabilitation and conservation of the built environment, community participation, and capacity building.

One of these projects, that was an outcome of the JICA study, was the Urban Heritage/Tourism Development Projects in the cities of Salt

(Historic Old Salt Development), Amman (Amman Downtown Tourist Zone), and Kerak (Kerak Tourism Development). The project in Salt centered on the following components: Historic Old Salt Museum (The Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber), tourist trails and steps, open plazas, panoramic lookouts, and training for tourist services. The project in Amman centered on similar components: The National Museum, tourist trails and steps, open plazas, panoramic lookouts, and training for tourist services. It is interesting to find out if such projects (see Table 10.1) emerged out of a conscious motivation and ‘practice’ or urban conservation/regeneration institutionalized in local and governmental

Table 10.1 Components and scope of work for the JICA-funded Urban Heritage/Tourism Development Project

<i>Project</i>	<i>Components and scope</i>	<i>Clients and agencies</i>
Historic Old Salt Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historic Old Salt Museum (The Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber) 2. Tourist trails and steps 3. Open plazas 4. Panoramic lookouts 5. Training for tourist services 	MOTA, Greater Salt Municipality (GSM), Salt Development Cooperation (SDC).
Amman Downtown Tourist Zone and the National Museum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Museum 2. Tourist street 3. Tourist trails 4. Raghdan Bus Terminal 5. Downtown Visitor Center 6. Training for tourist services 	MOTA, Greater Amman Municipality (GAM)
Kerak Tourism Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kerak Castle Presentation 2. Tourist Street 3. Castle Observation Points 4. Visitor Center 5. Training for Tourism Services 	MOTA, Kerak Municipality (KM), Kerak Development Cooperation (KDC)
Dead Sea Parkway and Dead Sea Panoramic Complex	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Road construction. 2. Tourist facilities 3. Dead Sea Museum/lookout 4. Training for tourism services 	MOTA, Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH), Jordan Valley Authority (JVA)

policies, or if they simply emerged as 'shock treatments' with negligible outcomes and low levels of sustainability (Daher, 2005: 301–2).

Once one attempts to understand the various components and the nature of the end product of such projects in Amman and in Salt (Figure 10.3), it is obvious that they mainly concentrate on physical aspects of urban regeneration (e.g. tourist trails, pedestrianization of public plazas, and an adaptation of an old house into a heritage museum, tourist panoramic lookouts, streetscapes, and signage). The intervention in the public urban space centers on stone pavements for plazas, streets, or steps, outdoor furniture and lighting, and signage. Eventually, this is a one-time limited intervention in the form of *architectural cosmetic* on the historic urban tissue of the city without serious attempts to address the establishment of heritage tools, systems, or practices that insure the continuity of urban regeneration and community involvement in the long run.



Figure 10.3 The old core of the historic city of Salt, Jordan. This city is in the process of undergoing schemes for urban regeneration and tourism development funded by donor agencies (JICA and the World Bank).

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (2000).

A new World Bank project where urban tourism is also the focus is the CHTUD funded by a Japanese grant through the World Bank. The CHTUD Project addresses urban architecture and tourism in selected areas within the historic cores of Kerak, Salt, and Madaba as mentioned earlier. Again, the focus is primarily on physical aspects of urban regeneration and tourism development such as upgrading and improving street networks and public spaces, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and traffic and parking improvements. Yet, the project, and based on its TOR, attempts to address city center zoning and building regulations. Issues such as capacity building, building communities, helping communities to invest in tourism or other non-physical interventions are not likely to be addressed. The project calls upon eligible engineering firms to apply for the bid.

Inam (2002: 35) has elaborated how in several urban regeneration projects and heritage conservation endeavors in urban settings, the practice is manipulated by architects, engineers, and urban planners more than any other experts (such as urban sociologists and anthropologists), therefore, such a practice is 'obsessed with impressions and aesthetics of physical form; and it is practiced as an extension of architecture, which often implies an exaggerated emphasis on the end product.' Urban regeneration is as much about community building as much as it is about physical place enhancement, which these networks of projects are not succeeding in achieving.

The situation in Lebanon is a little different, but it still shares a lot of similarities with Jordan. In Lebanon, the World Bank had provided funding in the amount of US\$31 million for the CHUD Project. The amount is almost similar to the one allocated for Jordan for the same group of projects. Other international donors were Agence Francaise de Development, the French government, and the Italian government. The objective was to protect, rehabilitate, and revitalize the historical and cultural heritage resources of five selected peripheral cities: Ba'albeck, Tripoli, Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon. It is interesting to note that the original name of the CHUD Project that was given to it by the World Bank was Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development (CHTD) when it was first initiated as a partnership between the World Bank and CDR. The name was then shifted to CHUD where the U refers to Urban, as some of the local consultants felt that the project needed to concentrate more on the problems of these urban historic cores rather than simply address tourism (World Bank & CDR, 2002). It is very early to judge whether the scope of the project had shifted as the name indicated as the many projects are still being implemented. Table 10.2 indicates the total amounts, including contingencies, in millions of US\$ allocated for each of the five cities.

Table 10.2 The total amounts and contingencies for the rehabilitation of each of the five historic city centers and urban infrastructure improvements

<i>Rehabilitation of historic city centers and urban infrastructure improvements (WB/CDR CHUD Project)</i>	<i>Total estimated cost in millions of US\$ (including contingencies)</i>
Ba'albeck	9.149
Byblos	3.079
Sidon	3.647
Tripoli	19.286
Tyre	7.433
Total	42.594

Source: WB and CDR (2002)

As indicated by a key official from the Lebanese CDR (Itani, 2005),

the project has two key development objectives: a) to create the conditions for increased local economic development and enhanced quality of life in the historic centers of these five cities; and b) to improve the conservation and management of Lebanon's built cultural heritage.

Based on 2002 Summary Progress Report for the project (WB & CDR, 2002: 1), the CHUD Project 'presents, for the first time, a strategic approach to protect, preserve, enhance, and better present the country cultural heritage, both as a focus of national identity and pride, and as a unique magnet for the cultural tourism industry.'

In February of 2002, an open workshop was held in Tripoli to discuss such urban regeneration/tourism development projects in Lebanon and Tripoli specifically. The meeting was attended by representatives of NGOs, anthropologists, academicians, and specialists and experts who worked with the World Bank consultants on these World Bank-funded projects. One particular expert from Tripoli who works with the World Bank consultants indicated that the World Bank CHUD Project is very comprehensive as seen in reports, PowerPoint presentations, and different projects documents, but in reality, and when it comes to implementation, the projects ends up becoming very modest as several initial components get deleted such as restoration of houses, addressing heritage tools within the historic cores, capacity building, and economic incentives

for the local community. At the end, the project concentrated on urban beautification in the public space in the form of tiling of tourist trails and plazas, awnings and canopies, signage, and the like. He added that a lot of money is spent during a very short period, but the outcome does not match the research and the initial aspirations of the project. During the same meeting, a local anthropologist had commented that ‘the same way we are sold the fast food meal; we are sold the World Bank Project.’

During a more recent visit to Tripoli in 2005, the author had observed that apart from the World Bank Project (which had not achieved considerable or physical results yet), the old city witnessed several ‘local’ initiatives and interventions that were well received by the local community. These local interventions included the renovation of *Sūq Bazirkan* (grain market) funded by a prominent political figure from Tripoli (Isam Fares), renovation at *Sūq al Dahab* (gold market) (Figure 10.4), funded by Tripoli Municipality and the French government; and renovation at *Sūq al Haraj*



Figure 10.4 Gold market in historic Tripoli in Lebanon. This old *Sūq* represents one example of several efforts for urban regeneration in the city by philanthropists or even international donors such as the World Bank.

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (2002).

(auction market) funded by the German government. One significant person who had contributed to the success of these local initiatives is a local professor from Tripoli, Rawya al Majzoub, who teaches at the Lebanese University and directs the Center for Restoration and Conservation of Historic Monuments and Sites there. As an activist, she had succeeded in rallying local and international support for the old city of Tripoli. Now, it is true that these three interventions remained confined to specific areas within the old city and were mainly centered on urban beautification (e.g. wooden canopies, re-pointing of stone facades, provision of light fixtures), but at least they attempted to work with shop keepers and owners of cafés and other functions within the old city. Furthermore, they proceeded with local capabilities and minimum funding that was directly channeled to the conservation of the old city. Based on interviews conducted by the author in Tripoli in 2005, many local shop keepers and residents in the old city are gradually becoming convinced that such small local initiatives are more sincere and will achieve better results than the *comprehensive plans* of the World Bank, which promised a lot and ending up delivering minimal change without really addressing the problems and concerns of the old city.

Such projects in Jordan and Lebanon started with comprehensive planning at the scale of the whole historic city cores; in fact, they were seen by local politicians as the *optimum solution* to the various problems of historic city cores. Gradually, they were reduced to very modest outcomes (action projects) centering on open space beautification and architectural 'cosmetics.' Even such action projects and urban cosmetics attempts, and through the donor agencies constraints and regulations, were very limited and did not target private properties, façades of buildings or street façades that are privately owned.

This reality becomes an issue for public contestation when one attempts to take into consideration the nature of such projects (comprehensive planning at larger scales) and significant funding levels (tens of millions of dollars, a great portion of which would end up accumulating foreign debt). Such funds have been channeled (during very short periods of time) and through very complicated donor agencies' tendering procedures, complicated methodologies, and complex network of agents, governmental officials and central agencies, and experts involved in these urban regeneration/tourism projects. Gradually, and once these projects are implemented, a certain reality would emerge in the region's historic city cores. These urban regeneration/tourism projects rarely attempt to establish a sustainable practice of urban regeneration and heritage conservation in such communities; nor do such practices end up in putting

in place urban management heritage tools that might engage the local authorities (e.g. municipalities).

Furthermore, such projects, and due to the fact that local actors (e.g. municipalities of such smaller towns) in most cases were not fully involved in either the decision making process or implementation of the projects, lack strong sustainability indicators. They represent a one-time intervention, a *shock treatment* with not enough consideration as to how such urban places will function after the intervention is over. Daher elaborates about the nature of the relationship between the local actors and central governmental agencies (MOTA) in Jordan and adds that 'it was very obvious right from the beginning that these projects were initiated and progressed and will be implemented, throughout the same patriarchal types of relationships between the Municipality and the Central Government' (Daher, 2005: 296). A Project Management Unit (PMU) was established for all JICA-funded projects in Jordan and was mainly housed in Amman and was composed of mainly MOTA personnel with minimal decision making powers at municipal levels. In an interview with MOTA personnel, it was elaborated that the rationales for the creation of the PMU was to facilitate mechanisms and contacts between the various agents of the project (MOTA, municipalities, JICA, and others). All contacts and decisions are done through the PMU, which in return is directly linked to the Secretary General and to the Minister of Tourism (Daher, 2005: 296).

In Lebanon, a PMU was also created for coordination purposes at CDR; it is responsible for monitoring progress against agreed-upon performance monitoring indicators. The PMU prepares in addition to the progress reports, detailed mid-term reports to serve as a basis for project reviews. Similar to Jordan, the municipalities in general are peripheral actors within this overall process and usually this is rationalized due to the lack of staff and expertise at the local municipal level. In certain Lebanese cases (e.g. Saida), municipal implementation units were added, but their ability to make decisive decisions remains minimal. Both the PMU and CDR will be jointly responsible for different aspects of the project. The following quotation by Daher (2005: 297) explains the mechanisms leading to embedded central government authoritarianism in the practice of tourism/urban regeneration processes in Jordan:

The researcher would argue that the various mechanisms of power (such as, but not restricted to, the establishment of a sub central government agency like the Project Management Unit) shaped and reshaped the types and patterns of contact between central and local governments regarding the Projects under research and emphasized

a patriarchal structure of Central Governmental Agencies (MOTA) regarding urban regeneration/heritage tourism developments that characterized the relationship between the Center and the Municipality. This patriarchal structure reflects embedded central government authoritarianism in the 'practice' of tourism/urban conservation and management in Jordanian cities.

The practice of urban regeneration and tourism development in secondary cities in Jordan and Lebanon, through the different international donor-funded projects, is tied up and linked to sporadic agents of power that have generated, so far, *shock treatments* in these towns and small cities and very modest outcomes in the form of architectural cosmetics rather than an institutionalized practice. These projects lead to the circulation of different forms of urban and heritage projects and of a prototypical tourist experience within the region. Gradually, not only is local difference between the different cities disintegrating, but also the tourist experience is confined to consuming the same manufactured concept of heritage and to gazing at the same urban furniture detail, lamp fixture, or floor pattern. Furthermore, these projects are not designed in a way to help local communities develop their tourism investment potentials at grassroots levels (e.g. help entrepreneur individuals realize certain development dream, help families start their own small- or medium-size bed and breakfast or other tourism business); on the contrary, the level of the interventions is simply physical and centers mainly on the beautification of the historic environment in the form of urban cosmetics as indicated earlier. The communities, and based on several interviews in the different cities, feel disengaged from this tourism development endeavor even though interested to participate in and benefit from this cultural industry.

By looking at these different donor agencies' projects in secondary cities in Jordan and Lebanon, one can form a better understanding of current transformations in the production, manufacturing, and consumption of heritage and urban space. These transformations are leading to a very generic realities of urban space, heritage, and of tourist experience where not only local differences disintegrate, but also where a 'new' system of visioning the city emerges. Robinson (2001: 49) has elaborated on how the

tourism industry is also open to criticism for its growing legacy and export of 'international' styles of functional, postmodern blandness. Resort areas, waterfront developments, hotels, and attractions have all evolved with little or no concession to environmental setting, local traditions, and the nuances of local culture and ethnic difference.

Comparing the different urban heritage details in urban tourism and heritage projects mentioned above (such as wooden canopies, pergolas, signage, lamp posts, and even manhole covers) leads to the conclusion that the postmodern blandness that Robinson refers to reflects the production of certain 'franchise' forms of heritage and place.

Projects of urban regeneration and tourism development funded by donor agencies can be viewed as a manifestation of neoliberalism. Such urban transformations affect the type of tourism development and experience prevailing within these secondary cities and smaller towns of the region; they lead to the circulation and definition of place, tourism experience, and of heritage-diluting local specificities and the distinctiveness of each locale. Yet, these projects are contributing to the fact that a newer tourist product (urban and social heritage of secondary cities within Bilad al Sham) is being incorporated into the tourism industry. This is a major shift from previous Orientalist visions that had confined the tourism product in the region of Bilad al Sham to classical and ancient ruins, biblical sites, and high-class architecture in prime 'traditional' cities such as Damascus, Beirut, or Jerusalem. Regardless of the limitations of these projects, it is interesting to notice how smaller towns in the region are attempting to diversify their economic base by locating their cultural and localized distinctive heritage as part of the objects of the tourist gaze. This is somehow, gradually changing the nature of the tourism product and experience in the region.

Notable Families as New Emerging Local Actors and the Rewriting of History

In the midst of neoliberal urban restructuring and donor agencies' urban heritage/tourism recipes emerges a local voice that attempts to rewrite history, re-define heritage, and re-position itself within such grand socio-economic and territorial transformations in our cities today with considerable consequences on the rewriting of local history, re-defining of heritage, and emerging new tourist product and experiences within the region. This local voice is embodied in either:

- (1) contemporary local politically or economically influential families in the region; or
- (2) notable families from the 19th century who used to play a considerable role during Ottoman periods as mediators between the central government in Istanbul and local regional authorities within each of the Ottoman provinces (Manna', 1992: 70–1) and whose role had

subsided during mandate period in the first half of the 20th century and the creation of nation states in the region during the second half.

Whether it is al Hariri, Debbane', or Audi in Lebanon; Shoman, Tell, Bataineh, or Bisharat in Jordan; Toukan, Khouri, Qattan, or Husseini in Palestine; or Ayidi, Jabri, or Azem in Syria; many of Bilad al Sham's notable families and cultural and political elites are re-emerging and reintroducing themselves on the public scene as patrons of art, heritage, and culture. Family estates, historic mansions, and heritage places are being conserved, rehabilitated, and adapted into centers of culture, history/heritage museums, art galleries, and themed restaurants that are appreciated by a wider spectrum of society, especially the youth or adults between 35 and 45 years of age who share a sense of belonging and an appreciation to these historic parts of towns and cities (Daher, 2004). These *heritage patrons* are reclaiming their position in different places of *the region* through the appropriation of heritage and through an appeal to culture, art, and the intelligentsia. It is very interesting to notice how part of these heritage patrons are the same urban elite who emerged in Bilad al Sham in the 19th century (and were defined by the term 'notables' by scholars and historians), are reinstating their position within society as active supporters of culture and critical public debate within civil society.

Sidon in Lebanon represents a perfect example where local families are involved in the local cultural scene. While the Debbaneh family are restoring and adapting their old residence into the new Debbaneh Palace and Saida History Museum; other notable families in Saida such as the Audi family, had also adapted their old residence into a Soap Museum and had been involved heavily through the Audi Foundation into urban regeneration activities in the city (Figure 10.5). The Debbaneh Palace was built in 1721 by the Hammoud family, and was acquired in 1800 by the Debbaneh family. Then, it underwent several periods of restoration; and especially after the war in 1999 when the descendants of Raphael Youssef Debbaneh set up the Debbaneh Foundation, which established the Debbaneh Palace and Saida History Museum. The objectives of the museum are to represent and shed light on the city's urban, socio-economic, and political history. With the aim of constantly renewing the visitor's interest in the city, the project will not only include artifacts from the past, but it will also focus heavily on the societies that produced them. This will involve explanations and extracts from people's daily lives, family social structures, and political circumstances, not to mention construction, architecture, and town planning.¹⁴



Figure 10.5 Interior of the adaptation into the Soap Museum of one of Saida's historic complexes by the Audi Foundation in Saida, Lebanon.

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (2002).

Endowed by the Audi Family in Saida, the Audi Foundation transformed the old family residence (the old soap factory) into the headquarters of the Foundation and into a thematic museum of handmade soap. This thematic museum seeks to relate the history of soap to the region at large stretching between Trablus (Lebanon), Haleb (Syria), Nablus (Palestine), and Salt (Jordan) and to show the various stages of its manufacturing and the diversity of its shapes. Furthermore, the family's involvement in the city included the renovation of the facades of the neighboring historic El Chakrieh Street and the rehabilitation of various traditional housing units in the same historic neighborhood.¹⁵ The work of both families (Audi and Debbaneh) adds to their prestige and sense of identity in addition to strengthening their relationship with their hometown. The Soap Museum marks one of the early examples of such projects, of which several have started to appear in Lebanon such as the Bsous Museum, which narrates and displays the heritage of the silk industry in the country (Dahdah, 2004).

Another type of family patronage, which is more political in nature and takes the form of major charitable work and foundations, is the work of the Harriri Foundation founded by the late Lebanese leader and ex-prime minister Rafiq al Harriri. The Harriri family, native to Saida, has concentrated on the restoration of major heritage monuments within the city such as the Omari Mosque (a significant 12th century historic mosque that was shelled by Israeli planes in 1982) and Khan el Franj (an historic urban hotel and inn supporting business and trade from the 17th century). The urban heritage of Saida town captured the interest of such political elite. Reasons for such patronage could be multiple, but it is also linked to creating legitimacy for such a powerful family and also strengthening its elite networks and political power. The Harriri Foundation also supported the upgrading of major streets through development of their infrastructure (e.g. water and sewage) in the old city.¹⁶

It is interesting to notice that the extensive work and involvement in heritage/tourism projects of both cultural and political elite families in Saida had encouraged the World Bank to reduce the amount of money allocated to this city for its CHTD (and later on CHUD) Project. Based on Table 10.2 the share of Saida is US\$3.647 million in comparison to Tripoli (US\$19.286 million), or Sour (US\$7.433 million).

The Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, established by the Arab Bank in Jordan, is another example of family/corporate philanthropy in the region that supported the change and transformation in contemporary Arab cultural discourse. The Shoman Foundation, and through its different cultural activities such as the Shoman Forum (a series of public lectures by local Arab social critics and critical thinkers), provided a different alternative voice for the sake of dialogue in a time of crises. The Foundation had been extensively involved in the conservation and protection of the architectural heritage of the city of Amman through the Darat al Funun Project: an old deserted house/complex built on ancient ruins and converted into a nexus of art and culture accessible to all groups of society and serving the Jordanian public. In 1993, the complex was adapted in a way that allowed a panoply of cultural events and historical layers (ancient Roman, Byzantine, and early 20th century Amman) to coexist. The project had attempted to connect with the community both physically, through its architecture and overall layout within the neighborhood, and spiritually, through its transparency and accessibility (Al-Asad, 1997; Daher, 1999).

The Tell family of the Jordanian poet Arar, in Irbid, had been a continuous supporter of local art and of a rich cultural life in northern Jordan. They were the patrons of several heritage conservation and cultural

projects in the city of Irbid such as the rehabilitation of their old *madafa* (a communal place for hosting family gatherings and events and for receiving guests and travelers). The family also adapted the old house of the Jordanian poet Arar (Figure 10.6) into a cultural center that was offered as a gift to the city.¹⁷

These family-patroned heritage projects work to, first, re-define heritage by concentrating on marginalized local and regional realities that had been previously subjugated and disguised by the formal state discourse on heritage and history. Second, these projects tend to concentrate on issues related to everyday life such as soap production, silk, commerce, *madafas* (architecture of hospitality), and urban social history. This presents a completely new experience of the region for tourists that supports the diversification of the tourism product and the development of cultural tourism.

In the Middle East, and mostly in places such as Jordan and Lebanon, as in most of the developing world, local public financing mechanisms

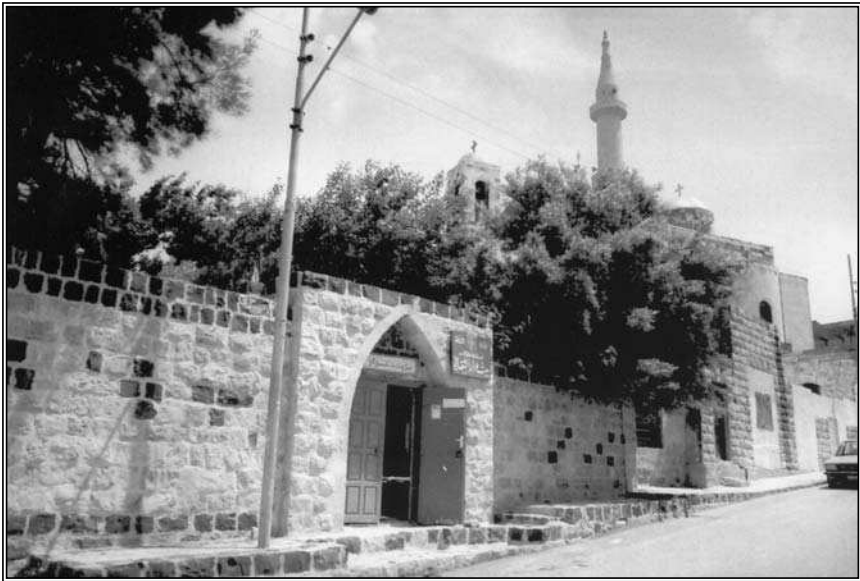


Figure 10.6 Arar House in Irbid, Jordan. This historic house where the famous Jordanian poet, Arar, used to live has been granted as a gift from the Tell family to the city of Irbid.

Source: Photograph taken by Rami Farouk Daher (1999).

are minimal. Furthermore, funding provided by the state for urban regeneration or heritage conservation and site management is almost non-existent. In Jordan and Lebanon, the 'state' is busy venturing into private/public neoliberal urban restructuring projects in prime locations such as in downtown Beirut or Abdali in Amman. The urban cultural heritage of smaller towns or the ordinary history of everyday life stays predominantly outside the interest of the state. In similar conditions, philanthropy in general and the work of such families in particular, becomes of crucial importance, as in some cases, it represents the only alternative to a different reading of history, of heritage, and of place.

Tiesdell *et al.* (1996: 74–5), for example, elaborate about economic restructuring and economic and cultural conservation of Lowell, Massachusetts and addresses the availability of local funds and the supportive infrastructure for heritage conservation. At Lowell, funding was acquired from the Great Society Model Cities Programme to create a national Historic Park, and also, as early as 1966, funding was provided through Federal Environmental Education money. More recently, and in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and after the designation of Lowell as an Historic District, Lowell Historic District became eligible for federal grants under the national Historic Places Trust and also through various tax benefits and incentives, Commercial Development Block Grants, and several revolving funds.

The different examples presented so far are a testimony to how such notable (elite) families of Bilad al Sham are attempting to rewrite themselves into history and into today's society in a global time of emerging different groups of 'publics' and 'counter publics' active in civil society. These families definitely represent an old/new group of 'publics' that is reintroducing itself in the region through not only the patronage of heritage projects, the arts, and culture, but also through socio-economic and political public life as well.

Urry (1990: 84–5) has elaborated, when addressing cultural changes and the restructuring of tourism in a shift from modernity to postmodernity, on the notion that while modernism involved *structural differentiation*, '[p]ostmodernism, by contrast, involves de-differentiation where borders between *high* and *low* culture, between scholarly or auratic art and popular pleasures, and between elite and mass forms of consumption' are dissolved. Now, one witnesses the celebration of the ordinary and of the everyday culture. One can easily situate the phenomenon of emerging patronages of art, culture, and heritage of the everyday life by notable families in the region (e.g. museum of soap or silk production in Lebanon, or a house that celebrates a life of local poet in Jordan), as part of this

mode of postmodernism, which is anti-hierarchical, and opposed to such vertical differentiations.

Yet, and most important of all, these local family heritage projects produce an important opportunity and a new accessibility for the re-reading of history and memory of the recent past in *the region*. This is part of a recent paradigm shift in scholarly Arab historiography in the region that is characterized by a shift from focusing on the *grand narratives* of national/formal history to focusing on the local, and granting voice to social and urban history, the ordinary, and the everyday life. These projects offer an ethnographic approach to the understanding of local history and the role of different families and foundations and provide the chance to investigate and research intersections and mediations between state and society today. Finally, these projects not only represent a form of assertion of the role of such families and foundations in the public sphere, but also grant voice to re-articulated memories at a regional scale, that is Bilad al Sham focusing on patterns, interconnections, regional motilities, and moments of change and transformation.

Notes

1. The author had conducted in 1991, while a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, extensive research on the current transformations of the Mills District in Minneapolis and the different adaptations such as 'Riverplace' and the 'Milwaukee Road Depot.' Such adaptations in the form of 'festive markets' contributed significantly to the processes of urban regeneration in the city.
2. www.jabalomar.com. Accessed April 23, 2005.
3. *Al-Rai'* newspaper. May 19, 2005. 'Saraya Project in Aqaba.' No. 12659, p. 13. Amman, Jordan. *Al-Rai'* newspaper. May 21, 2005. 'New projects in Amman.' No. 12661, p. 17. Amman, Jordan.
4. Solidere (Societe Libanaise de Developpement et de Reconstruction).
5. Mawared (National Resources Investment and Development Corporation).
6. Saudi Oger (Oger Jordan) is an international developer. Saudi Oger entered the partnership as main investor and also brought the expertise of its alienated master planners (Millennium Development, Lacedo).
7. Studying and comparing the levels of contestation against such flagship projects and neoliberal restructuring in the different contexts of Amman and Beirut is of extreme value and can be discussed in future research.
8. The Extended Fund Facility (EFF) within the IMF was established in 1947 to provide medium-term assistance in particular to members with (1) an economy suffering serious payments imbalances relating to structural mal-adjustments in production and trade where price and cost distributions have been widespread; or (2) an economy characterized by slow growth and an inherently weak balance of payments position, which prevents pursuit of an active development policy. The length of an EFF arrangement is typically three years and disbursement is conditional on the borrower meeting specified

- performance requirements, including structural reforms (IMF External Relations Department, 2001).
9. *Al-Rai'* newspaper. October 5, 2005. 'Second priority tourism development projects implemented by the Ministry of Tourism of Jordan.' No. 12798, p. 3. Amman, Jordan.
 10. http://www.gwutourism.org/tpf_sampe_case.htm. Accessed October 19, 2005.
 11. Interview with Director for the Tourism Second Priority PMU, MOTA, Amman, Jordan. July 11, 2002.
 12. On August 6, 1997, the government of Jordan and the World Bank signed a loan agreement for US\$32 million to finance the Second Tourism Development Project as part of the growing interest in expanding the tourism industry in Jordan. Part of this loan was allocated to the Aqaba Regional Authority, at that time, as a grant for the development of the Wadi Rum area. The project objectives specifically concentrated on creating conditions essential for an increase in sustainable and environmentally sound tourism activities in Petra, Wadi Rum, Jerash, and Kerak, and to realize tourism-related income generating projects at the potential sites (Aid Coordination Unit, 1997: 10).
 13. www.padeco.co.jp/middleeast.html2003. Accessed February 15, 2005.
 14. Meeting with Ms Monique Aggiouri. Debbbané Palace, Mutran Street, Saida, Lebanon. February 18, 2002.
 15. Meeting with George Audi and Other Soap Factory staff, Audi Foundation, Saida, Lebanon. February 18, 2002.
 16. <http://www.rhariiri.com/youthzone7.aspx>. Accessed October 30, 2005.
 17. Meeting with Mr Mustafa Wahbeh al Tell (the grandson). May 15, 2004.

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