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Eric Verdeil

**Politique de développement étatique et spécialisations d'ingénieurs. Le cas des urbanistes au Liban**

**Résumé :**

Les transformations de l'urbanisme au Liban dans la période d'après-guerre illustrent le cas d'un processus de professionalisation incertaine, pris entre l'affirmation d'origine universitaire d'un nouveau champ de spécialité, et la réalité du marché du travail où cette spécialisation professionelle peine à trouver un espace. Historiquement, l'urbanisme a été un outil essentiel aux mains du pouvoir en vue de la construction nationale sans jamais reposer sur une discipline académique. La mise en place de nouvelles formations depuis les années quatre-vingt-dix doit plus à des logiques universitaires qu'à une demande du marché du travail. Le marché de l'urbanisme apparaît comme une sous-branche du marché des études et consultations en architecture et ingénierie et il en reproduit les grandes évolutions. Il subit les effets de la limitation du rôle et des missions de l'Etat et reflète la part plus grande accordée aux opérateurs privés.

Urbanisme - professionnalisation - mondialisation - cursus universitaire

**State development policy and specialised engineers. The case of urban planners in post-war Lebanon**

**Abstract :**

The transformations of planning in post-civil war Lebanon illustrate the case of an uncertain professionalisation process, between the opposed forces of academic affirmation, of an emergent professional field and of the reality of a job market where planning hardly finds its space. Historically, planning has been an essential tool for national building, without ever relying on academically trained professionals. The establishment of new curricula in the nineties owes more to academic logic than to the market demand. The current market for planning is a secondary segment of the broader market of studies and consultation in architecture and engineering and it reproduces many of its features. It suffers from the effects of the restriction of the State's role and of shrinkage of its commands and reflects the greater role of private actors.

Urban planners - professionalisation - globalisation - academic curricula - Lebanon

# State development policy and specialised engineers. The case of urban planners in post-war Lebanon

## Introduction

In the Middle East and North Africa, the rise of urban planning as a state policy in the independence years was at the same time a tool linked to the national building process and a legacy from the period of colonial or foreign domination. Both have contributed to the emergence of planners' milieux. Engineering specialists, (including architects and civil engineers, which were rarely distinguished, at least before WWII[1]), have played a central role in development and modernisation policies (Longuenesse 1990, Souami Verdeil 2006). But planning is also a product of globalisation. The first steps of the international circulation of planning ideas and practices reflect that clearly (Verdeil & Longuenesse, forth.; Nasr 2005; Souami and Verdeil 2006). Today, globalisation is also a major factor of change in the economics of urban development, through the rise of transnational real-estate investors and design firms, epitomized in Dubai's tremendous urbanisation, but also observed in Beirut and in other major cities in the region. Shifts in urban management also derive from the new governance paradigm, spread by international agencies. These agencies advocate in the same package public-private partnerships, the reduction of the state role, and the empowerment of local authorities and of civil society. The implementation of such a new set of policies and its effects are far from uniform but indeed foster critical transformation in planning practices (Elsheshtawy 2005).

Few sociological studies address the impacts of such changes on the professional field of planning in the region. The economic and institutional changes of the last twenty years have led to the diversification of the field of planning beyond its usual tasks of establishing master plans or managing publicly funded operations, in which architects and engineers occupied dominant positions. Both in Western Europe and in the USA, urban planners have gained more importance at the local level because of rising concerns for participation; and new public-private partnerships have propelled project management skills to the front stage, thus enabling professionals with different backgrounds to get involved in planning. At the academic level, planning is increasingly becoming an autonomous field, distinct from architecture as well as from branches of the social sciences, while it previously had been mainly a post-graduate degree in most countries. In France, the issue of the institutionalisation of a planning profession has become critical (for France, Claude 2006, Verpraet 2005).

In developing countries, "planning cultures" also experienced in depth transformations linked to liberalisation and public-private partnerships, while the new "good governance" motto hardly fulfilled its promises (Sanyal 2005). Sanyal defines "planning cultures" as "the collective ethos and dominant attitudes of planners regarding the appropriate role of the State, market forces, and civil society in urban, regional and national development" and considers them mostly as "professional

[1] In Arabic, the word *al-muhandis* means the engineer and the architect. *Al-muhandis al-mi'amari* (literally the engineer of construction) is 'the architect' without ambiguity. The difference between architects and engineers became progressively clearer, after specific curricula for architects were set up in various universities (Beyhum, Tabet 1989).

cultures" (Sanyal, 2005, 3). However, the definition and changes of such "planning cultures" are not referred to the professionals themselves, to their academic and social backgrounds, to their careers or to their collective professional strategies or projects, but rather to state and international organisations policies or to social practices that might contest or contradict the latter. It is the aim of this article to address that issue for Lebanon.

In this respect, we can take advantage of the research on the social history of planning professions by French scholars. A first reason for doing so is the colonial legacy of French planning in Lebanon, as well as the continuous academic and professional links with France, which is reflected in the Lebanese legal framework, practices and discourses related to planning (e.g. Souami, 2005). A second reason is the heuristic gain these researches provide, since they address the relevance of the main concepts of the sociology of professions for planning.

These French scholars contend that in many ways the professionalisation of planning in the sense of Larson is unachieved. Gaudin speaks of a "blocked institutionalisation" (Gaudin 1989). No closure of the planning market can be stated, be it through the recognition of a diploma by the State or through collective regulation by a syndicate. Planning is merely an open professional system where access to mainly state-funded resources (jobs and positions, public contracts) is organised through coalitions of professionals occupying different positions and status. These coalitions have changed over time, in relation to the transformation of state policies. The renewal of the required competencies widened the competition to other professional segments. In France, for instance, the dominant feature of the planning market in the post-war period was an alliance of consulting architects and state « *urbanistes* » working as civil servants, whereas in the sixties the prevailing groups became the road and bridge engineers and academic social scientists (economists, sociologists and geographers) employed in public agencies (Verpraet 2005; Claude 2006). Meanwhile, each of these professions set up their own professionalisation project and became recognized by the State. But more recently, the rise of new university curricula of planning, distinct from the mother-professions of engineering or architecture, resulted in a return to the question of professionalisation, since academic and professional organisations of planners turned to the State in order to recognise the title of planner, even if this doesn't protect the field of practice (Claude, 2006). The market of planning is a place to analyse several competing professions (engineering, architecture…) among which the professional project of 'planners' themselves, rather than the professionalisation of planning as a completed process itself: it is an opportunity to highlight the conditions under which a professional project succeeds or fails to realise.

*Mutatis mutandis*, in Lebanon, the professionals in charge of planning have usually been engineers and, from the sixties onwards, increasingly architects. But recent transformations linked to globalisation, understood as an economical, geopolitical as well as a cultural change, seem to pave the way for professional 'planners'. New regional companies in the field of urban development are hiring planners; several Lebanese universities have established curricula in planning; international agencies operating in Lebanon push for hiring planners. Despite these recent trends, we contend that the professionalisation of planning remains hampered by the contradictory professional interests of planners, architects and engineers. The post-civil war financial and administrative state policies prevent the job market in planning from expanding.

In the first section, we shall outline the main stages of the development of planning in Lebanon and the related state policies and describe the new academic degrees and the strategies that have led to their creation. The second section will document the dynamics of the job market in planning.

## I- The development of planning in Lebanon[2]

### 1) The pre-war years

2 This section is mostly based on my PhD (Verdeil 2002).

Planning in Lebanon has Ottoman roots. The Ottoman reforms of the mid 19th century (*Tanzimat*) included a set of measures aimed at urban modernisation, and new developments outside the old urban fabric in Beirut or Tripoli and the building of new souks bore their imprint (Hanssen 2005). During the French mandate (1920-1943), new regulations for the built environment were also enacted including requirements for building permits. The French authorities also launched the first attempts to develop planning for the major cities. After Independence, the French mark on Lebanese planning remained obvious. The continued relationships with French planners, among whom emerged the prominent figure of Michel Ecochard – a former Mandate civil servant in Syria and in Lebanon – are evidence of the continuity between Mandate times and Independence. But planning in Lebanon experienced a major turn under President Fouad Chehab (1958-64). An ambitious policy of infrastructure development throughout the country was launched, in order to promote a 'harmonised' development. The reforms encompassed the setting-up of the administrative framework of planning, including the General Directorate of Urban Planning (GDUP), the Higher Council of Urban Planning and the Urban Planning Code, as well as Executive councils for major works in the city of Beirut and nationally, between 1959 and 1964. A new master plan for Beirut was approved (1964), and the same happened in the major cities in the following years. Chehab considered economic, regional and city planning as a major means of achieving the national unity, in this newly created country (1920), which was deeply divided among sectarian, regional and political lines.

The professionals in charge of Lebanese planning policies were at the beginning mostly engineers trained in French '*grandes écoles*' like the *Ecole Polytechnique* or *Ecole Centrale* or from other foreign countries. Later, graduates from the *Ecole supérieure d'ingénieurs de Beyrouth* (part of the Jesuits' Saint Joseph University) or from the American University of Beirut, as well as from other less established or recent universities, were also recruited by the administration. Several Lebanese degrees in Architecture had been established, and the architects represented an increasing proportion of the engineering profession. In 1970, about 3000 members were registered at the "orders of Engineers" of Beirut and Tripoli[3], among which one third had graduated from foreign countries. About 16% of the whole were architects. It is estimated that about one third of the engineers were employed by the State at the beginning of the seventies.

At the time, planning was clearly not a profession, but rather a job, done on a short period basis and in relation to an assignment carried out for the State – except for the few civil servants in the GDUP (the official figure was 46 employees in 1964, but they were much fewer in reality). Most urban planners were architects or engineers, hired typically as consultants to develop a master plan for a city or a region. Some, while not civil servants, were members of various boards involved in the management of the state planning policy, like the Planning council. Architects claimed a prominent role in planning, rather than civic engineers, since they saw themselves responsible for the "Lebanese cultural heritage" (Ghandour, 2003).

It must be noticed that the practice of planning was a decisive step towards positions of power in the engineering field, sometimes reaching up to the level of minister. Before the war, almost all the presidents of the Order of Engineers of Beirut had been in charge of planning consultations or had belonged to planning commissions. Among the ministers educated as engineers or architects, almost all of them had carried out planning activities – and had also been president of the order of engineers.

2) War, planning and reconstruction

3 In Lebanon, the term "order of engineers and architects" is used as a translation of the French « Ordre des ingénieurs et architectes » and as the equivalent of *niqabat al-muhandissin*, although a more exact translation of *niqabat* would be "syndicate". The law grants the order the task of organizing and controlling the profession of engineers. The members also pay fees for social benefits (pension and healthcare).

The physical damages resulting from the civil war (1975-1990) again propelled to the foreground the necessity of planning, offering the State an opportunity to reassert the link between city planning and national building. In 1977 and in 1982-83, during periods of peace that quickly evaporated, the State tried to launch programs for reconstruction, at the core of which were projects for rebuilding Beirut's city centre. The consulting studies were assigned to teams gathering French consultants with local professionals. These episodes generated a spirit of reform reshaping the administration's system, with the creation of the Council of Reconstruction and Development (CDR) in 1977 as well as the framing of new planning and construction laws in 1983.

While city planning was deemed a national obligation, the domestic market of planning, like in engineering and in architecture, remained narrow. The state's contracts decreased and wages diminished because of inflation, work was difficult because circulating in the country was terribly restricted. Meanwhile, the number of graduates in engineering and architecture from local and foreign universities recorded a spectacular increase, with registered members at the Order of Engineers reaching 6000 in 1982 and 13000 in 1990. Confronted with difficult conditions of life and work and with rising under- or unemployment, a lot of Lebanese engineers chose to emigrate, to the Arabian Gulf, Africa, Europe or America. That trend was not new, since Lebanese engineers had long been seeking markets in the Arabian Gulf or in Africa. But this tendency grew during this period.

The development of foreign markets for consulting engineering firms of Lebanese origin was to bring important changes regarding the professionalisation of planners, as the case of the Lebanese-Jordanian firm Dar al-Handasah demonstrates. Dar al Handasah had set up a planning department as early as 1971. Planning was a strategic sector since it allowed the firm to have access to markets thanks to very early studies, and later to obtain contracts for building and infrastructure projects as well as for works supervision, which were the more lucrative sectors. The company hired more and more post-graduate planners from Western universities in its staff, mostly Lebanese, along with Egyptians, other Arabs and a few Europeans. The main planning projects concerned Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria and Morocco, as well as Nigeria and later Angola. Dar al-Handasah's experience was widely recognized and the firm was then commissioned as a major consultant for the rebuilding of Beirut in 1977, 1982-83 and after 1991 (Ghosn 2005; Verdeil 2002). Other major Lebanese consulting firms like Khatib wa Alami or Associated Consulting Engineers, or public works contractors like CCC or OGER (which belonged to the future Prime Minister Rafik Hariri) had also built their experience on the foreign (and particularly Arab) market. They all were to become major stakeholders in the planning sector in Lebanon. These companies were a first opportunity for a few local professionals who graduated in planning in foreign universities.

But the number of such professionals was increasing, since a range of young architects or engineers who migrated from Lebanon during the war were trained in urban planning schools or planning firms abroad, mainly in Europe or in the United States. Among others, it is worth mentioning Ussama Kabbani, firstly trained as an architect, who graduated in planning from Harvard and then worked for the Boston Redevelopment Authority before being hired in 1992 by Solidere, the real estate company in charge of the Beirut's centre reconstruction, where he was the deputy manager of the planning department. Another example is Habib Debs, who holds a bachelor degree in engineering from the AUB and a degree in architecture from ALBA (the Lebanese Academy for Fine Arts). He then graduated in planning from the *Ecole des Ponts et chaussées* in Paris. He worked for a few years in *EPAMarne*, the public body in charge of planning the new town of Marne-la-Vallée in Paris, before opening a consulting firm in urban planning and architecture in Beirut in the mid 90s. Wafa Sharafeddine, an architect who studied at the AUB, was employed by the CDR at the beginning of the 80s and worked in the team in charge of the greater Beirut master plan, with the French consultant IAURIF. She then spent a few years in France, where she graduated in planning from the *Institut français d'urbanisme*, and later did a PhD in Planning from

La Sorbonne. After coming back to the CDR, she progressively climbed up the ladder, was in charge of various sectors but always in connection with foreign consultants and responsible for the implementation of foreign grants and programs.

These careers illustrate the fact that most of these professionals operating in the field of planning are, first, engineers or architects. But thanks to their post-graduation, they also had legitimacy as planners and indeed, worked for a part of their careers as such.

Through the reconstruction process, planning had been assigned the task of overcoming the war years of disruption. For Lebanese professionals having graduated and practiced abroad, it opened a promising field of activity. The creation of domestic planning curricula demonstrated the hope that this new sector could become a new job provider for young professionals.

3- The emergence of new academic curricula in planning: a new generation of planners?
Between 1994 and 2002, five new masters degrees in planning were established in Lebanese universities (table 1). As a result, it is estimated that more than 150 new graduates entered the job market or will do soon (and this does not include those who graduated from foreign universities). Several interlinked factors explain such a move. A first hypothesis is to consider these new degrees as a response to an anticipated or expected demand for professional planning graduates on the job market in the context of reconstruction. We contend, quite paradoxically, that this has not really been the case. Internal logics of the academic field also have played a role. The international circulation of planning ideas also helps understand both the origins and the organisation of the new curricula. In this section, we examine the conditions of creation of the curricula before addressing the issue of the job market for planners in the next section.

Most of the planners who graduated from these curricula were architects, very few being engineers or social scientists. Indeed, the new degrees have been created in faculties of architecture, with whom they share most of their staff. This is in line with the usual pattern of practice of planning in Lebanon, where architects have been predominant since the sixties.

Table 1. The curriculum in planning in Lebanon

| Course | Year of creation | Number of classes | Number of graduates (last known year) | Required Qualification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Master of Urban Planning - *Institut d'urbanisme* at the *Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts* | 1994 | 8 | 25 and 10 ongoing (2005) | Architects, engineers, masters in social sciences – Mostly architects |
| Master of Planning - Faculty of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University | 1998 | 5 | 66 and 23 ongoing (2007) | Architects, engineers or Masters in social sciences. Mostly architects (61 out of 66) |
| Master of Urban Planning and Design – Faculty of Architecture and Engineering at the American University of Beirut | 1998 | 5 | 10 and 19 ongoing (2005) | Planning: Architects or masters in social sciences<br>Design: Architects |
| Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning – Faculty of Architecture - Beirut Arab University | 1998 | 3 | 24 ongoing (2002-2004) no data on graduates | Architects and engineers |
| Master of Architecture in Landscape Urbanism – Notre-Dame University | 2002 | 0 | 0 (3 ongoing in 2006) | Architects |

Source: data collected from the universities, 2003-2007.

Most major Lebanese universities have created a planning degree, except the Lebanese American University (LAU) and Saint-Joseph University (which does not propose a diploma in architecture, as had been the case until the war). But at the same university, the Bachelor's degree in geography includes credits in planning, as does the faculty of Engineering, and many other programs (engineering or architecture) in other universities (like the LAU).

One of the main reasons explaining this boom of degrees in planning is the harsh competition between universities, all of them except the Lebanese University being private institutions. After the war, the Lebanese universities had to make up for lost time when they were cut off from foreign streams. They started proposing post-graduate degrees as a sign of modernisation and to retain students or young professionals from seeking specialisation outside the country. In the case of planning, one must also take into consideration that the strong increase of graduates in architecture during the war and post-war years (about 5000 members registered as architects at the order of engineers in 2000) could not be absorbed by the job market, which led to a significant rise in under- and unemployment. For young or sometimes older graduates, planning seemed to offer opportunities for distinction since this new specialisation enjoyed an attractive image in those times of rebuilding.

But it would be wrong to assume that these degrees owed their existence to a clear demand from the job market and from the major employers. Internal logics of the academic field must be highlighted. The quick expansion of planning diplomas first reflects the social and sectarian fragmentation of the Lebanese academic landscape: because of high tuition fees, access to AUB has been restricted to the upper class (even if grants partly compensate for less endowed students); on the other hand, access to the LU is free of charge. ALBA and Notre-Dame University are mostly Christian middle-class oriented, while the students at the Beirut Arab University are mostly Muslim.

An insight into the development process of these new courses shows the role of other internal academic factors. In the pioneer cases of ALBA and the Lebanese University, the creation of these diplomas also gave the "founding teachers" an opportunity to set up their departments - or at least an autonomous diploma - inside the faculty, which earned them material and symbolic gratification, within the academic world as well as outside, thanks to easier access to state contracts and consultations.

In these first two cases, another element also played a role. The founders of the courses had obtained master degrees abroad, usually in France. The creation of the new degrees was achieved through various steps of academic international cooperation with a former professor or colleague. Until today such cooperation has been financially supported by the French Embassy, to maintain its influence in the Lebanese francophone universities. EU programs also sponsored exchanges with the Lebanese university.

As a result of the interviews and of my personal experience and knowledge of these planning (or planning-related) courses[4], I can say that the creation of these diplomas owes very little to the State policy of planning in the post-war years. Of course, the founders and the university administrators considered that the "country needs it" as the Dean of ALBA once put it. They expected that the new graduates would find jobs, if not in the state administration (knowing the low salaries they could expect there), at least as State consultants. They particularly hoped that public administration or consulting firms would encourage their staff to follow vocational training in the new curricula. But the results were disappointing (see next section). There was never a clear involvement of the state or of top-ranking civil servants from the planning administration in the setting up of the diplomas, even if some state employees, on an individual basis, participated in some teaching programs. In contrast to the unclear and unconvincing prospects regarding the job market and the State policy in planning, the factors that have led to the creation of these curricula seem merely related to the need to unravel the academic offer, to the competition between universities and to internal academic reasons. In order to bring further evidence reinforcing this interpretation, the next section will present the main trends of the Lebanese planning job market.

## II- The job market for urban planning

The planning job market is little differentiated from the whole architecture and engineering market, of which it is something like a small annex. Its main characteristic relies in the fact that the main job provider is the state, which makes the planning market very sensitive to state policy changes and thus requires a brief summary of the policy framework.

To a large extent planning in Lebanon in the post-war years comes down to the rebuilding of destroyed cities and regions, beginning with Beirut's commercial centre. Through these projects, the state tried to reassert its role in the political, social and economic life of the country. The projects aimed to fuel national reconciliation and to bolster the economy. However the return of the state bore the mark of the liberal ideology of the new political elite. Therefore, the private sector (often closely linked to political interests) played a major role in the reconstruction process. On the other hand, the state's social interventions, in such things as the housing sector, the delivery of services or the up grading of slums, remained very limited.

Along with reconstruction policies, the increasing debt is a dominant concern of the post-war period and it explains (or is used as a pretext for explaining) the restricted involvement of the state in planning. While it accounted for 3% of the GDP in 1992, in 2006 it had reached about 180%, although the GDP had risen during the period. It is not only the result of infrastructure rebuilding,

4 I was an assistant to the Dean of ALBA in 1996-97 as a French national service volonteer, and since 2002 I've been teaching a seminar each year at the Lebanese University.

but also that of the agreement at the end of the war, including the dismantling of militias and the hiring of militiamen in the administration, and a consequence of the Lebanese government's financial policy that generated high interest rates. Another factor is the swarming corruption practices resulting from the balance of power between political factions, in the context of the Syrian domination over the country (Leenders 2004). Since 1998, governments have tried to contain state expenditure, specifically reducing civil servants recruitment.

In this section, we shall differentiate various segments of the market of urban planning to understand which kind of professionals they require and whether this contributes to the employment of planning graduates.

1) The prominent position of private global companies in the reconstruction

Planning the rebuilding of the damaged sectors in Beirut and other cities and regions represented an impressive volume of state contracts for consulting firms in the beginning of the nineties. The main client then was the CDR. These markets were particularly attractive since the studies and master plans would lead to detailed schemes and implementation projects, which are far more lucrative than the studies themselves. The large consulting and multidisciplinary firms, whose history was presented above, have been the main beneficiaries of such contracts (Verdeil 2002). They were able to rely on a small planning unit with a few qualified planners but the core staff was made up of architects and engineers of various specialties. For instance, in 1999, Dar al-Handasah had 1137 professionals, among whom were 18 "Town and Urban Planners and Designers", 13 "Transport-Planning Specialists", and 29 other engineers or specialists more or less related to planning. The staff also encompassed 127 architects (Ghosn 2005).

Solidere, the private real estate company in charge of rebuilding the city centre (180 ha), is another interesting – if not paradoxical- example of the new kind of actors operating in urban development. While a major player in city planning and building, it is not a main job provider for planners. In the mid 1990's, when it began its operations, the company staff size was above 300, among whom were a good number in the works and planning unit. Planners (like U. Kabbani mentioned above) were only a few, the others being engineers and architects. Employees in other branches (law, business, marketing, finance and asset management) accounted for the majority. In 2003, after the heavy workload was over and a sharp decrease in results in 2000-2001 led to reduction in the staff size, the company employed 145 persons, with the urban management unit accounting for 23. Here were a few planners and urban designers, as well as architects, lawyers and GIS specialists. Their task was to implement and control real estate development and to negotiate with the investors the design of their developments and their programs (commercial centres, residential building...). The staff also supervised the building permits and their implementation. When new studies are needed, Solidere relies on consultants, often foreigners, rather than hiring experts and planners. As such, Solidere's approach to planning is representative of new planning and urban development practices, oriented to project management and taking into consideration the commercial and business constraints of their investors and the financial results of the company itself.

The exceptional market of planning of Lebanese rebuilding has been widely concentrated in the hands of a few private firms. The consulting firms have operated according to their integrated business model, in which planning remains directly subordinated to the far more lucrative building and infrastructure design markets and is in no way economically and socially autonomous from them. Even if those firms rely on qualified planners (in the staff or, mainly, as consultants), we can observe a strong division of labour. Very few urban planners work in positions of manager or coordinator, a few others as consultants embedded in companies employing a great variety of professionals of others specialisation.

2) State and municipalities as job providers for planners?

Once the main studies and master plans of the reconstruction were completed, in the first part of the nineties, and while the implementation of these plans went on, ordinary planning took over. The economic and social organisation of the ordinary planning market differs greatly from the previous model but it is just as subordinated to the logic of the building and engineering job and consultation market.

In the mid nineties, the State launched a major change of the DGUP, the administration in charge of controlling urban development (subdivision and building permits) and implementing local urban projects. As a lot of positions were vacant since the war, the GDUP began in 1995 to hire a new generation of civil servants. As a result, in 2002, it employed 104 engineers in 118 'theoretical' positions. A close examination of the qualifications of the staff gives an opportunity to see who are the new employees in the administration of planning and if the academic renewal that has been previously observed has had an effect..

In 2002, of the 104 « engineers », according to the administrative labelling of their posts, 59 were architects and the remaining were engineers (most of them civil engineers). None was identified as a "planner" nor had a planning degree, although such a qualification was required for at least two of them. However, since the gathering of the data, three architects on the staff have graduated in planning at the Lebanese University. In fact, the domination of architects reflects the fact that one of the main activities of the GDUP is the control of building permits. But it probably also shows what little appeal such employment offers to students who have applied for specialisation courses in planning after their degree in architecture. The breakdown by age of the engineers at the GDUP clearly demonstrates the recent wave of recruitments, since 62 were born between 1960 and 1975 while 52 were born between 1940 and 1960[5]. The figures also point to the increasing proportion of women on staff. They represent 20 out of 37 employees among the most recent generation (those born between 1965 and 1975), but only 15 among the older staff. Such a trend, also reflected in other Lebanese and Arab administrations, reflects the growing proportion of women in universities and in engineering branches specifically (Longuenesse 2007). But it also indicates the female preference for administrative positions whereas young male graduates would tend to reject such positions, considering them to be not prestigious enough and badly paid. The weak appeal of such an administration is also highlighted through the academic origins of the civil servants. While before the war, many engineers in civil administration came from the most prestigious private French-speaking universities, the large majority now originate from the Lebanese University and the Beirut Arab University, which recruit in less wealthy milieus.

All this points to the social shift in the Lebanese administration and what could be called its social depreciation. Such a transformation illustrates the fact that social and professional changes, which affect the public planning sector, are not distinct in nature from those regarding the professional field of engineering as a whole. Here, the case of the GDUP reflects the more general trend of social and professional elites seeking to avoid the public administration that once used to offer interesting careers.

At the same time, the other public actors of planning in Lebanon, the municipalities, have not experienced any improvement in their situation. Already marginalised by the government before the war, their capacities have been very limited during and after the conflict. In 1998 and in 2004, new elections have taken place, in what looked like the promise of a new departure. But the administrative tutelage of the Ministry of Interior and the lack of autonomy regarding large-scale public works strongly contradicted this hope. Specifically, it prevented the municipalities from hiring new staff (Anonymous, 1998). Cities like Beirut or Tripoli, whose population is respectively over 400.000 and 200.000 inhabitants, did not employ, all services together, a total of thirty engineers, not to mention planners.

5 The availabale data provided only the birth date, not the hiring date.

In contrast to what could be expected from international comparisons, planners don't find jobs in the public sector. This is the result of two combined trends. The first is a general depreciation of the Lebanese administration that discourages the more qualified professionals (among them the planners) to choose such a career. More specifically, the centralisation of planning in the hand of state bodies and the continued marginalisation of the municipalities have not opened any professional opportunities at this level.

3) The small private consulting firms in the rescue of the State and work conditions

Even after its ambiguous strengthening, the GDUP obviously lacked competence to achieve on its own the task of expanding the areas subjected to master plans and to upgrade the existing ones, which was important work that required trained planning professionals. As was already the case before the war, the GDUP therefore commissioned private consultants. But the consultation planning market is only a depreciated and secondary segment of the consultation market in architecture and civil engineering as a whole.

Between 1995 and 2002, the GDUP commissioned 120 studies from 60 groups of consultants. Few of them are firmly established firms and most are individuals or temporary alliances of consultants, which may vary over time. As a whole, we have identified 75 individuals, consultants or managers of small consulting firms. Thanks to cross-comparison with the Order of Engineers directory, we know their year of inscription in the Order and their specialty (engineers, architects or surveyor) (table 2).

Table 2: Specialty and year of registration at the Order of Engineers of the GDUP consultants

| Number of consultants | Year of first registration at the order of engineers | | | Section of belonging in the order / title | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year of information | Before 1970 | 1970-1990 | After 1990 | Architect | Civil engineer | Surveyor |
| 1998 | 15 | 16 | 5 | 27 | 12 | 4 |
| 2002 | 17 | 21 | 5 | 32 | 9 | 0 |

Source: GDUP / Directory of the Order of Engineers (my cross tabulations)

Most consultants are architects, but civil engineers account for between one quarter to one third. Very few are surveyors. Their registration year reveals that planning consultations are almost always entrusted to experienced, older engineers, thus excluding the new generations of graduated planners. Of course, some may have graduated in planning from foreign countries but after checking with others sources, they seem to remain exceptions. None, or very few, of the consultants or consulting firms working for the GDUP are only or even mainly "planners". Access to public planning contracts relies more on general experience in the field of building and civil works than on professional and academic credentials. Many examples would show how local repute, political networks as well as sectarian and clientelistic factors combine in granting the planning contracts to the consultants. Since 2002, talks were under way to ease access to the market of consultation in planning for younger and academically qualified professionals, but no agreement has yet been reached, although there are some examples that the administration now awards contracts to planning graduates. In 2007 the president of the Order of Engineers and the head of the section of consulting architects publicly called for urban planning contracts to be exclusively granted to qualified

planners, which highlighted the fact that this is not usually done[6].

This situation derives from the fact that terms of reference for master plan studies have not changed since the pre-war years. They have to include population and elementary field surveys and a proposal for the zoning and for the building guidelines. The master plan studies, except for certain areas and specific commissions, usually do not require highly qualified skills regarding ancient urban fabric, social study, transportation patterns or environmental assessment. A polyvalent architectural or engineering team, with the help of an external expert for limited specific tasks, can easily perform the job.

For such consultants, planning is a secondary job that barely represents the main source of income. Most of the time it is an opportunity considered useful and welcome, particularly during the years 1998-2000, because building activity was generally decreased. But it also implies specific constraints and drawbacks. The consultants have to make a bank deposit to prove their financial solidity. Remuneration is calculated at the prorata of the concerned areas, which makes rural areas easier to work on than urban ones. Payment only happens when determined steps are validated by the administration, which can take a long time. Some engineers say *bakhchich* (kickback) is needed in order to accelerate the process. During all that time, the consultants have to pay in advance for wages and the various charges. In some instances, because of shortages in finance, the State has offered to pay in Treasury bills, which were not easy to sell or only with a below par rating of up to 20%.

The market for planning is limited, unstructured, and most of all, not permanent, which is why it does not require specific skills on a permanent basis. It is also clear from the above-mentioned facts that full-time planning work would be very restricting and risky, because of the uncertainty of public payment and of its inadequacy compared to the extent of the performed work. All this leads the consultants to seek flexibility and subcontracting, which aggravates the logics already at work on the engineering market.

The Lebanese engineering market has indeed a long history of people holding the status of independent consultant and of small-firm manager. This was both a result of the lesser weight of the state on the market as a job provider (compared to neighbouring economies that are more state oriented) and of a 'cultural' tendency to market fragmentation linked to the dominant pattern of building activity led by private and familial clients rather than state or corporate civil and public works firms (Beyhum Tabet, 1989).

The situation of young urban planning graduates illustrates this situation. We rely here on two surveys undertaken by the administrators of the planning degrees at ALBA and LU[7]. The first showed, at the end of 2002, that most graduates had a planning-related position. Twelve were planning consultants, 3 employed in a consulting firm, 13 out of these 15 being architects and practising also as such. One was a civil servant at the CDR. Fifteen of these students claimed they participated in master plan studies. 3 were teaching planning. The survey provides no information on part-time jobs or unemployment periods.

The LU survey in 2006 provides data on 47 out of 66 graduates. It offers a more diverse picture. Nine graduates were working as civil servants and most of them attended the course while already recruited in the administration. Five were teaching (4 of them at the LU, in the architecture, agronomy or landscape branches). Seven were working in an architecture consulting firm and 6 in a planning and architecture-consulting firm. Information is lacking on their status (employer or employee, the latter being probably the case of most according to my knowledge). Six were

[6] During a round table on the professional milieu of planning at the Order of Engineers of Beirut (5/22/2007).

7 I warmly thank Paula Samaha at ALBA and Mariam Adra and Mousbah Rajab at the Lebanese University for sharing the results of those surveys.

working in companies (without details) and 4 in other sectors. Lastly, 5 were abroad and 3 were out of work. Unfortunately no data is provided regarding gender.

Despite imperfections, the two surveys provide valuable information on the activity of young planning graduates as well as on the differences between the two curricula. ALBA trains consulting oriented professionals who combine planning with another activity, mostly architecture. LU offers professional training for state employees, at their own initiative and probably linked to career strategies. It also trains young students of lower social class than at ALBA who are mainly working as salaried employees. For both, planning is, at least on a part-time basis, a field of work activity complementary to architecture. According to interviews and qualitative appraisals, their involvement in planning is rarely in their own names: they often get subcontracts from senior professionals who pay them minus a percentage. Their job status and work conditions are no different to elderly less specialised consultants in planning and may be worse regarding job tenure.

4) New trends in the job market?

In recent years, we find evidence that the planning market is changing while remaining limited in size. Since the turn of the millennium, international agencies like the World Bank, the European Union and others have set up programs with various governmental bodies like the CDR, the Ministry for Administrative Reform or the Ministry of Environment, that have strongly relied on planners, hired as consultants or for limited-period public jobs. The Cultural Heritage Urban Program has established master plans for the rehabilitation of five historical city centres. The consultants have been selected, among other criteria, on their qualifications in planning historical centres. The World Bank also financed the jobs of a dozen planners and socio-economists assisting the CDR and the municipalities in planning missions. The European Union has also funded a program intended at empowering municipalities, which also allowed planning consultants to apply for work. In that case, most of the selected teams were linked to the academic environment (notably teachers from the various planning curricula) or with academic planning credentials. The funder aimed to promote new methods not limited to physical planning. It's not the place here to assess the nature and results of such planning work. But these contracts do illustrate a trend towards a more professionalised market. It is noteworthy to observe that such a trend goes along with the continued refusal to strengthen the state or local administrations with qualified and permanent staff and the priority given to assisting it with consultants on a temporary basis.

## Conclusion

In most of the Western countries as well as in emergent or developing countries, one can assess a trend towards the professionalisation of urban planning, even though it is neither linear nor without contradictions. In this respect, Tunisia represents the most advanced among the Arab countries. A professional association of urban planners was created in 1979, whose members are either graduated planners or field experienced professionals from other academic backgrounds. The association is trying to negotiate with the Tunisian state in order to grant planners an easy access to State and public agencies contracts, which are in greater quantity than in Lebanon. But they did not obtain a real market closure, so that planners are competing with others specialists. And in the context of the development of globalised mega projects, like on the Tunis lakes' shores, they are marginalised exactly as they are in the case of the reconstruction of Beirut (Souami Verdeil, 2006; Barthel 2006).

In contrast to such a limited but unquestionable process of professionalisation, the case of Lebanon is far more ambiguous. The order of engineers, which regulates the market of architecture and engineering, is a key actor in the debate on planning policies but it has no section devoted to planners and membership remains restricted to architecture and engineering graduates, with no possibility for urban planners with no engineering background to be registered. The increasing

number of locally graduated planners has not led to the creation of an association that would, like in the Tunisian case, assert a professional identity and claim for specific market regulations. The case of planning offers an interesting contrast with the strategy of the Lebanese surveyors who created an independent professional organisation, illustrating a different path towards professionalisation (Longuenesse 2007).

In fact, in Lebanon, the main promoters of the professionalisation of planners are the administrators of the new curricula devoted to planning. The Lebanese case illustrates that academic moves towards professionalisation can not by itself engender a process leading to the affirmation of a professional project. The mobilization of experts in the field is facing several hurdles and contradictions. The first is probably that the market for planners is too limited, unstructured and not permanent. This is the result of State policies not to allow local authorities to hire new staff and to restrict social spending. It also derives from the fostering of private-led real estate companies and their consultants that rely on very few professional planners.

A second reason is that most of the planning graduates in Lebanon operating as consultants also held architecture or engineering degrees, and they practice not only as planners: their professional interest is not to close the market of planning that could then engender hardships for themselves. Lastly, local architects and engineers, as well as state agencies, consider planning to be a branch of civil engineering and architecture. Consultants regard planning as a useful sub-field and secondary activity, because it can provide, in a context of scarce state contracts, extra work opportunities. But it is not in their interest to see that market becoming restricted to holders of planning credentials and they would probably oppose such a move.

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